

Mitchell returns to basics on *Night Ride Home*

By CALVIN GILBERT
Music writer

JONI MITCHELL
Night Ride Home
Geffen

The syncopated chirping of crickets signals the opening of *Night Ride Home*, Joni Mitchell's 16th album and the most consistently satisfying one she's made in many years.

The title song, as well as most of the entire album, is reminiscent of *Hejira*, Mitchell's 1976 album which provided an accessible combination of rock, jazz and folk.

A lack of accessibility has occasionally been a problem in her work, although even the ambitious *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* provided treasures to those who weren't willing to immediately dismiss the two-record set.

Mitchell's ambition, in itself, has been an obstacle, especially on her 1979 tribute to jazz musician Charles Mingus. Regardless of how heart-felt her intentions may have been, it's a tough album to endure in its entirety.

Her last three studio albums have been good, if erratic. On *Night Ride Home*, Mitchell's acoustic guitar is more prominent, and the relatively sparse instrumentation provides excellent support to the songs and her amazing voice.

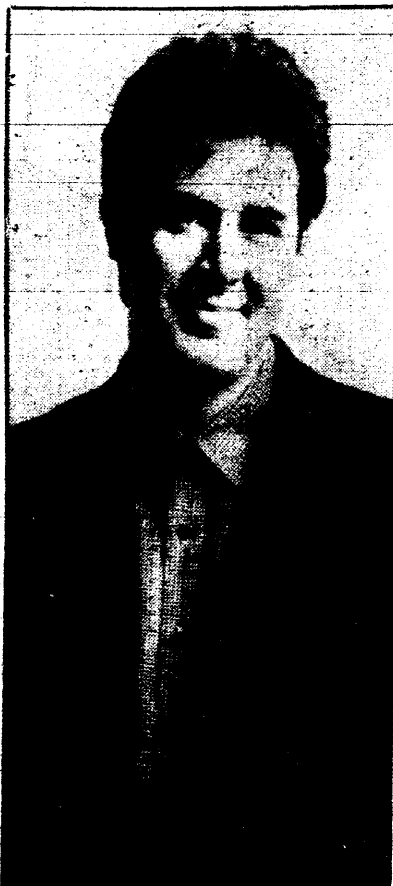
Lyrical, mature themes prevail, although Mitchell reveals fond memories of her youth through "Ray's Dad's Cadillac" and "Come in From the Cold." On "The Windfall," Mitchell apparently finds herself in the middle of a lawsuit filed by a former employee, who must have started out as a friend.

The album also marks a songwriting collaboration with husband Larry Klein, who wrote the music for "Nothing Can Be Done." Mitchell adapts a W.B. Yeats poem for "Slouching Towards Bethlehem."

Night Ride Home contains some gorgeous sounds, and I hope it's a success, if only to convince Mitchell to get onstage again for a concert tour. As good as her recordings sound, she's even better than that in person.

VINCE GILL
Pocket Full of Gold
MCA

After a stint with the country-rock band Pure Prairie League, it's taken Vince Gill a decade to get noticed by the mainstream country music crowd. It happened last year with the single



Vince Gill

"When I Call Your Name," which goes to prove that talent and tenacity eventually pay off . . . sometimes.

With *Pocket Full of Gold*, he plays it safe as he sings his way through 10 professionally crafted songs. The craftsmanship makes for a solid album, although there's little here to give Gill the added identity he needs at this point in his career.

The title song provides the best performance, with Patty Loveless providing harmony vocals. The clarity of Gill's voice, aided by his careful use of subtle embellishments, shows he has a strong bluegrass influence.

"Pocket Full of Gold" seems to be derived from the old country tune "A Satisfied Mind." Gill updates the theme by focusing upon an unfaithful husband, giving the song the plot twists that place it above the remainder of the album's material.

Other than that, it's primarily run-of-the-mill country, with songs about broken relationships and trying to pay the bills each month.



Joni Mitchell

Maybe it's taking Gill longer than most to figure out what he wants to do with his music. Don't count him out, though. Anybody who can sing and pick a guitar like he does should have a promising future.

SOUNDTRACK
The Doors
Elektra

Wake up, kids! The '60s are back for those of you who missed it.

Jim Morrison's still dead . . . or is he? And the other three members of the Doors are suddenly celebrities again. If you don't believe me, just turn on the TV. You'll probably see drummer John Densmore or guitarist Robby Krieger promoting the Oliver Stone film, *The Doors*. Or maybe you'll catch keyboardist Ray Manzarek criticizing the project.

A soundtrack CD has now been released and, stop worrying, it features Jim Morrison's original vocals. While it's not exactly a "greatest hits" package, it does serve as an interesting compilation.

Even today, the Doors are generally regarded as either incredibly important or overrated. The truth probably falls more in the middle. Overall, the

albums weren't terrific, although the individual cuts encompass some great music. And when American rock was falling into the "peace and love" message of San Francisco, the Doors seemed more dangerous. They were certainly a lot better than the bland bubblegum that had seeped into the Top 40 charts when "Light My Fire" was released.

The soundtrack release includes some of Morrison's poetry, as well as the long version of "Light My Fire" and the still eerie "Riders on the Storm."

In devising the soundtrack disc, somebody felt the need to include the classical performance of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana: Introduction*. As if somebody's going to look at the disc in a store and say, "Oh, look! It has the song by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus!"

However, it also features "Heroin" by the Velvet Underground and Nico, which may be more interesting than the tracks by the Doors.

All in all, it's not a bad package, although it duplicates much of the previous double CD compilation by the Doors. Don't look here for "People Are Strange" or "Hello, I Love You."

Maybe they weren't in the movie. I haven't seen it yet. I'm waiting until it shows up at the dollar cinemas