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Stereo Review

SEPTEMBER 1969 • 60 CENTS

THE SENSE OF HEARING: ODD FACTS FOR AUDIOPHILES
M. PIERRE BOULEZ OF THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
A SHORT HISTORY OF BELLS * MUSIC AT THE MOVIES

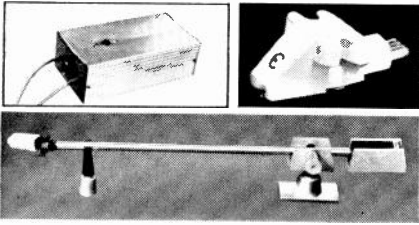


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Chinese music waiting for you, including one with the title "Shantung: Music of Confucius' Homeland." P. K.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

JONI MITCHELL: *Clouds*. Joni Mitchell (voice and guitar). *Tin Angel*; *Chelsea Morning*; *I Don't Know Where I Stand*; *That Song about the Midway*; *Roses Blue*; and five others. REPRISE RS 6341 \$4.98. ⓑ M 6341 \$6.95, Ⓒ X 6341 \$5.95.

Performance: **Superb songs by a major artist**
Recording: **Very good**
Stereo Quality: **Good**

In little more than a year, Joni Mitchell has come from virtual obscurity to a position of considerable prominence as a young songwriter-performer. Her first recording sold slowly at first, then took off in the wake of Judy Collins' version of *Both Sides, Now*. The establishment of Miss Mitchell's reputation as a bona fide talent followed quickly.

I prefer Miss Mitchell's own versions of her tunes to any other. It is always more interesting, of course, to hear composers do their own material, but in addition, Miss Mitchell's voice seems to me superior in quality, flexibility, range, and style to those of the many performers who have recorded her songs. Quite simply, she is a superb performer herself.

Both Sides, Now becomes virtually a new song when Miss Mitchell does it, despite its familiarity in other versions. *Chelsea Morning*, already recorded by Miss Collins, is one of the finest songs of recent memory, and will, I am firmly convinced, soon be a standard. *The Fiddle and the Drum*, an unaccompanied and somewhat uncharacteristic Mitchell song, is a sad questioning of American political aggressiveness (and a potentially fascinating new direction for Miss Mitchell). *The Gallery* and *I Don't Know Where I Stand* offer contrasting facets of a woman's love.

Like her first release, this is a major collection from a major artist, and should not be overlooked. I have yet to hear Miss Mitchell write (or perform) a song that does not move me. D. H.

NANA MOUSKOURI: *Nana Mouskouri Sings Over & Over*. Nana Mouskouri (vocals); the Athenians (instrumentals). *Scarborough Fair/Canticle*; *The Last Thing on My Mind*; *The Lily of the West*; *Try to Remember*; *Song for a Winter Night*; *Eveena*; and six others. FONTANA SRF 67594 \$4.98.

Performance: **On a clear, cold day . . .**
Recording: **Fine**
Stereo Quality: **Fine**

Beware of Greeks with vocal clarity and perfect diction; you may get to like hearing the words sung in full, pear-shaped tones. Then what would you do when Dusty Springfield comes sexily slurring around at your door? I would invite her in to listen to Nana, then I'd invite Nana to listen to Dusty's heart and soul. I don't know why I thought of Dusty in this instance. Maybe because I miss the intimacy that she communicates so freely, for it is intimacy that Miss Mouskouri lacks. She has everything else coolly perfected, like that other coldly perfect Greek, the Nike of Samothrace. It doesn't help Miss Mouskouri that she is backed by a string ensemble reminiscent of romantic tourist excursions through

the Greek islands. Nana Mouskouri's heart may be on her sleeve, but it is not in her voice, I'm sorry to say—or at least not in this program. R. R.

RECORDING OF SPECIAL MERIT

NRBQ: *NRBQ*. NRBQ (vocals and instrumentals). *C'mon Everybody*; *Rocket Number 9*; *Kentucky Slop Song*; *Ida*; *C'mon if You're Comin'*; *You Can't Hide*; and seven others. COLUMBIA CS 9858 \$4.98.

Performance: **Provocative new rock group**
Recording: **Very good**
Stereo Quality: **Very good**

There's been a lot of talk in rock circles lately about going back to basic sources. It's reminiscent, in a way, of the poignant pleas that recur every now and then for a return of the big bands. Already, a number of rock groups have arrived this year whose stock in trade is a re-creation of the music of the Coasters, the Drifters, *et al.* (shades of the Yerba Buena Dixieland Band!).

NRBQ arrives on a wave of publicity that would have us believe they are a throwback to the Fifties. Maybe so. As if to prove it, they play several pieces that really do recapture the sound of those passive Eisenhower years. But they do more, too. Consider their version of a Sun Ra piece called *Rocket Number 9*, the lovely, jazz-oriented melody (with lyrics by one of the NRBQ) by Carla Bley called *Ida* (and once known as *Ida Lupino*), and several pieces by keyboard player Terry Adams that are deeply tinged with the spirit of Thelonious Monk. A remarkably diverse collection of influences for a rock group—yet NRBQ handles it well. In the plethora of rock releases every month, this is one group that should not pass by unnoticed. D. H.

BUCK OWENS' BUCKAROOS: *Anywhere, U.S.A.* Buck Owens' Buckaroos (vocals and instrumentals). *Anywhere, U.S.A.*; *Tim-Buck-Too*; *Gathering Dust*; *Green-sleeves*; *Aw Heck*; *Highland Fling*; and six others. CAPITOL ST 194 \$4.98, Ⓒ 4CL 194 \$5.98.

Performance: **Jaunty**
Recording: **Good**
Stereo Quality: **Good**

Buck Owens' Buckaroos are touted as America's number one country band, which they may or may not be, and they make for amiable enough listening. They speed through this collection with the aplomb of a high-ground Lawrence Welk, and one number is performed so much like the other that it often seems that only the titles are changing. The only really bad thing here is an instrumental arrangement of *Green-sleeves*, and it is miserable. Otherwise, things such as the title song and *Georgia Peach*, sung by Don Rich, and *Gathering Dust* and *The Price I'll Have to Pay* performed by Doyle Holly, are spun out agreeably. This isn't really country-and-western music; it is too slick for that. For feeling it substitutes gloss, for momentum it substitutes speed; instead of interest it evokes only mild amusement. Still, as with Welk or Lester Lanin, I suppose there are fans of the Buckaroos who would have it no other way. P. R.

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