

New Albums**'Do-It-Yourself' Theme
Dominating Pop Music**

By MARY CAMPBELL

When Roger Miller sang "King of the Road," the news was twofold—it was the biggest pop song of the year and the same person wrote the lyrics and tune and sang it.

The do-it-all-yourself writer and performer is no longer news in pop music. Today, that's where it's at.

Four representative new albums are by Phil Ochs, Joni Mitchell, Jim Webb and John Hartford—doing all their own writing and singing and in some cases adding instrumental accompaniment.

Phil Ochs (pronounced Oaks), 28, from El Paso, has been around awhile. He's listed, under folk, in the Schwann catalog with three LPs on Elektra, the first in 1964, and one, out this January, on A & M.

His second LP for A & M, "Tape from California," has just been released.

We're not calling what Ochs does folk any more, not even urban folk. It's topical and politically "new left."

Side one of "Tape from California" is the more interesting of this "now" album. The first sticks in your mind (though all its stream of consciousness words won't stick) much like Ochs' earlier song, "Small Circle of Friends." Stream of consciousness, used here a couple more times, is supposed to bring the song into the listener's mind at least partly by feeling rather than intellectually.

Ochs is a master of vignette descriptions. One line will describe something so clearly that the picture is complete; the next line can be about something different. In the title song, for example, there's a line, "a poster of a movie star walked by." No other words are needed.

Ochs is outspokenly antiwar and has sung at antiwar rallies. The new album includes "White Boots Marching in a Yellow Land" and "The War Is Over." The former has some of those graphic one-liners. "The War Is Over" contains the most shocking line on the album—a statement toying with treason.

Ochs uses the traditional folk verse and chorus form. This and

the theme of "Joe Hill" and the tune used—"John Henry"—make it sound a lot like a Woody Guthrie song. Ochs' singing is clearer here than on any other song, although he is reasonably easy to understand all the way through.

Joni Mitchell, 24, from Canada, has her first album out, "Joni Mitchell," on Reprise. There's not a bad song on it.

Her best-known composition, "Both Sides Now," isn't on the LP. "Night in the City," which also is being heard around and about, is. Miss Mitchell plays piano and guitar and designed the album's psychedelic art cover.

Miss Mitchell's concerns are love and personal things. She has a lot of insights to share, but she doesn't shove them at the listener.

She sounds much like Judy Collins. But in "Night in the City" her voice is ready at any instant to take off in a Swiss yodel. It's a very individualistic, memorable delivery.

"Jim Webb Sings Jim Webb" was brought out by Epic after Webb's songs "Up, Up and Away," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix" and "Mac Arthur Park" became hits for other singers. However, the songs Epic has predate these hits, and since Webb is only 21 now, this album really is "early Jim Webb." When the Oklahoman begins to record for Dunhill as he intends to, he's bound to sound a long way beyond this.

John Hartford, from St. Louis, who wrote "Gentle on My Mind," and sang it (Glen Campbell heard that and then recorded it himself), has his fourth LP out on RCA, "Housing Project." He says at the beginning that each song is a room, therefore the name. On some of these, he plays 12-string banjo.

Hartford says in one song, "I'm so deep in love I'm almost in love." One song, "I Didn't Know the World Would Last This Long," has the above-suffering melancholy of one of Rod McKuen's best.

Hartford isn't trying to be deep, significant or exciting and it's possible to enjoy this record very much on Hartford's own quiet terms.