

## Matter of Record

### T for Texas

By Burt Becker

Delbert McClinton, a singer and harmonica player, is one of the few remaining examples of a musician with a fairly identifiable regional sound. Most modern music tries to lose its accent and appeal to a homogenous, vaguely national taste.



Delbert McClinton

Not McClinton. His state is Texas and, while he minimizes the country music associated with the area, he maximizes the rhythm & blues heritage with its barroom beat. The music carries a message but its main purpose, so they say in San Antonio, is to get the crowd on its feet.

#### Keeper of the flame

(Captioned, by its title, indicates McClinton is conscious about his role in cultural preservation, even though the record uses veteran Los Angeles studio musicians instead of Texans in the backing band. So this is not the rugged, shuffling sound you could hear 10 years ago from an artist like McClinton or Doug Sahm. But its the best thing in this vein you'll hear today.

Besides several McClinton originals (the best two are "Dear John" songs, "Two More Bottles of Wine" and "I Received A Letter"), the album revives some good numbers that were hits in the past. "Have Mercy" gets a fine soulful arrangement, "I'm Talking About You" and "Seesaw" are pretty good. Only "Just A Little Bit" falls short of expectations.

#### Mitchell meets Mingus

Joni Mitchell's Mingus (Asylum), her much-ballyhoosed collaboration with the late jazz bassist and composer, is quite a successful and evocative project.

On some of the numbers she wrote lyrics to accompany Mingus' music, others are wholly her compositions. The approach and instrumentation are contemporary, of course. Jaco Pastorius on bass, Herbie Hancock on electric piano and Ms. Mitchell's acoustic guitar mixed to the front.

The arrangements are generally quite spare and haunting, emphasizing the hollow reverberation of a plucked guitar string. The sense of tormented artistry is conveyed, especially at the end of Side One with its wailing, howling chorus of wolves. Other songs are more mischievous. Interspersed are snippets of conversation with Mingus.

The last song on the LP is a sort of double eulogy. "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat" was written by Mingus to recall influential saxophonist Lester Young. Now, with Mingus gone too, it serves as a remembrance of him.