

ANATOMY OF A SONG

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The Oral History of 45 Iconic Hits
That Changed Rock, R&B and Pop

MARC MYERS

Based on the popular *Wall Street Journal* column, *Anatomy of a Song* captures the stories behind 45 influential rock, R&B, and pop hits through oral-history interviews with the artists who wrote and recorded them—including Keith Richards on “Street Fighting Man,” Rod Stewart on “Maggie May,” Debbie Harry and Chris Stein on “Heart of Glass,” and more

Every great song has a story that needs to be told. In *Anatomy of a Song*, based on the ongoing *Wall Street Journal* column, writer and music historian Marc Myers brings to life five decades of music through forty-five transformative songs and oral-history interviews with the artists who created them.

Bringing readers inside the making of a hit, *Anatomy of a Song* includes the Isley Brothers' memorable song “Shout,” Led Zeppelin's “Whole Lotta Love,” Janis Joplin's “Mercedes Benz,” and R.E.M.'s “Losing My Religion.” After receiving an honorable discharge from the army in 1968, John Fogerty does a handstand and reworks Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to come up with “Proud Mary.” Joni Mitchell remembers living in a cave on Crete with the “mean old daddy” who inspired her 1971 hit “Carey.” Elvis Costello talks about writing “(The Angels Wanna Wear My) Red Shoes” in ten minutes on the train to Liverpool. And Mick Jagger, the Clash, Jimmy Cliff, Roger Waters, Jimmy Page, Stevie Wonder, Bonnie Raitt, and many other leading artists reveal for the first time the emotions, inspirations, and techniques behind their influential works. Covering the history of rock, R&B, country, disco, soul, reggae, and pop, *Anatomy of a Song* is a love letter to the songs that have defined several generations of listeners.

Marc Myers is a frequent contributor to *The Wall Street Journal*, where he writes about rock, soul, and jazz, as well as the arts. He is the author of the critically acclaimed book *Why Jazz Happened*, and posts daily at JazzWax.com, winner of the 2015 Jazz Journalists Association's Jazz Blog of the Year award.



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Acknowledgments

On Friday, September 23, 2011, I was grabbing a late lunch with my wife on New York's Upper West Side when Rich Turner, the *Wall Street Journal's* music editor, e-mailed an idea for a fast turnaround: "We're wondering about whether there are stories to be done about individual songs, an Anatomy of a Song, classic songs that resonate today and have backstories behind them, anecdotes surrounding them, huge histories of what happened to them after they came out. They're like people and we could profile them. To start, how about 'My Girl' by Smokey Robinson?"

And so began the newspaper's "Anatomy of a Song" column and my ongoing odyssey to gather the dramatic stories behind the writing and recording of some of America's most iconic rock, soul, country, R&B, gospel, reggae, and disco songs. Originally, the mandate was to treat them as a "write-through"—an article on the song with the songwriter's quotes spread throughout. But by the third column, on the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'," I faced a problem. There were two accessible songwriters—Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann—instead of one. That's when I realized the column would be better served as an oral history, with the stories told through songwriters' and artists' own words. The new format would be flexible enough to include as many sources as were needed to tell the story, and would also allow me to capture the sound of a subject's voice.

When I proposed the new format idea to Rich and Eben Shapiro, the *Wall Street Journal's* global arts editor, in July 2012, they agreed, and it worked perfectly. In the years that followed, the three of us routinely batted around artist and song ideas, and the process has been wonderfully collaborative and fruitful. My heartfelt thanks

to Eben and Rich for their initial vision and guidance and for giving me the opportunity to preserve music history. A special thanks to the Anatomy of a Song team over the past five years—Lisa Bannon, Emily Gitter (now editor of the Mansion section), Michael Boone, Brenda Cronin, Catherine Romano, and photo editor Ericka Burchett. I also want to thank *Wall Street Journal* senior deputy managing editor Michael W. Miller for his critical eye and support for the column.

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Introduction

At its heart, this book is a love story—a five-decade oral history of rhythm & blues, rock and pop as told to me by the artists who wrote and recorded the forty-five songs in these pages. Through their narratives, we hear the composers' original motives for writing the songs as well as the emotions that artists poured into their recordings. We also learn about the discipline, poetry, musicianship, studio techniques, and accidents that helped turn these songs into meaningful generational hits that still endure today. Over the decades covered in this book, the sound of R&B, rock and pop changed repeatedly along with the statements musicians were trying to make in response to their times and the desires and dreams of record-buyers. To put these songs in perspective, I thought I'd provide a sense of how R&B and rock emerged in the first place, a story that sets the stage for the book's opening oral history of "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" (1952).

Unlike popular music of earlier eras, R&B wasn't written for Broadway musicals, movies, or crooners. Instead, R&B originated as dance music by African-Americans for the African-American market in the years just after World War II. During this period, dance music was at an impasse. The tightening post-war economy had forced many large Swing Era–dance bands to fold while jazz musicians began playing a new improvised style intended to be heard in club and theater seats rather than on ballroom dance floors. To fill the void, several African-American band-leaders including Lionel Hampton and Louis Jordan merged the blues with boogie-woogie rhythms and dance beats to extend

the Swing Era just as jazz was becoming more esoteric and mainstream popular music was growing increasingly saccharine and bland.

The merging of blues and dance tempos was largely the result of a sizable demographic shift that took place shortly after America's entry into World War II in 1941, when round-the-clock defense plants in southern California, the Midwest, and other parts of the country needed as many workers as they could hire. As word reached the South in early 1942, a mass migration of African-Americans to cities such as Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago began. The newly arrived brought with them a passion for music from back home—the blues of the Mississippi Delta. By war's end in 1945, the demand for blues-flavored dance music in many of these urban African-American neighborhoods gave rise to blues shouters, saxophone honkers, and guitarists backed by foot-tapping arrangements influenced by jazz, boogie-woogie piano, and the rocking rhythms of trains and factory machinery. At first, the new up-tempo genre was called “jump blues.”

Most jump-blues recordings were initially released on major labels such as Decca and the so-called “race record” subsidiaries of Columbia and RCA. These three companies dominated the record industry up until the late 1940s, when a pair of recording bans by the American Federation of Musicians allowed small independent labels such as King, Aladdin, Apollo, Specialty, Imperial, and many others to gain footholds in urban markets, creating opportunities for African-American blues singers and jump-blues musicians. By 1949, beat-driven blues records had become so numerous and varied that *Billboard* writer Jerry Wexler convinced the magazine to drop the pejorative “Race Records” from its charts and use “Rhythm & Blues” instead. Wexler, who went on to become a partner at Atlantic Records and one of the most important R&B and soul record producers of the 1950s and '60s, wrote in the *Saturday Review* of June 1950 that the new name was appropriate for “more enlightened times.”

The popularity of R&B records among adults in African-American communities continued to grow in the early 1950s, thanks largely to the proliferation of jukeboxes and independent radio stations. But the music also began to inspire younger listeners who discovered R&B stations while cruising radio dials at night. Their growing interest in R&B singles recorded by artists such as Fats Domino, Jackie Brenston, Joe Turner, and Big Mama Thornton led artists to record songs that specifically addressed adolescent aspirations and anxieties. As younger fans gravitated to R&B in the early 1950s, white disc jockeys such as Alan Freed in Cleveland and those in other major urban markets championed R&B records. They referred to the music as “rock ’n’ roll” for dramatic effect and to make the music more acceptable to white households.

Eventually, white artists figured out how to sing and play the music authentically. Chief among them in the early 1950s was Bill Haley & His Comets, whose “Rock Around the Clock” in 1954 was featured during the opening credits of the feature film *Blackboard Jungle* a year later. The movie helped the song become the first rock ’n’ roll single to hit No. 1 on *Billboard’s* pop chart, turning the music into a national sensation. The film—a noir morality drama about an urban high school overrun by rock ’n’ roll-crazed juvenile delinquents—added a new dimension to the music. Up until “Rock Around the Clock,” the music had largely been an audio experience. You clicked on the radio, fed coins into a jukebox or placed a stylus on vinyl and used your imagination as the music played. The release of the film added dramatic visual imagery and, by doing so, inadvertently glamorized rebellion against teachers and other authority figures. The rudeness and recalcitrance by students in the film against “uncaring” and “disinterested” authority figures remains a mainstay of the music to this day.

The popularity of “Rock Around the Clock” not only excited young imaginations in urban markets across the country but also paved the way for electrifying performers like guitarists Chuck

Berry and Bo Diddley, and white rockabilly musicians in the South and Southwest, including Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, and Buddy Holly, who combined the twang of country and energy of R&B. The result of this fusion was a new, impatient form of rock 'n' roll with a rural feel that emphasized the electric guitar rather than the saxophone. With the rising sales of portable phonographs and family television sets nationwide in the late 1950s, the popularity of R&B and rock 'n' roll expanded again, helping the music make up an ever-growing slice of record-company profits. In the decades that followed, R&B and rock proved resilient as the music divided into subgenres. But over time, most songs did not remain artistically important or even interesting. In fact, only a small percentage of songs recorded have managed to retain their power and transformative significance while the majority have been forgotten.

This book is concerned with the songs that have endured. Although all of the songs featured in this book appeared originally in the Anatomy of a Song column for the *Wall Street Journal*, the material here is framed a bit differently. Each song begins with a new introduction to explain its historical significance. In addition, many entries feature new material added from fresh reporting or from my original interview tapes. The forty-five columns appear in chronological order by year so they tell a broader story about the music's evolution and the role each song played. In some cases, only one interview was conducted with the primary artist who wrote and recorded the song. In other cases, when multiple perspectives were needed, I included sources who could shed light on different phases of the song's development and recording.

Each song appears as an oral history, which not only lets artists tell you the story behind their songs but also provides a rare opportunity to hear the artist's voice, thinking, and process. In this regard, each oral history shares the immediacy of an audio podcast, since it enables you, the reader, to feel as if the artist is

speaking directly to you. In each case, I carefully edited these oral histories from interviews to ensure a story's seamless narrative and flow. For example, if an artist talked about a guitar solo and ten minutes later returned to the solo to flesh out a point, that material was united in the same section about the solo. Or if an artist stopped talking about the song to go into lengthy remarks about something unrelated to the song's history, that material was edited out.

This collection of forty-five songs does not purport to be a list of the best songs ever recorded nor do the songs chosen claim to cover every major event in music history. Together, they simply are a subjective collection of music milestones that I believe provide us with a greater understanding of the songs, the artists, and the music's history. Some readers might argue that other songs belong on the list. Maybe so. But I don't believe their inclusion would have dramatically altered the book's larger story about the music's development. Ultimately, these forty-five songs are stand-ins for the music's major turning points, presenting us with a starting point for conversation and debate about other worthy songs.

As for the time span covered, the book begins in 1952 with Lloyd Price's "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," a song critical to the development of both R&B and rock 'n' roll, and ends in 1991 with the release of R.E.M.'s "Losing My Religion"—arguably alternative rock's biggest hit and the song that primed the pump for grunge rock's appeal. Certainly, there have been songs recorded after 1991 that seem to have all the ingredients of an iconic work. Only time will tell. In my mind, a song is not iconic until it has stood the test of a generation—twenty-five years. There's no question that there are songs recorded as recently as last year that seem destined for iconic status. But the truth is we simply don't know that to be the case yet. In my role as a historian, I decided that 1991 was as good a cutoff date as any, since it gives us at least twenty-five years to evaluate a song's merits free from the gravitational pull of fads and music trends that existed when they were released.

Some of the songs in the book may not be as familiar to you as others, but that's part of the fun. Once you've read about the artist's thinking behind a particular song, I urge you to listen to the songs, preferably before and after reading about them. You also may want to listen to them in chronological order, so you can hear the same audio history of R&B and rock that I heard and see how the music's branches split off into other genres.

After conducting the in-depth interviews for these forty-five songs, I found that fascinating nuggets of information emerged. Some of my favorites include:

- The Doors' lead vocalist Jim Morrison often listened to Frank Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night" album in 1966, while the Latin rhythm that drummer John Densmore used on "Light My Fire" was inspired by the 1964 bossa nova hit "The Girl From Ipanema."
- The Four Tops' "Reach Out I'll Be There" was inspired by Bob Dylan's "throw-down" style of singing.
- Keith Richards' "Street Fighting Man" was inspired by the sound of French police-car sirens.
- John Fogerty based the opening of "Proud Mary" on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.
- Janis Joplin cowrote the lyrics to "Mercedes Benz" at a bar while the Beatles' "Hey Jude" was blasting on the jukebox.
- "Midnight Train to Georgia" was originally based on Farrah Fawcett telling the song's composer that she was catching a midnight flight to Houston.
- Steven Tyler wrote the lyrics to "Walk This Way" on the wall of a New York recording studio.

Throughout the interview and writing process, I viewed myself as a storyteller and the custodian of artists' recollections, reputations, and legacies. I've always felt that interviewing celebrated artists about their work is a sizable responsibility and privilege.

Without exception, those who participated in these oral histories expressed gratitude that the stories behind their work were being preserved accurately, sensitively, and with enormous care. Now I'm passing their stories on to you. Please think of this book as an oral history jukebox.

28: Carey

JONI MITCHELL
Released: August 1971

In the summer of 2014, I pitched Joni Mitchell on an interview about the writing and recording of her song “Carey,” which appears on her acclaimed album *Blue* (1971). Mitchell liked the idea and suggested we do the interview at her home in Los Angeles rather than talk by phone. I flew out in October, and after I arrived at her 1920s Spanish Revival house and parked on the steep decline of the driveway, I was ushered out to a covered tile patio bordering a courtyard. As I looked down at a swimming pool one level below on her wooded Bel Air property, a husky voice came up behind me, “Hey, New Yorker.” Mitchell had arrived barefoot, her hair down, wearing a flowing white top and long skirt. For the next two hours, she chain-smoked American Spirit cigarettes and talked about her months in Matala, Crete, in 1970 and her relationship with Cary Raditz, the song’s namesake.

When Mitchell recorded “Carey” in early 1971, the female singer-songwriter era was just unfolding. Mary Travers, Jackie DeShannon, and Laura Nyro, among others, had started the ball rolling in the early 1960s. Then Judy Collins had a hit with Mitchell’s “Both Sides Now” in 1967. In February 1971 Carole King released the album *Tapestry*, and Carly Simon released her eponymous album featuring “That’s the Way I’ve Always Heard It Should Be.” Joni’s *Blue* arrived in June and it was clearly a more personal, long-form work, an anxiety-ridden concept album that connected with women on an almost secretive, metaphysical level. Though “Carey” didn’t chart when it was released as a single in August, *Blue* reached No. 15 on *Billboard*’s album chart and is

among her most critically acclaimed recordings. *Blue* was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999.

What I remember most about my two hours with Mitchell are her eyes. She had a way of making a point and then fixing on you with a locked gaze as she took a drag from her cigarette. The gaze tended to linger longer than it should have and seemed to be sizing up whether a point she had made resonated. Even though her articulation was clear and immediately understood, her eyes seemed to have their doubts or were seeking more animated confirmation, perhaps out of habit. Eventually, Mitchell let go and she moved on. To this day, her gaze reminds me of an overly cautious mother watching her kids board a school bus and following them with her eyes until they are seated.

Interview with singer-songwriter JONI MITCHELL

JONI MITCHELL (SINGER-SONGWRITER): Everyone said I broke Graham Nash's heart when our relationship ended in late 1969. But that's not quite accurate. We both knew it was over, and it wasn't an ugly ending. Reasons for the break are complicated, but Graham and David Crosby were becoming inseparable, which was increasingly tough on me. In late January of 1970, David asked me to sail with him on his boat, the *Mayan*. But when I came aboard in Jamaica in early February, no one told me Graham would be there. It was an awkward thing to do, to put us in that position. When we reached Panama, I left, flying to San Francisco to meet my friend Penelope and start a preplanned trip to Greece.

The truth is after Graham and I separated, I was really depressed. I believed in that relationship, and suddenly it was over. I had a hard time believing in my own word. I also lost most of my Los Angeles friends, who had been my constant community. When I left him, they took his side. All of this was very painful.

In Greece, Penelope and I spent the first few days in Athens. I didn't think I looked like a hippie, but I definitely didn't look Greek.

My fair hair made me stand out. During the day, I'd pile it up on my head. It was a conservative look, like a schoolteacher. Still, my hair seemed to offend people, mostly men, who called out with a big grin on their faces, "Sheepy, sheepy, Matala, Matala." I asked around about the phrase and was told it meant, "Hippie, hippie, go to Matala in Crete. That's where your kind are."

A few days later, Penelope and I were on a ferry to see what Matala was all about. We arrived in Heraklion on Crete's north coast and stayed in a hotel the first night. The next day, I rented a VW Bug and we drove forty-five miles to Matala, a fishing village on the south coast. There weren't any homes in Matala, just two grocery stores, a bakery where the owner made fresh yogurt and bread, a general store with the only phone in town, two cafes, and a few rental huts. Most of the "hippies" who had traveled there slept in small caves carved into the cliff on one side of the beach.

After we arrived, Penelope and I rented a cinder-block hut in a nearby poppy field and walked down to the beach. As we stood staring out, an explosion went off behind us. I turned around just in time to see this guy with a red beard blowing through the door of a cafe. He was wearing a white turban, white Nehru shirt, and white cotton pants. I said to Penelope, "What an entrance—I have to meet this guy." He wasn't hurt, but all the hair on his arms and legs were singed from the blast. He was American and a cook at one of the cafes. Apparently, when he had lit the stove, it blew him out the door. That's how Cary [Raditz] entered my life—ka-boom!

The next night, Penelope and I went to the Mermaid Cafe for a drink with Cary. Several hippies were there, along with some soldiers. Someone recommended this clear Turkish liquor called Raki. I wasn't a big drinker, and after three glasses I woke up the next morning alone in Cary's cave. The stacked leather heels of my city boots had broken off, apparently from climbing a mountain the night before. I had no recollection of the climb. Later, when I returned to my hut, Penelope was gone. I was told she went off

with one of the soldiers from the Mermaid the night before. That was the last I saw of her for many years.

With Penelope gone, I was alone—and vulnerable. You have to understand the fragile emotional state I was in. I was still in pain, and had no one to talk to. Also, I had a bit of fame by then, and wherever I'd go, hippies would follow. I latched onto Cary because he seemed fierce and kept the crowd off my back. Soon I moved into one of the caves.

Originally the Minoans had lived in the caves, and then the Romans came and improved them by carving sleeping crypts and niches for statuary. But sleeping up there was tough. To soften the surface, beach pebbles were placed on the stone slab and covered with beach grass. I borrowed a scratchy afghan blanket and placed it on top. But there was no real comfort. When the waves were high and crashed on the beach, they shook the stone in the caves.

I enjoyed Cary's company, and his audacity. He had steely-cold blue eyes and a menacing grin, and he was a bit of a scoundrel. We were constantly in each other's company, and spent our days talking, taking long walks, going swimming, cooking, and doing the laundry. We just lived. One time we were in a park in Heraklion, where we sometimes went for the day. We were sitting on a bench when one of the tourist photographers came up to us and asked if we wanted our picture taken. He had a colorful box camera on a wooden tripod, so we said, "Yes." The pictures developed in minutes.

I also had my dulcimer with me from the States. It was lighter and less bulky than a guitar, and I took it with me everywhere. I used it to write "Carey" over a period of weeks in different locations in and around Matala as a birthday present for Cary. When hippies didn't follow me on hikes, I'd find solitary places to write. My lyric, "Oh Carey get out your cane" referred to a cane Cary carried with him all the time. He was a bit of a scene-stealer, and the cane was a theatrical prop for him. Sometimes he'd twirl it or balance it on his nose.

When I played the song for Cary on his birthday, I don't recall his reaction. He was always detached and sometimes even disrespectful—either trying to belittle me or make me feel afraid. I think at the time he felt greatly superior to women, which is why I refer to him in the lyrics as “a mean old Daddy.” As for the extra e in his name in the song's title and lyric, that was a misspelling on my part.

In April, theater people in Matala cast hippies for a Greek production of *Hair*. Weeks later, Cary and I traveled to Athens to see them in the musical. The lead actor was Greek and had shorter than Beatle-length hair parted on the side and a Frank Sinatra-style beige raincoat over his shoulder as he sang, “I'm a hairy guy.” We cracked up. It was so funny.

Athens was a turning point for me. I had had enough of Matala and, as I wrote in the lyrics to “Carey,” I missed “my clean white linen and fancy French cologne.” My hair was matted from washing it in seawater for months, I had beach tar on my feet, and I was flea-bitten—this was very rugged living. I also realized I was still heartbroken about my split with Graham.

Instead of returning to Crete with Cary, I flew to Paris. There, I wrote “California” and referenced Cary in the lyrics as “the red, red rogue who cooked good omelets and stews.” “Carey” and “California” are really part of the same musical novella, so Cary is in two scenes.

Back in the States, I wrote additional songs, and in early '71 I went into A&M Studios in Hollywood to record *Blue*. “Carey,” like the rest of the album, is pretty sparse, instrumentally, and we recorded it behind locked doors. If someone came in, I'd burst into tears. I was in great psychological pain while recording all of *Blue*. It took several years for me to get over how I felt. On “Carey,” I played the dulcimer and Stephen [Stills] played bass.

For me, recording songs like “Carey”—about deeply personal experiences—presented an artistic challenge. Songs I wrote were already a day, a week, a month or ten years old when I went into the studio. To rekindle my emotions, I used sense memory—which

is like method acting. It happens naturally with me and helps me recall my feelings—the joy, anxiety, and vulnerability I felt when composing the song. I was emotionally wide open when recording *Blue*, and incapable of guile.

I haven't spoken to Cary in years. We remained friends, then he married and we lost contact. But every so often Matala comes back into my life. A couple of years ago, a friend sent me a newspaper article about Matala. It has been built up a bit, and there's an annual musical festival held there now. The article said that in Matala I'm more popular than Zeus. I thought that was funny, you know?

Tracking Down the Real "Carey"

**Interview with financial executive CARY RADITZ,
the subject of Joni Mitchell's "Carey"**

After interviewing Joni Mitchell about her song "Carey," I realized I needed to find the real Cary Raditz, to capture his side of the story. It took a little doing, but five calls later, I reached him, and we had a warm conversation about his time with Mitchell in Matala, Crete, in 1970. Over the phone, I could hear in Raditz's voice the intensity that Mitchell had talked about during our conversation in Los Angeles. But I also heard someone who was still deeply moved by Mitchell and treasured the time they spent together—free of responsibilities and most modern conveniences. For both Mitchell and Raditz, their Matala months would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, immortalized in the lyrics of Mitchell's song. Cary wasn't such a "mean old Daddy" after all.

How did you wind up in Matala?

In July 1969, I quit my job as a copywriter at an ad agency in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, flew to Luxembourg, and hitchhiked to Munich to visit my girlfriend, who was interning for a chemical company. By October, the weather was getting colder

and we decided to head to a warmer place, leaving the destination to fate. We stood in the fork of a southbound road in Munich and stuck out our thumbs. If our ride went right, we'd go to Spain. If the ride went left, we'd go to Greece, and that's how we wound up in Matala on Halloween of 1969. Two months later, I went to Afghanistan in a VW bus to buy jewels for a leather-sandal business I had started with a friend. When I returned to Matala in February, my girlfriend had gone home to the States.

When did you meet Joni Mitchell?

I think Joni arrived in Matala in late February. We met either while I was watching a sunset or when I was blown through the door of Delfini's, a taverna where I cooked. I knew Joni was in Matala—there was buzz among the fifty or so hippies who lived in the thirty-odd caves in the cliff about a famous singer coming to the fishing village. I hadn't followed her career closely, so I wasn't sure who she was.

One night soon after she arrived, I was cooking at Delfini's when she came to have lunch, surrounded by fans. I resented how her fame had turned my friends into adoring sycophants. After she finished eating, she politely cleaned her table and brought the trash to me. She was just being a good person. In this taverna, we were used to drinking and dancing there until all hours and breaking plates and glasses on the floor in celebration. So I shrugged and threw her trash on the floor, I guess as an intended slight to her fame. Not long after, I was outside on a break when Joni came over and started talking.

Or we may have met on the afternoon I was in the kitchen of Delfini's. One of the owners was fiddling with the stove. There was a propane tank in there that had been on. The guy had an unlit cigarette dangling out of his mouth. At one point, he reflexively took out his lighter. I didn't have time to stop him. He lit it and there was a big explosion. It blew me out the door and gave him second-degree burns.

Why did she refer to you in the song as a “mean old Daddy?”

Looking back, I wasn't as nice to her as I should have been—or to anybody, I guess. I was a little hard on people around me. One day we were walking around at these ancient Roman baths outside of town with friends. She showed me a piece of driftwood and said it looked like a mermaid, asking me what I thought. I said it looked like a piece of driftwood. Not very nice, I know. I suppose I was taking a swipe at her poetic fantasies.

Why were you so mean?

I had a nasty, aggressive character then, and I was feisty. I was always getting into fights at the taverna—probably losing more of them than I won. I suppose she hung around me after her friend left because she knew people wouldn't dare come up to my cave without permission, so it was a haven for her of sorts, even though the cave was small—around eight by sixteen feet.

In the song, she sings about your cane.**Where did you get it?**

It was a broken shepherd's crook that only came up to my waist. I guess a shepherd had discarded it in a field. It was useful for climbing the rocky hills around Matala. The “silver” Joni sings about refers to her Navajo jewelry that she usually wore when she went out at night.

Did you hear her composing music?

All the time. It was a fascinating process. She was clearly a great musician with a great ear. She liked to try out these chords on her dulcimer—playing them over and over again like a mantra until she figured out where she wanted to go with them. She'd go into a kind

of trance, and things would come out of that. I'm not a musician, but what sounded to the average ear like monotony eventually flowered. She's also a technician who likes to mess with the tuning of her instrument.

When did you first hear "Carey"?

On April 19, 1970—my twenty-fourth birthday—in my cave. Joni played it for me as a present. She also gave me ten Mickey Mouse chocolate bars. They came with these Disney character cards that the cave people traded. When she sang the song, I was surprised by it, since I'm the subject. But I wasn't blown away. It sounded like a ditty, something she had tossed off. I believe the song went on longer than the final version on *Blue*. I think she changed some of the lines, too. As I recall, she sang something like, "Last night I couldn't sleep, the sea was full of sheep." One of the local expressions was that when the sea was choppy, the whitecaps looked like sheep.

Did the song sound like a farewell letter to you?

Yes—but Joni was leaving all the time. She was always saying she was going to take off soon, so her intentions were clear. Months earlier she was an elegant lady living in Laurel Canyon, and Matala was as foreign to her world as you could get. Life was very simple and raw in Matala, and eventually she wanted to return to her home and career. I liked Joni a lot and didn't like losing her company. But on the road, you already know that the friendships you develop are short-lived. That's built into the experience.

Where did you two take that photo together?

On Easter morning in a park in Heraklion on the north coast of Crete. We often went to Heraklion to visit or so I could buy leather

there for my sandal shop. We drove there in the VW Joni had rented weeks earlier. While we sat in the park, an old photographer came up to us and asked if we wanted our picture taken. It was a tourist thing. He had an old wooden box camera on a tripod, and we agreed. After he took the picture, he went into a makeshift darkroom to develop the image. Fifteen minutes later he emerged with the photo, and we bought it.

How did you feel when she left for Paris?

It was painful, but I understood. I liked Matala and was preoccupied with my business. After she left, I traveled around Crete early that summer and returned to the States in July of '70 to visit her.

When did you first hear "Carey" on *Blue*?

When I visited Joni again in Los Angeles in 1971. She invited me to A&M Studios in Hollywood. [Engineer] Henry Lewy grabbed me and put me in a room with headphones. He played a tape of the album, which they just had finished. I thought it was fantastic. "Carey" didn't surprise me, since I had heard it in Matala. "California," however, was a shocker. I was taken aback that she referred to me as a "redneck on a Grecian isle." I was from North Carolina, so my accent was strong, but I was hardly that. But look, she was just writing songs. You can't really take these things all that seriously. And I did take her camera, as the song says, but I didn't sell it. I gave it back to her later.

Did you tell her she had misspelled your name?

I pointed that out later and Joni apologized and said it was a spelling mistake.

So you really didn't care when she left Matala?

The truth is I was in love with Joni and missed her. We had spent virtually every day together for nearly two months. But I knew I was in way over my head. I couldn't earn a living then, and she was way too talented for me. I tried for some time after not to become too caught up in the whole thing.



Joni Mitchell with Cary Raditz and her dulcimer in a park in Heraklion, Crete, in the spring of 1970. Raditz was the inspiration for Mitchell's song "Carey."

Credit: Courtesy of Cary Raditz