

records

# Thank You, Joni Mitchell

By LES BLACK

Here is Joni Mitchell. A penny-yellow blonde with a vanilla voice. Influenced, or appearing influenced, by Judy Collins, Gingham, Leather, lace, Producer David Crosby (the ex-Byrd), Robert Herrick, North Battleford (Saskatchewan), New York (New York), Gordon Lightfoot, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, Chuck, seagulls, dolphins, Dairy Queen floats, the Lovin' Spoonful, rain, sunlight, garbage, metermaids and herself.

Last month she was in Ann Arbor, singing to sell-out crowds at Canterbury House. Now her first album, *Song to a Seagull*, is out on the Reprise label. It is an impressive debut, one of the year's most important folk albums (the others, so far, being Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* and *The Songs of Leonard Cohen*). (If you have a thing about labeling these records "folk", just say they're the three most important new albums you'll find on the "FOLK MUSIC" rack at J. L. Hudson's.)

Start with the Beatles. Just as Dylan taught a generation of minstrels where to plug in, the Beatles gave them a Sgt. Pepper trip complete with codas and cadenzas, sitars and steam calliopes. Add "Penny Lane" baroque riffs and "Yesterday—Eleanor Rigby" strings and you have folk music where Lennon and McCartney have taken it.

Their message reached even such traditionalists as Judy Collins. Having discovered that Marat-Sade sounds best with lots of orchestration, Judy then recorded an entire album of (*Wildflowers*) steeped in Joshua Rifkin's Baroque Muzak — Baroque Muzak par excellence, perhaps, but nevertheless, Baroque Muzak. *Wildflowers*, though it appears a comedown after the immense range of *In My Life*, is higher on the charts than any previous Judy Collins album has been (and success, they say, is where it's at).

Meanwhile, Joan Baez and Buffy Ste. Marie have joined the retreat from simple acoustic arrangements. They use the orchestrations of Peter Schickel, who is a genius (the Brian Wilson of baroque-folk). Phil Ochs weaves inventively among baroque and ragtime backings on his latest album, *Pleasures of the Harbor*. The new Ian and Sylvia fare less well with an insistent drummer (may he break an arm). M.G.M. has re-mastered old cuts to create *Hank Williams With Strings* (Who's next? Leadbelly?). And Tom Rush has a new release with strings and saxophones and, on one cut, a vocal group that sounds like the Lennon Sisters. His album is redeemed from mediocrity mainly by the bare worth of the material, including fourteen minutes of Joni Mitchell songs. Which brings us back to Joni.

Joni Mitchell has recorded an album without orchestration. She plays acoustic guitar. Her only side-man is Stephen Stills (of the Buffalo Springfield) on one number ("Night in the City") because, she says, "he came up with a beautiful bass

line that I just couldn't deny." Her main studio trick is to dub in her voice a second time as a choral answer on certain songs (especially good in stereo).

"If I'd recorded a year ago," as Joni tells it, "I would have used lots of orchestration. No one would have let me put out an acoustic album. They would have said it's like having a whole paintbox and using only brown. But today is a better time to be recording. It's like in fashion. There's no real style right now. You find who you are and you dress accordingly. In music today I feel I can put down my songs with an acoustic guitar and forget the violins and not feel that I need them."

Joni has let her songs find out who they are and has dressed them accordingly. As a result, instead of following others' directions she has started on her own. If you ignore this album because you have enough old acoustic Joan Baez, Judy Collins and Bonnie Dobson records, you'll be like someone ignoring spring because he's seen it once before.

Joni Mitchell has recorded an accessible, uncluttered album. She makes it easy for you to groove on the lyrics and the melodies and meanings and textures of her clear gentle voice and where she is taking you and where she has been.

Consider first her words. Miss Mitchell is a lyrical kitchen poet. Her mind works the way you want people's minds to work.

"Michael brings you to a park  
He sings and it's dark  
When the clouds come by  
Yellow slickers up on swings  
Like puppets on strings  
Hanging in the sky..."

Joni Mitchell is Leonard Cohen's *Suzanne*: she shows you where to look among the garbage and the flowers. She teaches you what you already know.

"She has brought them to her senses  
They have laughed inside her laughter  
Now she rallies her defenses  
For she fears that one will ask her  
For eternity  
As she's so busy being free."

With Leonard Cohen, even if you can figure your way into one of his songs, you know you'll never find your way out. With Dylan, just when you think you're with him he does something you can't understand and nobody seems to be able to help much. Joni Mitchell is different. She leaps from image to image but seldom does she leave you hanging. Occasionally her lyrics lose relevance and become frosting without any cake, but even then, she's like a sand-dune: you like the very idea of her.

Joni's tunes are surprising. you don't go whistling them down the street right away because you don't learn them so easily. Her notes do not flow into each other naturally; they are put there as the song is constructed. At their best, her tunes provide a specific setting for her words. At their best, as in the lilting chorus to "Night

in the City," the gentle verses to "Marcie" or the yet unrecorded "Go Tell the Drummerman," her melodies, like her words, become both rare and accessible. Eventually, you do learn to whistle them.

She sings her tunes with a voice that ought to be heard rather than described. You can be told that her voice is full without being heavy, buoyant without being fluffy, but that doesn't tell you much more than you knew before you started reading this sentence. No matter. Her voice will be around for a while. You'll hear it.

While the aforementioned "Night in the City" is probably the overall best number on the album, "The Pirate of Penance" is the most revolutionary. In it, with shifting speeds and inflections, two voices simultaneously sing what they know about the disappeared sailor (pirate) and a little about each other (shades of Lucy and Polly in the *Three Penny Opera*). "Michael from Mountains," "Song to a Seagull," and "Cactus Tree" are also notable cuts.

First albums, like first novels, may be autobiographical. This one tells a personal story. Joni begins joyous in the city "with places to come from and places to go," starts to feel trapped as "another man reached out his hand/another hand reached out for more," and ends up on the seashore feeling new freedoms and new entrapments. It's a well-told tale. But enough said. Buy the album. Even if you somehow decide you don't like the songs, the artwork on the cover is worth owning.

# It's Bobby, Knocking 'Em Out in Lansing



—Daily—Andy Sacks

At the airport, on top of a truck



—Daily—Andy Sacks

In the hotel, giving his speech

Ten years ago, this motion picture could not possibly have been made



Even a year ago THE FOX could not have been made... not quite this way.

SANDY DENNIS • KEIR DULLEA  
ANNE HEYWOOD AS ELLEN MARCH

IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S **THE FOX** — symbol of the male

SCREENPLAY BY LEO SCHIFFRIN  
A RAYMOND STROSS PRODUCTION in Association with MOTION PICTURES INTERNATIONAL, INC. • LEWIS JOHN CARLINO and HOWARD KOCH • LEO SCHIFFRIN  
From the Novella "The Fox" by D. H. LAWRENCE • Produced by RAYMOND STROSS • Directed by MARK RYDELL • Color by DeLuxe • From CLARIDGE PICTURES

TONIGHT AT 7-9

CAMPUS

DIAL 8-6416

**WAYSIDE Theatre**  
3020 Washtenaw — 434-1782  
Wednesday-Saturday-Sunday

**HI-SPIRITED HI-LARTY!**

WALT DISNEY presents  
**BLACKBEARD'S GHOST**

TECHNICOLOR®  
Shows at 1-3-5-7-9  
Continuous from 1 p.m. every day  
April 7-13

**Come to the Party!**  
**DON'T BRING A BOTTLE—BRING BAIL!**

THE MIRISCH CORPORATION presents  
A BLAKE EDWARDS PRODUCTION

**Peter Sellers**  
**"THE PARTY"**

2nd Week

featuring CLAUDINE LONGET Music: HENRY MANCINI  
Screenplay by BLAKE EDWARDS, TOM WALDMAN and FRANK WALDMAN  
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK MUSIC BY HENRY MANCINI ON RCA RECORDS

FEATURE STARTS  
1:00-3:05-5:10  
7:15-9:25

**STATE Theatre**

Coming Next  
"THE SCALPHUNTERS"

Program Information  
NO 2-6264

**VII F 210 S. FIFTH AVE. FORUM 761-9700**

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT—SATURDAY 11:30 P.M. ONLY

## "BATTLE OF ALGIERS"

Theatre will be cleared before this show

**ALEC GUINNESS COMEDY ORGY!**  
**TRIPLE FEATURE—3 FOR THE PRICE OF ONE**

"A SUPERIOR CONCOCTION OF WIT AND FARCE..."

in the best tradition of satirical good humor!"  
—Time Magazine

"A wild ride into a world of uproarious fantasy!"  
—Sat. Review of Lit.

"Its humors are so ingenious and persistent that it is one big chuckle from beginning to end!"  
—N. Y. Times



ALEC GUINNESS

## "The Lavender Hill Mob"

with STANLEY HOLLOWAY  
A J. Arthur Rank Organization Presentation  
A CONTINENTAL DISTRIBUTING, INC. RE-RELEASE

FRI.: Lavender—2:15, 6:50  
Kind Hearts—3:35, 8:15  
White Suit—5:20, 10:05  
MON.: Lavender—6:50  
Kind Hearts—8:15  
White Suit—10:05

"SOLID SATIRE... a choice piece of movie foolery!"  
—Newsweek

"MR. GUINNESS keeps you fascinated and entertained"  
—N. Y. Times



## Alec Guinness as THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT

also starring JOAN GREENWOOD and CECIL PARKER  
A Michael Balcon-Ealing Studios Production  
A J. Arthur Rank Organization Presentation  
A CONTINENTAL DISTRIBUTING, INC. RE-RELEASE

SAT.: White Suit—2:15, 6:50  
Lavender—3:40, 8:20  
Kind Hearts—5:00, 9:45  
"BATTLE"—11:30  
TUES.: White Suit—6:50  
Lavender—8:20  
Kind Hearts—9:45

"ITS GENTLE COMEDY AND FRISKY WIT ARE IN THE AMIABLE TRADITION OF 'ARSENIC AND OLD LACE' ALEC GUINNESS BEST ACTOR OF THE YEAR SCORES A NEW TRIUMPH!"  
—Cue Magazine

"A SPOOF ON THE HIGHEST LEVEL!"  
—N. Y. Times

## KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS

ALEC GUINNESS • DENNIS PRICE • VALERIE HOBSON • JOAN GREENWOOD

Screenplay by Robert Hamer and John Dighton • Directed by Robert Hamer  
A Michael Balcon Production • Made at Ealing Studios  
A J. ARTHUR RANK Presentation • A CONTINENTAL DISTRIBUTING, INC. RE-RELEASE

SUN.: Kind Hearts—2:15, 6:50  
White Suit—4:00, 8:40  
Lavender—5:25, 10:10  
WED.: Kind Hearts—6:50  
White Suit—8:40  
Lavender—10:10

MONDAY and TUESDAY

# Bogart Movies

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 7 & 9 P.M.  
Architecture Aud.

## KEY LARGO

(1948)

dir. John Huston, screenplay by Richard Brooks & John Huston after a play by Maxwell Anderson.

HUMPHREY BOGART LAUREN BACALL  
EDWARD G. ROBINSON LIONEL BARRYMORE

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 7 & 9 P.M.  
Angell, Aud. A

## THE HARDER THEY FALL

Bogart's last film—the fight scene (1956)

dir. Mark Robson, screenplay & producer Philip Yordan, based on the novel by Budd Schulberg.

HUMPHREY BOGART ROD STEIGER  
JAN STERLING

75c at the door sponsored by Voice-SDS