

owning a car.

LISTEN ALSO. . . with your motor nerves, and strut to Wilson Pickett's "634-5789" or the version of "Speedo" (which is this album's failure — if there can be such an animal on a Cooder lp — the Cadillac's classic original now being so hacknayed that even Cooder's playful funk cannot restore the spirit of Earl Carroll's braggadocio).

Stop. Look. But. . .

DON'T LISTEN. . . . to me anymore. There is a new Ry Cooder album afoot. Get it before it gets you.

— Neil T. Magidin

JONI MITCHELL: "Shadows and Light" (Asylum).

WHEN CLOWNTIME is over, Joni's down to the serious business. And at this, there is no one more adept than Joni Mitchell — a strange and unique figure, somehow lonely and striking, vulnerable and tough at once.

A more rigorously intellectually gifted individual writing songs doesn't exist. I knew this but had forgotten before hearing "Shadow and Light" — but successively "Coyote", "Amelia" and "Hejira" froze

me to the marrow with the force of poetic power and emotional depth. Mitchell seems cold and detached at times but that's the secret of her reservoirs of feeling: she can expose herself, scrutinise her attitudes and responses and encapsule them in metaphors that provide the springboard to real, penetrating, frightening illumination. Her grasp of language is so thorough — she plays no foolish games, she conjures perfect spellbinding images with such incisiveness it's not fair. It's staggering.

If we kept this review to a discussion of those three songs, there wouldn't be a single criticism offered. They are magical, deadly, inspired and touching. Her alchemy here is supreme, her balance of portentousness and detail near perfect.

Elsewhere she trips and slips but her voice is always magnificent. There are moments of fine music but they serve only punctuate the golden moments — this is Joni's testament.

Buy this or the album "Hejira" because these three songs are to be heard, loved, lived with, learned from. Otherwise I don't know.

She tries and fails but so do all the best. My admiration for Joni Mitchell is immense.

Niall Stokes.