

Minding Joni's roses

Almost every guy with whom I have had the courage to broach such a sensitive subject has confessed to a secret adoration for Joni Mitchell. I, too, confess harboring this same long distance love. And why not? The picture Joni paints of herself is so strikingly similar to the mental image I construct of an ideal lover, the identification seems inevitable.

Joni's latest album, *For the Roses* (Asylum) maintains my love as it deepens my understanding; she continues to paint her brilliantly expressive musical self-portrait.

Joni is more than a simple musician, although simplicity and elegant purity are two characteristics of the person that continually reveal themselves. Joni Mitchell is a total artist.

To begin to understand, we can look at the physical aspect of

For the Roses. As always, the album is magnificently packaged. The pair of photographs is exquisitely sensuous without ever hinting of pretension. The photograph shows Joni, in green velvet on a verdant hill overlooking a river. Inside the album, a naked lady gazes out over the Pacific. The self-portrait, by a trademark, is engaging in its simple beauty. In addition, you can read the poetry that accompanies her music.

Beyond the structural, we are confronted with a poetess of such depth and sensitivity that she defies classification. Large and small, her lyrics are autobiographical, her songs range from the pain of being a well-loved performer ("For the Roses") to the pain of loving a well-loved star ("Blonde in the Bleachers"). Her poetry ex-

presses the pain of lost love ("See You Sometime") and the oft-accompanying pain of finding a new one ("Woman of Heart and Mind"). In "Electricity" the unbroken flow of love's energy is likened to an electrical current and in "You Turn Me On I'm a Radio," she uses the medium as a metaphor to convey her longing. Throughout each poem, however, we are given a sense of the total person; needing, wanting, caring, loving, hurting, giving, giving.

*I want to be strong
I want to laugh along
I want to belong to the living
Alive alive...*

-All I Want

The culmination of Joni's talent rests in her execution of her poetry through her music and her voice. Since many of the songs are sad, she uses the piano

to accent the plaintive; but she reserves her guitar for some of the more cheerful tunes. The songs themselves are brilliant constructions, each brought to its individual fulfillment through Joni's soaring voice.

A Joni Mitchell album is, for me, a personal experience, wherein I feel the intensity of the pain and grow with her to find the inner strength to return, a bit less naive, to face the pain that love will sometimes bring.

I treasure her albums above all in my ever expanding collection. *For Joni* really lets one see into the depths of her heart, and gently lets her know that we all share the pain. By deepening our understanding of her life, we deepen our understanding of our own. Perhaps, that's what my love is all about.

-MICHAEL KIMMEL