

Plus! Glastonbury, Beasties, Ian Dury, Ringo...
50 pages of the month's best music reviewed



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The Music Magazine



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★ DR. JOHN ★
★ GENE CLARK ★
★ RANDY NEWMAN ★
★ JAMES BROWN ★
★ JONI MITCHELL ★

THE AMERICAN GIANTS ISSUE

BIG STARS!
WORLD EXCLUSIVES!
And smalltown girls...

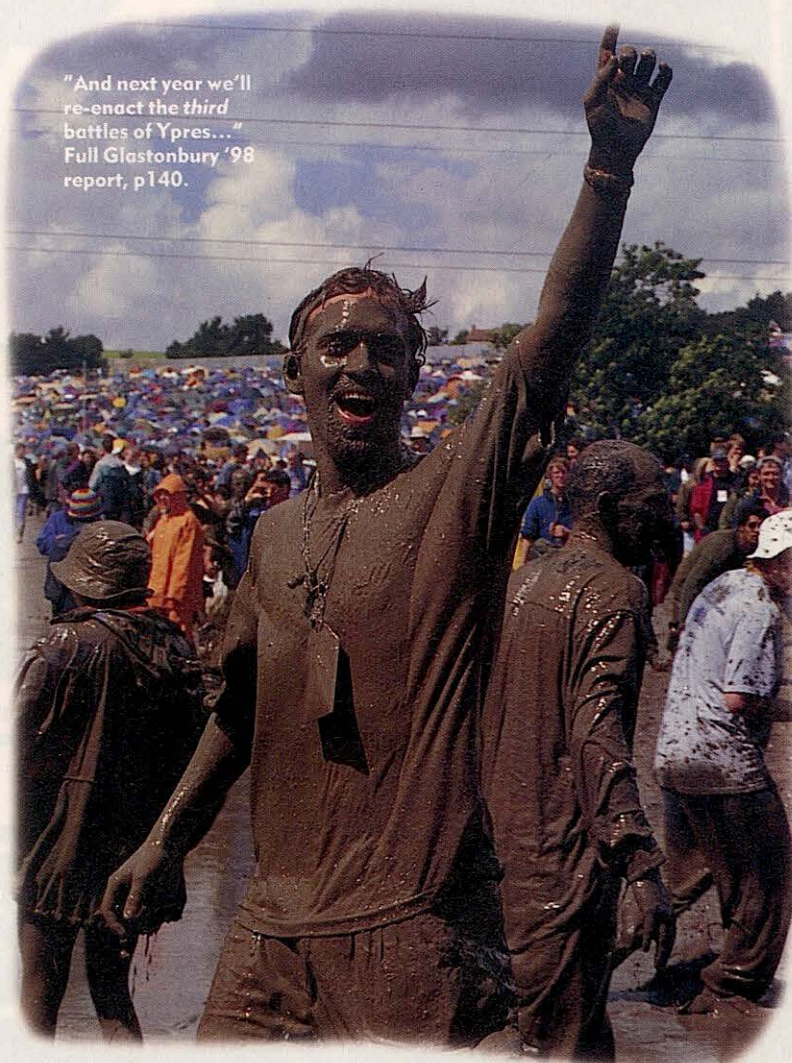
JUST ADD VIAGRA!
It's The Mavericks' horizontal dance tape

MOJO

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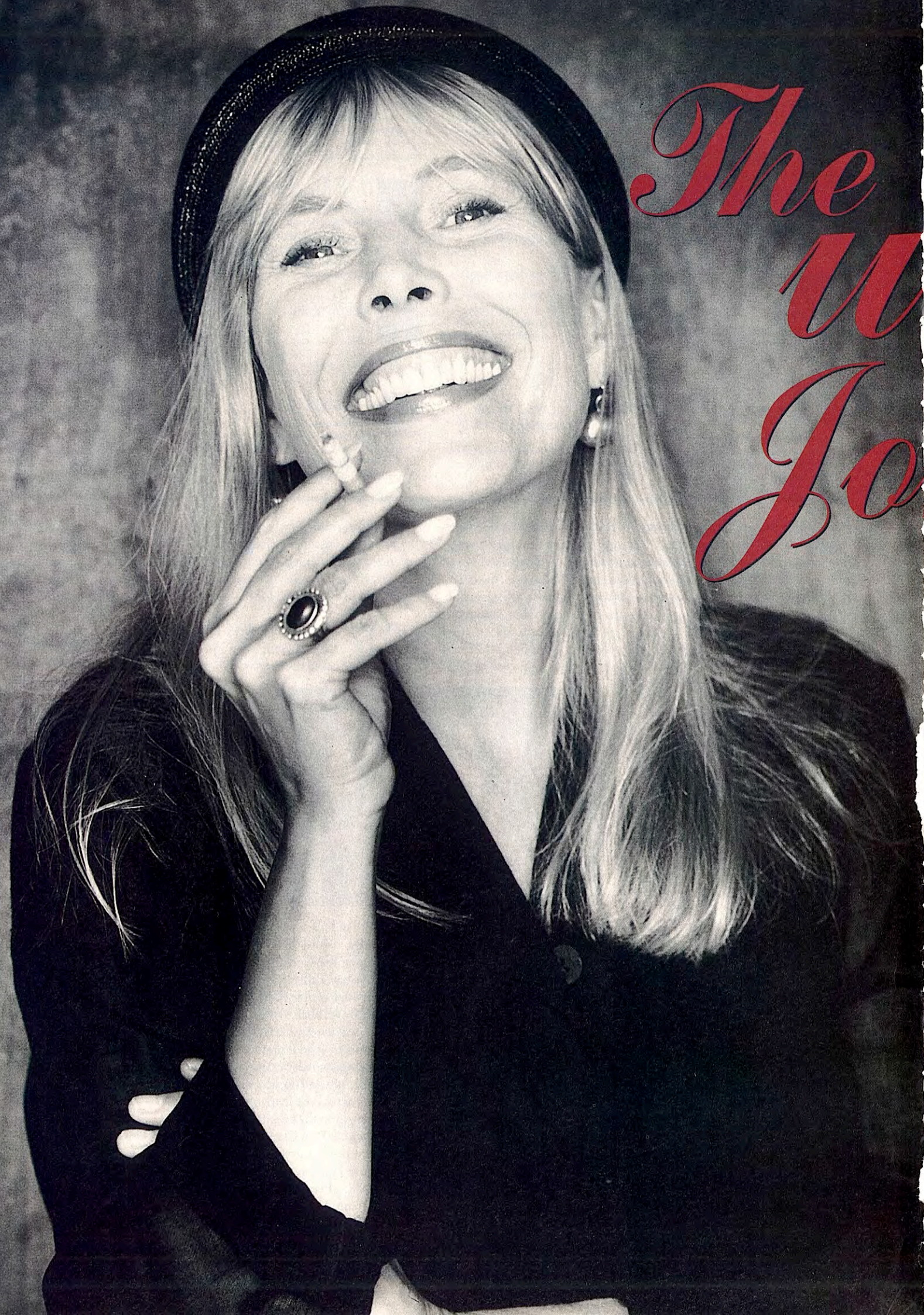
"And next year we'll re-enact the third battles of Ypres..."
Full Glastonbury '98 report, p140.

The unfiltered Joni Mitchell

There are those artists who shy away from public debate, who duck controversy, who shun self-analysis, who refrain from airing their private lives, who would, to be honest, rather not be quoted.

**And then there is
Joni Mitchell.**

Interview by
Dave DiMartino



IT'S A SATURDAY NIGHT IN Burbank, California, and perhaps 200 invited guests are sitting in a circular arrangement of plush chairs, overstuffed sofas, even cross-legged on the floor. Wines and bottled water abound. At the centre of this velvet doughnut is a small, round stage, upon which stand Joni Mitchell and three, sometimes four, other musicians. Video cameras record every detail of this, the second of two private concerts, for a television special to be aired later in the year. Rosanna Arquette introduces Mitchell on both nights.

Joni's paintings are everywhere, hanging on the curtained perimeter of the circle and exhibited proudly on the curved pathway which led the small audience to their seats. Her friends are everywhere, too. There among her dazzling band – including drummer Brian Blade, pedal-steel guitarist Greg Leisz, and trumpeter Mark Isham – stands bassist Larry Klein, Mitchell's former husband of 10 years, whom she'll briefly and conspicuously kiss midway through her performance. And there in the audience is the familiar, greying figure of Graham Nash, her celebrated beau from earlier days. And tonight, the composer of *Our House* has work to do.

Sure enough, Nash heads to the stage with a peculiar object in his hand, wrapped in what appears to be a disposable plastic bag. It is, says he, the trophy owed to Joni for her induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame last year. The one she never got because she never showed up to claim it. "You had your reasons," Nash says, diplomatically, "but I'm sure they're all fine." Looking at Nash – bemusedly or begrudgingly, it's hard to tell – she grasps the object in its sloppy wrapper and deadpans: "It's perfect in a garbage bag."



ONE HAS TO LOVE JONI MITCHELL, AND THESE days one does. Since 1994's *Turbulent Indigo* netted the singer two Grammy Awards – including Album Of The Year – Mitchell has been on the receiving end of a nonstop series of honours, awards, and the sort of accolades usually given posthumously to bluesmen most decent humans have never heard of. Among them: the Billboard Century Award, the National Academy of Songwriters Lifetime Achievement Award, the Canadian Governor General's Performing Arts Award, even Sweden's Polar Music Prize.

Such awards usually indicate a career nearing the end of its creative lifespan, but in Mitchell's case that's simply laughable. She's been *out there* in 1998 – touring with Bob Dylan and Van Morrison on a seven-date concert series verging on the historic, taking part in a memorable Los Angeles Walden Woods benefit (alongside an all-female cast including Sheryl Crow, Stevie Nicks, Björk, Shawn Colvin, Paula Cole and Trisha Yearwood), and completing *Taming The Tiger*, her 17th



Chez Joni in LA: "I enjoy village life... I know the shopkeepers and I tease them. I'm a small town person."

album. To be released 31 full years after she signed to Reprise Records in 1967, it is as fresh and vital as anything she has ever recorded, and will not come packaged in a plastic garbage bag.

Sitting outside a restaurant she frequents in Brentwood – an area now famous for its association with disgraced celebrity athlete O.J. Simpson – Mitchell is chatty, warm, an excellent smoker and, frankly, among the most magnetic personalities I've ever encountered. She zigs and zags from subject to subject; she is highly opinionated and visibly proud of it. She talks about nearly everything, including her reunion last year with daughter Kilauren – after giving her up for adoption 35 years ago – and her own mother, now 86, and the subject of *Taming The Tiger's* song *Facelift*.

So outspoken is Joni Mitchell that she and her publicist are discussing the downside of complete frankness. In these days of Lilith Fairs and tired topics like "women in rock", the press – god bless 'em

Guido Harari/KATZ

— continue to run familiar female names by Joni seeking assessment and, ideally, condemnation from the queen herself. Sheryl Crow? Alanis Morissette? Jewel? Even Rickie Lee Jones? Mitchell notes a previous reporter she'd encountered "laid on me questions like, 'What do you think of so and so?'" and I deflected and deflected and deflected and finally said something. And I thought, If they cut *that* off and *that* off — and you know they will — he got the dirt. He *got* it." She pauses. "I'm getting a rep for that."

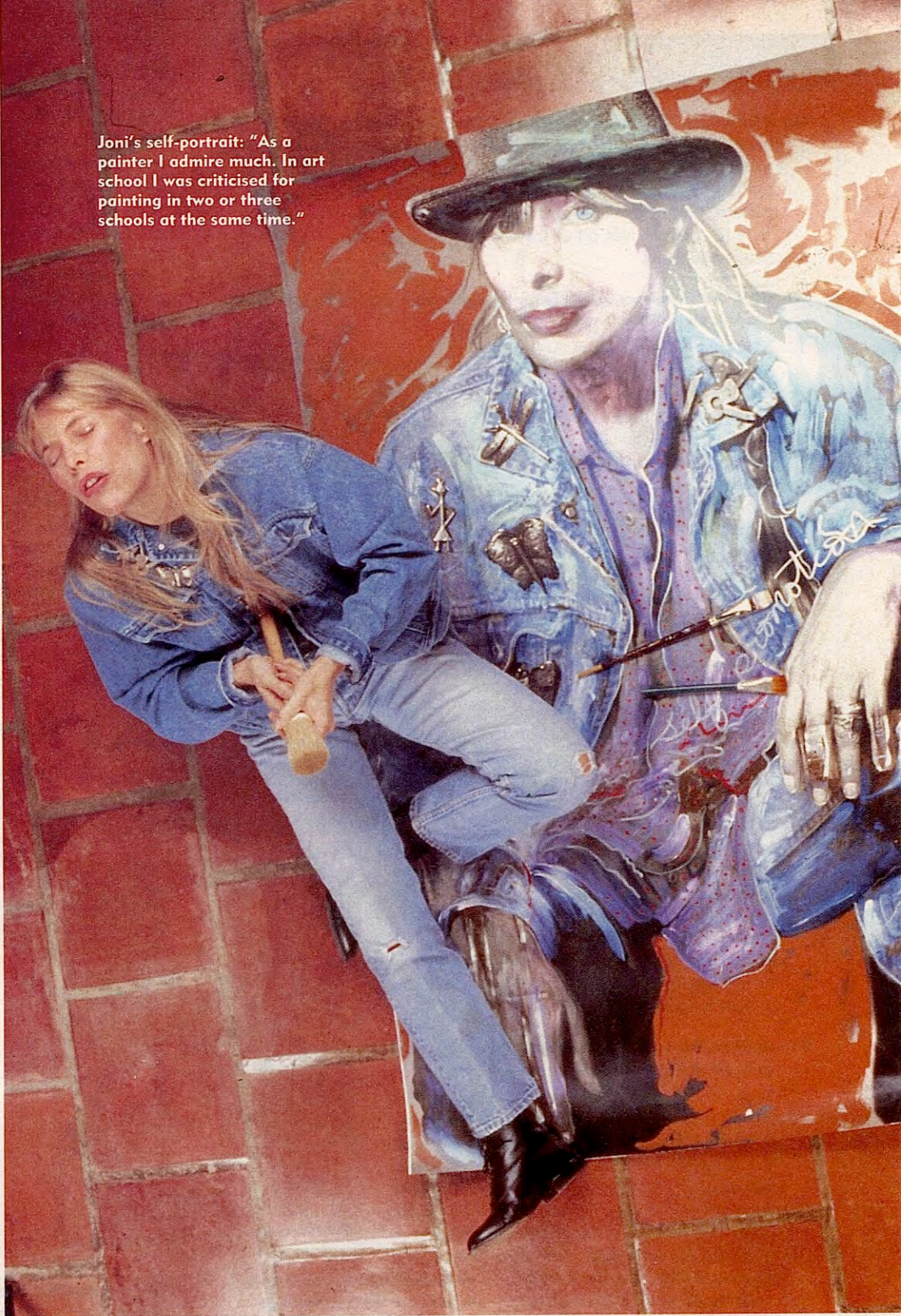
So much for the mudwrestling questions.

It seems like you've been surfacing more lately. A conscious move on your part?

No. I guess things started to take off in the last five years mainly because of the Billboard award. After that, it was a series of sort of copycat crimes, where people remembered me and I was the recipient of a lot of awards in a row. And then I won a Grammy — well, two Grammys, one for the artwork, which also pleased me very much.

I'm really a painter at heart and I can say this now since, you know, Kilauren has come along. Music was a hobby for me at art school, and art was serious. Art was always what I was going to do; I was going to be an artist. But the time that I went to art school was very disappointing — although I romanticised the time that Van Gogh went to art school. I thought that to go to the French Academy at that particular time — even though as a female I would have been considered an associate no matter how good I was — was the best education you could get. And yet in Van Gogh's letters to Bernard, he's begging him to get out of there, saying, "They're providing you with subject matter — if they have their way, they'll make a mistress of your art, and you won't know your true love should you come upon it." He was begging him to get out and just paint from his heart at that time. That was an eye-opener to me — when I read that, I thought, I'm going to give *myself* the art education: I'm going to paint the way I want to, never mind the art world. So I went back

Joni's self-portrait: "As a painter I admire much. In art school I was criticised for painting in two or three schools at the same time."



"I was always a star. I'm not one of those kids who had a bad high school life."

to painting landscapes and my friends and cats and not making a mistress of it — stopping trying to be innovative and *moderne*, and painting the kind of paintings that I can't afford to buy that I want to have in my house, you know?

The paintings on display on Saturday night were gorgeous.

People like that kind of painting. The art world will apologise for it if they write about it, you know what I mean? The art world is a funny world — I'm glad I never had to be a part of the gallery scene or anything.

Do you know Don Van Vliet, Captain Beefheart?

Yeah, he's a good painter.

He retired from making music in the early '80s, ostensibly to paint. I spoke with the man who handles his work professionally, and he mentioned that it was tough for any musician to be taken seriously in the art world unless he devoted his time solely to art. He said it would take a minimum of 10 years for him to be away from the music business to be taken seriously at all.



← Absolutely. You're regarded as a dilettante. That's because – here's my opinion on that – America is far away from a renaissance spirit. I've seen shows passing through Rome, the poet as painter, Ferlinghetti's drawings on display. That's a renaissance culture: they understand it, condone it. Why shouldn't a poet be able to render? Not all of them can, but supposing they can? Don't rule it out.

You made that point very well on Saturday night when you mentioned what Georgia O'Keeffe said.

(Quoting) "Oh, I would've liked to be a musician, too, but you can't do both." It's a lot of work, you have to give up a certain amount of socialising – but the way I learn anyway, everything that I admire sparks me: best teach it to me as admiration.

Funny, as a painter I have so many heroes. But as a musician I like one or two in each camp and then I don't like the rest. Like, I don't care for John Coltrane – many people think he's the greatest. Coltrane seems like he's on Valium to me. Charlie Parker, I see his greatness; then Wayne Shorter is a genius – he's a tributary of 'Trane, but he's got so much more breadth and mysticism and wit and passion and everything. So to me, Coltrane is kind of a stepping-off point to Wayne.

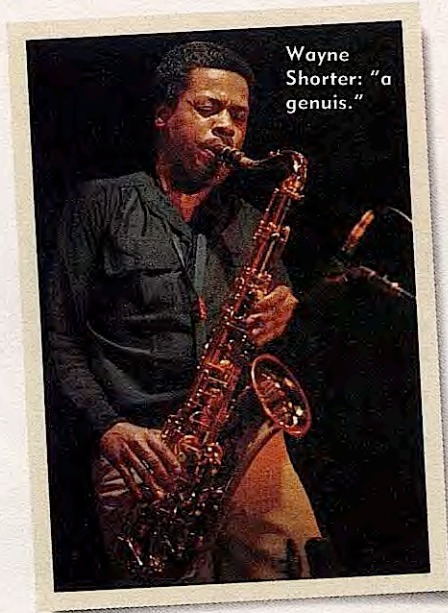
I have strong and strange opinions on things which are kinda controversial. As a painter I admire much. And it's been hard – like music, it's been hard to synthesize the many styles that I like. In art school I was criticised for painting in two or three schools at the same time. Music hybrids better than perhaps painting does immediately. I ended up kind of without a country – you know, musically speaking?

Do you derive the same degree of artistic satisfaction from painting as you do from music?

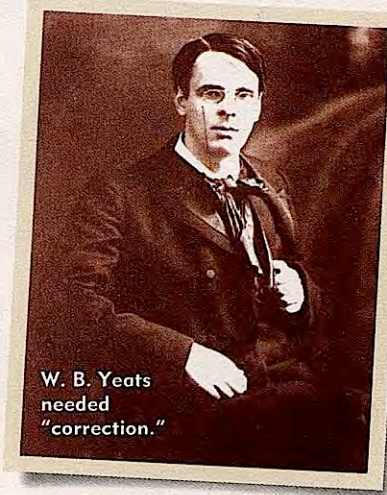
Yeah, as a painter there are so many painters that I bow to. I didn't like poetry, so the poetry that I made is the kind that I like better. So I don't like a lot of poets, and that seems to annoy people, that I'm dismissive of a lot of what they think are great poets. I'm with Nietzsche on the poets. He went into a long harangue: "The poet is the vainest of the vain, even before the ugliest of water buffalo does he fan his tail. I've looked among him for an honest man and all I've dredged up are old gods' heads. He muddies his waters that he might appear deep." That's one of my favourites. I can see the filler in [poetry] – I can see, a lot of times, the effort. It wasn't honest enough for me a lot of times. It was tipping its hat always to the Greeks and classicism in a certain stylistic way. I like Yeats, I love Yeats – the Yeats poem that I set to music [on Slouching Towards Bethlehem], though, I corrected... there were parts of it that I added; they let me do it, which was amazing. Because I think they sued Van Morrison for setting something. They just said, "You have to put 'adapted by'." And I think I did it pretty seamlessly because I understand his style – the third stanza is mine, and it's very much in the style of the first one, more so than his second stanza.

For that matter, on-stage you mentioned Bob Dylan's covering your own Big Yellow Taxi.

It's been so long since I heard it, but I don't think he ever mentions the taxi, he just goes straight to the tractor. It was on *Self Portrait*, I believe.



Wayne Shorter: "a genius."



W. B. Yeats needed "correction."

Actually the Dylan album, I think. But I wondered if you were as sensitive as the Yeats estate might be when someone was altering your own work.

Oh, no, no. And I love Bobby. I think Bobby thinks of himself as not friendly. I think he just thinks of himself that way. But I'm very fond of him, and over the years we've had a lot of encounters, and most of the discussion has been about painting, actually. No, he can do whatever he wants as far as I'm concerned (*laughs*). He's one of those people like Miles, you know? Even if he wasn't up to it that night – or I saw a performance where he just kinda cruised – whatever it was, I would always be curious about the next. Because he's kind of untouchable in a lot of ways.

And I love his writing – you know, not all of it. And I was a detractor in the beginning. In the beginning I thought he was a Woody Guthrie copycat. I never liked copycats, and I just found out why from these horoscope books that just came out. I'm born the Day of the Discoverer in the Week of Depth. I really love innovators. I love the first guy to put the flag at the North Pole; the guy that went there second doesn't interest me a lot of times. Although some could say that Wayne Shorter is the guy who got there second, but he took it somewhere. So Dylan went to Woody, and you have to build off of something. Not everybody comes out of the blue as a genuine muse – a real cosmic muse. It used to be that's what music was – but now it's formulated. And, especially, it's become a producers' art, who's an interior decorator basically.

Does Dylan know that you were initially a detractor?

Oh, I don't know if he knows that or not, but you know, the thing that turned me around was Positively 4th Street. It stopped me in my tracks, and I went, Oh my God – that's just great. We can write about anything now.

Because up 'til then, I was writing songs. And I wrote poetry in the closet because I didn't like it. I wrote it, I just rhymed, haha. Rhyming Joan, I guess. But I didn't care to show it to anybody, or I did it in school on assignment because I had to. And I was praised for it, but I just figured I got away with it. And songs I loved, stories I loved – I always

loved stories from the moment I could understand English. Poetry was kind of like shelling sunflower seeds with your fingers – it just was too much work for too little return, a lot of times. I like things more plainspeak.

And the poems that I did like in school were very visual – and less diaphanous and cryptic. I think people like to say they understand it, but there's nothing really to understand. You can comb it and comb it for understanding, and it may produce a lot of thoughts, but it doesn't get to the heart of the matter clearly enough for me. Most poetry.

In high school, my teacher loved T.S. Eliot and we studied The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock – which essentially needed a translation key to even begin to be deciphered by 14-year-olds. I'm not sure it should've been foisted on people who weren't willing and ready to explore it.

Not only that – but speaking as a poet, I write a song, say, Stay In Touch on this album, and I know what I wrote it about. When my daughter and her boyfriend came, Teddy heard it and said,



In the studio, 1975:
"My songs are not so much for singing – they're more dramatic. Prettiness is not the point; the point is to bring the words to life like a Shakespearean soliloquy."

"Kilauren, that song's about you." Well it was – it's about the beginning unsteadiness in a very passionate new relationship. Any time I have a passionate new relationship, that song will come to life in a new way. If it's overly explained, you rob the people whose lives it brushes up against of their own interpretation and their own experience.

I know how a song falls differently against your life many times. To keep it alive it has to – you're bringing new experience to it all the time, and it's not the experience you wrote it with, so it's open to interpretations. It's a kind of dead poet's society thing – tear those pages from your books. The songs shift around – either it means something to you or it doesn't. And that's one reason why I resent the "who is it about?" fixing it in time, "it's about that over there..." No it isn't, it's a mirror – and it reflects you if you take the time to look as you pass it by.

I'm sure you've had people picking apart your songs on the autobiographical level, saying this line is about that person...

And they assume that – the new press. The new press is so irresponsible they print their assumptions without using the word. I don't think they know the word 'assume' exists. They print it as a bald-ass fact, "When she wrote this, she meant this," like bad poetry teachers.

I'm still living here, and it's getting me in a lot of trouble, too. Especially if they name a person. Not To Blame caused a lot of friction. Some people said it's about O.J., and some people said it's about Jackson Browne, right? Well, it's about men who batter women – and it has some details that are specific and some that apply to a lot of different situations. It's about the kind of guy who goes around battering women – and if the shoe fits, wear it, you know (*laughs*)?

But there's still a lot personally revealed, I think. On the new album, there are lyrics referring to radio stations playing "genuine junkfood for juveniles", and you're singing about "a runaway from the record biz". How do you view yourself as a record maker in the business of making records today?

The business – even the executives are kind of at the mercy of the Wall Street graph. The graph must go up. So it creates a kind of conservative poker playing. And they won't bet on any long shots. And among the long shots there are a lot of generalities. People over 30, especially people over 50. VH1, MTV – all of the outlets for music have been barred to me for many years, 20 years, for one reason or another. For mysterious reasons. In the beginning, when I first started, for the first five years I had no drums on my record, so I didn't go to AM radio. So even in the time when I was a young artist. You only get about five or six years before they're sick of you in the business generally, and they let you ride – they don't put any money or effort or interest into you, really. They just let you sit there like manure in the pasture, as a procurer of young artists at the label. But they don't help you get your product to market.

Has that in any way affected your art, your music?

No, it hasn't at all. I was accused of pandering on *Dog Eat Dog* – and my manager told Thomas Dolby, who'd been hired as a colourist, to give me colours and get away. And he was comfortable with that, or so he said – but behind my back, my manager thought that if Thomas was producing it would create some more excitement. And so they negotiated that, and it caused a lot of trouble. And people said that I was selling out or pandering on that record. I wasn't. ➔

"Strap on the dildo honey, I want to get fucked in the ass'? It seems all we left this generation was shock value."

◀ What people don't know is I was a dancer – I like some disco. I don't belong to any camp. I like a little of this and a little of this and a little of that – and at any moment, I could be inspired to go in any one of those directions.

No, I've always kept my painting pure and I've always kept my music pure, that's one thing. No matter how disturbed I've been. My predicament wasn't one in which effort worked any way. I was just *shut out*, period, after the *Mingus* album.

But, as you said, things have changed significantly since the Billboard award. Take the Swedish Polar Music Prize – how exactly did that come along for you?

They're trying to have a kind of Pulitzer Prize for music over there. It's fairly new. McCartney had been a recipient and Quincy Jones, and they have a pop and classical category.

Sounds like a wonderful idea.

Yeah, it was fun. I enjoyed the King, I really enjoyed his company, he was a character – kind of a hippy playboy guy.

Had you met any kings before?

No. He let me smoke, so that was good. I had to ask his permission, though. He smoked with me. He'd say he had to keep pace with me. So sometimes he'd say yes and sometimes he'd say no. Can I smoke now? "No." Well when can I smoke next? "I'll tell you." And he had a silver cigarette case, and he'd say, "OK, we will smoke now (*laughs heartily*)."

How did you enjoy the Walden Woods benefit?

Oh, I loved it. I thought it was a beautiful night. People were talking about it for days afterwards. Weeks, of course, doesn't happen in this town. Maybe even weeks – weeks later I was still talking about it.

I've played with a big orchestra before, but never so comfortably. Maybe because I'm more comfortable – maybe because always I had to sing and play and play *with* them with very little rehearsal. This time I just had to stand up and sing, so I was liberated from having to plunk. And I loved the arrangement – I sang Stormy Weather with 60 pieces. The most beautiful arrangement we could find of it. Frank Sinatra had recorded it several times, but this one – I forget the arranger's name, but we just copped it – you couldn't beat it, it was so gorgeous. And to feel all those strings come rising up around you, you know?

When I got to the hall that day, it was the first day that we went to our dressing room, and we'd been rehearsing with a bit of the orchestra, the central kind of little jazz group that was the centrepiece

of the orchestra. It was the first time I'd gone to my dressing room, and there was a guy taking me up the stairs to my dressing room, and I was kind of huffing at the second landing and I said, Why would you put the oldest one on the third floor and the young ones all down on the stage? It should be the other way around. So I put all my stuff down and came back down to rehearsal, and I played with this big orchestra – I went back up to my dressing room, we started to do make-up, and when I looked at my face I was glowing – and I realised I came up those three flights of stairs two at a time after playing with that orchestra. That's how incredible it was. So I have to do that again.

Tonight I'm going to record with Herbie Hancock, he's doing an album of Gershwin tunes. Stevie Wonder's going to be there too. I've got a choice of three songs. I think with Frank Sinatra's death and all, there's a resurgence of interest in that era. Of eras of music, I would say I'm a swing era baby. I love the swing beat. Even though my music doesn't reflect all the kinds of music that I love, it eventually will.

After watching you do Marvin Gaye's Trouble Man on Saturday night, it struck me as odd that you've never recorded a complete album of cover songs.

I've never been *able* to. By contract. It was disallowed.

Would you like to do one?

I'm *going* to do one. I'd love to.

What you brought to that song was fabulous.

Oh, I love that song. I've played that song over and over – I'd only do the ones that I play over and over and over. I own them in a certain way because of my love of them. I love that song. I sang that at the Stormy Weather concert also.

That was quite a group – how did you all relate to each other?

We didn't really – aside from the duet that I did, there wasn't that much co-mingling. People came – they kind of kept us apartheid in case the fur would fly, I don't know. I saw Stevie [Nicks] because she was before me, and Björk and I worked together. I love Björk. No, I think we were all a little out of our idiom – it was hard work, everybody was a little nervous, it was just beautiful. We're going to do it again in San Francisco in September, taping it there.

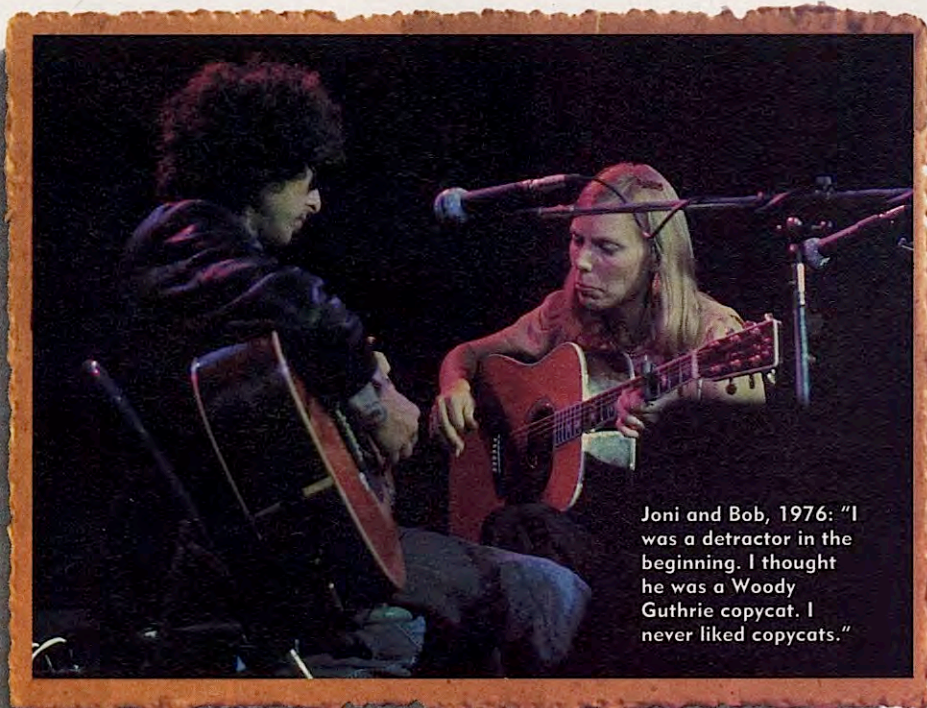
At the show with Dylan and Van, you all played so very well that I wondered if you felt you all rose to the occasion due to the company? I've seen Van play many, many times, yet when he played Moondance, it was as if I'd never heard it before.

I think we all *did* kick each other up. Bobby – I don't want to be indiscreet to Bobby, but it's beautiful what he said. I don't want to be a tattletale here.

We can go off the record, if you'd like...

Well it's for his sake – and it's kind of a brag on my part. I treasure it, but it's not something I really can say publicly, I don't think – just as a person... [off the record stuff follows]... So anyway he greeted me after the show in Vancouver, he went on last that night, and it was a difficult show for me because I'm not used to playing big sports arenas, and there was a lot of milling, a lot of going for beer, and a lot of talking really loud through all of the shows. It seemed to be that that crowd had come for the beer and the event itself – not to listen, just to be at it, you know? And I thought that was a shame. And you have three people that are really listened-to artists, it's OK if there's no lyrical text or something, but I assumed that this was gonna be a writers' tour, so I picked a set for Bobby. And I think he did for me, too – because he put in one of the best line-ups of songs that I've seen him do for a long time. All of that you can quote me on.

Charlyn Zlotnik/Redferns, Neal Preston



Joni and Bob, 1976: "I was a detractor in the beginning. I thought he was a Woody Guthrie copycat. I never liked copycats."



“Mine was a generation of screamers. The ‘40s singers smiled – a more graceful suffering.”

But when he came off-stage, he was there to greet me, and it takes a moment to kind of recover – and I wasn’t sure if it was a good experience. I thought we played well in spite of it, but that we weren’t properly listened to. It was the first one, you know. Then I realised it was just the nature of the crowd. But Bobby was standing and he was very excited, and he said, (*affecting Dylan’s voice*) “Oh those chords, those chords – you’ve got to show me some of those chords. I love those chords that you play. We’re gonna sound like an old hillbilly band when we go on.” I don’t know whether that’s indiscreet or not – what do you think? – I’m so sensitive to it. I said, Bobby you don’t want to learn these chords. First of all you have to learn tunings, and tunings are a pain in the butt. And you won’t have nearly the fun that you’re having now with your music.

When I saw him it was almost as if he was taking songs that he hadn’t written and making them his own, in a strange way.

Um-hum, um-hum – that’s what I’m doing. Bobby and I played in Tokyo a few years back, three or four I guess, and he called me up just before we went over and he said, “I forgot how to *sing* – but I remember now, I remember now. The trouble is they want me to do all those Bob Dylan songs – and they’re so heavy.” And that’s exactly what I feel about my material. It’s like Meryl Streep at a certain point decided to do comedy. I’ve done drama, he’s done drama; we’ve done it very well. But we both have a sense of humour. His perhaps is more apparent in his writing than mine is. It’s in there, here and there, there’s a little bit of comic relief – you know, “Drink up now, it’s getting on time to close.” But people don’t even seem to notice, they’re so stunned by the drama of it all, you know?

And I started doing these cover songs with my hands free, like I say – the liberty in it is just exciting, you know? I’d like to make a

whole show out of Gershwin. The songs that I write, you see, they’re not really so much for singing – they’re more dramatic. Like Bob’s work, the prettiness of the singer, in the later work especially, is not the point – the point is to bring the words to life like a Shakespearean soliloquy. If you have to talk ‘em, whatever it takes, you know? Whereas these old songs don’t have a lot of words and there’s plenty of time to ride the note and float, and they’re real singerly material, and I don’t write stuff like that.

It seems to me that maybe around *Hejira* time – not so much that you shifted styles per se, but...

The poet took over the singer.

There were melodies that anyone could cover in some of your earlier songs, and it would make perfect sense – they were gorgeous songs that existed unto themselves. And by no means are the newer songs inferior on any level...

The writing is superior, really – but, like rap, it’s at the cost of melody to a certain degree. Although... it’s more like jazz melody, it’s conversational improvisation. If it didn’t have words on it, it’s conversational improvisation around a known melody. Except I don’t really state the melody.

I had a difficult time trying to describe that when reviewing your show; I compared the speak-singing style to later Lou Reed...

It’s the same thing that Bob does. The poet takes over. Maybe I guess Lou Reed, although I’m not as familiar with his material as Bob’s. The point in the performance is to make the words come alive. Like Ella Fitzgerald is a beautiful singer, she has perfect pitch and perfect ➤

time, but she doesn't illuminate the words – she just sings through them. "S'wonderful, s'marvellous" – that's the way it's written, she sings through it. Whereas Billie Holiday makes you hear the content and the intent of every word that she sings – even at the expense of her pitch or tone. So of the two, Billie is the one that touches me the deepest, although I admire perfect pitch and perfect time.

And you could have that at the expense of the read, but I don't think anybody could have perfect pitch, perfect time and colour the words, right? I'd sacrifice the perfect time and the perfect pitch to colour the words, but that's because I like the text. Dylan does that. He never reads the same thing the same two days in a row – and as a result, you can almost see his state of mind in the reading. And I respect that, I think that's emotional honesty, and when you have this complex creature, the singer-songwriter...

Everybody's a singer-songwriter now, but not everybody should be, not everybody can do all of these things, and yet everybody does. And that's why I think music has gone downhill. It used to take three – a great lyricist and a great musician and then a great singer. Like with Frank, and that's why that stuff is so enduring – because you had three gifted people doing it. Now you've got people, they're not really a great singer or a great writer or a great musician doing it, so the standards have dropped severely. And ironically, at the same time that the standards dropped, the machines have increased. These people have 20 times the distribution, so the bad stuff is really everywhere.

The album that has one or two good songs, the rest being filler...

It's hard to write 10 good songs. I know the fellow that runs my Website said, "You used to put records out one a year." And I did for a long time – and I think that the standard of writing on them is pretty even. People listen to it and for one year they've got three favourites, and then they put it on five years later and some of the ones they didn't even notice suddenly mean something, because they're all about different themes. So either you've experienced that – and if you have, then you're closer to the songs, so you know.

But music now is so disposable. Like this new album – I'm very proud of it, I think the standard is high, I'm very proud of the composition, the tools were available. I play nearly everything, and I guided everything into place on *Court And Spark* – even though I didn't play it, I sang it, and then they played it from that and it was pretty much as writ. *Hissing Of Summer Lawns* was a little looser – I let people stretch out, and as result of that it had a jazzier flavour, because they used their own harmonies instead of mine. People weren't really ready for jazz in pop music at that time – jazz-tingeing.

With those older things – lines like "bombers into butterflies" – do you feel like that was a different Joni?

Yeah, there are some things that I'm prejudiced against in my early work. I think they're the work of an ingénue, that I'm miscast in them now, I don't do them for that reason. However I saw this female impersonator, John Kelly, and he did a lot of my early work beautifully – from a spirit point of view, beautifully – and he's in his mid-thirties I think. And in drag, to boot, and singing in a full tenor voice, some of them, not even imitating me, just singing them with all his heart. He sang *Night In The City*, which I think of as a childlike ditty, and like I was a ghost at my own funeral I saw the audience respond and I heard the song, it gave me some perspective on it that I never had. Not that in a limited show that I feel the need to include it. I'm out for a long time. What I felt when I put this show together, the necessity was to run by these songs that had become considered obscure and difficult. Any chance I get to air them and run them by people so they can make some new memories against these songs... they're too good to kill is the way I figure it. So I chose to use this run as an opportunity to revitalise them.

You, Dylan and Van Morrison seem nearly alone among your contemporaries in that your newest work is treated by critics with as much respect and enthusiasm as your earlier material. You don't really seem to be as much tied into a time as others.

Well, they try to tie you to a time whether you're tied to a time or not. Like I've seen recently, "that folk singer from the '60s". I haven't been a folk singer since 1964 – and I didn't make my first record since 1967. When I started making my own music, that's not folk music – it has its roots in, and it's classical. The first music that I made that was my own, when I stopped singing folk songs, was rooted in Chuck Berry. Big Yellow Taxi is rooted in Chuck Berry. In my pre-teen years, my best friends were classical musicians. And my parents, we only had five records in the house.

What were they?

Clair De Lune. My father had a Harry James record and a Leroy Anderson record, he was a trumpet player. And my mother had Clair De Lune, Brahms' Lullaby, a lot of classicism, beautiful melodies. And I had personally, until I became a dancer and won records... because people didn't buy records like they do now. I've got a godson who lives in a trailer park who's got 50 CDs. These things are expensive.

People charge now; they didn't when I was coming up. If you didn't have the cash for it you didn't get it. And I used to go down and take the records out of the brown paper and go in the listening booth and listen to Rachmaninov's Rhapsody On A Theme By Paganini. It was like 75 cents but we couldn't afford it. I'd go downtown and put it on and listen to it and swoon, a couple of plays, and put it back in the paper, and put it back on the shelf. Like Russia or something, it seems like now.

I was wondering when I saw you get that Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Award from Graham on Saturday night – was that staged, or was that really the first time you received it?

No, he'd brought it the night before, and accidentally a friend of mine, Chris, one of the boys who sang with me, broke it, and the top piece came off of it, but he was scared to tell me – he was horrified, he went home and he couldn't sleep. But he did bring it in the garbage bag like that. So I laughed.

Graham has a very good attitude about the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. My father would have the same attitude. Unfortunately I do not have a good attitude about the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and you can say this. It was a dubious honour – in that they held me out conspicuously for three years. To go, Oh, thank you, thank you – I mean, having conspicuously ostracised me for a few projects, how can I be gracious, really?

And the other complaint that I had is that it was gonna cost about 20 grand to take my family – that they charge, and they get a free concert out of you. It's exploitative, I'm sorry. Brian calls it the Hall of Shame, and in a certain way I think it is. It's mercenary, and they're putting everybody in – so the honour is dubious on that level. It's not really rarefied. The best records don't make that record of the year, the best records do not win the Grammys. The best do not win, so all this is is perpetuating the falseness of the victors, you know? It's not correcting history as it should be. There's a lot that's in there that's great, but...

When you get these accolades do you feel, good, you deserve it? Embarrassed? Too little too late? Or who cares – it's meaningless because the best things are never recognised?

Every one was different. Most of them fell short of honouring me. If I'm truly honoured, I should be humbled, and most of them made me arrogant, because they didn't seem to know why they were putting me across, only that they should. And yeah, that kind of ticked me off. And then there were tailgaters too – people rubbing up and taking credit for things more than they're deserving of, and that's always



Awards with (top) Eddie Van Halen and Emmylou Harris; above, Peter Gabriel; right, two Grammys.

← annoying too. And again my depth gets in the way. Because I know Graham just has a straight-ahead healthy attitude that it's an honour to be in there. And you know, coming from Manchester or whatever – I come from Saskatoon. It's more of a boondocky place than Manchester, really, although it is the centre of the North American continent, pretty much. It can have that claim to fame, I guess...

Yeah, I'm a deep thinker, so I thought a lot, What is honour? I think about things like that. The Governor General award – the Governor General truly honoured me, and I blushed like a school-girl when he gave me that award. And it was very sweet, and it was kind of private, I don't need to repeat what he said. But I enjoyed that, but the applause was way too long and he kept saying, "Get back up and take it."

I don't really like a lot of applause. I'm not a natural performer, you know. I'm kind of ambiverted, in that I have hambone – I have enough ham to get up there, and enough introvert to be the writer. But of the two, I have no need to perform like a lot of performing animals do. Some people are just performing animals and need that, and don't feel comfortable anyplace else. But I feel very comfortable – well, Geffen said it years ago, he said, you're the only star I ever met that wanted to be ordinary.

I was always a star. I'm not one of those kids that had a bad high school life. I was always invited to the pretty kids – the doors were opened to the things that most people come to this business wanting. But I always chose my friends – my mother said, "You have the weirdest friends," but I chose them with my heart.

I enjoy the car jockeys down here, you know – one guy brings the cars in like a matador – I enjoy village life, let's say that. This is my small town here; I know the shopkeepers and I tease them. I like that, I'm a small town person.

Celebrity takes all of that away from you in a certain way. There's a tremendous pocket of adjustment where you either take drugs or kill yourself or something. You say you're not gonna change, but everything around you changes, and you eventually have to change. Everybody goes through that awful period. I'm kind of used to it, I'm comfortable with my celebrity, but I don't think anything much of it. But I'm like a mother about my art. I know what's good about it, what's exceptional about it, what's unique about it; I don't like it being compared to things that aren't unique. So that makes me seem kind of salty or rivalrous.

I love making music. There's still plenty to discover. I haven't hybrid all my interests yet. There's Cab Calloway started appearing in some of the music, there's many things that I've enjoyed, the crooning era, that – I'm going to make a record of '40s music to get that out of my system, so that lies ahead of me, the thrill with that big orchestra.

It's the business I don't like, the pigeonholing I don't like, the pitting me against every female that comes along, favourably and unfavourably. That I've had to do because there weren't that many women in the business. I don't like the idea that they make us both put on the gloves, they prod one of them until they say something snotty about me, then

hit me over the head with the snotty thing that they said, then get a rise out of me and start these artificial catfights.

Rather than thinking of me as a bitter old fogey, like the young press would like to do, if they thought about it as a mature artist, if it was the old guild system, it would be respected that I knew something, and that maybe my criticisms of these people who outsell me 20 to one, so they really are creating more public interest... but there are things, habits that they have gotten into, that aren't great art. False coming in the vocals, whining.

The '40s singers smiled and were elegant, they were drinking and having a high time, they really were more adult, there was a more graceful suffering going on. My generation was a generation of screamers, we were screaming over mountains of amplifiers – not myself per se (*laughs*), I was the only one on with an acoustic guitar, surrounded by The Who's amplifiers, usually (*laughs*). But generally speaking, my generation was screaming over loud electrical impulses, right? And their faces were all contorted, and they were railing, but this next generation has a general tone – they're whiners. I think of Noel Coward: "What's going to happen to the children when there are no more grown-ups/Wot-wot-wot's going to happen to the tots." They're not growing up this generation, somehow, and they're malformed in a real insipid way, like blaming. And whining. And I just wish they had more character in general. And the over-sexed part of it all, and the guns, you know – it's a degenerate era in the history of music.

But then there are things like the Lilith Fair...

I've been invited to play.

Are you going to?

Um, I'm contemplating. It was out of the question because I just didn't want to play, last year. This year I've had a taste of it and I had some enjoyment. I got sick out

on this little tour, so I had to do three concerts in the state of delirium, but I managed to stay on my feet, so it was a mixed pleasure. In spite of the illness, I enjoyed myself.

But in light of what you were saying before about false comparisons – because you're all women, say...

Yeah, I'm sick of being lumped in with the women. Laura Nyro you can lump me in with, because Laura exerted an influence on me. I looked to her and took some direction from her. On account of her I started playing piano again. Some of the things she did was very fresh. Hers was a hybrid of black pop singers – Motown singers – and Broadway musicals, and I like some things also from both those camps.

That record *New York Tendaberry*...

Beautiful record, beautiful. I love Edith Piaf and I love Billie Holiday, but there's no one of that stature among this crop that's come up... would you help with this? Because otherwise I'm gonna spend this whole press tour with them pinning me, and me having to deflect – Well, it's nice. Because some of it, it's like culture.

Like if you look at children's toys.



Joni's turntable favourites: (from top) Noel Coward, Edith Piaf, Charles Mingus, Billie Holiday, Laura Nyro.

Corbis, Michael Ochs Archives, Reira, Michael Ochs Archives, Corbis, Corbis-Bettman/UP, Steve Kagan/Gamma Liaison, Corbis

I have a grandson now. Toys are supposed to teach a child the culture. It's frightening to see these killer crushers, the destructive nature of the toys they're exposed to, the violent nature of the toys. This is very bad for culture. Now art can reflect culture or it can deflect culture. I took the stance to sort through my own bullshit and *meshuga*, so to speak, for something that was useful to me – my own silver linings. If you could describe the quandary you were in accurately, with some saving grace, so that it was worth it to them to suffer with you, or suffer with the character you're playing – like a good play it had some illumination to it. I don't see much illumination in the work that's coming up.

Could you give me an example of the first case?

Whose work in particular?

Yours or anyone else's.

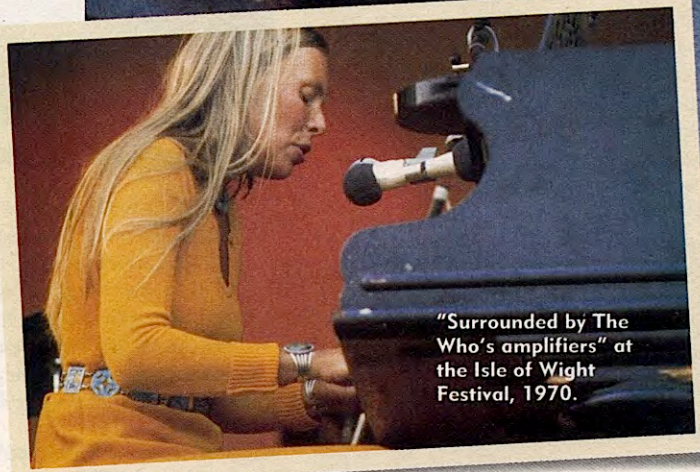
Well, you'd have to ask different people. For different people it's different things. [The new lyric] "happiness is the best facelift", for instance. I said that to my boyfriend one day, and he said write that down – or it would've gone up into the air, you know? I think that's a useful phrase.

I got a letter from a guy once who had broken up with his wife. She had had an affair and he hadn't – they were about to get back together, and he couldn't forgive her. And he was putting together a tape of everything they were listening to when they were courting – and they were going to the lake of their courtship. And he said, the funny thing was when they were going together I was her music, and he was putting all of his music and her music together. But in the final wash, the only thing that was keeping him from blowing this relationship, because he was so mad at her, was "you can't find your goodness because you've lost your heart". And it was that line that was going over and over in his head, so that he didn't just tell her off when she got to the door – "You had an affair and I didn't" (*laughs*) – and blow the whole thing that he was attempting to set up.

People are always telling me that I saved their life or I changed their life. And lately I've taken to saying, How? Because I have a funny look on my face, they go, "Oh, you hear that so much." And I say, No, the funny look on my face is because I'm wondering, How? Well they always pull a different line. Some of them I wouldn't even think had that kind of power, but it's a little phrase stuck in there somewhere that was just the thing they needed to keep from drowning at a certain moment. I think you'd find it would be different things for different people.

When I see contemporary songs quoted by contemporary music critics, they say, "This is a great lyric," and they'll isolate a line, and I'll think, What's great about that? There's no nourishment in that line. There's not even alliteration or linguistic colour, you know? "Everybody's gay." You know – it's a statement, but there's no art. I mean, OK, am I missing something, is it minimalism here? Is it Barnett Newman? Is it all distilled down to its simplest essence and therefore

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"Surrounded by The Who's amplifiers" at the Isle of Wight Festival, 1970.

it's valid? Or do people just not know how to express themselves very well? Are they not thinking? Have they been praised too much in the school system,

because the school system changed because they didn't want to give them an inferiority complex? So they gave them an A when they really shouldn't have had one? So they think that's good, and now everybody thinks that's good? I mean, the standards have just dropped so far from Dickens, so far from Kipling. These are masterful thinkers and writers, rich in character...

If someone new emerged today and wrote songs with as much depth and meaning as, say, the material you wrote in the '60s, would there be – in marketplace terms – even an audience for them – one that wasn't tied to some weird nostalgia? ➔

← It seems like all we left this generation was shock value. And they're very, very concerned about bodily excretions, in terms of their art and what they say. It seems like that's all we left them or something. I heard, there's a new singer-songwriter – you might know who this is – someone was touting, "Oh, this great new singer-songwriter," and he's got a line, "Strap on the dildo, honey, I want to get fucked in the ass tonight," or something.

I was listening to Noel Coward last night – incredible, incredible craft, incredible wit, incredible social commentary with humour. Stylistically, the language is a bit more formal than certainly this generation would understand. But beautiful and correct, and internal rhyme, and so much skill and so much to say without being heavy. I think that's what happened to Bob and I: not to take a poke at drama and the dramatic song, because it's important, and Piaf was one of my first childhood heroes – but I know within the context of my generation I was considered much too dramatic for most people's tastes.

What was the stereotype or misperception about you that bothered you the most?

I guess "that folk singer". Because it's so ignorant. The only thing I've taken from folk music in my art since I began to record is the long lines of the folk songs, to give you the space to put some text to it. A longer line than, "Embrace me, da-dah-dah." [Larry] Klein, from time to time, would provide me with the melody with short lines, and I'd say, Oh, let me parquet words to that just for the exercise, like the Jimmy Swaggart piece, Tax Free. Tax Free had really short, little lines, and I chose to collaborate with him on that just for the challenge – "Front rooms/Back rooms/Slide into tables/Crow into bathrooms." But generally, "I picked the morning paper off the floor," that's long folk-line singing.

But my chords – nobody in the coffeehouses ever played chords like those. And they're not jazz chords either. Wayne Shorter came in on – what song was it? Ethiopia? – and he said, "What are these chords? These are not piano chords and these are not guitar chords – what are these chords?" And he waded into it like a champ. But harmonically speaking, I'm in my own kind of world.

Did you expect your audience to grow along with you?

I'd hoped. I didn't expect anything. One would hope that it would find an audience.

Do you feel that it has?

It's hard to say, because the last 20 years I've had no record company support, no radio support – the marketplace has been denied me, so I think a lot of those records, there's a bigger audience for it than it received. *Chalk Mark In A Rainstorm* really deserves a big audience, as big as anything the contemporary females have. It's not difficult music. I was disappointed that the company couldn't somehow or other – I was disappointed in the industry at large, that had closed me out from the marketplace, so to speak, that no one would allow me the normal venues that are open to announce that you have product out, with pride. Or that nobody saw. Except Janet Jackson saw it – and she touted it in her interview.

Was that a good thing for you?

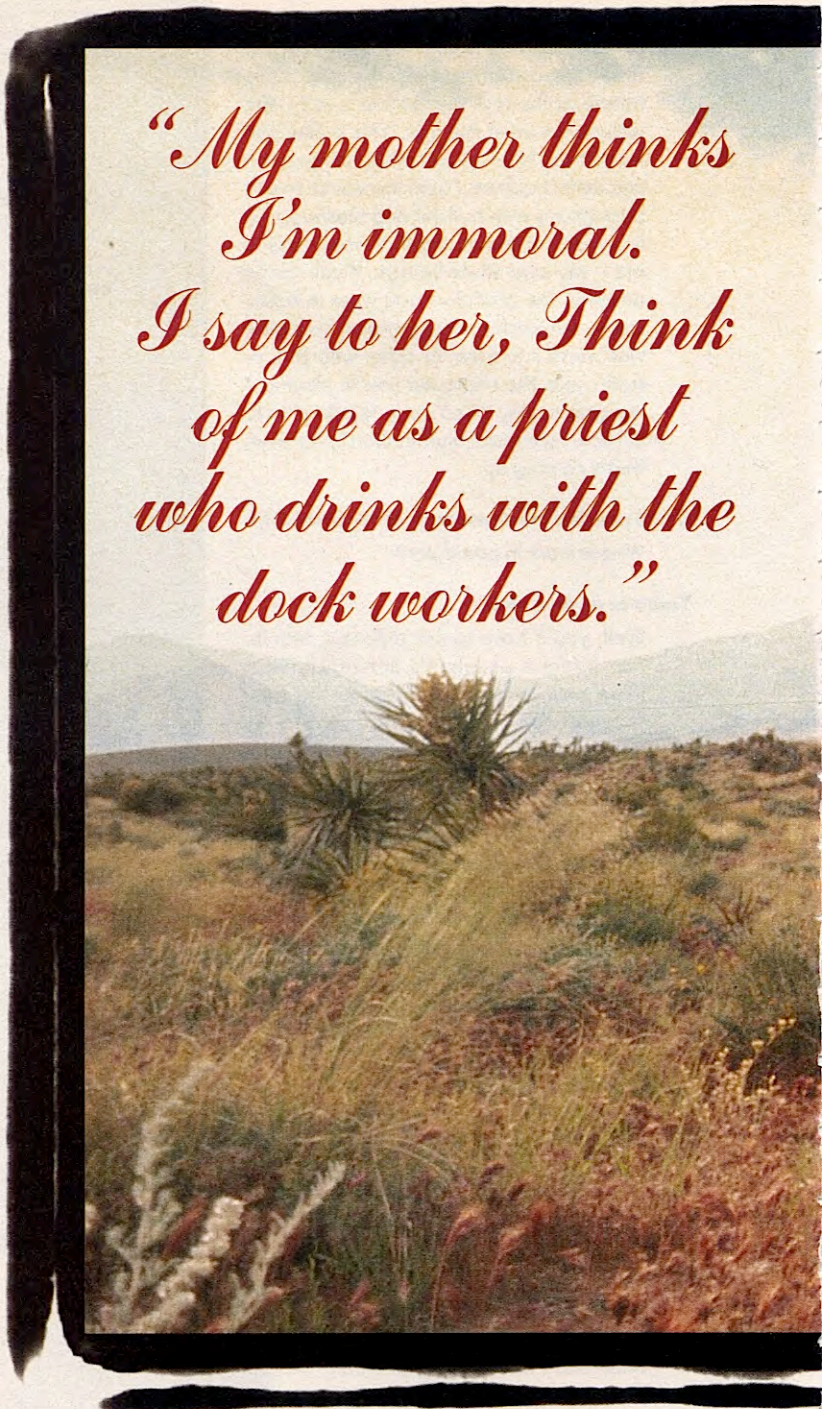
Yeah, that was – the best review I got for that record was from Janet Jackson. Yeah. And it really pleased me, it touched me.

Do you think the market access you're talking about is more a function of age or sex?

Both. It's more than that. I'm a long distance runner. Miles was a long distance runner. And I'd have to look up his birthdate, but there was always that restlessness to never rest on your laurels and become a human jukebox. Miles, to the end, was moving forward, still searching and exploring, like Picasso. I belong to that restless camp, you know. Not everybody does. Probably because of the stars, something as simple as that – the moment you popped out (*laughs*). Go figure.

But the industry, to answer your question more tersely, is basically designed to make of you something disposable. That's the way mercantilism in America works. And they get the new improved version of the product. The attention span in this country is shorter, I think, than most. In other countries, if something's good, they're loyal

"My mother thinks I'm immoral. I say to her, Think of me as a priest who drinks with the dock workers."



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Another aspect in which you're sort of an uncelebrated pioneer is that in the early '70s it seemed like your private life was the subject of some discussion – but it's nothing compared to what's happening now to people selling 10 million copies of each album. We're so familiar with every aspect of their lives through the media, it's as if they've given over their privacy as part of the deal.

It's become like movie stars. I wrote a poem when I was 16. Having written this poem, why am I in this business? But we had to write a poem, right? It was supposed to be blank verse. So I was getting my hair done for some kind of prom deal, because that's the only time we'd go to the beauty parlour in those days. And I was sitting under the dryer, and they had stacks of movie star magazines. The reigning deities, the teenage idols at that time, were Sandra Dee and Bobby Darin, who were newly married. So the tabloids were full of the mis-



adventures of their marriage. And I just felt so bad for them. And I remember thinking to myself, If somebody wrote this about me in the school paper, I would just *die*. So that's what triggered this poem that had to be turned in for assignment. It was called The Fishbowl:

The Fishbowl is a world reversed
Where fishermen with hooks
That dangle from the bottom up
Reel down their catch without a fight
Pike, pickerel bass, the common fish
Ogle through distorting glass
See only glitter, glamour, gaiety
Fog up the bowl with lusty breath
Lunge towards the bait and miss
And weep for fortunes lost
Envy the goldfish? Why?
His bubbles breaking 'round the rim
While silly fishes faint for him
And say, "Look there!
I think he winked his eye at me."

How could you end up in show business with that insight, you know? Because I knew it was a trade-off. Blessedly, when I entered

into it, there was this brief time when it was viewed as collaborative – because our generation was all in it together – and you were even given the luxury of correcting an interview such as this.

I did an interview with Cameron Crowe and he was allowed – it was before it was them and us, the critic and the artist. I forget what's it's called – a *blow job*, isn't it? – when you write a nice thing about an artist or something. It didn't used to be like that. And people were allowed to write about an artist that they liked, and say nice things. Anyway, Cameron came back with the piece, and I read it over and I said, Oh gee, I didn't really explain this very well – I missed a part, and put in this and this and this. And he said, "Well, Joni, you said that, but I took it out." I said, OK, don't edit me internally – you have to pick your favourite paragraph, because if you take it out in the middle, it's not going to make any sense, because it's such a convoluted thing.

So anyway, he was still living at home at the time. And he'd written a piece about Neil Young, who he adored, and he read it to his mother, whose opinion he valued. And his mother said, "Cameron – why would you write a thing like this? You love Neil Young." And he realised then that peer-group pressure among writers had caused him to put in some, I don't know, cynical or snotty things about this artist who he simply adored. That's when it began to shift. ➔

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to it. But here, good or not, people get off at a certain point. It's because we're trained – even more so than ever, this batch of babies coming up with the TV – to fear not to be hip. Well hip is a herd mentality, so anything too adventuresome, people are afraid to be the first, or they'll stick out too much. And usually anything that's innovative is not hip, and the copycat gets it all. Once they've heard it the second time, the copier gets the mass approval, because it's kind of familiar by that time. It's been run past them once already.

Another aspect in which you're sort of an uncelebrated pioneer is that in the early '70s it seemed like your private life was the subject of some discussion – but it's nothing compared to what's happening now to people selling 10 million copies of each album. We're so familiar with every aspect of their lives through the media, it's as if they've given over their privacy as part of the deal.

It's become like movie stars. I wrote a poem when I was 16. Having written this poem, why am I in this business? But we had to write a poem, right? It was supposed to be blank verse. So I was getting my hair done for some kind of prom deal, because that's the only time we'd go to the beauty parlour in those days. And I was sitting under the dryer, and they had stacks of movie star magazines. The reigning deities, the teenage idols at that time, were Sandra Dee and Bobby Darin, who were newly married. So the tabloids were full of the mis-

adventures of their marriage. And I just felt so bad for them. And I remember thinking to myself, If somebody wrote this about me in the school paper, I would just die. So that's what triggered this poem that had to be turned in for assignment. It was called *The Fishbowl*:

The Fishbowl is a world reversed
Where fishermen with hooks
That dangle from the bottom up
Reel down their catch without a fight
Pike, pickerel bass, the common fish
Ogle through distorting glass
See only glitter, glamour, gaiety
Fog up the bowl with lusty breath
Lunge towards the bait and miss
And weep for fortunes lost
Envy the goldfish? Why?
His bubbles breaking 'round the rim
While silly fishes faint for him
And say, "Look there!
I think he winked his eye at me."

How could you end up in show business with that insight, you know? Because I knew it was a trade-off. Blessedly, when I entered

into it, there was this brief time when it was viewed as collaborative – because our generation was all in it together – and you were even given the luxury of correcting an interview such as this.

I did an interview with Cameron Crowe and he was allowed – it was before it was them and us, the critic and the artist. I forget what it's called – a *blow job*, isn't it? – when you write a nice thing about an artist or something. It didn't used to be like that. And people were allowed to write about an artist that they liked, and say nice things. Anyway, Cameron came back with the piece, and I read it over and I said, Oh gee, I didn't really explain this very well – I missed a part, and put in this and this and this. And he said, "Well, Joni, you said that, but I took it out." I said, OK, don't edit me internally – you have to pick your favourite paragraph, because if you take it out in the middle, it's not going to make any sense, because it's such a convoluted thing.

So anyway, he was still living at home at the time. And he'd written a piece about Neil Young, who he adored, and he read it to his mother, whose opinion he valued. And his mother said, "Cameron – why would you write a thing like this? You love Neil Young." And he realised then that peer-group pressure among writers had caused him to put in some, I don't know, cynical or snotty things about this artist who he simply adored. That's when it began to shift.

Henry Diltz

◀ **Do you think the new artists who sell 10 million records have their own sense of community in the us-versus-them sense, or is it a different scenario altogether?**

No – this generation seems to be the most celebrity-loving, celebrity-hating generation that ever lived. And nobody wants to do the mundane job. In my parents' generation, you got a job and you kept it. My father wanted to be a lawyer, but he was a grocery clerk and then the store manager. You got a job no matter what your dream job was. That was your dream job. Then my generation, which was a more affluent generation – no war to deal with, no Great Depression to deal with – saw through and became very critical of the powers that be.

I don't know whether that's good or bad – like certainly the dope wars of Vietnam, the transparency of that, did not deserve the thwarting of the boys coming home. I used to play in Fort Bragg to soldiers, like Bob Hope. I figured I don't care whether it's an unjust war or not, soldiers need singers. So I disagreed with my own generation. I wasn't really of my own generation either. I wasn't an anarchist, I wasn't a nihilist – I never really could find my politics.

The only thing from the hippy thing that I believed in, that I saw evidence of, the only positive thing that I carry on to this day, is the Rainbow Coalition. There we were, white middle-class kids, but we were treated like a grungy minority, and we got a taste of prejudice, which I thought was very healthy and should give us the empathy for all peoples, an insight that no other generation had. The other generations were very apartheid; my parents tried to teach me their ways, which were too narrow for me. Anything different was feared. To me, anything different was compelling and something to explore.

On that level, how was it for you upon being reacquainted with your daughter Kilauren – has she turned out the way you thought a young woman of her generation might?

Her adoptive parents are very like my parents, so her rebellion – I think, and I'm just getting to know her, it's only been a year – is quite similar to my own. I was difficult to raise in my teens, and she was too. Both of us wanted to stretch out and see the world. She took off at 14 with her brother as a chaperone, and modelled quite extensively, 'til 27, all around the world. And she's going through a second rebellion as we speak, you know against me, trying to shock me. Well it's harder to shock me than it was the kids, because they're more like my parents, you know? I loved the experience, everything, with the difficulty and all. We'll be fine. But it's an odd situation and there's much that has to be worked through. So I'm going on Saturday to see her. We had a bit of an awkward encounter, and then we had a beautiful encounter, so we're going through everything intensely in a short space of time. But yeah, there are a lot of things.

Surprisingly, there's less of a gap than there was between my mother and I. My mother thinks I'm *immoral*. I've searched diligently for a morality that applied to the times that I lived in. I keep saying to my mother, Think of me as a Catholic priest that drinks a little with the dock workers (*laughs*). I just don't want to get that *clean*.

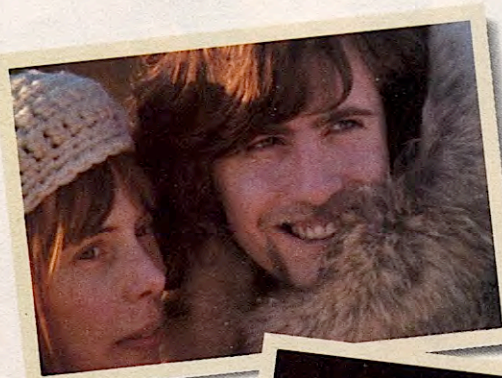
Did she hear Facelift?

Yeah.

What did she think?

I think she's getting used to it. I keep saying, It's not our song, Mum, any

Other halves: (from top) Graham Nash, boyfriend Donald and (now former) husband Larry Klein, 1989.



more, this is so many people's story. This is a story of mothers and daughters; I can say now that I have my own back. There are bad Christmases from time to time. There's a big moral breach. Before I was separated from my husband, my mother introduced us to the man who later became my boyfriend. But the divorce had not come through; as far as she was concerned I was living in sin, flaunting my Hollywood ways in their faces, in their town. Humiliating them. I said, Who am I humiliating you in front of? Your generation is all *dead*. There are no witnesses as far as I can see (*laughs*). My generation is not as intolerant of this. So that's a generation gap song. The funny part of it is, that she's 86 and I'm 55, or 50, when the song occurred.

One of the things that's marvellous to watch was Larry playing on-stage with you even now.

He begged me, "Joan, Joan, I'm jealous. You've got to take me on this tour. Who's playing bass?" I said, The seat is open, I'm not cheating on you. I played the bass myself on this last record, but he came in and played the parts that I'd written because sonically the keyboard that I was using wasn't quite right for a couple of songs. He played the bass part that I'd already transcribed. I was really tight on this record that it be my composition all the way down the line. Klein and I always had a broad ability to relate. Great discussions – that never went away. Playing music – that never went away. I said to Donald – Donald's my boyfriend – It's not like Klein and I are out of each other's life, we're just out of each other's hair (*laughs warmly*). He said, "Write that down, that's another song."

Is it an odd thing for you – the boyfriend, the husband, and then even Graham giving you that award the other night?

They're all wonderful men, though. Graham is a sweetheart – and we didn't part with any animosity. A lot of pain – there's always pain in pulling apart. Graham needed a more traditional female. He loved me dearly, and you can see there's still a fondness and everything, but he wanted a stay-at-home wife to raise his children. And I said that I could – a rash promise I made in my youth – and then realised I couldn't. So it all worked out.

THE CONVERSATION WINDS down, and a surprisingly cool summer breeze blows, whisking lingering cigarette smoke up into the pure and oxygen-rich air of luxurious Brentwood. By any standard, this is good. And this encounter with the woman who penned *Ladies Of The Canyon* is also good, a significant step up from our first – which took place in a Los Angeles theatre in 1991 and remains a conspicuous exhibit in my own Hall of Shame. Picture this: six-foot-four writer, watching Sting's *Soul Cages* tour, crammed into a seat with his knees pressed hard up against the seat in front of him. Writer shifts in discomfort, unavoidably tugging hard at the hair of the woman sitting directly in front of him. Said woman turns around and fixes the innocent but inescapably tall hair-puller behind her with a glare as cold as a Saskatoon winter.

"I gave you a look that would curl you?" Mitchell grins. She didn't think it was so funny seven years ago.

We descend the staircase leading down from the restaurant and enter a courtyard filled with luxury stores, designer fashion shops, and Brentwood car jockeys who bring very expensive cars in like matadors. And in this paved paradise, can you guess where they keep them? ■

