

Biography reveals pride, loneliness

Joplin struggled to be recognized as artist

By STEVE HAIN

"The cultural situation of the sixties, Janis' environment and particularly the destructive elements of that environment were all factors that she used to validate her problems.

"Her environment was such that she was shaking off oppressions to reinforce her behaviour on one hand and then having her audience applaud her lifestyle on the other. So she became what the environment wanted her to become."

These were some of the insights into Janis Joplin given by Myra Friedman in a recent Toronto interview.

Friedman was one of Joplin's closest companions from the time she started singing with Big Brother until the time of her death in October, 1970.



Janis Joplin

Friedman majored in music at Northwestern University, worked with Decca Records and then spent five years with Columbia records as a writer. In 1968 she went to work for Joplin's manager, Albert Grossman until Janis's death.

Friedman is currently recovering from writing a biography of Joplin called *Buried Alive* and doing freelance magazine pieces.

In Friedman's estimation it was a combination of Joplin's immensely talented voice and the process of "historical accident" that made Joplin the dynamic stage personality that she was.

Her performances were "great outbursts of emotion" that drew on her dim view of life, that loneliness and tremendous 'down energy' that was an integral part of her performances. But no matter how good, Janis was never totally satisfied with

her show until her questions of "was I good, was I really good" were answered.

Although a dressed Joplin resembled a peacock's plumage her dedication to her music was as sincere as any artist's. She was always very conscious of the way her voice sounded and towards the end it was more noticeable that her screams were used as emphasis rather than explosions.

The need for permanence, to be recognized as an artist, was constantly gnawing at Joplin's insides. As Friedman put it, "she wanted to be known as a real artist, and not as some scraggly image from Haight Ashbury."

Coupled with her quest for permanence was her need to remain in the spotlight. When Jimi Hendrix died, Janis was naturally upset, but in discussion with Friedman she would view it as a start of a competition. It was as if "it was stealing her thunder", and Janis would wonder "if I'll get as much publicity when I die."

SEX A PAIN

Her sexual exploits were not all what they were made out to be.

No sugar tonight

LONDON, England (CUPI) - Dockers have refused to load a consignment of sugar here for export to Saudi Arabia.

Due to a drastic sugar shortage in England, the dockers have ordered the government to divert the 80-ton shipment to the local market. The sugar is now stored in a dock shed, waiting further developments.

Other supplies of sugar, which have been redirected to different ports, are also expected to be halted by the dockers, in their attempt to end the national shortage.

While on the surface they sometimes appeared fulfilling, inside they were "making her wretched."

"It was a pain thing, something she didn't enjoy, and was a means by which her loneliness and lack of self esteem expanded."

For all her hype, Joplin was not as totally wild as everyone thinks. When I asked Friedman if Janis had any interest in the occult, she laughed and made a point of saying that she was a very "down to earth person, totally unmystical."

"If someone was discussing it she would be very polite, not saying anything, and would later dismiss it by saying that 'it's not in the stars, it's in us.'"

Janis was not consciously "screwed" by the record industry. Although some elements of her audience and entourage led to her psychological exploitation, she was not financially exploited.

When she died, the people at Columbia were shaken, "they're not machines", and were placed in a strange position. She had just laid down the tracks to the album *Pearl*, which was "the best album she had ever made and nobody had heard it."

ETHICS?

This put Columbia in a "damned if they did and damned if they didn't" position. They were divided between ethics and the feeling of "how terrible it would be not to release it," with musical achievement winning out.

It was also unfortunate that her death had such a devastating effect on her last band, Full Tilt Boogie. A Canadian band, Full Tilt has since dropped two of its original five members and are now playing with King Biscuit Boy. They were a band with whom Joplin had "really felt she had found herself," and with whom hopes were held to outdo her previous releases.

At this time there is not much in the way of unreleased material. There are only two or three cuts available and therefore not enough to warrant the release of a new album. A documentary is scheduled for release and will feature a few short interviews with Joplin and some excellent performance footage.

As I was leaving I was given one more insight to toy with. "Janis was self-destructive; no-suicidal is closer to it. She was driving herself towards an early death by committing suicide every day of her life."

Strike three

OTTAWA (CUP) - Canadian labour unrest may break all records this year.

Already 5.2 million days have been lost to work stoppages in the first six months of 1974, due largely to strikes by unions wanting contracts reopened to provide escalatory cost-of-living clauses.

The record for days lost was set in 1972 when 7.8 million days were lost over the twelve month period.

Several of this year's strikes have caused serious difficulties for the government, especially the strike by Vancouver grain-handlers which limited Canada's vital shipments of wheat.

But there is no relief in sight throughout the rest of 1974. In fact, on December 31, present contracts simultaneously end for almost 150,000 workers, including nearly 100,000 railway employees, 35,000 postal workers, 6,800 longshoremen in British Columbia and on the St. Lawrence River, and 2,300 grainhandlers in Thunder Bay and Montreal.

Unions in all cases will be taking tough stances to win substantial pay increases for their members.

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