

Who Is Joni Mitchell?



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By Alexander Baron



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Lying in a Los Angeles hospital bed at this moment is a 71 year old woman where she has been since the end of March. If the name Joni Mitchell is not as well known as it should be, that is only because the younger generation is not as educated as it should be. Although she has said she regards herself first and foremost as a painter, Joni Mitchell will be remembered first and foremost as a singer-songwriter and one of the voices of her generation.


Let us not *remember* her yet though, because although she remains gravely ill, her fans have not given up on her. On April 4, a fan registered a website for people to leave **messages of support**. So who is Joni Mitchell? Born at Fort Macleod, Canada in November 1943, as a young woman she was

a stunningly attractive blonde, but even drop dead good looks and enormous talent are no guarantees against hard times, and she certainly paid her dues. In 1964, she found herself pregnant and alone; at that time single motherhood was still very much a stigma, even with the [Summer Of Love](#) just around the corner, and faced with difficult choices, she carried the baby to full term, giving up her daughter for adoption. (They were not reunited until 1997).




Relocating to the United States the following year, she finally broke through as the Sixties faded. Although she has produced a considerable body of work spanning the genres from folk to rock to jazz, what is arguably her greatest song, *Both Sides Now*, was written at the age of just 21 before her career had properly begun. Likewise what remains her best known song, *Big Yellow Taxi*, was recorded in 1970. Both these songs, especially the former, are intensely personal, and ones for which the listener can find her or his own meaning.

Although not a great musician in a purely technical sense, she has a unique vocal style, and remains an enormous influence, especially on female songwriters. Joni Mitchell has a presence on [Songfacts](#), and of course her own [official website](#), which hopefully like the lady herself will be around for many years to come.





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Tim Sandle • 2 years ago


Joni Mitchell's '70s work is very good, especially the 'Blue' album.

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— Point taken. I think this is absolutely extraordinary. At one time the police would have shown her the door.

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— Very interesting!