

**HEJIRA**  
**Joni Mitchell**  
**Asylum 7E-1087**

The title of Joni Mitchell's new album means "flight to a more congenial place," implying, in other words, a search for something better.

In "Black Crow," Mitchell writes "In search of love and music, My whole life has been, Illumination, of Corruption, And diving, diving, and diving, diving, Diving down to pick up on every shiny thing..."

This restlessness, boundless curiosity and ceaseless search indeed form the spirit of "Hejira," which, while it lacks strong melodic impact, is powerfully driven by rhythms that sustain considerable excitement.

The searches for love and music, as it turns out, do not always lead in the same direction, and many of the songs on "Hejira" concern the loneliness and lovelessness of constant travel.

In "Coyote," Mitchell writes of an exciting but fleeting and inappropriate one-night-stand encounter, while in "Song to Sharon" she sings wistfully of remembered weddings and other people's families, acknowledging that she is still, despite her passionate pursuit of a career, a romantic veiled by "the ceremony of the bells and lace."

Musically, Mitchell seems to have distilled rather than expanded her style. Although Tom Scott, who helped her realize her affinity for jazz with "Court and Spark," is still around, along with other musicians such as Larry Carlton and John Guerin, the instrumentation is spare and the arrangements restrained. The result is a tasteful, refined sound easily dominated by Mitchell herself.

Mitchell's lyrics are, as they generally have tended to be, extraordinary. The words to most popular songs read like the pathetic poems of half-wits, but Mitchell's verses shine with intelligence and imagery. Except in "Blue Motel Room," a somewhat joking tip-of-the-hat to popular convention, she steers completely clear of the cliches that burden most rock and pop. The lyrics on "Hejira" invite and surprise like the ever-receding horizons of which Mitchell writes.

Early-period Mitchell fans who have felt somewhat alienated by her most recent work may find this album closer to the sound that made her famous. The album is not likely, however, to result in any new defectors.

—Pam Simon