

Mitski is the Modern-Day Joni Mitchell That We All Need

With the release of her most recent album, *Be The Cowboy*, Mitski reminds you of every heartbreak of your life. Whether it be a serious multi-year romance, small high-school crush or a stranger that you passed on the street once. She brings you back to the point where things just didn't *work*. Mitski fits right in along other contemporary 'sad-girl-rock-singer/songwriters' like Courtney Barnett, Julien Baker and Frances Quinlan of Hop Along. Yes, she has sad lyrics and she shreds on her guitar, but this album transcends the archetype of the forlorn rockstar who just can't catch a break.

This album stands as a series of diary entries in which we get a peek into Mitski's life and the listener follows her on this personal journey and suddenly goes pale as they realize that these songs were written for *them*. These songs resonate on a weird transcendent level. They come from a place of honesty, and because of this they ring true and physically makes your heart hurt.

Mitski's soft voice reminds me first of Joni Mitchell. They both have sad songs, and intricate lyrics. Mitchell will forever be a classic artist for all of time, her songs are brutal yet beautiful. Her discography is meant to be cried to and are there for the days when you need to reflect. *Blue* will forever be a staple for these kinds of days, but Mitski is bringing this necessity into the 21st century. She doesn't necessarily sing about how she needs a man or significant other. She talks about things like legacy and just wanting to not fade away in "Remember My Name" and "A Horse Name Cold Air". Mitchell will forever be a staple in the world of folk and for women musicians, but her songs are a time capsule of the 60s, and 70s, of the Woodstock era and her songs were made for those people Mitski makes her music for the lonely, reflective hearts of today.

In the song “Nobody”, which was released as a single, is a disco-dance song that proclaims that she has nobody to love her and that’s she’s all alone. Looking at the lyrics it looks just plain depressing. However, with its infectious beat, it’s impossible to do anything but dance along. It’s anthem for all of those people alone on a Friday night, and don’t have any prospects in sight. It makes loneliness okay since she asks you to dance along with her. It’s utterly refreshing. She calls you to sing along to her loneliness as well as hers, to create a moment in which you aren’t alone: you’ve got this song.

Many of her songs work as vignettes. The album has 14 songs but tracks at just over a half hour long. The album is incredibly polished but there are little flourishes peppered in that makes it feel real and legitimate. It isn’t perfected to such a degree that it becomes ingenuine. On the first song, “Geyser”, it begins with a heavy droning sound which then crackles and sounds like a technological malfunction. I double checked my computer when I heard this noise. It was intentional. The vocals and instrumentation break in and out for the opening like a scary movie trailer, it feels visceral as if something is looming in the background. It fits perfectly with the song which then quiet literally erupts with the chorus.

In another one of the songs, “Me and My Husband”, the recording begins with a little sigh. Listening to this album with my large headphones around the city, I never heard this initially. However, when I listened to the album in full in the quiet of my apartment, I heard Mitski’s deep sigh before the guitar kicked in the for song. It’s so small, but it has become one of my favorite things about the album. This sigh also is rather humorous since Mitski herself is not currently married, nor has she ever been. Whether this sigh is for the construct of marriage or to fit the narrative of the song, it works in both ways. It adds another layer, almost a piece of set

design to the song. It sets up the listener for the tone, if she's sighing before the song even starts, the character of the song is *very* over it.

Even though the album (and much of her previous work) appeals to sad themes and tones, a happy person can still listen to them. They aren't only for those going through heartbreak or a rough patch. I've listened to this album on happy days. There's something about her lyrics and her feelings behind them that are awe-inspiring. She throws around metaphors so easily, and none of them fall flat. "Toss your dirty shoes in my washing machine heart /Baby, bang it up inside." She adds rhythm to something that you would think would be clunky. She smooths it out, making it another catchy song.

The songs are intense with soaring, longing vocals. The guitars are heavy and when the stereo is turned up loud enough, you can feel every guitar strum and drum beat knock against your ribcage. Joni Mitchell's beautiful bell-like voice will forever resonate on a rainy afternoon or to be your soundtrack for your next existential crisis. People have and always will be lonely. But, it's a lot more fun to feel all of these emotions whilst whipping your limbs around your apartment to loud guitars. This is what this new generation wants. We want to dance and make the most of our feelings. We accept and understand that we won't always be happy, so as long as this is a constant, we might as well be jumping around and singing at the tops of our lungs. Unfortunately, you can't really do that with folk songs.