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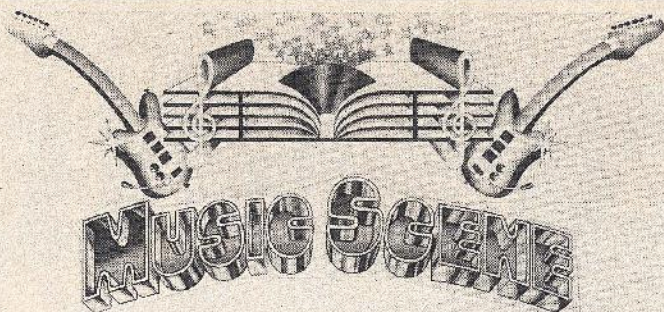
MUSIC SCENE

'74 Readers Poll Uriah Heep
10cc Roy Wood King Crimson SB&Q
Eric Clapton Black Oak Mott



Peter Owen TDR.

Rock Revival



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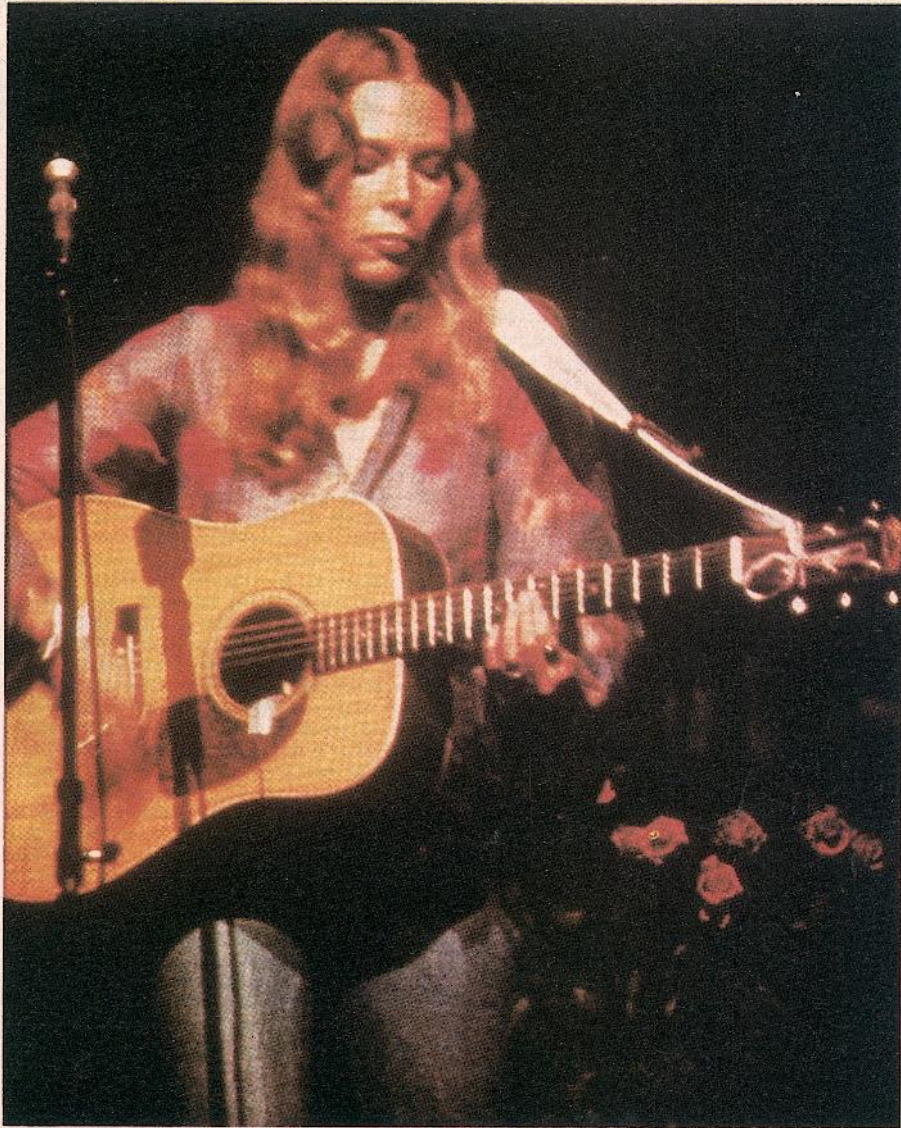
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JONI

words: Alan Clements



A TRUE story, as told to me by Al Kooper a couple of years ago. "When I was in the Blues Project, this folksinging chick had just come into town . . . she had just split from her husband and was going the rounds. She was going with the drummer in the Blues Project, who already had a lady, and it was all very messy. Well, one night she was really depressed and crying into her beer, so I went home with her and listened to her songs — I didn't want to do anything else with her because she was with the drummer, and besides, everyone had told me she was a weird chick. So anyway she played me her songs, and they were just incredible. So incredible that I phoned Judy Collins up there and then, at five in the morning, and said 'I know you've got to get up early this morning to go off to Newport, (She was on the board of directors for that year's Newport Folk Festival), but you've just got to get this girl onto the Festival . . . it's the best stuff I've heard for

years, and there's songs you could do too.' Judy was real drowsy, but she agreed and took the girl up to Newport — and that was Joni Mitchell."

Maybe that was 1967, although I'm not absolutely sure. Certainly, in that year Judy Collins recorded two of Joni Mitchell's most famous songs, "Both Sides Now" and "Michael From Mountains" while Joni was almost totally unknown. In early 1968, Tom Rush, who was at the pinnacle of his career, recorded "Tin Angel", "Urge For Going" and "The Circle Game", all songs by Joni, and he even used the last of the three as the title track of his album. Thus it was more due to the appreciation of her songs by other artists that Joni Mitchell set foot on the road to fame and popularity as one of the very best lady singers to have come from America, ranking with Joan Baez and Judy Collins.

Her own first album was released in 1968, produced by ex Byrd David Crosby, and with Stephen

JONI

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Stills playing bass, perhaps an interesting foretaste of their future together as part of Crosby, Stills and Nash (and later Young). The album doesn't seem to bear a specific title, but I've always known it was "Song For A Seagull", which is one of the fine songs on the album, along with "Michael From Mountains" and "Nathan La Raneer". In 1969 came "Clouds", which took its title for a line in "Both Sides Now", and the album also contained Joni's own versions of "Tin Angel" and "Chelsea Morning", the latter of which has become one of her most recorded songs.

In early 1970, Judy Collins single version of "Both Sides Now", having laid dormant for over a year, suddenly caught on, and qualified for the award of a silver disc for sales of 250,000 in England, and the same year Joni was one of the galaxy of stars who performed at what was arguably the greatest festival outside Woodstock, held on the Isle Of Wight.



Mention of Woodstock brings to mind Joni's song of that name, which was recorded with great success by Ian Matthews' Southern Comfort and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. Apparently Joni herself wasn't at the Woodstock event, but composed the song while listening to the festival on the radio. Her own version is on the 1970 album "Ladies Of The Canyon", along with "The Circle Game" and "Big Yellow Taxi", an ecological protest song which became a large single hit.

In 1971, came what has probably been Joni's most successful album to date, "Blue", which includes such memorable tracks as "Carey", "California", "This Flight Tonight" and "A Case Of You". On this album she was helped out in places by Stephen Stills and James Taylor, both of whom were romantically linked with her around this time, but both of whom have gone on to marry another lady singer, Veronique Sanson and Carly Simon respectively.

By the end of 1971, Joni's manager, David Geffen had started his enormously successful record label, Asylum, and it was an obvious move for Joni to leave Reprise records, where her first four albums were released, and to throw in her hand with her manager. The first result came in 1972, with "For The Roses", which seems to have been her least successful album in terms of commercial sales, but still contains what I consider to be some of her best work, as evidenced in "You Turn Me On I'm A Radio" and "Cold Blue Steel And Sweet Fire", on which track the legendary James Burton plays excellent lead guitar.

Most recently, in fact earlier this year, "Court and Spark" was released in Britain, and swiftly followed the trend set when it was released in America by zooming up the charts with impressive speed. So far, the favourite songs haven't made themselves known, although "Raised On Robbery", which was released as a single, seems to be a good contender for that "Best of Joni Mitchell" album which will inevitably be released at some point in the future. Still, there doesn't seem to be any hurry — Joni's doing very well, and in 1974, her popularity seems to have topped even the previous acclaim accorded her. And that's how it should be.

