

JULY 3, 1976  
THE **Canadian**

The Toronto Star

When every fairy  
tale comes real

Joni Mitchell  
in pictures



# THE Canadian

Canada's largest-circulation magazine

Appearing in the Vancouver Province, Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald, Medicine Hat News, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, Regina Leader-Post, Winnipeg Tribune, London Free Press, North Bay Nugget, Hamilton Spectator, Toronto Star, Ottawa Citizen, Montreal Gazette.

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## This Week

At 31, Myrna Kostash of Edmonton has been writing for seven years, always specializing. First she wrote travel articles for *Saturday Night*, while hitchhiking around continental Europe. Back in the English-speaking world she suddenly discovered Women's Liberation ("I was smitten like Paul on the road to Damascus"), began teaching Women's Studies at the University of Toronto and wrote a column for *Maclean's* during International Women's Year. ("When IWY ended, so did the column.")



Deciding to write a book, she returned to Alberta in search of a subject — "I fell in love all over again with the Ukrainian farming country around Two Hills and Hairy Hill, where my parents were teachers" — and thus found her third specialty. Myrna has no intention of specializing in politicians, despite her piece on Alberta Energy Minister Don Getty in this issue, but this study of Western vs. Eastern biases helped her realize how glad she was to be home: "I had no idea how strongly I had assumed Toronto attitudes in 10 years."

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Published by Southstar Publishers Ltd., 401 Bay St., Suite 1100, Toronto, Ont. M5H 2Y8, 416-363-7151.

Advertising Representatives: MagnaMedia Limited, Toronto address as above, 416-363-4152. Also 231 St. James St., Montreal, Que. H2Y 1M6, 514-282-2123. Second-class mail registration number 1321. ISSN 0319-5139. Indexed in the *Canadian Periodical Index*.

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### Candlelight and gore: confessions of a prize-fight vampire

The central idea in boxing is to slug the other fellow so hard his brain hits the inside of his skull and he falls down unconscious. Rules and referees exist simply to see that you do this in the correct way. Judges exist because, in those cases in which both fighters remain on their feet, someone has to decide which one came *closest* to making the other fall down unconscious. The idea is there, even when the achievement is not.

It sometimes happens that the vanquished never gets up again. This is an unfortunate incident. This is not murder. Still, it is well to remember that among fight fans — and, indeed, among the paid observers of federal politicians — it is axiomatic that contenders for the title must have "the killer instinct." The fans, in the safety of their seats, have killer instincts of their own.

I'll confess my hypocrisy about the fight game. I deplore it. It is barbaric. It is one step above cockfights, two steps above organized dogfights, three steps above the bear pit. Here we have two men, trapped by spotlights and ropes, and they're beating the bejeezus out of one another with bloodied gloves, all for the amusement of several hundred other men. Disgusting. And I can't stay away. A respectable man who's hopelessly addicted to the favors of his high-priced mistress might understand my feeling. I attend with guilt, but I attend.

This is why it was that, like a hypnotized slave obeying orders from the king of vampires, I recently made a trance-like journey to the Imperial Ballroom of the Lord Nelson Hotel in central Halifax. Never in my experience had there been a fight-night like this one. The ticket, which cost 25 measly dollars, was a tasteful, embossed invitation-card, available to only 200 of us fight connoisseurs.

The program opens with a solid hour of cocktails among the sporting gentlemen of old Halifax who have gathered to patronize an evening of amateur fisticuffs. A few wear evening clothes and there's not a windbreaker in the house. There are even some *women* here, young women dressed for a debutantes' ball in creamy evening gowns. So sweet. Ah, but dinner is served. Shall we follow Pipe Major Dutch Simms into the dining room? But of course. The room is splendid. Long tables, seating 10 or 12 each, enclose the ring in a cosy U. Four chandeliers sparkle above the scene of coming bloodshed. The floor is polished hardwood, in a parquet pattern. The snowy linen, the silver, the wine goblets are a festive array indeed. At every set-

ting there's a card that gives details of the night's offerings: food and violence.

Seafood cocktail. *Rocky Meisner*, out of *New Glasgow*. Tossed green salad. *Junior Diggs* of *Dartmouth*, a comer with a murderous bolo punch. Rolls and butter. *Cleveland Denny*, lightweight from *Montreal*, a dancer with a lot of class. Half roast chicken. *Leo Charles Pelletier* of *Eel River Crossing, N.B.*, a welterweight who can smack you good with either hand. Potato and two vegetables. *Chris Clarke* of *Halifax*, a gold medallist at the *Pan-American Games* in *Mexico*, ninth-ranked amateur lightweight in the world and, now, a *Canadian hope* at the *Olympics* in the light welterweight division. He's a southpaw, fast, strong, slick, cocky, as mean as a homet. Any dessert? Yes, rum parfait. *Carroll Morgan*, the massive *Halifax* heavyweight with a bull's neck, rib-cracking fists, and all the fighting finesse of a man who inspires sane people to climb under tables during barroom brawls. He looks as though he trains by hitching himself to farmers' ploughs to give the horses a rest. Wine with dinner? Certainly. It's red, a shade darker than blood.

The fight announcer declares: "This is not a Roman arena. If you're here



to see blood and gore, then go to hell on home." At the back of the room, a 75-year-old man replies: "Bring on the gladiators!" So they do.

Seven three-round fights, in which the skill and ferocity of the boxers pleases and surprises fans who normally pay only to see professionals cut one another up. The bar remains open. We sip our scotch at ringside as Clarke mercilessly demolishes a bleeding Halifax youth. We order a double as Morgan slams great, echoing wallops into the midsection of the Canadian amateur heavyweight champion, and sends him gasping to his knees on the royal-blue canvas. Morgan and Clarke, we agree, deserve watching at the Montreal Olympics. We also agree that, tonight, a good time was had by all.

# A Woman of Heart and Mind

In the middle of the lives of Joni Mitchell

Thirteen years ago when she was 19, she left the Alberta Prairie, following the voices of her sweet mysteries east to Toronto. And there in the thriving musical subculture of Yorkville, Joni Mitchell found room to grow alongside better-known performers Ian and Sylvia, Gordon Lightfoot, Minka and Josie.

Today, throughout the world, she is known and respected for her ability as a composer and performer. *Time* magazine recently labelled her "rock 'n' roll's leading lady... a creative force of unrivalled stature in the mercurial world of rock." And now she is celebrated in a new photo-book, *Joni Mitchell*, by Leonore Fleischer, published by Gage — a comprehensive history in pictures of her career, from which the photographs on these pages have been taken.

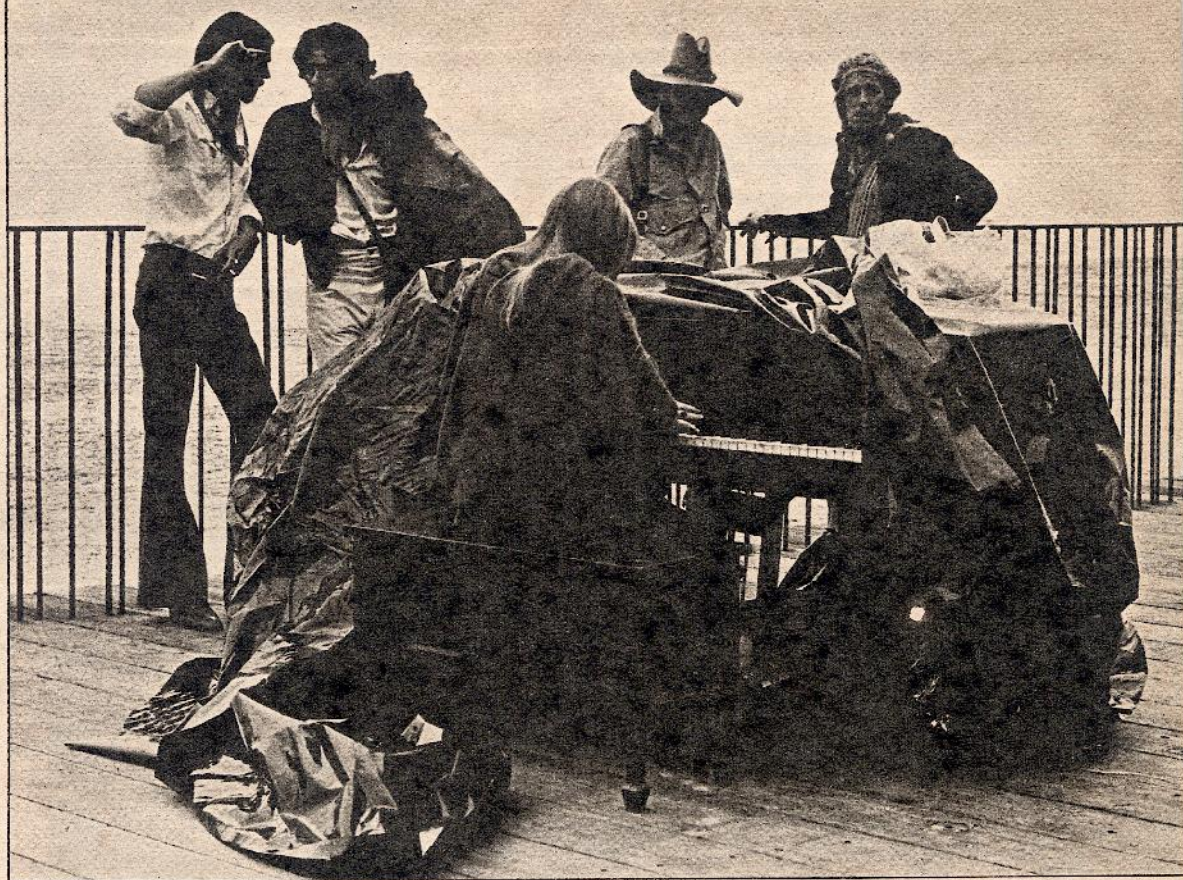
Certainly in '64, Mitchell couldn't predict her future. She only knew that music was her first love. In 1965, while singing at the Penny Farthing, a local club, she met Detroit performer Chuck Mitchell. They married that June and worked the Eastern folk circuit as a duo. She was, by then, writing all the time — and writing well.

But as she began to succeed, the marriage failed. "She knew she was beginning to happen and needed out," says her husband. More to the point, she says, "I guess the thing that bust it was when I started making more money. That hurt a lot." In '66, the Mitchells split up and Joni headed for New York.

"I always kept my goals very short," she says. "I had no idea that I would be this successful, especially since I came to folk music when it was already dying."

In New York she wrote prolifically, wandering the streets, talking to strangers for inspiration. It wasn't until she moved to California, however, that she laid down the tracks for *Song to a Seagull*, first of eight successful albums to date.

The key year was 1969 — Mitchell played festivals and toured the U.S. with Crosby, Stills and Nash, then the best band in the country. She also fell in love with band member Graham Nash, a liaison responsible for some of her finest, if also most bittersweet, songs. The relationship didn't last, but it was painstakingly analyzed in songs on several albums.



In 1969, Mitchell played the festival circuit. One stop was Monterey, California (above), where she warmed up oblivious to threatening weather. More recently she

helped a young friend with an illustration during an L.A. Express concert (below, left). Leonard Cohen influenced Mitchell's writing considerably during the early years.

"He taught me to work on the poignancy of a song," said Mitchell. The two greeted each other (below, right) at Newport in 1967.



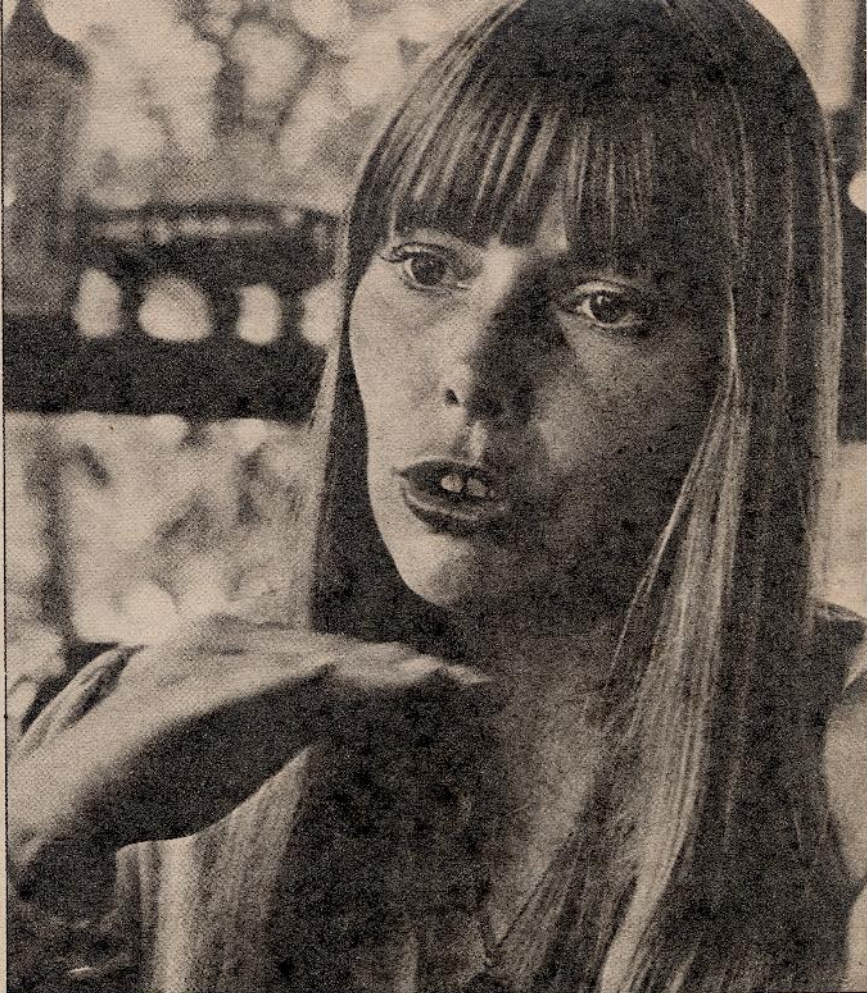
That year she spent close to 40 weeks on the road. A new celebrity, she was the object of much personal scrutiny — she was exhausted, she was tired of questions about her loves. In early 1970, the self-described “woman of heart and mind” called it quits. “I felt I never really wanted to play in front of people again. I felt like what I was writing was too personal to be applauded for.”

For a year she travelled, took stock of her success and wrote. *Blue*, *For the Roses* and *Court and Spark*, probably her most popular albums, were released after that temporary retirement, in a period of three years.

Since then, she has toured extensively, released a double album of concert material, *Miles of Aisles*, and most recently *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*.

Her material now is well away from its original folk influences, with close ties to jazz and also to rock’n’roll and ethnic music. Still the same themes arise, from an older point of view now — relationships gone sour, loneliness sprung from success, the responsibility of art. “The most important thing,” says Mitchell now, “is to write in your own blood. I bare intimate feelings because people should know how other people feel.”

Joni Mitchell is available by mail from Canadian Magazine Readers’ Service, 401 Bay St., Dept. B16, Toronto, Ont. M5H 2Y8. Write, enclosing cheque or money order and return address. Soft-bound, 80 pages, \$3.95 each, including postage and handling.



“My family consists of pieces of work that go out in the world,” Mitchell says. “Instead of hanging around for 19 years they leave the nest early.” At the end of the ‘60s she worked on her second album at home

(left) in the Laurel Canyon section of Los Angeles. An impromptu moment was shared at Monterey (below) by John Sebastian, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, Joni Mitchell and David Crosby.

