



# DOWN TO YOU...

Words: TOM DOYLE

Crazy chords, unreliable beaus, jazz cats and a drunk Lennon litter the path to Joni's second great masterpiece – an intimate self-portrait and dissection of the LA scene's bacchanal, set against an exquisitely recorded and arranged musical backdrop.

Portrait: HENRY DILTZ





SITUATED JUST SOUTH of the corner of Sunset Boulevard and North La Brea Avenue in Hollywood, the A&M recording studio lot was one of the most happening spots in Los Angeles in 1973. Formerly the site of Charlie Chaplin's film studio, it had been purchased by A&M Records' Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss in '66 and quickly become one of the premier recording facilities in southern California.

"You would see everybody walking around the lot," recalls Cheech Marin, one half of stoner comedy duo Cheech & Chong, who recorded a series of albums at A&M and who would appear in a cameo skit on Joni Mitchell's pivotal sixth album, *Court And Spark*. "It was Leon Russell and The Carpenters and Joe Cocker and Joni Mitchell. We showed up and everybody would go, 'Who are these two guys recording outside in the courtyard?'"

LA in '73 was fast changing. Many of the Laurel Canyon hippy musicians were now rich and mellowing marijuana had been replaced by ego-boosting hits of cocaine, de rigueur in both the recording studios and record label boardrooms. The previous November, Carly Simon's cryptic Number 1 song *You're So Vain* had been marketed via promotional mirrors handed out to radio DJs, both to reflect the song's title and provide a handy surface for chopping out a line.

As night fell over Hollywood and the bars closed at midnight, sometimes the party moved on to A&M, where the notoriously riotous sessions for John Lennon's *Rock'n'Roll* album were taking place, overseen by a gun-packing, amyl nitrate-sniffing

Phil Spector. More than once, Joni Mitchell dropped by: one time with her new buddy Jack Nicholson, another time with Warren Beatty. Lennon's girlfriend at the time, May Pang, later recalled the ex-Beatle had bitched behind Mitchell's back that the hip actors were "Joni's trophies".

In the studio next door, Mitchell was finessing the altogether more focused *Court And Spark*. Bored and drunk, Lennon gate-crashed proceedings to offer Joni some unsolicited advice.

"I played him something," she later recalled. "[He said] 'Oh, it's all a product of over-education. You want a hit, don't you? Put some fiddles on it!'"

The irony being that at a time when Lennon was regressing to rock'n'roll first principles, Mitchell was undertaking a daring progressive leap; *Court And Spark* would be the album to transform her from confessional folk singer into the queen of LA jazz rock. In many ways, it would be just as starkly emotional as her previous landmark, 1971's *Blue*, but with its raw sentiments soothed by its rhythmically driven songs and glossy production. Here, as she vividly described in its eerie piano ballad title track, she was exploring "the city of the fallen angels": songs about deranged parties, failed therapy sessions and love-lorn Bel Air sadness.

Like Lennon, however, not everyone was buying into Mitchell's new direction. "Joni reached a point where, to my mind, she was writing about rich people," Randy Newman later told MOJO writer Barney Hoskyns. "And I lost interest."

"I can only say that you write about that which you have access to," Mitchell responded in her defence. "So, if you go from the hippy thing to more of a Gatsby community, so what? Life is short and you have an opportunity to explore as much of it as fame and fortune will allow."

In truth, Mitchell had always been ambivalent about

success. *Court And Spark* would only serve to make her even more famous. With its release, on January 17, 1974, it was to become her biggest album, hitting Number 2 in the US, going double platinum and marking the beginning of a whole new phase in her musical development.

AFTER THE COMMERCIAL triumphs of *Blue* and its predecessor, *Ladies Of The Canyon*, Joni Mitchell was left feeling exposed and vulnerable. Later, she'd lament that "they were putting me on a pedestal, and I was wobbling". She had determined to become a hermit.

Aged 29, she dropped out of the Californian music scene and disappeared into the Canadian wilderness of British Columbia, moving into what she described as "a little stone house like a monastery where I could just go away and hide." There was no electricity, only hardwood benches to sit on, not even any mirrors. Tired of public life and dedicated to this ascetic existence, she painted and wrote songs for what was to be her fifth album, *For The Roses*.

In Canada, she pondered her fame, and what she might do if she returned to face it, in characteristically poetic terms; not least in the title track of *For The Roses*, which viewed the moon as an empty spotlight and imagined the sound of the wind to be distant applause. By contrast, her newfound sense of freedom was vividly expressed by a Joel Bernstein photograph in the album's artwork: the singer shot from behind, naked on the shore.

"Norman [Seeff, photographer] took some pictures of Linda Ronstadt in her underwear," Mitchell explained in 2022 when talking to Elton John for his Apple Music show, *Rocket Hour*. "I thought, Oh God, we gotta do this? So, I decided to just be naked on my record (*laughs*). Get it over with."

When Mitchell returned to A&M studios to make *For The Roses*, the main





**Boho dance: (above) John Guerin with Mitchell at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, June 1, 1974; (opposite) John Lennon and May Pang, Century Plaza Hotel, LA, March 24 the same year.**

musical change was the overdubbing of woodwind and reeds, played by Tom Scott, a prodigious 24-year-old jazzier signed to Quincy Jones' short-lived Symbolic Records. Jones had introduced Scott to Joni's music by way of her 1969 song Woodstock, an instrumental, soprano recorder-led version of which he went on to record for his 1972 album, *Great Scott!*.

"Joni's recording engineer Henry Lewy called me one day," Scott recalls. "He said, 'Joni heard your Woodstock and asked if you'd like to participate in her record?' I said, Sure. I mean, I was a working session musician. I thought she was a folk singer. I got rid of that notion very, very quickly."

Scott was surprised to discover a songwriter with a unique and sophisticated musicality. "I was very taken with the kind of ethereal, atmospheric approach that she took," he says. "It had a very spiritual, wonderful quality. I was just blown away by this singer, songwriter, instrumentalist, whose music defied categorisation."

Scott was to be Mitchell's guide in introducing jazz elements to her songs. Although, in truth, there were already traces of the genre in her idiosyncratic style. What David Crosby had previously

termed Joni's "weird chords" – played in folk-style open tunings on acoustic guitar – left much room for harmonic manoeuvre. Mitchell applied the approach to her piano playing.

"She was sitting at the piano," Scott remembers, "and she played the classic Miles Davis So What chord, a five-note chord, in fourths. To me, it's a jazz chord. I said, Oh, man, there's that D minor 11th. She said, 'I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know chords. I just like the sound of stuff that I find on the piano.' Her tunings and her chord sense were so sophisticated, just instinctively."

Equally impressed by Mitchell's vocals in the studio, Scott noted that she could effortlessly perform the tricky task of overdubbing her singing while matching her vibratos exactly, time and time again.

"There were some background vocals where she sang very, very precisely," he says. "If there were three or four parts, the vibratos were all in sync. She said, 'Could you double that with woodwinds?' And I thought, Well, if I'm gonna double it, why



don't I go ahead and match the vibratos just exactly as she had?

"The sound of this thing was like, 'We're breaking some new ground here.'"

**I**N EARLY 1973, following the November '72 release of *For The Roses*, Tom Scott was playing with his band L.A. Express at The Baked Potato, a small club in the Studio City district of the San Fernando Valley. The group consisted of crack LA sessioners – drummer John Guerin (who had played with both Frank Sinatra and Frank Zappa), bassist Max Bennett (responsible for the slinky double bass line on Peggy Lee's *Fever*), and The Crusaders' guitarist Larry Carlton and keyboard player Joe Sample. The quintet honed their chops and blew off steam during a Tuesday night residency.

Often, L.A. Express would play to only 10 or 20 people, though with the introduction of R&B grooves to their repertoire, they found that their jazz-funk was soon attracting much bigger crowds. One day, Mitchell turned up to catch their set.

"Upon hearing the band," Scott recalls, "she said, 'Gee, I've never recorded with a full band before. You think your guys would be interested?' I said, I think we can work it out (*laughs*). So, she gave me a tape of the tunes that she had written. I wrote out master rhythm parts and we went in the studio and began to work on what became *Court And Spark*."

As Mitchell later understated, it would prove to be "a good expansion".

The sessions at A&M were once again overseen by Henry Lewy, who had recorded all of Joni's albums there since 1969's *Clouds*.

"Henry was great," says Ellis Sorkin, the assistant engineer on *Court And Spark*. "Joni was so much of her own force that Henry was just there to sort of guide things around. He wasn't one of those kind of producers: 'We need to try a different ➤"

**"I thought Joni was a folk singer. I got rid of that notion very quickly. She defied categorisation."**

TOM SCOTT

arrangement.' It'd be more just like, 'Oh, maybe we should add that.' It was more of a reinforcement."

"It was clear that in the relationship between Henry and Joni, Henry was a mediator," says Tom Scott. "He had the calmest, most peaceful kind of vibe. He was just there to help Joni with whatever she wanted."

"I mean, technically he was her engineer/producer, not really her producer producer," Sorkin adds, "because she pretty much knew everything she wanted, always. But Tom was also such an important connective tissue for her with arrangements. I mean, if you were to say who produced the record with Joni, you could almost look to him equally or more so than to Henry."

In fact, the sleeve of *Court And Spark* bore no production credit whatsoever. In a 1973 interview with her friend Malka Marom, Mitchell even came over as vehemently anti-producer. "A record producer is completely unnecessary," she argued. "It's a babysitter, it's an interior decorator. If you know what you're doing, you have an engineer. You go in, you have the vision, he makes the sound, he has his knowledge, you have yours, and you interact."

No matter who was actually in charge, the new set-up instantly yielded results. Not least with the shuffling, upbeat feel of *Help Me*, the swooning, fretting love song that was rumoured to be about Mitchell's new relationship with John Guerin. "There was that romantic interest with John, obviously," says Sorkin.

"He was sort of basking in his newfound glory as Mr Mitchell," quips Scott.

Mitchell's lyrics were wide open to interpretation, particularly in the way they oscillated between first and second person (was she also addressing herself when she sang "you"?). At first glance, the haunting *Court And Spark* may have seemed as romantically minded as *Help Me*, but Mitchell's future husband/co-producer Larry Klein (whom she married in 1982 and divorced in '94) later claimed that the lyrics concerned the singer's encounter with a deluded fan who believed that she was writing coded messages to him.

"[He] makes such a good case that she starts to actually feel like she understands what he's saying," Klein told writer Michelle Mercer. "There's the idea of the narrator being in such a fragile position that they start believing what someone who's sitting on the edge of insanity is telling them." (Mitchell subsequently disputed Klein's explanation of the song.)

**M**ORE ON THE nose was *Free Man In Paris*, which dealt with Mitchell's friend and Asylum Records boss David Geffen's liberating experiences in the French capital, far from the stresses of the LA record business. Geffen, however, reportedly begged Mitchell not to release the track, fearing that the line about finding "a very good friend of

**"Joni was a little bit... I don't want to say aloof... but when Crosby and Nash were around she'd open up more."**

ELLIS SORKIN

mine" would somehow out him as gay (a fact he didn't make public until 1992).

Adding backing vocals on the song's chorus were Mitchell exes David Crosby and Graham Nash. Ellis Sorkin noticed how their presence seemed to help Mitchell relax. "Joni was a different kind of personality," he says. "She was a little bit... I don't want to say aloof... but when there was a group of people around, or Crosby

and Nash, she opened up a bit more. A lot more chatting and whatnot."

Other guests on the album included Robbie Robertson and José Feliciano, playing electric guitar on *Raised On Robbery* and *Free Man In Paris*, respectively. These contributions were often recorded in bursts of activity, in sharp contrast to Mitchell's own slow-lane approach. "It wasn't at all like when she was doing things herself," Sorkin says. "Because when she did things herself it would be interminably long."

Mitchell would often take three hours to nail a vocal (on her next album, *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, says Sorkin, it might be three days). What was clear was that the singer's voice was changing, the

soprano range of her earlier albums dropping to alto, whether due to ageing or the fact that she smoked anything up to four packets of cigarettes a day.

"Well, it couldn't have helped," Tom Scott chuckles. "She chain-smoked Marlboros. In fact, she's kind of the one that started me smoking. I'd walk into that booth, and it was like, Pffff. Finally, I just said, OK, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

Scott and Mitchell worked so closely together that the former was soon able to interpret the latter's more abstract, painterly requests, such as wanting a musical colour to be "a little more yellow here". Scott also provided orchestral arrangements, including the stunning score for ballad *Down To You*, for which he and the singer won a Grammy in 1975 for Best Arrangement Accompanying Vocalist(s). However, for this song at least, Scott would have appreciated greater acknowledgement on the album sleeve.

"I felt slighted when the credits came out," Scott admits. "It said 'arranged by Joni Mitchell and Tom Scott'. You know, ➤



European vacation: (above) Mitchell with friend and Asylum boss David Geffen, the inspiration for *Court And Sparks'* *Free Man In Paris*; (opposite) Joni on-stage, 1974.





I arranged the damn thing. I took what she had played on the piano and orchestrated it. She was incapable of doing anything like that. But she still insisted on putting in the credits she was co-arranger.

“She was a bit selfish that way, I thought. So I was disappointed. But I did win my first Grammy.”

Sorkin, meanwhile, attests to Mitchell’s unrivalled levels of perfectionism on *Court And Spark*.

“It was next level,” he says, “but

it never felt picky. When I worked with Karen Carpenter, it felt to me almost like picky. I got it, but I [did think], Oh, was that really necessary to replace the breath between those two words?

“Joni wasn’t quite like that. It was more about just getting into the feeling that she wanted... eventually.”

**A** FAR MORE SPONTANEOUS experiment was conducted on the evening of August 26, 1973, when Mitchell joined Neil Young and the Santa Monica Flyers at Studio Instrument Rentals in Hollywood during the stoned and loose sessions for *Tonight’s The Night*. Together they cut a raucous version of Raised On Robbery, a song in which she inhabited the character of a hooker soliciting a john in a Canadian hotel bar.

Mitchell was never a big fan of Crazy Horse (whose drummer Ralph Molina and bassist Billy Talbot were on the session), dismissing them as a bar band “that should not be elevated to the concert level”. But having been a rock’n’roller at heart since her teens, she proffered her crunchiest song to date, borrowing Young’s Gretsch electric guitar for the take. When Young’s producer David Briggs played the recording back to her, however, she hated the ragged, drunken result. (Not until 2020 would the track receive an official release, on Young’s *Archives Volume II*, before making Mitchell’s own *Archives Volume 3* box set two years later)

There was no questioning the song’s narrative strengths, however. After hearing the version on *Court And Spark*, another of Mitchell’s new film star friends, Faye Dunaway, admired the singer’s prostitute persona, saying “You’re so lucky because you can invent your own roles.”

But not all of Mitchell’s new songs were fictions. The dreamy acoustic layering of People’s Parties belied the anxiety of its narrator, gripped by “frightened silence” as she witnesses a disturbing scene. According to Jack Nicholson’s then-partner Anjelica Huston, its source was a dinner party

**“Her attention to detail was next level but it never felt picky. It was more about getting into the feeling she wanted.”**

ELLIS SORKIN

at which Dutch model Apollonia van Ravenstein had a dramatic meltdown.

“[Apollonia] had been crying that night – laughing and crying, it was hard to figure out which or why,” Huston recounted in her 2014 memoir, *Watch Me*. “She had balanced a lampshade on her head; tears were pouring down her cheeks.” It was later revealed that Nicholson had slept with van Ravenstein, casually telling

Huston it was a “mercy fuck”.

In the track list, People’s Parties segued into the quietly desperate and intensely personal *The Same Situation*, in which Mitchell is tormented by an elusive love. The opening lines of the third verse – “You’ve had lots of lovely women/Now you turn your gaze to me/Weighing the beauty and the imperfection/To see if I’m worthy” – were rumoured to be addressed to Warren Beatty. And it was also said that Jackson Browne was the real-life tardy lover of *Car On A Hill*, “who makes friends easy/He’s not like me”. Tom Scott, certainly, is convinced the singer was “telling you her innermost feelings in the most remarkable, unique way”.

Lightening the mood considerably, there’s *Twisted*, a faithful cover of the jokey jazz tune about psychoanalysis, first performed by Annie Ross in 1952 and re-recorded by her trio Lambert, Hendricks & Ross in 1960 (the version Joni knew). “I went through analysis for a while this year,” the singer admitted to Malka Marom in 1973. “I felt I wanted to talk to someone about confusion, which we all have. Since it’s a song about analysis, I feel that I earned the right to sing it.”

Cheech Marin, who performed the spoken-word part with Tommy Chong (“Man, the chick is twisted... crazy!”) tells *MOJO*, “She called us and said, ‘You know that song *Twisted*?’ I said, Yeah, I know it real well. She said, ‘Well, I’d like you and Tommy to come in and do a little interlude in the break. You think you can do that?’ Yeah, sure. No problem.”

“So, we went right in and had a good old time. It was easy. I think we just did one or maybe two takes at the most. But it was a good fit for us. I don’t think she gave us any direction. The only thing she said was, ‘Go!’”

Analysis also figured in *Trouble Child*, with its central figure poignantly “breaking like the waves at Malibu”, and its snaking groove moving towards R&B. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mitchell was at the time an enormous fan of Marvin Gaye’s *Trouble Man*, released in ’72. “I had this song ➔

**Back home:  
on-stage at  
the Troubadour,  
August 1, 1974.**







on an album, and I kept the needle on this track, playing it over and over,” she said of Gaye’s track. “It was so influential to my music and my singing. It excites me from the downbeat... the way the drums roll in... the suspense... the approaching storm of it.”

Equally, Mitchell was much enamoured of the sound of Stevie Wonder’s 1972 albums (*Music Of My Mind*, *Talking Book*), even going as far as taking Henry Lewy to a Wonder session, when he was making *Innervisions*, in her quest to achieve a similar bass-end quality on *Court And Spark*: “I said, Listen to this. The bottom end is getting fatter. Why can’t we do it?”

“Yeah, she did like to have some more bottom,” says Ellis Sorkin. “It gave it more depth. Earlier records like *For The Roses* and *Blue*, if you listen to them, they don’t have quite that fuller low end. It was bringing up more of the bass drum and bass guitar into the mix.”

Unusually for the era, Mitchell took a long time perfecting the mixes for *Court And Spark*, spending up to eight hours on each track. “Back then people just didn’t do it,” says Sorkin. “It used to be that people would mix a record in one to three hours and it was done. So, yeah, she sort of started that. That was her seeing the future of the way things were to become.”

The sound of *Court And Spark* was to contribute greatly to its commercial success – its songs sounded warm on hi-fi and silky smooth across the FM airwaves. Additionally, the driving rhythms of its singles, *Help Me* and *Free Man In Paris*, prompted heavy rotation on radio.

“Up until *Court And Spark*,” said Mitchell, “they wouldn’t play me on the radio because there was no drums. So I get drums, I get a little airplay.”

Upon its release, it was clear that *Court And Spark* was both a masterpiece and a giant step forward. Not that Mitchell’s

friend Bob Dylan seemed particularly impressed. When the singer played him the finished album, he fell asleep. “I think Bobby was just being cute,” she reckoned.

Record-buyers proved more alert to Mitchell’s new direction. With *Court And Spark* selling strongly, Joni embarked on a tour, backed by L.A. Express, which was extended again and again. “We start rehearsing at SIR down in Hollywood,” Tom Scott remembers. “Then we went on what was [meant] to be a six-week college auditorium kind of tour. But the album went on the charts and then would... not... leave.”

Larry Carlton and Joe Sample chose to focus on The Crusaders rather than tour with Mitchell, and so Scott recruited 23-year-old guitarist Robben Ford (who’d learned his trade backing Jimmy Witherspoon) and the more seasoned jazz pianist Roger Kellaway, then 34.

“Joni’s not trained,” Kellaway points out to MOJO. “And yet, she felt comfortable picking a band that was completely trained. I mean, classically, and sort of able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. The courage of Joni... it’s a testament to the flexibility of her creativity.”

**T**HE *COURT AND SPARK* tour was the first time Mitchell had performed live with a band and she relished showcasing her new, more muscular songs alongside the tender acoustic numbers. “Hopefully,” she said to Malka Marom ahead of the opening show at Kiel Opera House in St Louis on January 18, 1974, “the tour’s concerts will... show a spectrum of a person’s feelings, as opposed to locking into one facet.”

But while no one cried out “Judas!”, there was some resistance from a minority to Mitchell’s new, band-based sound. In St Louis, one yelled, “Let’s hear her without the band.” A beat later, another replied, “Let’s hear her with the band.” In Chicago, at the Auditorium Theatre on January 23, someone in the crowd shouted out, “Turn down the volume!” Mitchell coolly responded, “What’s the matter, do we have a hall full of purists? I thought Chicago liked to boogie.”

To placate the traditionalists, Mitchell initially arrived on stage solo to perform a selection of her acoustic songs. “I’d be off-stage, but I’d be listening,” says Tom Scott. “I don’t remember ever hearing her flub a lyric, a chord, nothing. She was perfect. I found that to be astonishing, especially in light of the fact that those tunes, the lyrics are complicated

and wordy. And she never forgot one. Of course, it’s her own poetry. But still, we all screw up every now and then. Not her (*laughs*.)”

“She would just walk on stage,” says Roger Kellaway, “and the audience would go on the journey.”

As the tour progressed, Mitchell and L.A. Express grew in confidence. Kellaway remembers that Mitchell’s manager Elliot Roberts encouraged him to rock out behind his Fender Rhodes electric piano.

“Elliot spent a lot of time trying to groom me more into a rock’n’roll player,” he says. “Either by the way I dressed... or there were some Jerry Lee Lewis kind of glissandos I did that the crowd always loved. He said, ‘Good, you should keep doing that.’”

The tour reached London in April ’74, for a three-night stand at the New Victoria Theatre where famous fans including Rod Stewart and George Harrison came to pay their respects. The latter was already pals with Tom Scott, having first met him when Scott played with Ravi Shankar on the soundtrack for the 1968 movie *Charly*. “At that point,” says Scott, “I became George Harrison’s close to best friend.”

After the show, Harrison invited Scott and the other members of L.A. Express to his sprawling Henley-on-Thames estate, Friar Park, where they ended up in the former Beatle’s studio, cutting two tracks, *Hari’s On Tour* (Express) and *Simply Shady*, destined to appear on his 1974 album, *Dark Horse*. Kellaway found recording with Harrison and staying in his Victorian neo-Gothic mansion quite a trip. “I remember meditating in one of the high turrets,” he says.

When Mitchell and the band returned to the States and picked up the tour, Lewy came on the road to record shows, with a view to releasing a live album (various gigs having already been taped and nixed by Mitchell). In the end, the bulk of what was to be the double LP, *Miles Of Aisles* (released in November 1974, only 10 months after *Court And Spark*), was captured over five nights at the Universal Amphitheatre in Universal City, LA County.

“That was really close to the end of the tour,” says Ellis Sorkin. “By that time the show was so... y’know... boom. We knew exactly what to do.”

**M**ITCHELL’S INTEREST in jazz music and jazz musicians was to endure and grow deeper throughout the ’70s: from the more expansive arrangements of *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* through the mesmeric travelogue of *Hejira*,

**“Live, I don’t remember ever hearing Joni flub a lyric, a chord, nothing. She was perfect.”**

TOM SCOTT





Sparks: Mitchell with (from left) Tom Scott, Roger Kellaway and Robben Ford, New Victoria Theatre, London, April 20, 1974.

and on to *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* and her audience-testing, if also authenticity-proving, collaboration with a legend of the genre on *Mingus* in 1979.

*Court And Spark*, meanwhile, cast a long shadow of influence down the decades. Stevie Nicks, in a 2008 interview with MOJO's Sylvie Simmons, remembered hearing the album, soon after its release, while tripping on acid: "I was with my producer [Keith Olsen] at his house, with a set of speakers that were taller than [a] fireplace, and I was in a safe place, and I sat there on the floor and listened to that record. That for me was a pretty dynamic experience."

Madonna, 15 when the album was released, later recalled, "In high school, I worshipped Joni Mitchell and sang everything from *Court And Spark*, my coming-of-age record." Brian Eno went even further in 2016,



calling *Court And Spark*, "an almost perfect album... it's one of the most grown-up records ever made in that the things she's talking about and thinking about are such serious and complicated emotional situations. It's the best engineered album you've ever heard. I learned a lot from that album and have listened to it as much as any album I've ever owned."

But it was Prince who proved the most devoted Joni worshipper, later quoting Help Me in The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker on 1987's *Sign O' The Times* ("It was Joni singing, 'Help me, I think I'm falling...').

Mitchell even claimed to have spotted the teenage Prince at one of her shows in Minnesota. "He must have been about 15," she said. "He was in an aisle seat, and he had unusually big eyes. He watched the whole show with his collar up, looking side to side. You couldn't miss him – he was a little Princeling.

"Prince used to write me fan mail with all the U's and hearts that way that he writes," she continued. "The office took it as mail from the lunatic fringe and just tossed it."

"She tended to attract those kinds of people like Prince," says Cheech Marin, "who really saw her as an artist over and above anybody else who was doing the same thing at the same time. All musicians are just enamoured of her. Every album, it was a different leap forward."

**U**LTIMATELY, IT WAS not only the sound of jazz but also the music's restlessly questing spirit that animated *Court And Spark* and the Joni Mitchell albums that followed.

"I think she stands out as a marvellous example of an artist never resting on her laurels," concludes Tom Scott. "Like Miles Davis, she was constantly searching. Always reaching for the next thing." ●