

Joni Mitchell

Latest offering is a pleasant whole

Joni Mitchell "For The Roses" (Asylum Records) — Why predictably successful performers switch record companies is a mystery known only to themselves and the corporate lawyers of both sides. How the change may affect their performance, their "artistic freedom," and eventually, their continued success, is just as much a mystery.

Some, like Joan Baez (Vanguard to A & M), become more "commercially appealing" at the expense of musical integrity. Others, like the Rolling Stones and the Beatles (respectively, London and Capitol to their own labels), become more adventuresome, at no cost to quality. Still others, like Delaney & Bonnie (Atco to Columbia), seem to change, thankfully, very little.

The latest addition to this last group is Joni Mitchell, once-Canadian folk singer, expert composer, one-time "old lady" to practically every male name in modern music, and formerly a profitable part of Warner-Reprise Records.

"For the Roses" is her latest album, and first since joining Atlantic's Asylum Records. From its twelve cuts, one can say that, generally, only her employer has changed.

It has been about a year since "Blue," her last release for Reprise. Contrasts between it and "Roses" are difficult because of dominant similarities. Finally gone is Joni's fleeting panchant for the tritely cure up-tempo bits — most evident in "Yellow Taxi," less so by the time of "California" on "Blue," and not at all in the songs of "Roses." But, that seems more

evolutionary in cause, anyway. More tangibly attributable to her change of labels is the disappearance of less-than-lasting and less-than-uniform recording quality. Typically and annoyingly Reprise, were Joni Mitchell albums that would deteriorate in sound quality with each playing and with each cut toward the center of the record. With Miss Mitchell's talent for intricate lyrics, the loss of snap-crackle-pop distortion is not missed.

Overall, "Roses" holds no surprises for those accustomed to the musical directions of Joni Mitchell. Repetitive melodies serving as vehicles for far-reaching words still remain. Personal topics serving for anyone's understanding still do. The best of minimal instrumental accompaniment till complement lyrically-set tones.

There are no "hot tunes" singly-destined for million-sales. There are neither stand-outs nor throw-aways that can be discussed apart from the very pleasant whole.

Robert Murphy
Neil Diamond, "Hot August Night," (MCA Records) — There's something about Neil Diamond. Maybe it's that he's Mr. Smooth one night at the

Greek and Mr. Hip in denim the next — or sometimes both, sold-out for a weekend.

Maybe it's that he can write and perform driving songs like "Solitary Man" or "Sweet Caroline" one year, and pass off trash like "Crunchy Granola" or "Porcupine Pie" the next — or sometimes both on the same album.

Maybe it's that he's so polished one never expects him to be real — really good or really bad — and that when he is bad, one chalks it up to a hot August night.

R. M.

"Carnival In Babylon" Amon Duul II (United Artists) — With an umlaut over each "u" in Duul, the group is German, or Bavarian if one gets technical. With a slightly-distracted ear, the group is middle-stage Jefferson Airplane — complete to the urgent-girl singer, the tearing guitar, and the oozing percussion.

Wether in German or English, the lyrics stream in what must be deep meaning. If one is prone to merely absorbing, the music of Amon Duul II can be potent. But if one is seeking fresh energy, Duul is dull.

R.M.

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