

# Shadows and light: some semblance of a garden

by Brent Bambury

By the time Woody Guthrie died in 1967, his art had already spawned a generation of folk musicians that were to be of profound influence on the decade. The Newport Folk Festival in 1963 launched the era of "Woody's Children", a band of "pseudo-western" folkies that included such hopefuls as Phil Ochs, Arlo Guthrie and Bob Dylan. When Joni Mitchell released her first LP recording in the summer of 1968, Guthrie had been dead for nearly a year. Mitchell's **Song for a Seagull** is a simple, clean collection of 10 ballads all written by the performer. Joni plays piano and guitar, and her friend Stephen ("I'm no fun anymore") Stills tinkers on bass. It's a good thing that Joni Mitchell arrived so late on the folk music scape. Her disposal of the genre proves life after folk doesn't have to be Everlasting.

**Shadows and Light**, Joni Mitchell's 12th album, is a retrospective view of post-folk Joni. Since recording with Tom Scott in the early 70's, Mitchell has been moving cautiously into the field of jazz music. The transition has been turbulent, enduring critical dissent and mutiny of the faithful. With **Shadows and Light**, Joni articulates the completion of the pivot. The artist has evolved. Now, would you please refile these records under "jazz"?

**Shadows and Light** is a splendid recording of a splendid concert from a tour completed last fall. Backed by

a battalion of jazz personalities, the tour provided Joni with a spirited refutation to the mediocre reviews she had been handed for last summer's solid tribute to Charles Mingus. It is a refutation stronger than words. With Jaco Pastorius now a staple on bass, Mitchell's band is rounded out by Pat Metheny's guitar, Mich-



ael Brecker's saxophone and Don Alais' percussive talents. The musicians provide such a high energy and expressive setting for Mitchell's music and vocals that she appears to be totally at ease in the concert environment. There is none of the self-conscious chatter that characterized the **Miles of Aisles** concert earlier in the decade. Instead, the album swings into showmanship with a compelling opening rendition of the title cut.

All of the material on **Shadows and Light** (excepting one song) has been released previously; and most of it within the last 5 years. A few of the songs sound too much

like their studio siblings, and these clone-like numbers generally detract from the quality of the album. But there is still a considerable looseness that sets **Shadows and Light** apart as an article of achievement. Solos by Alais and Metheny come off like quiet fireworks. And Mitchell's voice continues to sculpt a profound range of emotions, delivering a lyric with an integrity of expression not found elsewhere in popular music.

The most successful cuts on the album are those taken from Joni's later work. **Good-bye Pork Pie Hat**, a piece by Charles Mingus, is a phenomenal performance. Originally released by Joni last summer, there is a remarkable improvement in concert. Brecker's saxophone punctuates a loose and empty Mitchell while the entire band experiences an audible appreciation for the late composer.

The album closes with a nostalgia piece, dictated no doubt by the timing of the concert. Ten years after the concert, Mitchell's **Woodstock**, while musically uninteresting, provides a poignant juxtaposition of two different performers. Her ponderous vocals betray an admiration for the naive ideals of the 60's. And there is sincerity when she adds,

"And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden."

To some semblance of a garden."

Mitchell's sense of arrangement is probably her greatest

strength. Her voice, though graceful, does not touch the prowess of a Cleo Laine. On **Shadows and Light** however, fertile lyrics, eloquent melodies and a superb collection of musicians document a musical expertise that gleams. In Hejira, Joni sings:

"We're only particles of change, I know, I know, Orbiting around the sun."

But it's hard to have that point of view When I'm always hung up on someone."

The music slides into the pensiveness of Pastorius' bass. Brecker's saxophone takes flight.

Joni Mitchell knows how to make a song work. She could never return to the folk scene. She knows too much.

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## "The Ceremony"

By Elliott Richman

The Ceremony, a Japanese flick, was an excellent movie with one minor drawback.

Masuo, the major character, had a troubled life. For example, his brother was buried alive while his mother and he were fleeing the ravages of World War Two. He never knew who his father was for his father committed suicide when he learned of the Japanese emperor's denial of his possessing divine powers.

At another time, Masuo had a very strange marriage for he was present at the ceremony but his bride wasn't! He was humiliated when his marriage was carried out with everyone stupidly acting as if the bride was there by bowing deeply to a ghost as she supposedly walked down the aisle into Masuo's hands. Later that night, he was so upset to learn that at the last minute his bride ran away from him that he was ready to make love to a pillow!

Masuo's life was literally torn at the end of the movie for

many important members of his family drop dead.

Unfortunately, this movie has a slight drawback, namely; the confusing family relations certainly reminds one of a soap opera. But get it straight, this movie is NOT a soap opera. It is just that it goes from one relative to another without a long enough transitory period that one is likely to get confused on which person is which one of Masuo's relatives. Masuo was not even sure whether he had a sister for he suspected that the girl was his father's daughter by another woman.

"The Ceremony" is an appropriate title for this masterpiece because it starts with Masuo's grandfather's death and slowly, it goes back into Masuo's past through flashbacks showing various ceremonies ranging from his father's death to his own bridless marriage. Some scenes of his childhood are also shown.

This movie is worth seeing but unfortunately, it was shown only once on October 12, 1980 in the Arts Centre.

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