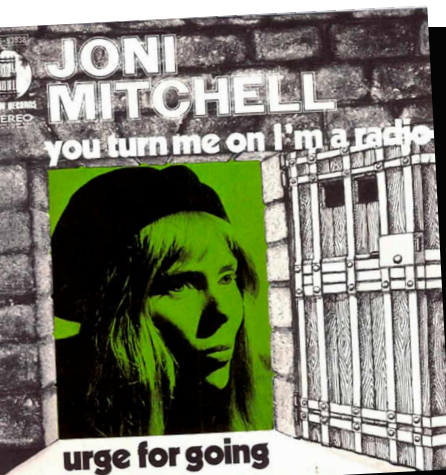


FOR THE ROSES

Words: LOIS WILSON

RELEASED: **November 21, 1972** / LABEL: **Asylum** / CHART: **- (UK) • 11 (US)**

*The overlooked link between **Blue** and **Court And Spark**, where the arrangements are augmented with woodwind and strings – and the process of healing begins.*



“It captures Joni stretching out with character studies and exploring the link between art and commerce.”





JONI MITCHELL WAS paralysed by the huge success of *Blue*. Running away from the spotlight's glare, she left Laurel Canyon for British Columbia's Sunshine Coast and holed up in a small stone house with just one room, a loft and no electricity; there she wrote the majority of songs that became *For The Roses*. Later she'd describe the period as "melancholy exile" but among the shade are shards of light – put down at A&M studios in Hollywood with producer/engineer Henry Levy, *For The Roses* is as much about survival and healing as alienation. It captures the singer-songwriter stretching out, lyrically experimenting with character studies and introducing woodwinds, reeds and strings while grasping the possibilities afforded by jazz.

Her first album for Asylum, it was not without problems but she dealt with them in her own way. When label co-founder David Geffen asked her to write a hit record for him, she came up with the derisive riposte *You Turn Me On, I'm A Radio*. Recorded with pals David Crosby, Neil Young and Graham Nash – though only the latter's raspy harmonica solo made the final mix – it backfired slightly when it actually did become her first Top 40 placing in the US (Number 25) and also her first Canadian Top 10.

She'd explore the relationship between art and commerce more fully on the title track: "Remember

the days when you used to sit/And make up your tunes for love... And now you're seen/On giant screens/And at parties for the press/And for people who have slices of you," she laments. But despite her desire to move away from intimate diarising – the social protest of *Banquet*; *Judgement Of The Moon And Stars* (Ludwig's Tune), her homage to Beethoven; *Barangrill*, where truck stop cafe becomes metaphor for enlightenment – the album is, nevertheless, filled with autobiographical insight. "You can't hold the hand of a rock'n'roll man very long," she sighs on the jazzy-folk hybrid *Blonde On The Bleachers*; likewise *Lesson In Survival* and *Woman Of Heart And Mind* carry huge emotional weight.

Best of all is *Cold Blue Steel And Sweet Fire*, undeniably one of her greatest songs, an unvarnished portrait of life with a drug addict – her then partner James Taylor, hooked on heroin. "Red water in the bathroom sink/Fever and the scum brown bowl/Blue steel still begging/But it's indistinct/Someone's hi-fi drumming Jelly Roll/Concrete concentration camp/Bashing in veins for peace," she sings over strummed guitar and woodwind, the utter despair palpable.

Issued in November 1972, it hit the Billboard chart at Number 11 and the Canadian chart at 5. Sandwiched between *Blue* and *Court And Spark*, and little appreciated in the UK at the time, it often gets overlooked; if it was by anyone else we'd call it a career best. ●

TRACKS



Side 1

Banquet
Cold Blue Steel And Sweet Fire
Barangrill
Lesson In Survival
Let The Wind Carry Me
For The Roses



Side 2

See You Sometime
Electricity
You Turn Me On, I'm A Radio
Blonde In The Bleachers
Woman Of Heart And Mind
Judgement Of The Moon And Stars (Ludwig's Tune)

Radio star:
 (opposite) Joni performs at Carnegie Hall, February 23, 1972.