



Daily Photo by STUART HOLLANDER Joni Mitchell

# Joni's latest LP offers free-spirited jazz, rock

By KURT HARJU  
On The Hissing Of Summer Lawns (Asylum 7E-1051), Joni Mitchell takes an ambitious and perceptive look at the type of life American society offers to a free-spirited artist like herself. While she does not totally reject or condemn the American Dream, she yearns for something more.

"Conceived graphically, musically, lyrically and accidentally—as a whole," this package is the first major collection of new material to be released by Joni in two years. Hissing shows a creative mind working in full gear on a thematic song cycle that is the most challenging effort of her illustrious career.

SUPERFICIALLY, the record is an extension of the electronic, jazz-influenced compositions she initiated on Court And Spark and, most recently, Miles Of Aisles.

But there are striking differences in the mood and the

attitude she is adopting on the new album. She is less the lovesick lady mourning the end of an affair and more the woman of the world observing the changing scene.

In "Shades Of Scarlet Conquering," her cinematic, southern belle declares "a woman must have everything" and she means more than just Clark Gable.

HER MUSIC too has grown more confident—she's now a first-class composer of sophisticated musical structures, arrangements and sound effects; judging by the album's impressive sonics. It's a considerable achievement as Mitchell is now working without the guidance of Tom Scott who originally helped shape the group sound on her last three albums.

On this release, Joni is trying to establish her place in the ranks of pop music's elite. She's a star but success is turning out to be less than she expected.

The first song, "In France They Kiss On Main Street," celebrates freedom, romance and creation as the human and artistic ideals to which she aspires. But, in "The Boho Dance," she realizes that she's still much the same person as when she was a struggling folk-singer from Canada:

Nothing is capsulized in me  
On either side of town  
The streets were never really mine  
Not mine these glamour

gowns.

The aspect of contemporary living that she really dislikes is the bureaucratic and technological maze. "Harry's House" effectively destroys the myth of suburban bliss by including the classic Johnny Mandel-Jon Hendricks tune of unrequited love "Centerpiece," within the pessimistic context of her song.

INSTRUMENTAL support varies from solo guitar to full See JONI'S, Page 8

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## Clarke scarce on 'Journey'

By STEPHEN HERSH  
STANLEY CLARKE is one of the more conspicuous of the new wave of electric jazz heavies. He's a dazzling bassist—this he demonstrated at Hill Auditorium a couple of months ago as a member of Chick Corea's band, Return to Forever.

His playing is the fastest and most fluent around, and the weird metallic tones he gets out of his Alembic brand bass mark his sound as completely distinctive.

But Clarke's own playing unfortunately isn't spotlighted on his latest album, Journey to Love (Nemperor NE 433). As an arranger, he employs a variety of jazz and rock styles to build effective compositions. A solo recording, though, is the

best place for a back-up musician to showcase his talents as a soloist. And on this album, though we hear a lot from George Duke and Jeff Beck, we don't hear enough of Clarke.

ONE OF Clarke's bass lines is the first thing we do hear on the opening tune, "Silly Putty." He plucks out a springy riff, based on a set of descending chord changes, and when he finally hits bottom he thumps out a short, funky lick which leads into a keyboard burst.

It's keyboard player George Duke who dominates the rest of the song. It sounds a lot like the song "Funny Funk" on Duke's album Feel. It's syncopated and spirited, and some of Clarke's bass riffs do occasionally bubble up from the

background—but they're scarce. And in the tunes featuring guitarist Jeff Beck, Clarke is hardly in evidence. Those numbers show Beck to be just a mite out of his element in a jazz group, as he seemed to be in the Eddie Harris album of a couple years ago, E.H. in the U.K.

BOTH ON Journey to Love and on the Harris record, Beck's solos are slightly more hesitant and less fluid than those of the other musicians—the musicians schooled in jazz—participating in the sessions.

But his solos are good because the notes are well-chosen. And the tough, loud rock 'n' roll chords he plays on "Hello Jeff" add a nice touch, reminiscent of his album Beck Ola.

Still, Duke's synthesizer solos are a telling contrast to Beck's, because they're so agile and forceful. Duke is right at home playing fast, furious, warbling solos. And that fast, furious playing is the essence of this electric jazz.

IT ISN'T only the electric stuff that's fast. "Song to John," dedicated to John Coltrane, is a two-part acoustic composition featuring John McLaughlin on guitar and Chick Corea on piano. It starts off slowly, with Clarke gently bowing a double bass.

Later, the pace picks up. All the instruments state a speedy unison theme, and then they take turns playing rapid-fire solos.

It's here that Clarke does some of his best work on the album, plucking lightning-fast, rumbling riffs.

"CONCERTO for Jazz / Orchestra" is a sprawling tune, punctuated with a few loud, crashing, pompous blasts which sound like some Return to Forever songs.

That number would have worked better had it been cut to the length of the few stinging solos, by Clarke, Duke, and the former guitarist for Bruce Springsteen, David Sancious.

When the spotlights at Return to Forever concerts turn to Clarke, the bassist invariably kicks ass. On Journey to Love, he seems modest. He shouldn't relegate himself to the background.

## Musselwhite plays traditional blues with an electric touch

By JOAN BORUS  
IT DOESN'T seem like many people have heard of Charlie Musselwhite, save for hard core blues freaks, and that's a shame. When he decided to title his latest album Leave the Blues to Us, (Capitol ST-11450) he wasn't boasting by any means. Just listen to the LP once and you'll be content to leave the blues to Charlie and the other fine musicians on this album.

Few harp players are able to match Charlie's performance. His harmonica style is mellow, throaty, and incisively honed. He can bend a blue note on the harp the way B.B. King does on the guitar and is also able to skillfully weave and interact his solos within the context of the song.

A STUNNING example of this is the first cut on side two, "Candy Kitchen," where Musselwhite's wailing harp plays around Mike Bloomfield's imitative, high pitched guitar, in a call-and-response pattern that compliments the interplay between the two instruments.

The overall musical effect of Leave the Blues to Us could best be labeled urban blues in that it features a brass section, electric guitars and piano, and slick, tight arrangements.

Yet, as the liner notes point out, the difference between urban and country blues is difficult to define—the basic difference being usually one of sophistication in the arrangements and instrumentation.

DESPITE HIS tendency for a higher energy treatment of the blues, Musselwhite never forgets the tradition from which he came. Side one for example closes with the traditional ballad, "Key to the Highway," a song associated with great

bluesmen like Big Bill Broonzy. Similarly, Musselwhite pays respect to the past with "Early in the Mornin'," song that dates to the inception of the blues.

In updating the tune, Musselwhite alters the instrumentation but works within the three-chord structure of elemental blues to create one of the best songs on the LP.

MUSSELWHITE'S earthy singing provides the basic stimulus for the energy to the album. His style of vocal inflections on a cut like Willie Dixon's "Business Man" shows a thorough understanding of the nuances necessary to properly sing the blues.

Credit must also be given to Musselwhite's superb back-up musicians. In addition to performances by Bloomfield and Goldberg, he is augmented by the King Bee Band, a group of studio musicians whose driving rhythm adds a special touch of polish to Musselwhite's arrangements.

## Scott-Heron concert scheduled

This Friday night, December 5, black poet and musician Gil Scott-Heron will appear in concert with The Midnight Band at the Michigan Theatre as part of the After Midnight Concert Series.

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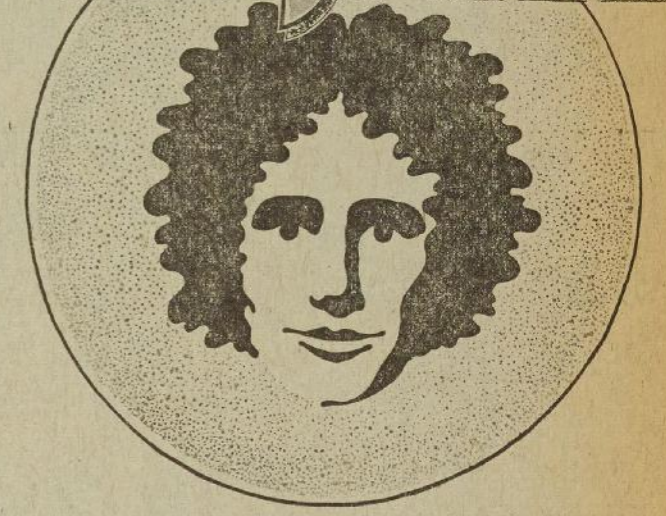
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