

HERE'S TO JONI Tribute concert honours Mitchell

*New Yorkers fete
singer's jazz period.*

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While many north of the 49th parallel spend Canada Day paying tribute to a bunch of dead white guys who made a nation, a couple dozen musicians will spend tomorrow night in Central Park singing the praises of a more modern Canadian hero. Joe Jackson, Chaka Khan, Jane Siberry, Holly Cole, P.M. Dawn, Duncan Sheik, and more than 20 others will take the stage for Joni's Jazz, a tribute concert designed to examine Joni Mitchell's 1970s "jazz period."



Joni Mitchell.

Among the highlights will be a performance of the complete 1976 album, *Hejira*, which Rolling Stone contributing editor Anthony DeCurtis, in liner notes written for the concert, deems "an extraordinary album . . . profound," and "powerfully emotional."

Mitchell herself probably won't be there, since she is anticipating the imminent birth of her grandchild.

"Everybody in this show is a monstrous fan," concert producer Danny Kapilian said. "We have just about all musical genres represented here — jazz, folk, avant-garde, hip-hop, soul — which proves how broad and deep Joni's music is. There were only two truly brilliant female artists in the 40-year history of rock and soul music, and those are Aretha Franklin and **Joni Mitchell.**"

"Every great artist has a peak period in their career, and for Joni it was her jazz period, the seven albums from *Blue* to *For The Roses*," Kapilian said.

In making those albums — which also included *Court and Spark*, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*, *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*, *Hejira* and *Mingus* — Mitchell drew on the talents of up-and-coming jazz musicians, including Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, and Jaco Pastorius.

"The jazz period was the most obviously daring period of her career thus far," DeCurtis said.

Please see **MITCHELL** on page C3

Mitchell paved way for female artists

MITCHELL from page C1

"It's something that was so unpredictable that its effects are still being felt today."

The concert is the latest public recognition of Mitchell's influence on a generation of artists, a process that seems to have started with her double-Grammy win for 1994's *Turbulent Indigo*. Artists as varied as Prince, Paul Westerberg, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, and the opera singer Renee Fleming have cited Mitchell as a formative influence. Many see the current crop of female singer-songwriters, including Alanis Morissette, Jewel, Suzanne Vega, Fiona Apple and Sarah McLachlan, as direct beneficiaries of Mitchell's groundbreaking musical efforts in the 1970s.

"She is finally getting attention that is long overdue, partially because of the current fashionable interest in women singer-songwriters," DeCurtis said.

Since the Grammy wins, the 55-year-old Mitchell has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; played at the 29th anniversary celebration of Woodstock last year; toured with Van Morrison and Bob Dylan and, most recently, has been the subject of a tribute album, this spring's *Jazz Takes On Joni Mitchell* by pianist David Lahm.

She has also been the subject of a unique tribute by New York performance artist John Kelly, who plays the singer-songwriter in drag in his popular cabaret show *Paved Paradise*, a revue of Mitchell's music. Kelly will perform two songs at tomorrow night's tribute, although he won't be in drag.

"She gave birth to that song-as-soliloquy genre," Kelly said, musing about her significance. "She gave it a depth and consistent autobiographical take. There is a lyricism in her music and a wanderlust that is very sexy and exotic, but it is the impact of the words and the music and the honesty she has that is so strong. She has spent her life trying to see what is going on in her heart."