

Joni Mitchell stays serene

By JARED JOHNSON

Joni Mitchell's second album, "Clouds," won the Grammy Award as best folk performance of 1969.

Her followup to "Clouds" is "Ladies of the Canyon," a lovely collection of pure truth and beauty.

Her singing as always is animated, yet serene, tender, still determined, lyrical and poignant, but never overbearing. With a quiet intensity her lyrics project their message, her crystal-clear voice happily free of Joan Baez's subtle tension and repetitious protest themes.

THERE is direction and conciseness in her music. Her voice and acoustic guitar are free as they must be, not chained by amplification. Cuts include "The Circle Game," already recorded by many other artists, "Woodstock," also on the new CSNY, "Ladies of the Canyon," "Rainy Night House," and "For Free." Many of these songs were a long time in coming. Joni wrote "The Circle Game" in 1966, "Morning Morgantown," and "Conversation" in 1967.

If you like Joni Mitchell, then you should certainly pick up on

Nancy Michael's first album, "First Impressions. Nancy sounds enough like Joni to be her sister, not only in singing, but in the music she writes, and the arrangements. "Tired of Waiting", "Fantasy," and "Just the Same" find Nancy very close to where Joni was on "Clouds," lyrics sketching out visions of some private faraway world that only one's mind can inhabit. The parallels with Joni extend even to a priceless double-tracking at the end of "Tribute to GG" similar to Joni's throughout "The Gallery."

THE highly structured music on "Soft Parade" was reflected by the award-winning cover. In contrast, the "Morrison Motel" cover is seedy and sloppy looking, but still an accurate reflection of the music inside.

"Waiting For the Sun" was their best LP, with "Soft Parade" a close second, but on "Morrison Motel" they haven't touched material like "Love Street" or "Spanish Caravan." They've taken the easy way out opting for hard rock almost all the way through. The new songs lack the mystique of "Wishful Sinful" and the skillful arrangement of "Touch Me."