

8 Part IV—Tues., June 29, 1971 Los Angeles Times ★

ROBERT HILBURN

# Joni Mitchell's Bid for Top Album

In a year in which three of the leading candidates for the list of 10 best albums have been by women—Janis Joplin's "Pearl," Carole King's "Tapestry" and Carly Simon's debut album—Joni Mitchell's "Blue" (Reprise MS 2038) adds a strong fourth. The album is a marvelously sensitive portrait of love and romance, from the times of semi-desperation and regret to those of comfort and celebration.

Miss Mitchell, whose best known songs include "Both Sides Now" and "The Circle Game," has established herself in her past albums as a writer who has the sensitivity to pick out those important moments of a situation and/or relationship and as one who has the skills and intelligence to express those moments in fresh, lasting ways.

In "Blue," quite possibly, she uses that sensitivity and those skills more impressively than in any of her previous albums. The album's 10 songs were produced with just the right amount of restraint, limiting the instrumentation to just a touch of guitar here, a bit of piano there.

As in many of her previous songs (particularly a song like "Both Sides Now"), Miss Mitchell often combines more than one emotion or theme in a single work. "All I Want," for instance, is a multi-faceted song that speaks about her own desire for fulfillment/adventure ("Alive, alive, I want to get up and jive/I want to wreck my stockings in some juke box dive"), but ends up revealing most of that fulfillment is based on a certain kind of relationship: "All I really want our love to do/is bring out the best in me and you . . . I want to make you feel better/I want to make you feel free."

There's happiness in "My Old Man," tenderness in the poignant "Little Green," mischievousness in "Carey," regret in "This Flight Tonight," longing in "River" and a kind of shattered idealism in "The Last Time I Saw Richard." Several of the songs have one or two guest musicians (including Stephen Stills on one number, James Taylor on three and drummer Russ Kunkel on three), but it remains, more so than most albums, the highly impressive, personal work of a single artist.

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LEON RUSSELL/FORUM: There are, John Fogerty pointed out recently really two kinds of singers/writers/groups in rock music these days: those that understand rock 'n' roll and those—and 80% or more fall in this category—that merely imitate real rock 'n' roll. Leon Russell, like Fogerty himself, is one of the few who understand rock. That's why, as he showed Sunday night at the Inglewood Forum, his music is so irresistible.

Russell grew up in Oklahoma, soaking up both the country music and rhythm & blues roots that are so important in pure (as opposed to second and third generation) rock. Thus, his music, both in his own tunes like "Delta Lady" and in his interpretations of songs like Bob Dylan's "It's a Hard Rain Gonna Fall," reflects the



Joni Mitchell

rawness, the sensualness, the rhythm, the infectiousness of rock.

In addition, Russell is a superb showman, one of the all too few figures in rock whose very presence on stage causes excitement in an audience. He is not a showman in the energetic sense of a Little Richard or Mick Jagger, but in a restrained sense. His showmanship is based on manner (a little detached and mysterious), dress (he was all in white Sunday—jeans, T-shirt, shoes and socks) and pacing (teasing the audience with alternating slices of ballad and upbeat rock until he let loose with his supercharged closing numbers).

There's also, of course, a dash of sex (supplied by swaying singers Claudia Lennear and Kathi McDonald) and the steady, sure beat of Russell's band. Special note should also be made of the particularly effective lighting that was specially designed and created by Michael Shere. It included a giant top hat, similar to the type Russell often wears. An exciting, impressive show that had the audience—including George Harrison, who watched unnoticed from the side of the stage with Denry Cordell, and Raquel Welch, who sat in the regular audience—on its feet during most of the final numbers. Drummer Buddy Miles, particularly, and blues guitarist-singer Freddie King also drew good response.

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RECORDING NOTES: Tom Fogerty's first single since leaving Creedence Clearwater Revival is due any day. It's titled "Goodbye Media Man" . . . Excellent reading: Greil Marcus' long article on rock (its meaning and its audience) in the early 1970s in the June issue of Creem magazine . . . The Mamas and Papas are rehearsing new material and will return to the studio shortly to begin work on a new ABC/Dunhill album before going on a concert tour . . . Carly Simon will record her next album in Los Angeles with producer Paul Samwell-Smith (who produced Cat Stevens' "Tea for the Tillerman") . . . Procol Harum returns to the United States in July for another tour . . . Stephen Stills will tour Great Britain after his upcoming U.S. tour.

## MILTON BERLE TO PLAY NOAH IN THREE CITIES

NEW YORK (UPI)—While Danny Kaye continues to hold forth on Broadway in Richard Rodgers' "Two by Two" musical, another veteran comedian, Milton Berle, will be playing the pivotal role of Noah in the Midwest.

Berle is scheduled to cope with the Great Flood at the Municipal Opera in St. Louis Aug. 2-8, at the Summer Music Hall in Dallas Aug. 10-22 and at the Starlight Theater in Kansas City Aug. 23-5.

Comedienne Joan Rivers, whose talents have re-

play she helped write.

Producer Zef Bufman, currently represented here by "Story Theater" and "The Metamorphoses" at the Ambassador Theater, has contracted to present "My Son-in-Law Knows Zubin Mehta," the joint work of Miss Rivers, Lester Kolodny and Edgar Rosenberg, a television producer who is Miss Rivers' husband.

Miss Rivers will have a leading role.

### "The Beguiled" Due

"The Beguiled," starring