

## Music

# Pink Floyd's newest cluttered, not up to legend

Review By Douglas R. Weil  
Pink Floyd/*Animals*/Columbia JC 34474

Not since the Beatles crossed the Atlantic Ocean has there been such an intense emotional attachment in music like the relationship that exists between music listeners and rock band Pink Floyd.

Pink Floyd grabbed the ears of a generation with the 1973 release of the now immortal *Dark Side of the Moon* (DSOTM) album. With *DSOTM* a new wave in rock music washed ashore. Some called it the age of gadgetry, others called it art-rock. Whatever it might be labeled, Pink Floyd's computer created psychedelia changed rock 'n' roll music forever.

What seems most remarkable about *DSOTM* is that it commanded the listener's attention. It was nearly impossible not to become immersed in songs like "The Great Gig in the Sky", "Us and Them" or "Brain Damage" which all appear on *DSOTM* and are still irresistible today.

In contrast to *DSOTM*, *Animals*, the new album from Pink Floyd, is not a very listenable album. It doesn't have the alluring power of *DSOTM*. But his doesn't mean *Animals* isn't a good album.

On *Animals* we find that Pink Floyd has matured as rock musicians. Although a number of very positive things may be said about *DSOTM*, the fact remains that it was the product of an immature band.

*DSOTM* was rock 'n' roll kids climbing the walls of the studio, twisting every dial in sight, doing anything to produce a unique sound. It was the entry of rock 'n'

roll into the third generation since these were the first technicians of rock music.

Recording studio instrument  
In fact the recording studio was Pink Floyd's most important instrument. Through the studio, Pink Floyd was able to create sounds that for them were unattainable through the use of the traditional guitar-bass-keyboards-drums combination. Most importantly the studio techniques and electronic gadgetry helped to cover the band's biggest flaw, mediocre musicianship.

On *Animals*, Pink Floyd puts their musical talents out front and pushes their manipulative studio tricks into the background. Yes, the tricks are still there but they aren't of such a "gee whiz" character typical of the alarm clocks, heartbeats and cash registers on *DSOTM*.

For one thing Pink Floyd uses the electric guitar more proudly than ever before. This is especially apparent on David Gilmour's guitar solo during an

This guitar solo has an ambiance that makes one lean back and think, "God, my hearing really improves when I'm stoned." Stoned or not, this instrumental passage hits listeners hard and leaves them begging for more.

Use of keyboards and drums are in line with their use on previous albums. However, there are times on *Animals* when keyboardist Richard Wright sounds more like a sleepwalking Gary Wright.



Photo courtesy of Columbia Records  
Dave Gilmour

the conceptual character of *Animals* is little more than sidesplitting banality.

*Animals* is an oversimplified Orwellian comment on survival in a social system. *Animals* is composer Roger Waters' continued expression of disdain for one thing or another.

Waters' disgust was well-stated in "Have a Cigar" from their last album *Wish You Were Here*:

"Well I've always had a deep respect  
and I mean that most sincerely  
The band is just fantastic  
That is really what I think  
Oh, by the way which one's Pink?"

The target of *Wish You Were Here* was the music business. Now Waters uses the same tone (disgust, dismay and sarcasm) to lash out at the larger world and its faults.

While *Wish You Were Here* was straightforward (and as a result powerful), *Animals* is but a weak attempt to construct a clever allegorical essay of life in the 1970's. In the end the allegory becomes cluttered and "the message" only obscures otherwise good music.



Nick Mason

### Popular gimmick valuable

Pink Floyd also recognizes the value of a popular gimmick—even one that wasn't their idea. Perhaps this is the explanation for the voice bag solo on "Pigs (Three Different Ones)." It seems the band believes if the voice bag works well for Peter Frampton ("Do You Feel Like We Do?") it can only work better for Pink Floyd.

And in fact the voice bag solo is an asset to "Pigs (Three Different Ones)" but it may be that the solo wah-wahs a little too long.

Although the album shows a stronger and more grown-up band instrumentally,



Rick Wright

instrumental passage on *Animals*' "Dogs." The licks are crisp and searing, almost machine-like.



Roger Waters

## arts and entertainment

# Joni Mitchell's 'Hejira' medicine for the melancholy

Review by Michael Zangari  
Joni Mitchell/*Hejira*/Asylum 7E-1087

The sixties have passed. The war is over, people are trying to pretend it never happened, Woodstock was eight years ago, prices are up, quality of life is down and Joni Mitchell is 35 years old.

At this stage of the game you'd think Mitchell would have gotten out of the morose melancholy that has marked her albums from the beginning. Not so. And what is more, it is what keeps her music consistent.

Her lyrics, lost lovers and lusts have matured to the point where she can laugh at herself, and still blow you away with the emotional intensity.

So what do you expect at this time in her life? Another *Blue*? Mitchell is an artist, and as such has changed and expanded with the times around her.

*Hejira* then is as much about change as it is about her horniness.

Dara says "have children"  
Mama and Betsy say—"Find yourself a charity  
Help the needy and the crippled or put some time into ecology"

Well, there's a wide world of noble causes  
And lovely landscapes to discover  
But all I really want to do right now  
Is find another lover...

Mitchell in transition.

The instrumental tracks on *Hejira* are exceptional. Backing by various members of the L.A. Express and a host of fine studio musicians including jazz bassist Jaco Pastorius give the songs an unindulgent lushness. The simplicity of earlier albums is gone.

Suited her best

What is there in its stead is a leaning to jazz, a medium that has always suited her best.

In the wake of the musical onrush, Mitchell vocals have been somewhat less adventuresome. She does no falsetto meandering as she almost always has in the past. In places she talks lyrics instead of singing them.

The vocals on the album are its weakest link. It is definitely Mitchell, but you get the impression that a tired Mitchell is behind the voice.

"Black Crow" spotlights this problem. A strong introduction and backing track starts the song bubbling until it's cooking, then a clumsy Mitchell enters, half shout-

ing, half hurrying to get too many lyrics in too little space and the song is lost.

The tempo and general style are similar to "Big Yellow Taxi," but the performance is sad.

Most of the material she is working with is exceptional. She still has a flair for unusual phrasing and a strong sense of lyrical integrity.

Her lyrics on "Coyote", and a host of other songs suggest that Mitchell has been on the road. "... a prisoner of the white lines on the freeway" as she puts it—passing by lovers and friends on an endless treadmill.

Mood pieces

In "Coyote" she shines. Her subtle suggestiveness and rooted descriptions make for one of the nicer mood pieces on the album.

It speaks of the necessity for making a choice between love, work and liberty.



Photo courtesy of Asylum Records

Joni Mitchell, back again with *Hejira*.

*Coyotes in the coffee shop*

He's staring a hole in his scrambled eggs

He picks up my scent on his fingers

While he's watching the waitress' legs...

Either he's going to have to stand and fight

or get on out of here...

Leonard Cohen calls this prose-rock. And certainly the lyrics are up front on all but a few of the songs.

"Furry Sings the Blues" is a good example of Mitchell's ample talents in descriptive prose. In it she describes (Over veteran blues singer Furry Lewis' strenuous objections) the decaying Beale Street, along with its rich rag-time history.

Neil Young makes a guest appearance on the song playing blues harp. The song does not adapt well to Young's feeble harmonica playing. He fills when he gets the chance but after a while it's almost funny, in an eerie sort of way. "Furry Sings the Blues" is one of the strongest cut on the LP regardless.

Close to remote people

Mitchell seems to have a closer empathy with remote people and places than she does with tangible things in her environments.

In "Furry" she speaks to W.C. Handy who is long dead. In *Amelia* it is woman aviator Amelia Earhart, whose fate is still unknown.

In the eight-minute epic "Song for Sharon" she brings it closer. Talking to an old friend, Mitchell makes the mandatory comments on her love life, and her past and present thoughts about marriage.

Mitchell dubbed some eerie background vocals in the song that give it an incredible depth. Once again Mitchell lyrically comes through with power.

Many people in the press and the record stores have been disappointed by Mitchell's showing on the *Hejira* LP.

While it isn't as accessible musically as she has been in the past, I can't say it is not her best.

Mitchell is experimenting, and as long as she goes on in this line, each additional album will be an entity unto itself.

By this standard, it would be hard to downgrade *Hejira*. It is a tremendous job to do a consistent album in which all of the material stands, and Mitchell has done it again.