

children, little old ladies, and drunks therefore also excuseable on the grounds that the victims should have taken better care in protecting themselves? I think that this is an assumption inherent in society's attitude towards rape and rape victims that we must fight continuously.
Connie Bagnall, Rape Relief, Vancouver

I'm excited about the fact that your Centre is encouraging civil action and that you have a lawyer willing to represent the victim. In answer to your comments on corroboration you are correct that, while at present the warning as to corroboration must be given, in fact a guilty verdict is possible on the victim's testimony only — this was unclear in the article.

Secondly, you mention compensation for the victim from the "Worker's Compensation Board." I believe here you are referring to the Crimes Compensation Board and in Alberta damages, although small, have been awarded to compensate for loss of income while the victim is unable to return to work.

Thirdly, I agree with your response to the concept of apportionment of responsibility as it is likely to be applied in a rape civil suit and wish to assure you that the idea is not mine. In the article, I was reiterating a judicial process which is likely to occur. It is up to the victim's lawyer to persuade the court that the victim bears no responsibility for what happened. I also wished to make the point that, should the court find the victim partly to blame for the attack, in a civil suit this finding does not mean she must lose her case.

Linda Duncan

Linda Duncan is a lawyer with the Edmonton Social Planning Council and editor of the law column for *Branching Out*. She is also on the board of directors for the Rape Crisis Centre of Edmonton.

Civil Suit Successful in U.S.

In January 1976 an American woman was awarded civil damages as a result of a law suit she brought against two rapists two and a half years earlier. A jury of 8 men and 4 women awarded Mary Knight \$40,000. in compensatory damages and \$325,000. in punitive damages in a decision believed to set a precedent in U.S. courts.

Knight was attacked by two strangers after she left a singles bar in Washington, D.C. The two men forced her into a car and drove her to a home where she was raped repeatedly. Both men were convicted and sentenced to prison terms although one is now out on parole. Knight decided to bring the civil suit because, "I didn't think jail was going to do these guys much good. I knew I was going to remember that night for the rest of my life and I wanted them to remember it too." She says the money is not the reason she brought the suit. "I just wanted to see if society would put a price on what they did to me, the hurt, the pain and the mental anguish."

The men have filed notice of appeal arguing that the award is oppressive.

(*National Inquirer*, Feb. 14, 1976.)

music

Getting the Message

by Beverley Ross
illustration by Audrey Watson

Rita MacNeil's album "Born a Woman" has arrived too late. As the liner notes explain, MacNeil was first impelled to create her songs by the strong emotions she experienced as the result of her involvement with the women's movement in Toronto in 1971. But lyrics like:

And the media they've done so fine
Exploited our bodies and they buried our minds

Follow their line and you're sure to be
Another brain-washed member in society
With a wonder bra to improve your figure
And girdles designed to make you five pounds slimmer

Cover girl to improve your complexion
O don't offend the male population.

© Skinners Pond Music

while they were fine perhaps in the earlier days when we were all on fire with our new found selves, are not as timely as unabashedly political statements need to be. Today, as we awaken to the "morning after" of IWY and the increased disillusionment in society at large, MacNeil's presentation of the problems of liberation are dated

by their simplicity and naivete.

Surely, the omnipresence of the media being what it is, everyone in the English speaking world who is *going* to have their consciousness raised has had it raised. The liberation songs on this album are not likely to be useful tools of instigation.

If MacNeil's live performance has been a source of inspiration to women's groups across the country, her presence on the album is held down by singularly pedestrian musical arrangements on the more heavy-handed songs, such as the title track and "Need for Restoration". Where the lyrical message is more subtle as with "Angus Anthony's Store" or "John and Mary", the songs receive a correspondingly more creative treatment from musical director Jim Pirie.

When MacNeil sings from her emotional rather than her political consciousness, Pirie matches the haunting, ballad-like quality of the songs with suitably shaded sounds. On tracks like "Rene" and "Who Will I Go To See" MacNeil displays her gift for expressing her personal experience within the bounds of traditional folk song.

Her voice is strong and clear, with the reedy vibrato quality of a Joan Baez. It is in keeping with the Cape Breton-Scottish ballad tradition from which her songs arise.

This is an album in which half the songs are immediately appealing because they are real, warm and human. The others, while they may be sincere in their inception, sound as if they were written out of a sense of duty. They are obtrusive and awkward in both message and musical treatment. Unfortunately, it is these songs which are likely to stand out and make Rita MacNeil a more obscure artist than she deserves to be.

It seems that every new Joni Mitchell album is her best. "The Hissing of Summer Lawns" is no exception. Very few artists have managed to survive and grow in the ruthless climate of the "pop" music world in the way that Mitchell has. Critics have accused her of being too introspective, too painfully honest. I've always believed that this criticism came from those too inflexible to accommodate her point of view. Hardened by their (often male) roles, they seem untouched by her minute perception of the world and her image in it. But as the edges of these roles gradually become blurred, perhaps Mitchell has come to realize that she speaks not only for herself but also for many women and men who identify with her vision.

The poetry of this new group of songs is more self-assured, more universal than before. It is still Mitchell magic, but here the other personae outnumber the formidable "I" of her past albums. The imagery is a mixture of both the fanciful and the urbane:

Battalions of paper-minded males
Talking commodities and sales
While at home their paper wives
And their paper kids
Paper the walls to keep their gut reactions

hid

Yellow checkers for the kitchen
Climbing ivy for the bath
She is lost in House and Garden
He's caught up in Chief of Staff

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Since there are no production credits on the album, one can assume that Mitchell and the musicians she worked with are responsible for the masterful direction of the album. An acknowledged leader in the search for "new" sounds, Mitchell continues to experiment with songs like "The Jungle Line", where lyrics juxtapositioning "uptown" images with figures from Rousseau's paintings are superimposed

on a musical backdrop of Moog synthesizer and Burundi warrior drums. Her use of "voice-as-instrument" techniques, where masses of multi-tracked vocals are used like horns and strings, continues to be copied for its innovation. "In France They Kiss on Mainstreet," the inevitable "top-40" track, makes no concession to that market. Also intriguing is the Joni Hendricks' tune, "Centrepiece" set right in the middle of "Harry's House." The album continues with a traditionally rooted half *a capella*, half choral song "Shadows and Light":

Critics of all expression
Judges of black and white
Saying it's wrong
Saying it's right
Compelled by prescribed standards
Or some ideals we fight

For wrong, wrong and right
Threatened by all things
Man of cruelty — Mark of Cain
Drawn to all things
Man of delight — born again, born again.
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I prefer to receive the messages a la Mitchell but I won't ask you to judge by my "prescribed standards." Be drawn to that which delights you.

Rita MacNeil "Born a Woman,"
Boot BOS 7154

Joni Mitchell "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," Asylum 7ES-1061

Beverley Ross is an arts instructor at the Youth Development Centre in Edmonton. She also sings, composes and contributes regularly to *Branching Out*.

