

Bette Midler: A Now Woman

By LORAIN ALTERMAN

There are superstars and there are stars. In an age when any flashy rock and roller who captures the public's imagination for fifteen minutes is instantly dubbed a superstar, Bette Midler is a star. And the constellation she moves in sparkles with names like Bette Davis, Judy Garland, Joan Crawford and Aretha Franklin — women whose originality raises them above the rest of the cluster and continues to shine more brilliantly through the years. Miss M may be just at the beginning of her journey, but already her talent and style and wit transcend any easy categorization.

But the way to becoming the most glamorous and exciting new entertainer on the scene wasn't easy for the girl from Hawaii and part of the problem had to do with the way society conditions women. As Bette puts it: "I think women are taught from the time they are born to fear certain things, to fear not being married, to fear not being beautiful in the way society tells them that they should be. That's the way it was with me. Identity is a peculiar thing. Sometimes I don't know anymore who I am. I used to be Bette Midler and now I am the Divine Miss M. When people don't know the Divine Miss M, when they only meet Bette Midler and they don't know what she does for a living or what books she reads or programs she watches or food she eats or friends she has — when they don't know who I am all they see is this person, this face. Like one writer said that I looked like the kind of girl who wouldn't be asked out on a Saturday night. And that's very very funny. I was amused

Shirley Bassey: Audience Contact The Key

Shirley Bassey has the following advice for women trying to break into show business: "Find yourself first . . . accustom yourself to performing before an audience . . . apprenticing in live shows, a sort of vaudeville, prepares you for success . . . many artists have a big record hit and then don't know how to cope with the success that follows . . ." Miss Bassey compared this advice to her own experience when her recording of the title song from the James Bond flick "Goldfinger" catapulted her into an international star. She knew that to maintain this success she had to get in front of audiences so they could connect the voice with the person. She credits this advice for contributing substantially to her established career.

by it but I was also taken aback by it because I suppose it's very true. When people meet me for the first time, especially if I'm not dressed up or don't have any goo on my face, they're not interested in knowing me.

"Most people in our country aren't interested in knowing you if you're not one of the beautiful people, or if you don't have money. I suppose when I first started with this whole thing it was so that I would be asked out on Saturday night — now I'm too tired to go. I don't really care. I am content to be with people who don't care that I don't have any makeup on and that's what you have to

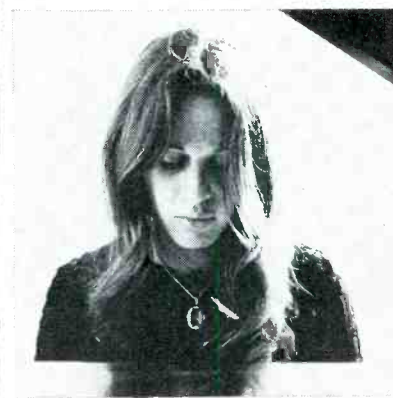
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Female Songwriters

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stand on their own merits, being adaptable to other performers and styles of presentation. The number of really competent song writers may not be large, but a good many of these writers are women.

Carole King's (Ode) first hit composition was "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow," recorded by the Shirelles, and a current King discography lists over 50 recorded versions of the classic since that time. The discography enumerates 80 other songs written by King, and among them are some of anyone's favorite tunes — songs that all-too-often were identified with the performer rather



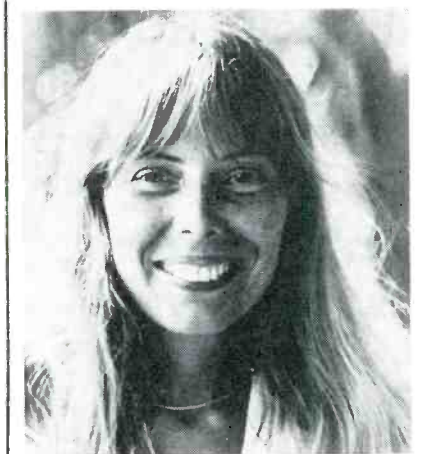
CAROLE KING: Co-author of some of the biggest songs of the '60s, her emergence as a recording star has not diminished her status as one of the best songwriters of the current era.

than the author. The now-legendary list includes Aretha Franklin's "Natural Woman," "The Locomotion" of Little Eva, the Drifters' "Up On The Roof," "Go Away Little Girl" sung by Steve Lawrence, "For Once In My Life," performed by the Righteous Brothers, the Byrds' "Wasn't Born To Follow," as well as newer songs performed by Ms. King herself, such as "You've Got a Friend" and "So Far Away." While she concentrated on melody in most of her earlier collaborative efforts, King now writes most of her own lyrics as well. In this she demonstrates the same meticulous craftsmanship (craftswoman-ship?) that has always graced her tunes, and her simple, direct lyrics reveal a maturity and worldliness tempered with just enough of the romanticism from her rock and roll days.

For one who began writing for others, King has made a completely successful transition to more personal statements about the loneliness of a traveling life and the demands of constant creativity. But her music is still perfectly

adaptable to other interpretations as evidenced by the fact that so many cover versions of her newer songs have achieved the same levels of success as during the days of collaborative writing.

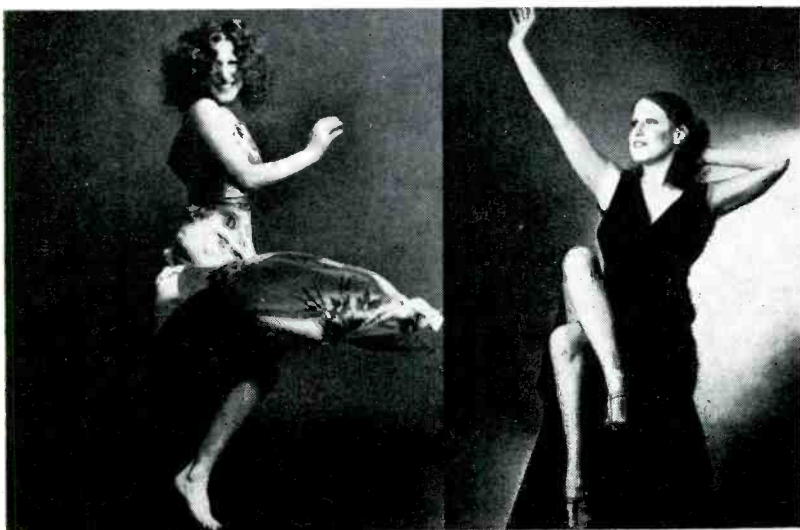
Joni Mitchell (Asylum) gained attention as a songwriter before her own performances were recorded, through frequent exposure on albums by Tom Rush and Judy Collins. When the public finally heard Ms. Mitchell perform her own songs, and discovered that her exciting visual and tactile lyrics were more than matched by an equally spectacular voice, she was an immediate sensation. Her early works fell within the realm of folk songs, and some of these songs are now virtual folk standards, such as "The Circle Game" and "Urge For Going." The latter tune has never been recorded by Mitchell herself, but is one of her best known and most recorded songs. Songs like "Clouds" and "Chelsea Morning" helped win wider exposure for Mitchell, and her reputation as a performer has grown mightily in more recent years. Her songwriting has developed along totally original lines, though her extremely inventive and unusual melody lines and lyrical images ("You Turn Me On I'm A Radio") have not become at all inaccessible. Of the many artists, male or female, writing today, Joni Mitchell can make one of the strongest claims to genius.



JONI MITCHELL: She uses words as if they were colors on an artist's palette, and her songs are infused with her unique personal vision.

Laura Nyro (Columbia) has had her greatest commercial successes through the recording of her songs by other performers. This is not due to any lack of performing ability on

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BETTE MIDLER: A true star with the same brilliance as Judy Garland and Aretha Franklin.