

[E-BOOK] Joni Mitchell's Court and Spark (33 1/3)

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Sean Nelson

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Sean Nelson : Joni Mitchell's Court and Spark (33 1/3) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joni Mitchell's Court and Spark (33 1/3):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An excellent approach to the materialBy Charles H. LeinTo read more about my feelings on this nicely done work, please check out my review (less favorable) of the "Aqualung" installment. The only thing I would add to those comments is: 1. I don't get the reviewer who feels that Mr. Nelson "trashed" everything else in Joni's catalog after "Hissing...", and then describes his book as "nasty" and critical "tripe". The way I see it (and I'm not going to foam at the mouth because someone else disagrees - to each his own), Nelson was dead-on in merely making the case that Joni's strongest period was the "For The Roses"/"Blue"/"CS"/"Hissing..." period, and that other later periods never really achieved this consistency of insight/voice/broad appeal. The guy, like all of us, clearly LOVES Joni. He's just honest and objective enough to admit that she had some mis-steps and down periods that the "golden period" is almost completely and gloriously devoid of. I'm the first to admit that I love

"Hejira" and "Wild Things Run Fast", and others. What I won't sink to is getting red-faced and "nasty" over some objective (and well-supported) criticism of an artist who I love, but acknowledge as capable of occasional weak moments.² Like others, I wish there was more editorial fine-tuning and attention to the choice of writers and their product. Too often, books in the series seem to forget what the objective and wonderful potential of these works really is. Again, just my opinion, but I think Nelson struck the perfect balance of historical/cultural milieu, informed appreciation for what makes his subject excellent (or awareness of when it's less-than-excellent), and fair critique.⁶ of 6 people found the following review helpful. DisappointingBy Stutch"Writing about music is like dancing about architecture"First off let me say I am not a lyric person. If music is the hand then lyrics are the glove. A hand without the glove is still very useful - the glove without the hand?That said this book delves deeply into the the lyrics - which are for the most part really great lyrics. I know them inside and out. And so I was a bit taken aback at the interpretation presented in this book. For in all my 100's of listenings to this album, never did I ever construe this as an introspective monolog that Joni was having with herself. I always identified with the observational aspects of CA living in the '70's. And in the greater context of Blue and the travails of being a folk singer surrounded and dating bona fide rockstars. So its very clear the author I hear two different albums.I look to identify with the songs themselves as a whole, while the author stops at identifying primarily the lyrics. A narrow trap. And what a lot of work made connecting all these words together! So analytical yet with so little emotion. It seems to be all about the words and so little about the music. So its a narrow viewpoint.And the other nagging thread in this book is the incredible gravity given to assumptions into the artist's psyche. I am reminded of the scene in Annie Hall, where they are waiting to get into the movies. Behind them a Columbia professor is authoritatively yammering away about Marshal McLuhan. Woody gets so upset at the guy being so off base in his insights that he goes over and pulls out Mr McLuhan who says, "you have no idea what I am about. How you got to teach anything...".So I gotta wonder, what would Joni say to the author about his book? Has he ever sat down with Joni and delved into the many many insights he offers up as factual? Doubtful. We may never know and that enigmatic quality is likely best preserved unexamined.And finally, though there are some musical insights given, it left me wanting. I like detail of how the collaborations worked. How did the arrangements evolve? Who had what ideas and how did that work in the studio? Some glimpses but very little on the craft behind the album.Although I know this album quite intimately, I was disappointed that this turned out to be pretty much a third party's interpretation of the lyrics. It finally comes together in the analysis of "Down To You" and that is a great bit of the book; but other than than it was the old adage regarding writing about music.¹ of 1 people found the following review helpful. BrilliantBy CustomerSean Nelson's take on Joni Mitchell's pivotal album, "Court and Spark" is one of the best books I've read in the 33-1/3 Series, of which I am in general a big fan. Nelson speaks fan-to-fan, making insightful commentary on the individual songs, providing illuminating background information, and relating the music back to his own personal experience (and, by extension, ours). Detailed, but never bogged down by extreme technical analysis, Sean Nelson's "Court and Spark" gives a thorough and knowledgeable examination of one of my favorite albums of all time, and provided an unexpected bonus--he took a group of songs that I have heard hundreds (if not thousands) of times and made me feel like I was hearing them for the first time.

Court and Spark is Joni Mitchell's most overt attempt at making a hit record, full of glossy production, catchy choruses, and even guest stars from every stratum of rock culture, high (Robbie Robertson) and low (Cheech and Chong). The record was a smash, reaching number two on the charts in March of 1974, spawning three hit singles; Help Me, Free Man in Paris and Raised on Robbery and cementing Mitchell's position as a commercial as well as an artistic force. Sean Nelson, a well known musician himself (Harvey Danger, the Long Winters), is particularly well equipped to understand all the elements that went into the making of this classic album, and he does so with clarity and wit.