

Rachel Rosenzweig

Music of the 60s

Film Assignment #2

Joni Mitchell Woman of Heart and Mind

The top comment on the youtube documentary was “This brought tears to my eyes. Joni’s music was the background of my 20s. I’m in my 70s now and her songs are still the background of my life.” Joni Mitchell is ghostly in the sense that her voice transcends any decade. It is hard to encompass her persona in words, but she is so feminine in her curiosity. Her curiosity is tenacious, defensive but equally open, and caring for others in her pursuit of an answer. The old soul in her is perhaps what caused her to dance like time was running out, for it sounds like she has had so many lives. The best way I can describe her, at least the imprint this documentary gave me, is that she is like a songbird (preferably a mockingbird). She croons sad songs that are painfully beautiful. They are humble, but critical to the soundtrack of life. I think they are also clearly intentional, they act as memories for her when she recounts them – as if they are relics of that life stage. I truly believe that is the purpose of music, to understand the ways in which new versions of yourself fold into past ones. She embodies the other soundtrack of life – which are street performers and guitar-playing grifters who made you want to get barefoot and dance at the park.

The documentary did a great job in that it placed her life within context, hiding no taboo subjects such as abortion, young motherhood, abusive marriage, poverty, etc. because they make up her mastery. As another young woman, I feel for her in such a profound way and I wish I could reach out to her through time to give her a hug. This

documentary brought up the question: is the best art born of pain? Can we avoid that pattern? Or should we embrace it? She reflects me in one portion of the film, where she says: "I only consider having written for a year because that is how long I have *felt* like a songwriter." It floored me. Once you decide you are an artist, you just are. That's what this last bit of college has taught me, and I am so thankful. I respect how she was her own manager, that she felt confident enough in herself to take leaps.

This film was such a multi-angular view of Joni Mitchell. I particularly loved learning about her through her admirers, collaborators, and friends. Somehow she was capable of making every person in the audience feel like she was only comforting them, and them alone. That is an artistry that I aspire to possess.