

the time,' Mitchell said. 'They wouldn't have said it if it had been written by a man.' The song is propelled by the explosive fretless bass of Mitchell newcomer Jaco Pastorius, a flamboyant jazz-rock legend whose life ended tragically with a drug overdose in 1987. 'He was the bass player of my dreams,' Mitchell said. 'I can't imagine *Hejira* without him.'

DON'T INTERRUPT THE SORROW

From the 1975 *Rolling Stone* review: "In 'Don't Interrupt the Sorrow,' a poem of almost impenetrable mystery, she [Joni] voices the core of her vision. Among other things, the song parallels modern forms of female subjugation with both Christian and African mythology in imagery that is disjunctive and telegraphic:

*He says 'Your notches liberation doll'
And he chains me with that serpent
To that Ethiopian wall
Winds of change patriarchs
Snug in your bible belt dreams."*

DOWN TO YOU

From *Paste Magazine*, 2017: "With spiraling, interwoven orchestration, *Court and Spark's* 'Down To You' rightly won a GRAMMY for Best Arrangement Accompanying a Vocalist in 1974. With Mitchell's quintessentially raw self-awareness, the lyrics almost certainly seem to be a reflection on her own character and

the thrill she finds in new lovers. But, like the true poet she is, she never explicitly states to whom she's speaking, which allows listeners to insert themselves and their imaginations into the song."

DREAMLAND

From the 1975, *Village Voice* review: "In 'Dreamland,' Airtio's drum becomes the beat of a pep rally where the chant is a jingly montage of racist images and quasi-ads, and the result is Mitchell's greatest third-person song: a frightening, funny parody of how television and advertising corrupt ideas by turning them into commercial products with a putative erotic value. This is stuff Mitchell knows to her bones. Sexual corruption may be the metaphor for material corruption, and Mitchell makes the most of it, warping every syllable into a hooker's come-on, obviously enthralled by the rotten opulence she excoriates. She is herself, after all, one of the ultimate products of imperialism: a jaded Hollywood star."

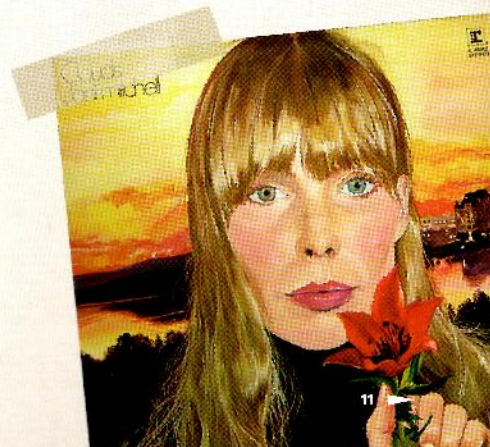
FOR THE ROSES

From Joni Mitchell's introduction to the song at Carnegie Hall on February 23, 1972: "This is another new song. It's called 'For the Roses,' and it comes from the expression, 'to run for the roses.' You know what that's all about: that's when you take this horse and, you know, like he comes charging into the finish line, and they throw a wreath of

flowers around his neck, and then one day, they take him out and shoot him. It's kind of a macabre thing to say, isn't it, I guess?"

NOTHING CAN BE DONE

From *The New York Times*, March 17, 1991: "Oh I am not old / I'm told / But I am not young,' Joni Mitchell sings in 'Nothing Can Be Done,' from her new album, *Night Ride Home*. 'Must I surrender with grace / The things that I loved when I was younger?' she asks. 'What do I do here with this hunger?' Ms. Mitchell's stoic reply to her own question, repeated almost like a mantra throughout the song, is simply: 'Nothing can be done.'"



SONG LIST CONTINUED

a young girl incarcerated in one of Ireland's Magdalene institutions—The Magdalene Laundries—for being over 20, unmarried and attractive. The song is an exceptional example of taking a news topic and finding the human side that speaks of the injustice, but never sounds like it's a protest song—it never talks at the listener, takes a position and pounds at it. It simply takes a first-person account and uses elegant metaphor, figurative language and prosody to bring the speaker's situation to life."

TWO GREY ROOMS

Joni Mitchell wrote a wordless vocal melody and instrumental accompaniment for the song in 1982 during the sessions for her album *Wild Things Run Fast*. She titled it "Speechless" as lyrical inspiration for the song escaped her until 1989 when she encountered the story of New German Cinema director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who, amid the repression of Germany's anti-gay Paragraph 175 laws, was left broken-hearted by a male lover in his youth. In a 1996 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Mitchell says of the song: "It's a story of obsession...about this German aristocrat who had a lover in his youth that he never got over. He later finds this man working on a dock and notices the path that the man takes every day to and from work. So the aristocrat gives up his fancy digs and moves to these two shabby gray rooms overlooking this street, just to watch this man walk to and from work. That's a song that shows my songs aren't all self-portraits."

WOODSTOCK

From a pbs.org interview with David Yaffe, author of Joni Mitchell's bio *Reckless Daughter*: "As rock and folk musicians from around the country headed to Woodstock in August of 1969, Mitchell stayed behind. She was scheduled to perform on 'The Dick Cavett Show' the day after the festival ended and, nervous that her return home would be delayed, her agent David Geffen asked her not to go. Bitterly disappointed, she followed the legendary festival from afar and wrote the song 'Woodstock,' a song that held tremendous emotional weight for her. The lyrics are not really a celebration, especially when you hear the way she sings it. It's a dirge. The first few times she performed it, she burst into tears, because it brought back the intensity of the experience and was so moving."

RAISED ON ROBBERY

From the 1974 review in *The New York Times*: "Not all of Mitchell's songs focus solely and inwardly on love. She's fine at telling tales too, like the fast and racy 'Raised on Robbery' about a prostitute vainly attempting to make a sale in a bar."

RIVER

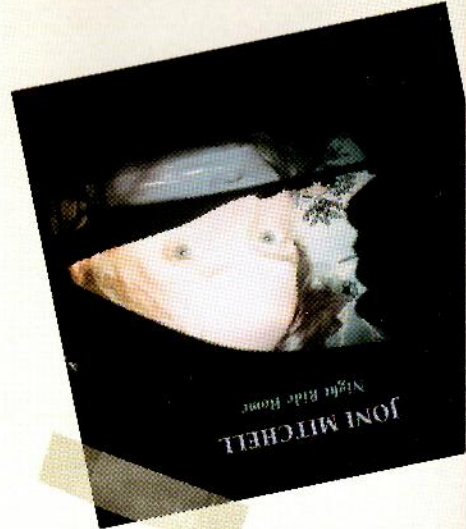
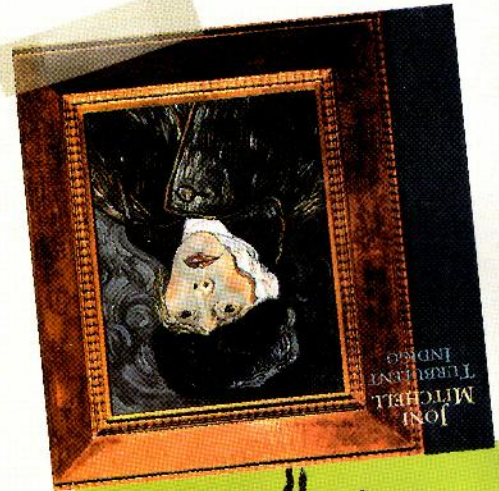
From the *Washington Post*: "James Taylor, who knows the song better than just about anybody aside from Mitchell, said in a 2006 interview with the *Post* that 'I don't know why it's suddenly getting picked up as a Christmas song. But some things just become identified as seasonal songs, and this is now one of them.' At the time, Taylor had just released *James Taylor at Christmas*, which included 'River'—a song he'd first heard decades earlier, when Mitchell played it at her home in Los Angeles in 1970, shortly after it was written. 'Most Christmas songs are light and shallow, but 'River' is a sad song,' Taylor said. 'It starts with a description of a commercially produced version of Christmas in Los Angeles...then juxtaposes it with this frozen river, which says, 'Christmas here is bringing me down.' It only mentions Christmas in the first verse. Then it's, 'Oh, I wish I had a river I could skate away on'—wanting to fall into this landscape that she remembers. It's such a beautiful thing, to turn away from the commercial mayhem that Christmas becomes and just breathe in some pine needles. It's a really blue song."

THE BOHO DANCE

From the 1976 *Rolling Stone* review: "Images of entrapment and enslavement (an artist to his patrons) also inform 'The Boho Dance,' set in New York. Inspired by *The Painted Word*, Tom Wolfe's clever diatribe against the art world establishment, this recollected dialogue depicts the hypocrisy of a scene that only pretends not to be thoroughly commercialized."

THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES

From songchops.com: "On her 1994 album *Turbulent Indigo* Joni Mitchell has one of the most descriptive, powerful songs you'll ever hear. She crafts a first-person story about



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SONG LIST UPDATE

“Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire” and “Help Me” will replace
“Raised on Robbery” and “Don’t Interrupt the Sorrow.”



From the 1973 Rolling Stone review: “Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire” — the apparatus and taste of smack — is brilliant and chilling with its ironically brimstone lyric that is cruelly telling especially when read apart from the song:

*Cold Blue Steel out of money
One eye for the beat police
Sweet Fire calling,*

*“You can’t deny me
Now you know what you need.”*

*Underneath the jungle gym
Hollow-grey-fire-escape-thief*

*Looking for Sweet Fire
Shadow of Lady Release*

*“Come with me
I know the way,” she says*

“It’s down, down, down the dark ladder...”

“The weeping reed fills that interlace the song come from Tommy Scott and are superb, their airy swirling and blending with Joni’s imagery like the best of jazz, like Dolphy walling his heart out on ‘Melba’ or ‘17 West.’ But for the fear and degradation of the lyric, this could be the most lissome and trenchant love song on the album, so lovely is the tune and so sensual the singing. But then, who says that love in a strange form is not what heroin is all about?”

HELP ME

From 7 inches of 70s Pop (blog): “Joni Mitchell was still being labeled as a folk singer until the first single, ‘Help Me,’ from her 6th album, *Court & Spark*, traveled into the Top 10 in June of 1974. By now, Joni was adding more jazzy touches to her singing and playing as well as her backing musicians, who on this album happened to be Tom Scott & the L.A. Express. The sound perfectly suits Joni’s singing style with an arrangement that gives the listener the feeling of a falling-in-love swoon. This song and album were a door flung open to her musical adventures in jazz explorations, going so far as her 1979 album, *Mingus*, a collaboration with Charles Mingus who passed away during the making of that album. But nothing was a commercially successful as ‘Help Me,’ and it’s easy to see why. Right from the opening sighs of ‘Help Me,’ I think I’m falling, we’re right there with Joni reminiscing on our first pangs of love. But the pangs turn tragic as she realizes that she’s in love with a dude that loves to play the field. Joni is now hoping for the future and worrying about the past. Know why? She loves her freedom, too. Ah, hippies in love. Now as the music builds in over, I mean, she says, we were talking or not talking (wink wink) and then you danced with a lady with a hole in her stocking. Alas, Joni would not get her question answered, but became a musical influence on just about every female singer/songwriter that came after her, as well as people like Prince (who sampled ‘Help Me’ in his own song ‘The Ballad of Dorothy Parker.’)”