

Michael Waddacor's
Strange Brew™

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Striking an unusual chord

Understanding those weird Joni Mitchell guitar chords



Joni Mitchell (above) – the gifted and acutely sensitive Canadian singer-songwriter, poet and painter – created an impressive oeuvre of original recordings between 1968 and 1998. Her intelligent and finely crafted works – most notably her seven-year purple patch between 1970 and 1976 – have touched and influenced scores of other musicians, not to forget her millions of fans around the globe.

Michael Waddacor continues his two-part celebration of Joni Mitchell and revisits the four masterful albums that defined her purple patch (see pages three to 10).

Beyond the subtle power and unique beauty of her melodies, lyrics, voice and arrangements, Joni Mitchell is an accomplished and unusual guitarist. While she may not be a guitar hero in the sense of Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Eddie van Halen, Steve Vai, or Steve Wilson, she has an

excellent command of the fretboard and an adventurous approach to shaping chords and notes.

Earlier in her career, Mitchell relied almost exclusively on the acoustic guitar or piano to write and record songs. In the mid-1970s, however, she turned increasingly to the electric guitar and, in the mid-1980s, she also began to explore the inherently vast musical scope of Fairlight and other synthesizers. She wrote most of her guitar-based songs using an open or non-standard tuning, working with more than 50 different tunings she has referred to as “Joni’s weird chords”.

The singer-songwriter – who has drawn on various forms of rock ‘n’ roll, rockabilly, folk, rock, blues and jazz for her main structural and chordal ideas – has said that her use of alternative and unorthodox tunings enabled her to express harmonies that were more varied, complex and adventurous without having to resort to complex chord shapes.

Rhythmic combination

By watching some of her concert video footage, a literate guitarist will soon sense her approach towards simpler chord shapes made all the more distinct not only by using alternative tunings, but also by her distinctive, if not emphatic, rhythmic combination of strumming and picking.

Her guitar style also entails the occasional use of percussive hand slaps on the body of her guitar.

Besides her great and novel guitar style, Mitchell is also a good piano player. More notable, however, is her touching soprano voice, characterised by unusual phrasings and, at its best earlier in her career, one that ranged over more than four octaves.

With the passing of time, her smoking habit has darkened her voice and, in many ways, given it more character, especially when she touches on more desolate or disconcerting topics, as she did so convincingly on *Turbulent Indigo*. ■

Disappointing tribute album

The new Nonesuch Records tribute album, the blandly titled *A Tribute to Joni Mitchell*, features the following artists and songs:

- (01) Sufjan Stevens – *Free Man in Paris*
- (02) Björk – *The Boho Dance*
- (03) Caetano Veloso – *Dreamland*
- (04) Brad Mehldau – *Don't Interrupt the Sorrow*
- (05) Cassandra Wilson – *For the Roses*
- (06) Prince – *A Case of You*
- (07) Sarah McLachlan – *Blue*
- (08) Annie Lennox – *Ladies of the Canyon*
- (09) Emmylou Harris – *The Magdalene Laundries*
- (10) Elvis Costello – *Edith and the Kingpin*
- (11) k d lang – *Help Me*
- (12) James Taylor – *River*



As a rule, one is wary of tribute albums because they tend to have inferior and even tasteless or passionless interpretations of good songs by a great original. A case in point is the Led Zeppelin tribute album. In some cases, the concept works as on the *I'm Your Fan* Leonard Cohen tribute album.

The opening track of this album, the jaunty and rather muddled interpretation of *Free Man in Paris* by Sufjan Stevens confirms right up front why many of us are wary of tribute albums. The second track exacerbates the situation because Björk – Iceland's

greatest living eccentric – is an acquired taste, even on her own best works, and her ethereal, twinkly, slow-tempo electronic version of *The Boho Dance* is too stilted and affected.

Then comes a trashy, tortured version of *Dreamland* by Caetano Veloso and one is about to eject the CD and trash it into splinters. Brad Mehldau's instrumental version of *Don't Interrupt the Sorrow* – one of Mitchell's finest songs – is an indulgent and soulless piano piece that is supposed to be meditative, but sounds far too affected and pointless.

The respected and talented jazz singer with the deep, seductive voice, Cassandra Wilson, brings some introspective beauty to her gentle interpretation of *For the Roses*, but she sounds too dreary to make us believe Joni Mitchell was one of the most original and gifted songwriters of the 1970s. Prince restores some dignity to the album with his heartfelt and souled version of *A Case of You*, but, then again, Prince's voice is an acquired taste. His arrangement, however, is lovely and there is no doubting that his tribute is affectionate and sincere.

A few goose bumps

Mitchell's compatriot, Sarah McLachlan, generates a few goose bumps with her earnest rendition of *Blue*, but one cannot help sensing she could have found a better song to cover for her style of singing. Anne Lennox has an exquisite, classically trained voice with immense power, control and great enunciation and does some justice to her sprightly cover of *Ladies of the Canyon*, although the overall arrangement sounds too industrial and cold.

One of the few highlights is the slightly countrified version of the deeply touching 1994 ballad, *The Magdalene Laundries*, by Emmylou Harris, but, for all her feelings, she is a far cry from Mitchell's original poignancy. I confess to never being an Elvis Costello fan, so his dreamy and dreary cabaret-jazz bastardisation of *Edith and the Kingpin* is far too irksome and way too off the mark to gain any neophytes.

Again, it takes a talented Canadian songbird to restore some dignity to the tribute album, which is what k d lang does on her tender and sincere acoustic rendition of *Help Me*. She has excellent vocal range and depth – and is prepared to use these with conviction to craft the finest piece of the album.

Veteran American singer-songwriter, James Taylor, who contributed guitar to the *Blue* album, returns a favour of sorts with his gentle, unassuming version of *River*, but I confess to never liking his voice, so I find the song unenjoyable.

In summary, this tribute is listenable and, at times, touching and tender, but it begs the question: Where are the great Mitchell covers many of us know? For example, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's version of

Woodstock, Fairport Convention's *Eastern Rain* and Judy Collins' *Both Sides, Now*. ■

The Mitchell purple patch

A devoted Joni Mitchell fan most likely will own most of her albums, of which at least eight are indispensable (or close to being essential). Of these special albums, four extraordinary ones form the peak of her 1970s purple patch and deserve revisiting: *Blue*, *Court and Spark*, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* and *Hejira*.

Blue

The fragile, confessional masterpiece



Release date: July 1971 (USA and UK)
Label: Reprise Records (CD: 7599-27199-2)
Producer: Joni Mitchell (not credited in the early days)
Engineer: Henry Lewy

The 10 songs: *All I Want*, *My Old Man*, *Little Green*, *Carey*, *Blue*, *California*, *This Flight Tonight*, *River*, *A Case of You* and *The Last Time I Saw Richard* (all songs written by Joni Mitchell)

Thirty-six years have passed since the release of *Blue*, yet Joni Mitchell's fourth album's touchingly beautiful nuances and subtleties remain fresh, evocative and inspirational. Many critics and fans rate *Blue* as Joni Mitchell's finest album, although *Court and Spark* and *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* are not far behind in their overall musical appeal, but for different reasons. Music critics, musicians and music enthusiasts continue to cite *Blue* as a watershed work and one of

the finest accomplishments of any singer-songwriter of the rock era.

The album is rated 24 in the third edition of Colin Larkin's *All-Time Top 1,000 Albums* (Virgin, 2000). More recently, *Blue* is rated 30 in *Rolling Stone's The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time* (Wenner Books, 2005). The album is also showcased in the third edition of *The Mojo Collection: The Ultimate Music Companion* (edited by Jim Irvin and Colin McLearn; Canongate, 2003) and in *1,001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die* (Robert Dimery – general editor; Cassell Illustrated, 2005). All four editions of *The Rolling Stone Album Guide* have awarded *Blue* a peerless five-star rating.

Seamless precision

The album's initial appeal starts with the stark and intimate blue-duotone portrait of Mitchell taken by US West Coast photographer Tim Considine. Inside, the subtle symbolism of the cover starts taking shape from the opening bars of *All I Want*. The predominantly indigo mood and richly inspired creativity are sustained with seamless precision and an undercurrent of gnawing grief and regret to the dark closing piano chords of *The Last Time I Saw Richard*, one of the finest love songs from her earlier period.

Building on the essential sounds and skills of her impressive first three albums, but this time with a deeper confessional spirit and greater confidence, *Blue* reveals an artist fast maturing in her prime years, becoming more insightful in her vision, more touching in her sounds and more skilful and agile in her craft as a lyricist, melody writer, singer, pianist, guitarist and arranger.

Few singer-songwriters in their early days ever sounded so competent, distinctive and compelling in their rawness, simplicity and insight. The only peers who spring to mind are Bob Dylan (*Highway 61 Revisited*, *Blonde on Blonde* and, a decade later, *Blood on the Tracks*), Neil Young (*After the Gold Rush* and *On the Beach*) and Van Morrison (*Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*), and, to a lesser extent artists like Tim Buckley, Nick Drake and Tim Hardin.

Queen of song

If *Blue* has one outstanding notion, it hoisted Mitchell head-and-shoulders above her female peers as the undisputed queen of the singer-songwriter genre – a title she continues to deserve. Many have been inspired by her; some have emulated her; but none has come close to outshining this masterpiece, with the possible exception of Carole King on *Tapestry* (1971) and Patti Smith on *Horses* (1975).

The only other truly penetrating and heartfelt break-up album of the 1970s that one cannot forget easily is Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (1975).

While Mitchell has a few West Coast friends contributing to the album, among them Stephen Stills, James Taylor and drummer Russ Kunkel, she is

by far the dominant musician with her deeply personal and unusually phrased soprano singing and her sparse, yet emotive acoustic guitar, piano and dulcimer playing dominating the 36 minutes of recording. (She learnt to play the dulcimer while travelling around Southern Europe in 1970).

On this work, she managed to plumb new depths of her psyche and her understanding of the musical creative process to render 10 mostly brilliant songs. To add to *Blue's* melancholic ambience and heartfelt intimacy and honesty, Mitchell asked engineer Henry Lewy to be her sole companion during her recording sessions.

Her deeply personal lyrics are kept pared, honest and direct. Seldom has beauty in music of the rock era sounded so compellingly honest, painful, fragile and credible. In a 1979 interview with Cameron Crowe for *Rolling Stone* magazine, the singer admitted:

"The *Blue* album, there's hardly a dishonest note in the vocals. At that period of my life, I had no personal defences. I felt like a cellophane wrapper on a pack of cigarettes. I felt like I had absolutely no secrets from the world, and I couldn't pretend in my life to be strong. Or to be happy."

Mixed emotions

The album revolves around a suite of six introspective and delicate love songs of break-up, regret, sorrow and anguish, some of which quake with a brittle joy, while others are shrouded in a more solemn sense of loss, angst and even cynicism and loathing. In the middle of the album, Mitchell approaches more ecstatic climes with her more up-tempo, almost celebratory, syncopated songs of *Carey* and *California*.

On *River*, a bittersweet song about flight and freedom, she pines for the happier days of her Canadian Prairie youth. All in all, Mitchell turned her aching melancholy and loneliness into a suite of tender songs that must have had some cathartic affect judging by her keener spirits that prevailed on *For the Roses* in 1972 and *Court and Spark* in 1974. *Blue* confirms that there always is a place for tender, honest and self-examinatory songs that are kept pared.

Seldom has an artist sounded so gorgeous in her vulnerability, or elegant in her loathing, cynicism and doubt. Seldom, too, has any singer-songwriter sounded so cohesive, fluid, focused and ardent in any key work revolving around a personal and, perhaps, elegantly flawed exploration of love and life.

This unassuming masterpiece created, by default, a template for writing and producing a confessional singer-songwriter album.

And there is little doubt that *Blue* later touched and shaped some of the key works by groups and artists such as Led Zeppelin (the folkier side), James Taylor,

Sandy Denny, Joan Armatrading, Prince, Tori Amos, kd lang and Sarah McLachlan. ■

Fifty other key albums from 1971

- 01 Allman Brothers Band: *At Fillmore East*
- 02 Audience: *The House on the Hill*
- 03 The Beach Boys: *Surf's Up*
- 04 Black Sabbath: *Master of Reality*
- 05 David Bowie: *Hunky Dory*
- 06 Edgar Broughton Band: *Edgar Broughton Band*
- 07 Jack Bruce: *Harmony Row*
- 08 J J Cale: *Naturally*
- 09 Can: *Tago Mago*
- 10 Caravan: *In the Land of Grey and Pink*
- 11 Leonard Cohen: *Songs of Love and Hate*
- 12 Alice Cooper: *Killer*
- 13 David Crosby:
If I Could Only Remember My Name
- 14 Deep Purple: *Fireball*
- 15 The Doors: *LA Woman*
- 16 Emerson, Lake and Palmer:
Emerson, Lake and Palmer
- 17 The Flamin' Groovies: *Teenage Head*
- 18 Focus: *Moving Waves*
- 19 Funkadelic: *Maggot Brain*
- 20 Marvin Gaye: *What's Going On?*
- 21 Gentle Giant: *Acquiring the Taste*
- 22 Isaac Hayes: *Shaft*
- 23 Humble Pie:
Performance – Rockin' at the Fillmore
- 24 Jade Warrior: *Jade Warrior*
- 25 Jethro Tull: *Aqualung*
- 26 Elton John: *Madman Across the Water*
- 27 Janis Joplin: *Pearl*
- 28 Carole King: *Tapestry*
- 29 Led Zeppelin: [untitled]
(aka IV/The Runes Album)
- 30 John Lennon: *Imagine*
- 31 John Martyn: *Bless the Weather*
- 32 Curtis Mayfield: *Roots*
- 33 MC5: *High Time*
- 34 Paul and Linda McCartney: *Ram*
- 35 Van Morrison: *Tupelo Honey*
- 36 The Move: *Message from the Country*
- 37 Harry Nilsson: *Nilsson Schmilsson*
- 38 Pink Floyd: *Meddle*
- 39 John Prine: *John Prine*
- 40 The Rolling Stones: *Sticky Fingers*
- 41 Todd Rundgren:
Runt: The Ballad of Todd Rundgren
- 42 Santana: *III*
- 43 Sly and the Family Stone: *There's a Riot Goin' On*
- 44 Cat Stevens: *Teaser and the Firecat*
- 45 Rod Stewart: *Every Picture Tells a Story*
- 46 Traffic: *The Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys*
- 47 T Rex: *Electric Warrior*
- 48 Uriah Heep: *Look at Yourself*
- 49 The Who: *Who's Next*
- 50 Yes: *The Yes Album*

Court and Spark

The sweet, evergreen pop classic



Release date: January 1974 (USA and UK)
Label: Elektra/Asylum Records (CD: EKXD 31)
Producer: Joni Mitchell (not credited in the early days)
Engineer: Henry Lewy

The 11 songs: *Court and Spark*, *Help Me*, *Free Man in Paris*, *People's Parties*, *Same Solution*, *Car on a Hill*, *Down to You*, *Just Like This Train*, *Raised on Robbery*, *Trouble Child* and *Twisted* (all songs written by Joni Mitchell except for track 11, *Twisted*, by Ross and Grey)

In 1972, with the release of *For the Roses*, Joni Mitchell hinted she would be heading in a rock direction and downplaying the predominantly folk roots of her first three albums. With the release in January 1974 of her splendid fifth studio album, *Court and Spark*, she lightened her spirit and not only embraced the freer ethos of rock, but also began her flirtation with jazz, which would become a more serious love affair over the remainder of the 1970s.

The Rolling Stone Album Guide rates *Court and Spark* a five-star album. It is rated 116 out of 1,000 in the third edition of Colin Larkin's *All-Time Top 1,000 Albums* (Virgin, 2000) and 113 out of 500 in *Rolling Stone's The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time* (Wenner Books, 2005). The album is also showcased in *1,001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die*

(Robert Dimery – general editor; Cassell Illustrated, 2005).

Adhering to her fundamentals as a deft and original songwriter with a gift for weaving both words and melodies with refined and understated arrangements, Mitchell shifted into a higher gear and crafted a sunnier, breezier, slicker and more relaxed sound. Somehow, she manages to lose the sardonic intensity of *Blue*, while keeping her vision earnest and her feelings heartfelt and plausible.

Part of her success in this regard is attributable to her decision to turn to the adroit jazz-fusion sensibilities of Tom Scott and his band, LA Express. By now, no one could doubt she was well ensconced in the sunnier, more laidback US West Coast singer-songwriter family and less preoccupied with her chillier and more forlorn topics and tones.

Timeless appeal

It is no coincidence that *Court and Spark* became her highest-charting (and best-selling) album by reaching number 14 in the UK and an amazing position of two in the USA. For me, *Blue* is an excellent album, but, in many ways, it has been overhyped. Her evergreen classic remains *Court and Spark* because it can be played more often at different times of the day, regardless of one's mood, and still sound so fresh, balanced, compelling and sweetly seductive after more than 30 years.

Turning away from the deeper melancholy and introspection that characterised *Blue*, she sweetened her delicious soprano voice without ever approaching anything syrupy or saccharine in tone or atmosphere. Yet, we also sense – in keeping with Mitchell's dualistic approaches to her craft and subject matter – that a certain unease, discomfort and even self-deprecation act as an occasional undertow to the lighter sound and spirit.

At her best, Mitchell can master polarities and anomalies in her lyrics and her musical compositions and arrangements. This is part of the deeper appeal of *Court and Spark*, where we sense a woman who deeply desires to be madly in love and yet also emancipated and disowned. She seeks security, certainty and domesticity, yet she also yearns for a sense of adventure, rootlessness and unpredictability.

In her words, as revealed in an interview with Cameron Crowe, published in *Rolling Stone* magazine of July 26 1979, *Court and Spark* was a turning-point album:

"*Court and Spark* was a turning point. In the state that I was at in my enquiry about life and direction and relationships, I perceived a lot of hate in my heart. I perceived my inability to love at the point and it horrified me some."

While Mitchell distanced some music critics and fans because they thought she was too intimate and

revelatory, one has to commend her for not indulging in neurosis, vanity and an almost psychotic self-loathing and self-doubting that characterised some of the works of her 1970s peers. *Court and Spark* is her most assured, balanced and musical album made all the more appealing because her lyrics are sharp, pared and well enunciated and well sung. But, to enjoy her more emotionally haunting and adventurous and musically experimental facets, she fares better on *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* and *Hejira*. ■

Fifty other key albums from 1974

- 01 Average White Band: *Average White Band*
- 02 Bad Company: *Bad Company*
- 03 Big Star: *Radio City*
- 04 Blue Öyster Cult: *Secret Treaties*
- 05 James Brown: *Hell*
- 06 Jackson Browne: *Late for the Sky*
- 07 Eric Clapton: *461 Ocean Boulevard*
- 08 Gene Clark: *No Other*
- 09 Leonard Cohen: *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*
- 10 Miles Davis: *Get up with It*
- 11 Deep Purple: *Burn*
- 12 Earth, Wind and Fire: *Open Our Eyes*
- 13 Eno: *Here Come the Warm Jets*
- 14 Genesis: *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*
- 15 Golden Earring: *Moontan*
- 16 Al Green: *Al Green Explores Your Mind*
- 17 Roy Harper: *Valentine*
- 18 King Crimson: *Red*
- 19 Kraftwerk: *Autobahn*
- 20 Little Feat: *Feats Don't Fail Me Now*
- 21 Lynyrd Skynyrd: *Second Helping*
- 22 Van Morrison: *Veedon Fleece*
- 23 Mott the Hoople: *The Hoople*
- 24 Nazareth: *Loud 'n' Proud*
- 25 Randy Newman: *Good Old Boys*
- 26 New York Dolls: *In Too Much Too Soon*
- 27 Shuggie Otis: *Inspiration Information*
- 28 Gram Parsons: *Grievous Angel*
- 29 Patto: *Hold Your Fire*
- 30 The Pretty Things: *Silk Torpedo*
- 31 Procol Harum: *Exotic Birds and Fruit*
- 32 Queen: *Sheer Heart Attack*
- 33 Lou Reed: *Rock 'n' Roll Animal*
- 34 Linda Ronstadt: *Heart Like a Wheel*
- 35 Roxy Music: *Country Life*
- 36 Todd Rundgren: *Todd*
- 37 Santana: *Lotus*
- 38 Phoebe Snow: *Phoebe Snow*
- 39 Strawbs: *Hero and Heroine*
- 40 Supertramp: *Crime of the Century*
- 41 Tangerine Dream: *Phaedra*
- 42 10CC: *Sheet Music*
- 43 Richard and Linda Thompson: *I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight*
- 44 Robin Trower: *Bridge of Sighs*
- 45 Traffic: *When the Eagle Flies*
- 46 Tom Waits: *The Heart of Saturday Night*
- 47 Robert Wyatt: *Rock Bottom*
- 48 Yes: *Relayer*

- 49 Neil Young: *On the Beach*
 50 Frank Zappa: *Apostrophe*

The Hissing of Summer Lawns

Soaring higher in creativity and craftsmanship



Release date: November 1975 (USA and UK)
Label: Asylum Records (CD: 7559-60332-2)
Producer: Joni Mitchell (not credited in the early days)
Engineer: Henry Lewy

The 10 songs: *In France They Kiss on Main Street, The Jungle Line, Edith and the Kingpin, Don't Interrupt the Sorrow, Shades of Scarlett Conquering, The Hissing of Summer Lawns, The Boho Dance, Harry's House/Centrepiece, Sweet Bird and Shadows and Light* (all songs written by Joni Mitchell, except for 8b, *Centrepiece*, written by Johnny Mandel and Jon Hendricks)

Building on the new groundwork established through her scintillating previous album, *Court and Spark*, Mitchell unfurled her creative wings and soared higher, this time ascending into the realms of jazz, as well as some of the percussive music of West Africa (Burundi warrior drumming to be specific) and subtle hints of Latin America to create her next album, the much-maligned and misunderstood, yet highly innovative, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*.

Contrary to popular critical reviews in 1975, this is one of her best albums – and my favourite because it

balances accessibility and experimentalism so skilfully.

This turning-point work is an intelligent, provocative and sometimes touching social commentary revolving mostly around the paradoxical comfort zones of married women in their well-spruced and furnished middle-class American suburban homes. Beyond the immaculate lawns and sprinkler systems (“the hissing of summer lawns”), the cosy television dinners and other trappings of middle-class LA suburban wealth, we sense a menacing, even sinister, world where all is not benevolent and comfortable in the realms of supposed marital bliss and material abundance.

Perhaps exhausted in part by carrying her own emotional baggage and rollercoaster romantic experiences and, perhaps, more content, balanced and outwardly observant, Joni Mitchell matured remarkably as a songwriter, singer and instrumentalist in four or five years.

With comparative ease, she shifts dramatically from the melancholia of personal confession, notably her concerns about betrayal and hurt in romantic love, to a breezier, more adventurous (and sometimes humorous or amusing) focus on new musical sounds and the wider society in which she lives.

Making visual music

In a rare feat for a singer-songwriter of the time, her lively imagination enters into the privacy of American homes and neighbourhoods to enable her to sketch and paint vivid vignettes of life in her wider surroundings.

By now, even if serendipitously, Mitchell fused into one cohesive work of art her desire to be taken seriously as a poet, a painter and a musician. One cannot help feeling she sketched and painted this album’s 10 almost seamless songs, so vivid and arousing are its musical tones as well as its images and symbols.

Here, she delves into the realms of personal power and submission, trust and deceit, love and hate, and the trappings, if not the futility, of material wealth countered by spiritual paucity and emotional deprivation or repression.

In the supposed Land of the Free and the Brave, she has painted a small gallery-full of portraits of people enslaved to tedious, if not meaningless, relationships, belief systems, domestic rituals and material possessions, among other burdens.

What distinguishes Mitchell in her more cerebral approach to songwriting on *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* is her moral ambiguity, which spares her from becoming the irksome polemicist or condescending judge of human behaviour.

Beneath her seemingly cool intellectual stance, we sense glimmers of compassion and at other times

genuine sorrow and sympathy. One also cannot help sensing a touch of autobiography in her wider social commentaries – a lyrical approach she would revisit in subsequent works.

Most imaginative work

Beyond Mitchell’s explicit and often intriguing vignettes, one is impressed by the album’s fine musical qualities: the rich combination of shifting melodies, tempi, beats, tones and arrangements. Mitchell is a musical painter – and on this landmark album she is not afraid to experiment with her techniques and palette, shifting from bolder strokes and brighter tinctures to gentler touches and subtler hues.

Her aural contrasts reinforce the polarities of her subject matter, whether it is enslavement versus emancipation, or fear and loathing contrasted against admiration and acceptance. Looking back on her masterful oeuvre of the 1970s, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* is her most sonically adventurous, lustrous and imaginative album.

One of the first impressions to emerge on listening to this album again is that it features rich, explorative guitar work. Mitchell hired three adroit West Coast guitarists, Jeff Baxter (of Steely Dan fame), Larry Carlton and Robben Ford, to complement her own excellent guitar work and create a novel tapestry of sounds.

Add to this the musical talents of others such as Victor Feldman and Joe Sample on keyboards, Max Bennett and Wilton Felder on bass, Chuck Findley on horn and John Guerin on drums, and you have a delightful mini orchestra of versatile session musicians well schooled in rock, jazz and other idioms.

This remains one of her best-arranged albums – and one cannot help sensing, as she did on *Hejira*, that she achieved a cohesive working ethos with her handpicked musicians, all of whom were sensitive to, and supportive of, her idiosyncratic vision and meticulous directives.

Many music critics and Mitchell fans, alike, misunderstood or overlooked this album when Asylum Records released it in November 1975. In early 1976, *Rolling Stone* magazine went as far as declaring *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* the worst album of 1975.

In fairness, this is not Mitchell’s crowning glory when it comes to her strongest and most memorable melodies, but in the wider ambit of mid-1970s singer-songwriter and West Coast music, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* remains a superlative work.

It combines subtle melodicism, innovative arrangements, excellent instrumental performances, insightful lyrics, an assured and heartfelt voice and a clean, fresh production, which makes for a commendable album in any musical genre.

The album has been noted as the mark of a singer-songwriter at her creative peak – and Prince has cited this as one of his all-time favourite albums. ■

Fifty other key albums from 1975

- 01 Aerosmith: *Toys in the Attic*
- 02 The Band: *Northern Lights – Southern Cross*
- 03 Jeff Beck: *Blow by Blow*
- 04 The Bee Gees: *Main Course*
- 05 Black Sabbath: *Sabotage*
- 06 Burning Spear: *Marcus Garvey*
- 07 Camel: *Snow Goose*
- 08 Ray Charles: *Renaissance*
- 09 Gene Clark: *No Other*
- 10 Crosby and Nash: *Wind on the Water*
- 11 Crusaders: *Chain Reaction*
- 12 Miles Davis: *Pangaea*
- 13 Miles Davis: *Agharta*
- 14 Deep Purple: *Come Taste the Band*
- 15 Bob Dylan: *Blood on the Tracks*
- 16 Eagles: *One of These Nights*
- 17 Earth, Wind and Fire:
That's the Way of the World
- 18 Eno: *Another Green World*
- 19 Fleetwood Mac: *Fleetwood Mac*
- 20 Funkadelic: *Let's Take It to the Stage*
- 21 Rory Gallagher: *Against the Grain*
- 22 Gentle Giant: *Free Hand*
- 23 Al Green: *Al Green Is Love*
- 24 Herbie Hancock: *Man Child*
- 25 Janis Ian: *Between the Lines*
- 26 Jade Warrior: *Waves*
- 27 Keith Jarrett: *The Köln Concert*
- 28 Elton John: *Rock of the Westies*
- 29 B B King: *Lucille Talks Back*
- 30 Led Zeppelin: *Physical Graffiti*
- 31 Little Feat: *The Last Record Album*
- 32 Bob Marley: *Natty Dread*
- 33 John Martyn: *Sunday's Child*
- 34 Curtis Mayfield:
There's No Place Like America Today
- 35 Pink Floyd: *Wish You Were Here*
- 36 Queen: *Night at the Opera*
- 37 Roxy Music: *Siren*
- 38 Paul Simon: *Still Crazy after All These Years*
- 39 Patti Smith: *Horses*
- 40 Bruce Springsteen: *Born to Run*
- 41 Steely Dan: *Katy Lied*
- 42 Tangerine Dream: *Rubycon*
- 43 Richard and Linda Thompson:
Pour Down Like Silver
- 44 Robin Trower: *For Earth Below*
- 45 Van der Graaf Generator: *Nadir's Last Chance*
- 46 Loudon Wainwright III: *Unrequited*
- 47 Tom Waits: *Nighthawks at the Diner*
- 48 Neil Young: *Tonight's the Night*
- 49 Neil Young: *Zuma*
- 50 Frank Zappa: *One Size Fits All*

Hejira

Flying high with some of her most gorgeous singing



Release date: November 1976 (USA and UK)
Label: Asylum Records (CD: 7559-60331-2)
Producer: Joni Mitchell (not credited in the early days)
Engineer: Henry Lewy

The nine songs: *Coyote, Amelia, Furry Sings the Blues, A Strange Boy, Hejira, Song for Sharon, Black Crow, Blue Motel Room and Refuge of the Road* (all songs written by Joni Mitchell)

The startling *Hejira* album – one of the finest of Joni Mitchell's recording career – marked her return to confessional writing, but, this time, with greater wisdom, aloofness and even humour, while also exploring flight and travel (actual and metaphorical), as well as time and love.

Characterised by sparse, haunting arrangements, *Hejira* had finely pared lyrics and melodies, and revealed the singer still riding on the crest of a massive creative wave in the wake of *Blue*, *For the Roses*, *Court and Spark* and *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*. Sadly, this album brought her to the end of her 1970s purple patch and hereafter Mitchell would become a far less consistent writer and musician in many respects.

Most of the nine songs were written on the road, while travelling alone by car from Maine on the US eastern seaboard back to Los Angeles. Hence the title that was inspired by Mohamed's hejira – or

flight from danger from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. This is her personal hejira – an escape from smothering relationships and romantic disappointments, as well as the soulless demands of the music industry. She needs to breathe again, feel a renewed vitality coursing through her veins and gain an acute perspective of herself and life.

For example, on the title song, she reflects: "In our possessive coupling, so much could not be expressed / So now I am returning to myself those things that you and I suppressed".

Hejira is a mostly sombre and insular work about being on the road, physically and metaphorically, observing the significance of changing landscapes, from burning deserts to snow-capped hills. These symbols – all part of a vividly drawn series of vignettes – reinforce, once more, her frequent fascination with polarities and anomalies, as well as her own recent and current emotional states.

Compared with *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*, her lyrical style on *Hejira* is less enigmatic, more pared and narrative. This album features some of her most arresting lines of the 1970s, especially when she voices here crystal-clear and evocative images and ideas like:

*A prisoner of the white lines of the freeway
Leaving six white vapour trails across the bleak
terrain / It was the hexagram of the heavens
I dreamed of 747s / Over geometric farms
There's comfort in melancholy / When there's no
need to explain
White flags of winter chimneys / Waxing truce
against the moon
Those are the clouds of Michelangelo / Muscular with
gods and sungold*

Flowing freely

In many respects, Joni Mitchell has never sounded so gorgeous in her candid, intimate, warm and breathy singing, so engaging in her confessional, poetic recollections and insights, and so free-spirited, sincere and deft in her combined approach to singing and playing guitar.

Hejira is an album of almost childlike marvel, adventure, flight and freedom – an idea reinforced by not only the finely photographed and art-directed monotone conceptual cover art, but also by the greater use of free-flowing jazz motifs, unorthodox chord structures and enrapturing rhythms. She allows her simple and subtle melodies to flow freely and the playing and arrangements are kept loose and easy, almost spontaneous and unaffected.

The greatest musical performances, even 30 years on, remain the adventurous and lyrical bass lines of

the late Jaco Pastorius, who, unwittingly, gained accolades normally reserved for a high-performing lead guitarist. While Pastorius went on to become one of the musical heroes of the monstrously talented jazz-fusion group, Weather Report, led by Joe Zawinul, he never again sounded so hauntingly beautiful, inspired and communicative.

It seemed that Pastorius hungered to develop a new, deeply humanistic language exclusively for the fretless bass – and he developed it serendipitously while recording the *Hejira* songs at the A&M Studios in Los Angeles in the summer of 1976. For me, Mitchell found in Pastorius her perfect musical soul mate and sparring partner. [See Pastorius article on page 10 overleaf].

Almost equally adroit are Mitchell and Larry Carlton on guitars, with their chiming, flanged weavings being another of the album's high points. While she and Carlton delve into jazz, an approach elevated further by the adventurous and free-spirited playing of Pastorius, Mitchell somehow manages to keep close to her more traditional folk roots characterised by modal patterns and structures inspired by traditional English ballads.

While Mitchell retains much of her tendency for deep reflection and introspection, her approach becomes lighter and more carefree on *Hejira*, yet also starker and more succinct. This extends to her dominant approach towards writing lyrics, which are biased towards prose poetry and liberated from the customary constraints of rigid rhyming and length of lines.

Her overall approach towards writing and recording this album is one of astute and pared suppleness, which ensured a graceful-sounding final product rich in understatement and subtlety. Like the singer driving on the open highway, she keeps her music propelled with passion – hypnotic, inviting, even seductive.

Lone aviatrix

We even get to hear more of the artist's offbeat humour (as on *A Strange Boy* and *Blue Motel Room*), as well as her admiration for unsung heroines, as on *Amelia*, her haunting tribute of sorts to the American aviatrix, Amelia Earhart (1897-1937). On this masterful song – one of her best of the 1970s, Mitchell likens aspects of herself to those of the lone aviatrix and uses the notion of a solo flight to declare one of her most poignant truths:

"I've spent my whole life in clouds at icy altitudes".

Mitchell later disclosed in an interview: "The whole *Hejira* album was really inspired ... I wrote the album while travelling cross-country by myself and there is this restless feeling throughout it. ... The sweet loneliness of solitary travel. ... In *Amelia*, I was thinking of Amelia Earhart and addressing it from one solo pilot to another, ... sort of reflecting on being a woman and having something you must do."

As with *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*, Mitchell took her freedom of writing to the point that her melodies are subtle, arcane and certainly not easy to whistle or hum. The music, largely, is hypnotic, atmospheric and serves as sympathetic accompaniment to her lyrics as tone poems. Her articulation of her lyrics and her pronounced singing of them in the final mix downplay the importance of melody in a conventional musical sense. Instead, she deepened her interest in rhythm – something she introduced so creatively on *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* – and lured us into her private world with the help of enticing rhythms and, again, those “weird Joni chords”.

Symbolically, she sought refuge on the road away from the maddening Los Angeles society, and rediscovered and revitalised herself – not only as a private woman approaching her mid-30s, but also as insatiable artist, searching deeply for something fresh and compelling to share with a wider audience. In what was largely a prosaic and disappointing year for rock music, Joni Mitchell’s *Hejira* remains her subdued, but deeply compelling and timeless masterpiece. ■

Jaco Pastorius remembered

Her greatest collaborator

Beyond any iota of doubt, the extraordinarily talented bassist, Jaco Pastorius, was Joni Mitchell’s most accomplished and arousing musical collaborator before his tragic death in 1987 after being brutally assaulted outside a Florida nightclub.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Pastorius was a maestro of the fretless Fender Jazz bass who could shift from complex and frenetic bass lines to delicate and understated pieces of haunting beauty. Rarely has a bass guitarist been able to play a fretless bass with such a wide command of musical idioms, improvisational skills and, above all, the ability to make the bass a lead instrument capable of speaking and singing its own poetic and melodic language with emotive eloquence and adventurous spirit.

He played some of his most beautiful and adventurous work on Joni Mitchell’s *Hejira* album. For me, this is the work he is best remembered for as the maestro of his instrument.

Unsurprisingly, *Bass Guitar* magazine readers voted Pastorius as The Greatest Bass Player Who Ever Lived! In 1988, he became one of only four bassists – along with Charles Mingus, Milt Hinton and Ray Brown – to be inducted into the *Down Beat* Jazz Hall of Fame. He drew his rich inspiration from a wide variety of musicians, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Igor Stravinsky, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa, The Band, Santana, James Brown and Otis Redding.

Born John Francis Pastorius III in Norristown, Pennsylvania, USA on December 1 1951, of mixed Finnish, German, Swedish and Irish ancestry, Pastorius usually is best remembered for being a member of the popular American jazz-fusion band, Weather Report (1976-1982), which featured keyboardist Joe Zawinul and saxophonist Wayne Shorter. In 1964, at the precocious age of 12, he formed his band, The Sonics, at Fort Lauderdale in Florida in response to the arrival in the USA of Beatlemania.

During his Florida high-school days, Pastorius was also recognised as an accomplished athlete who excelled at basketball, baseball and American football. He also enjoyed drawing and his initial musical fervour led him to play the drums. After injuring a wrist during a football game, he turned his musical attention to the bass. He played in several bands and recorded for several R&B and jazz groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His first of several significant breaks occurred in 1974 when he met rising guitarist Pat Metheny, with whom he recorded. Pastorius, Metheny and drummer Bob Moses recorded an album, *Bright Size Life*, for the progressive-music label, ECM, in 1974.

Breakthrough

In 1975, Pastorius met Blood, Sweat and Tears drummer Bobby Colomby, who had been asked by his record company, CBS Records, to find new talent for their jazz division. This led to CBS signing Pastorius and recording his first album, *Jaco Pastorius*, in 1976. The album’s musicians included percussionist Don Alias, saxophonists Michael Brecker and David Sanborn, pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Lenny White.

Between 1977 and 1982, he performed with Weather Report and also contributed to several album sessions for other artists, including Ian Hunter, Alphonse Mouzon, Flora Purim and Herbie Hancock. For Joni Mitchell, he is best remembered for playing on *Hejira* (1976), *Don Juan’s Reckless Daughter* (1977), *Mingus* (1979) and the double live album, *Shadows and Light* (1980).

After the amicable dissolution of Weather Report, he formed a big band, Word of Mouth, which recorded an album of the same name using his compositions. During 1983 and 1984, however, his behaviour and health began to decline primarily because of psychological problems associated with bipolar disorder. To exacerbate his frail condition, Pastorius increased his excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs. Sadly, after being removed forcibly from the stage of a Carlos Santana concert at Holiday Park in Fort Lauderdale on September 11 1987, he left for a nearby club at Wilton Manors.

Here, at the Midnight Bottle Club, after being refused entry and brutally beaten by a club bouncer, he was placed on life support in a Fort Lauderdale hospital. His family agreed to end his life support – based on

the medical conclusion that he was brain dead – and he died on September 21 1987 at the age of 35. Sadly, the bouncer responsible for his death, Luc Havan, was convicted of second-degree murder and served a mere four months in prison.■

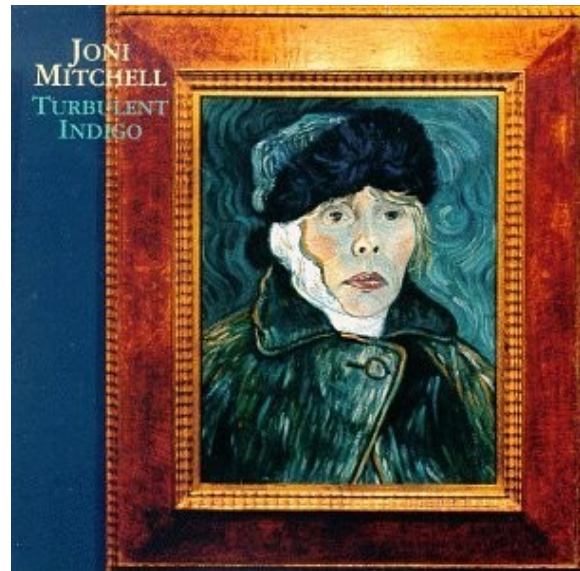
Fifty other key albums from 1976

- 01 Abba: *Arrival*
- 02 Aerosmith: *Rocks*
- 03 Joan Armatrading: *Joan Armatrading*
- 04 Atlanta Rhythm Section: *Red Tape*
- 05 Bad Company: *Run with the Pack*
- 06 Be-Bop Deluxe: *Modern Music*
- 07 Jeff Beck: *Wired*
- 08 Blue Öyster Cult: *Agents of Fortune*
- 09 Boston: *Boston*
- 10 Jackson Browne: *The Pretender*
- 11 Burning Spear: *Marcus Garvey*
- 12 Jim Capaldi: *Short Cut Draw Blood*
- 13 Jimmy Cliff: *Jimmy Cliff*
- 14 Ry Cooder: *Chicken Skin Music*
- 15 Doobie Brothers: *Takin' It to the Streets*
- 16 Eagles: *Hotel California*
- 17 Earth, Wind and Fire: *Spirit*
- 18 Foghat: *Night Shift*
- 19 Rory Gallagher: *Calling Card*
- 20 Al Green: *Full of Fire*
- 21 Hot Tuna: *Hoppkorv*
- 22 Carole King: *Thoroughbred*
- 23 Kiss: *Destroyer*
- 24 Led Zeppelin: *Presence*
- 25 Magma: *Udu Wudu*
- 26 Roger McGuinn: *Cardiff Rose*
- 27 The Steve Miller Band: *Fly Like an Eagle*
- 28 Modern Lovers: *Modern Lovers*
- 29 Graham Parker: *Howlin' Wind*
- 30 Parliament: *Mothership Connection*
- 31 Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers:
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
- 32 Ramones: *Ramones*
- 33 The Rolling Stones: *Black and Blue*
- 34 Rush: *2112*
- 35 Santana: *Amigos*
- 36 Boz Scaggs: *Silk Degrees*
- 37 Al Stewart: *The Year of the Cat*
- 38 Rod Stewart: *A Night on the Town*
- 39 Thin Lizzy: *Jailbreak*
- 40 Toots and the Maytalls: *Reggae Got Soul*
- 41 Peter Tosh: *Legalize It*
- 42 Robin Trower: *Long Misty Days*
- 43 U Roy: *Dread in-a Babylon*
- 44 Bunny Wailer: *Blackheart Man*
- 45 Tom Waits: *Small Change*
- 46 Wet Willie: *The Wetter the Better*
- 47 Stevie Wonder: *Songs in the Key of Life*
- 48 Stomu Yamashta: *Go*
- 49 Frank Zappa: *Zoot Allures*
- 50 Warren Zevon: *Warren Zevon*

The great '90s album

Turbulent Indigo

Capturing the sadness of the human condition



Release date: October 1994 (USA and UK)
Label: Reprise Records (CD: 9362-45786-2)
Producers: Joni Mitchell and Larry Klein
Engineer: Dan Marnien at The Kiva

The 10 songs: *Sunny Sunday, Sex Kills, How Do You Stop, Turbulent Indigo, Last Chance Lost, The Magdalene Laundries, Not to Blame, Borderline, Yvette in English* and *The Sire of Sorrow (Job's Sad Song)* (all songs written by Joni Mitchell except for 3, *How Do You Stop*, written by Dan Hartman and Charlie Midnight, and 9, *Yvette in English*, written by Joni Mitchell and David Crosby)

In many respects, *Turbulent Indigo* is Mitchell's finest work since the 1970s and, besides a rather jaded *Yvette in English* written with David Crosby, marks her unbridled return to true musical form and heartfelt personal insights on topics such as sexual and physical abuse, transient relationships and pretensions of about nurturing talents.

She again plumbs the depth of poetic imagination and creates another sonic gallery of moving and thought-provoking vignettes. This album features

some of her most searching and best-worded lyrics, as on *The Magdalene Laundries*, *Borderline* and *The Sire of Sorrow* (*Job's Sad Song*).

What makes this album notably compelling is that she wrote most of this material around the ages of 49 and 50 – a time when we expect so many singer-songwriters to have passed their creativity expiry date and resorted to a heartless, all-for-the-money-and-fame complacency.

Seldom has any artist in his or her middle age sounded so earnest and concerned. As the title suggests, this album is marked by an overall mood of sadness, desperation and isolation – not to forget a restrained outrage at what has become the indignity, crassness and shame of humanity.

In some respects, this is her *Blue* of the 1990s, but with different subject matter and far greater maturity of vision and empathy for those who suffer different forms of physical, emotional and mental abuse. Even the cover art speaks volume, with her solemn, Vincent van Gogh-like self-portrait with a bandaged ear being anything but a parody of the great Dutch expressionist's life, vision and art.

Read the lyrics to *Turbulent Indigo* – and you get the message: the cheapness of the salutations to Van Gogh's rare and precious talent with scant regard for the cruel society that ridiculed and ostracised him – not to forget the inner storms he bore with so much gnawing sorrow.

It sounds as if Joni Mitchell, unhurried, mellow and receptive, recalled many of her best reflective and creative moments, and fused these into a new sonic kaleidoscope of intimate musings. Here, she returns to the bleak precision of her *Blue*-period lyrics and symbols and the fluid melodicism and translucent arrangements that made *Court and Spark* such masterpiece.

There even are hints of the reflective, adventurous and sometimes percussive acoustic-guitar work that shaped key works like *Hejira*, while some of the sinuous singing and playing and the delicate but clever arrangements recapture some of the unusual glory of *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*. ■



Dog Eat Dog (1985) ... her best '80s album

Milestones

Highlights of a creative life

- 1943:** Born at Fort McLeod, Alberta, Canada
- 1953:** Contracts polio and starts to sing
- 1961:** Leaves high school
- 1963:** Begins studies at Alberta College of Art
- 1964:** Quits art college to develop a career in music
- 1965:** Birth of her daughter, who is given up for adoption; marries Chuck Mitchell and settles in Detroit
- 1967:** Moves to New York City and then Los Angeles
- 1968:** Releases first album, *Song to a Seagull*
- 1969:** Releases second album, *Clouds*
- 1970:** Releases third album, *Ladies of the Canyon*
- 1970:** Sails with Crosby, Stills and Nash and travels around Southern Europe
- 1971:** Releases *Blue* album to critical acclaim
- 1972:** Releases *For the Roses* album
- 1973:** Enjoys a break from music for several months
- 1974:** Releases *Court and Spark* album
- 1975:** Releases *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* album
- 1976:** Releases *Hejira* album
- 1977:** Releases *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* album
- 1978:** Collaborates with Charles Mingus, jazz bassist
- 1979:** Releases *Mingus* album to mixed reviews
- 1980:** Contributes to, and stars in, the film *Love*
- 1981:** Inducted into Canadian Music Hall of Fame
- 1982:** Releases *Wild Things Run Fast* album and marries Larry Klein
- 1983:** Tours North America with her band, Refuge
- 1984:** Releases *Refuge of the Roads* documentary
- 1985:** Releases *Dog Eat Dog* album
- 1986:** Records duet, *My Secret Place*, with Peter Gabriel in the UK
- 1987:** Death of Jaco Pastorius
- 1988:** Constructs her recording studio, The Kiva, and releases *Chalk Mark in a Rainstorm* album
- 1989:** Contributes to environmental benefit song, *The Spirit of the Forest*

1990: Participates in Roger Waters' *The Wall* concert in Berlin, Germany
1991: Releases *Night Ride Home* album
1993: Separates from Larry Klein and headlines *Troubadours of Folk* festival in Los Angeles
1994: Releases *Turbulent Indigo* album
1995: Receives *Billboard* Century Award
1996: Releases first compilations, *Hits* and *Misses*
1997: Inducted into American Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
1998: Releases *Taming the Tiger* album
2000: Releases covers album, *Both Sides Now*
2002: Releases *Travelogue* album, a rerecording of 22 of her songs with an orchestra
2003: Geffen Records boxes her four Geffen albums
2004: Releases *Dreamland* and *The Beginning of Survival* compilation albums
2005: Releases *Songs of a Prairie Girl* compilation album as her contribution to the centennial celebrations of her home state, Saskatchewan
2007: Rumours abound that a new studio album is being recorded

Guest singers and musicians

A veritable who's who of guest musicians

Since her 1968 debut album, Joni Mitchell's guest and session singers and musicians over more than 30 years have included:

Airto (percussion)
 Don Alias (percussion)
 David Baerwald (vocals)
 Jeff Baxter (guitar)
 Max Bennett (bass)
 Chuck Berghofer (bass)
 Brian Blade (drums)
 Michael Brecker (saxophone)
 Dennis Budimir (guitar)
 James Burton (guitar)
 Cheech & Chong (vocals)
 Iron Eyes Cody (vocals)
 Vinnie Colaiuta (drums)
 David Crosby (vocals)
 Paulinho da Costa (percussion)
 Bill Dillon (guitar and guitorgan)
 Thomas Dolby (vocals and keyboards)
 Peter Erskine (drums)
 Wilton Felder (bass)
 José Feliciano (guitar)
 Robben Ford (guitar)
 Glenn Frey (vocals)
 Peter Gabriel (vocals)
 John Guerin (drums)
 Bobbye Hall (drums and percussion)
 Herbie Hancock (piano)
 Don Henley (vocals)
 Milt Holland (percussion)
 Jim Hughart (bass)
 Billy Idol (vocals)
 Mark Isham (trumpet)
 Plas Johnson (saxophone)

Manu Katche (drums and percussion)
 Jim Keltner (drums)
 Larry Klein (bass and keyboards)
 Sneaky Pete Kleinow (pedal steel guitar)
 Russ Kunkel (drums)
 Michael Landau (guitar)
 Greg Leisz (pedal steel guitar)
 Steven Lindsey (keyboards)
 Steve Lukather (guitar)
 Lyle Mays (keyboards)
 Graham Nash (vocals)
 Willie Nelson (vocals)
 Ben Orr (vocals)
 Jaco Pastorius (bass)
 Wayne Perkins (guitar)
 Tom Petty (vocals)
 Billy Preston (organ)
 Emil Richards (percussion)
 Lionel Richie (vocals)
 Robbie Robertson (guitar)
 Tom Scott (woodwinds)
 Seal (vocals)
 Bud Shank (flute and saxophone)
 Wayne Shorter (saxophone)
 Steuart Smith (guitar)
 John David Souther (vocals)
 Steve Stevens (guitar)
 Stephen Stills (vocals and bass)
 James Taylor (vocals and guitar)
 Carlos Vega (drums)
 Susan Webb (vocals)
 Kenny Wheeler (flugelhorn)
 Neil Young (harmonica)

Peer admiration

We've got you covered!

A diverse spectrum of artists has covered Joni Mitchell songs over the last 40 years. These artists include:

Tori Amos
 Björk
 Clannad
 Judy Collins
 Elvis Costello
 Counting Crows
 Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young
 Sheryl Crow
 Fairport Convention
 Amy Grant
 Emmylou Harris
 Janet Jackson
 Diana Krall
 k d lang
 Annie Lennox
 Matthews' Southern Comfort
 Brad Mehldau
 Sarah McLachlan
 George Michael
 Mandy Moore
 Nazareth
 A Perfect Circle

Prince
Tom Rush
Buffy Sainte-Marie
Sufjan Stevens
James Taylor
Dave Van Ronk
Cassandra Wilson
Paul Young



Self-produced cover art

Brush with fame

Since the release of *Song to a Seagull*, Mitchell has been involved in producing artwork for most of her album covers. These include the covers for these 20 albums:

Song to a Seagull: drawing and painting for front and back covers
Clouds: painting for front and back covers
Ladies of the Canyon: drawing and painting for front and back covers
Court and Spark: drawing and painting for front cover
The Hissing of Summer Lawns: drawing and painting for front and back covers
Hejira: cover design using photographs by Joel Bernstein and Norman Seeff
Don Juan's Reckless Daughter: cover design using photographs by Norman Seeff
Mingus: paintings for front and back covers, as well as paintings of two Charles Mingus portraits in the foldout CD booklet
Shadows and Light: cover design using videographic imagery
Wild Things Run Fast: painting for front and back covers, as well as three paintings for the CD booklet
Dog Eat Dog: design and superimposed drawings on, and tinting of, Norman Seeff photographic images used on front and back covers
Chalk Mark in a Rainstorm: cover design
Night Ride Home: art direction (with Glen Christensen) and photography for front and back cover
Turbulent Indigo: painting for front and back cover, as well as eight paintings for the foldout CD booklet
Taming the Tiger: painting for front and back cover, as well as eight paintings for the CD booklet and another for the printed CD

Both Sides Now: painting for front and back cover, as well as three paintings for the CD booklet
Travelogue: paintings for front cover and two printed CDs, as well as photographs showing another 20-odd paintings
The Beginning of Survival: painting for front and inside covers of digipack, printed CD and slipcase, as well as eight paintings for CD booklet
Dreamland: painting for front and inside covers of digipack, printed CD and slipcase, as well as nine paintings for CD booklet
Songs of a Prairie Girl: art direction and design with Masaki Koike using photographs by Joel Bernstein

Written and published by Michael Waddacor ©
 1 Hocky Avenue, Northcliff, 2195, Johannesburg
 Phone: 0027 (0)11 888 1226 (office) or
 0027 (0)84 457 7133 (mobile)
 Email: waddacor@telkomsa.net
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 Fifty key singer-songwriter
 albums of the 1970s

Music that helped to define a creative decade

Joan Armatrading: *Joan Armatrading* (1976)
 Jackson Browne: *For Everyman* (1973)
 Jackson Browne: *Late for the Sky* (1974)
 Jackson Browne: *Running on Empty* (1977)
 Tim Buckley: *Blue Afternoon* (1970)
 Tim Buckley: *Starsailor* (1971)
 Tim Buckley: *Greetings from LA* (1972)
 Michael Chapman: *Fully Qualified Survivor* (1970)
 Leonard Cohen: *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971)
 Leonard Cohen:
New Skin for the Old Ceremony (1974)
 Sandy Denny: *Sandy* (1972)
 Nick Drake: *Bryter Layter* (1970)
 Nick Drake: *Pink Moon* (1972)
 Bob Dylan: *Blood on the Tracks* (1975)
 Bob Dylan: *Desire* (1976)
 Bob Dylan: *Street Legal* (1978)
 Carole King: *Tapestry* (1971)
 Roy Harper: *Stormcock* (1971)
 Roy Harper: *HQ* (1977)
 Janis Ian: *Between the Lines* (1975)
 John Martyn: *Bless the Weather* (1971)
 John Martyn: *Solid Air* (1973)
 Don McLean: *American Pie* (1971)
 Joni Mitchell: *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970)
 Joni Mitchell: *Blue* (1971)
 Joni Mitchell: *For the Roses* (1972)
 Joni Mitchell: *Court and Spark* (1974)
 Joni Mitchell: *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* (1975)
 Joni Mitchell: *Hejira* (1976)
 Van Morrison: *Moondance* (1970)
 Van Morrison: *Tupelo Honey* (1971)

Van Morrison: *St Dominic's Preview* (1972)
Van Morrison: *Veedon Fleece* (1974)
Randy Newman: *12 Songs* (1970)
Randy Newman: *Sail Away* (1972)
Randy Newman: *Good Old Boys* (1974)
Laura Nyro: *New York Tendaberry* (1970)
John Prine: *John Prine* (1971)
Simon and Garfunkel:
Bridge over Troubled Waters (1970)
Patti Smith: *Horses* (1975)
Phoebe Snow: *Phoebe Snow* (1974)
Cat Stevens: *Tea for the Tillerman* (1970)
Cat Stevens: *Teaser and the Firecat* (1971)
James Taylor: *Sweet Baby James* (1970)
Richard and Linda Thompson:
I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight (1974)
Tom Waits: *Small Change* (1976)
Tom Waits: *Foreign Affairs* (1977)
Neil Young: *After the Gold Rush* (1970)
Neil Young: *Harvest* (1972)
Neil Young: *On the Beach* (1974)

Dedicated to Billy and Lilith with love