

Age shifts Joni Mitchell into new gear

By DEBI MARTIN
Cox News Service

Joni Mitchell fans who wonder if she's gotten lost in jazz's complex circuitry, will find her new album a return from the maze. *Wild Things Run Fast* includes musical elements acquired during Mitchell's six-year journey into the jazz terrain, but the territory is marked with a new twist.

"Now I'm interested in rock again," Mitchell said this week. "The new album is a synthesis of ideas. Part of the concept was to anchor down the rhythms a little more — they've been flying around through my jazz excursion. In the *Mingus* project I was into a Jackson Pollock zone — lines in the air over white space, but there was no anchor. It was all very abstract expressionistic."

Like a painter who experiments with a variety of visual styles, Mitchell has dabbled her aural paint brush in three distinct wells of music. First there was her *Blue* period, 1968 to '71, when she wrote romantic, impressionistic songs, simply orchestrated with an acoustic guitar.

WITH THE RELEASE of *For the Roses*, her musical canvases began including the punchy textures of rock 'n' roll, but rock's minimalism didn't satisfy her drive toward complexity.

In 1975, she began fusing jazz's sophisticated, subtle rhythms into musical collages that became progressively more abstract. *Mingus*, released in '79, was her most surrealist portrait.

Today, Mitchell performs material from all these periods. Backed up by players from her new album, Mitchell's concert may surprise her followers.

"People expect me to be this melancholic damsel in distress and when they see me having a good time, they wonder if I'm on some kind of Mae West joke-ride," she says. "I think the show we're doing now is a balance of emotion — there's lightness."

IT'S NO WONDER Mitchell's fans expect her to be a 'heavy' in concert. The one constant element throughout her musical evolution has been the motif of love in her lyrics. Whether the album is jazz-oriented, rock or folk, songs about romance dominate her discography. Her earliest songs were deeply personal, transparently exposing her sores from failed relationships. And when her music became more abstract, so did her lyrics.

Now, on *Wild*, Mitchell's verse still bubbles with



Mitchell

feeling, but it's cooled with sober reflection from a distance.

"Lyric poetry belongs to your teens and 20s," she said. "In your 30s, you begin to produce epic poetry because your perspective has shifted. You get to a point where the gushing of feeling stops and you start to see yourself aside yourself."

Wild is just fictional vignettes. *Chinese Cafe Unchained Melody*, is about backflashes like on the show *Happy Days*. It's seeing your kids hanging out where you used to. There's a generality to it — about change and the passage of time speeding by.

"BUT THERE'S STILL confessional material on that album and there's vulnerability. I'd still rather put myself in a vulnerable position in the song if I think that being that sacrificial lamb serves a purpose. If it really embarrasses me to say something, often I leave it in. I still want people to relate to the feelings and be able to see themselves in the song," she said.

Mitchell is still putting herself on the line on *Wild*. In *Man to Man*, and *You Dream Flat Tires*, Mitchell sketches women in love who resemble two of her earlier characters. *Man* is a variation on Don Juan's wreckless daughter — a woman whose creative urge and wandering spirit is so strong it's doubtful she can stay tied down to one man.

"I wrote a lot of positive love songs on this album. I'm saying 'I do,' like there is no debate — which (it) is kind of unusual. I'm ready now for the compromises in a relationship. It's worth it to me now."

Mitchell recently said 'I do' to her bass player, Larry Klein. They married last November, and one can't help but wonder what effect a stable relationship has had, or will have, on her work.

"I DON'T THINK it will affect my song writing. Writing disappointing love songs is my forte. I still will draw a lot from past experiences," she said.

Mitchell's songs and her personal life seem to be on

School using solar power to heat its swimming pool

MARBLEHEAD, Ohio (AP) — Danbury High School is heating its swimming pool with solar power, apparently Ohio's first school to do so.

A federal grant paid for the work, which began in 1979. School officials say the pool will be able to open at the beginning of the school year in fall.

Previously, the opening had to wait until the school's oil-fired steam plant was started.

School officials said they aren't sure how much money will be saved by the solar system because they have to see how well it works.

the upswing. Now approaching 40, she says she feels younger and less serious than when she wrote the anthem of the Woodstock generation.

"Those times were pretty difficult. We, the song-writing poets of that time, inherited a lot of ludicrous responsibility. We were told we could change the world and that'll make you old fast — like how presidents go gray overnight.

"I guess it was partly the times," she said. "The longer you live, all the ages you've ever been will come in and out on you almost like premonitions."

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