

# Joni, James offer strange albums

by DON SHEWEY

"Remember the days when you  
used to sit  
And make up your tunes for  
love  
And pour your simple sorrow  
To the soundhole and your knee  
And now you're seen  
On giant screens  
And at parties for the press  
And for people who have slices  
of you  
From the company  
They toss around your latest  
golden egg . . ."

"For the Roses"

Long-time fans of Joni Mitchell will probably be quite surprised to hear **For the Roses**, her new album on Asylum Records—it is really the strangest record she has ever done. The songs are tremendously complex, and on first hearing it doesn't sound much at all like the author of great songs like "Both Sides Now," "The Circle Came," "Chelsea Morning," and so on. The emphasis is on the piano instead of guitar, on poetry instead of lyrics. Luckily, the songs get better at each hearing, and eventually **For the Roses** turns out to be a better-than-average **Joni Mitchell** LP and certainly her most ambitious to date.

The big numbers on the album are things like "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire" with its Laura Nyro-like character-im-

ages, "You Turn Me On (I'm a Radio)" ("If you've got too many doubts/If there's no good reception for me then tune me out/'Cause, honey, who needs static, it hurts the head/And you wind up cracking and the day goes dismal/From 'Breakfast Barney' to the sign-off prayer . . ."), and "Judgment of the Moon and Stars (Ludwig's Tune)," which has some bizarre horns and strings arrangements.

There are several rambling poem-songs which range from weak ones like "Lesson in Survival," to "Woman of Heart and Mind," which works well in this style. The most feeble lyrics are on "See You Sometime," one of those songs that can be applied to any one of Joni Mitchell's superstar ex-lovers, and "Blonde in the Bleachers" isn't much better. "Baran grill" (which features some seemingly incongruous but definitely insane woodwinds) and "Electricity" are considerably more well-constructed songs. None of the songs on this album seem destined to be widely recorded by other artists like previous **Joni Mitchell** tunes; the only really catchy song is "You Turn Me On (I'm a Radio)." This works to make **For the Roses** a more personal thing than Joni Mitchell's earlier albums.

**One Man Dog**, (Warner Brothers Records), James Taylor's latest offering, is also strange in a slightly more accessible way. There are 18 cuts, mainly a minute or two in length, which just flow together like the second side of **Abbey Road**. Traditionals, jigs, instrumentals, and sing-alongs "Mescalito has opened up my eyes . . ." take up about a third of the time. "Chili Dog," a sensational (and slightly obscene) little concert number, is included. The more substantial songs are along the line of most of James Taylor's; "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight" will probably be a new J. T. classic.

Musical assistance on **One Man Dog** is provided by old friends and new friends—regular crew Russ Kunkel, Danny Kotchmar, Craig Doerge, and Leland Sklar, plus Carole King, Carly Simon, Linda Ronstadt (who does a fine little solo on "One Morning in May"), and John McLaughlin, who adds acoustic guitar on one of his own compositions, "Someone." There are a lot of really nice, jazzy horn bits on a few songs. After three similar-sounding albums, it's good to know James Taylor can do something new every so often. **One Man Dog** is a pleasant musical grab-bag of styles.

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