

# A Pervasive Sense Of Desperation

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## "TURBULENT INDIGO"

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Joni Mitchell (Reprise)

An Old Testament sense of foreboding looms over Joni Mitchell's new album. With few exceptions, the 10 songs on "Turbulent Indigo" address the Canadian musical innovator's anxious vision of social disintegration. The sense of desolation that has powered some of her most intriguing work in the past comes across here as more desperate than ever.

Ever the dexterous lyric writer, she somewhat conversationally directs our focus on the disenchantment and naked aggression that have lately taken hold of us. In "Sex Kills," "Everyone hates everyone/And the gas leaks/And the oil spills/And sex sells everything/Sex kills . . ."

The domestic violence that haunted "Cherokee Louise," a song from her 1991 album "Night Ride Home," turns up here in "Not To Blame." Mitchell, who has never shied away from psychology, eerily probes the motivations of an anonymous celebrity who batters his wife. As she did on "Cherokee Louise," Mitchell uses Wayne Shorter's remarkably iridescent alto saxophone to cut across the song's agonizing narrative grain, spiriting the piece clear through its realm of rhetoric into the a genuine terrain of song.

The Old Testament foreboding turns up quite literally in "Sire of Sorrow (Job's Sad Song)," which finds the singer addressing herself to her Creator: ". . . Oh you tireless watcher! What have I done to you?/That you make everything I dread and everything I fear come true?"

Only once do the dark clouds truly lift from this recording — on a song she wrote a couple of years ago with her old pal and longstanding musical champion, David Crosby. "Yvette in English," which appeared on Crosby's 1993 album "Thousand Roads," belongs to Mitchell's excellent gallery of song-portraits, a charming group of works that includes "Marcy," "Roses Blue," "Carey," "Song for Sharon" and numerous others.

— Paul A. Harris