

JOAN ARMATRADING

When Joan Armatrading's third A&M album *Joan Armatrading* was released in July 1976, it was love at first listen. The album and her subsequent concert performances resulted in excellent reviews and adulation from even the most skeptical of critics.

Rolling Stone named *Joan Armatrading* "Runner-up Album Of The Year," which found the lady side by side with Jackson Browne, Boz Scaggs, Rod Stewart and Bob Seger. "... an unforgettable voice," said the *Washington Post*. "The music is scorchingly honest, technically brilliant," opined the *Philadelphia Enquirer*. Meanwhile *Joan Armatrading* gradually nudged its way into the top half of the national charts.

In England similar accolades were echoed. *Joan Armatrading* went gold. Editorial writers of *Sounds* voted *Joan Armatrading* #1 for 1976 after reviewer Phil Scutcliffe declared: "... we need Joan Armatrading like we need Bob Dylan and the Beatles. You'll play this record once in a while forever."

With an uncanny knack for arresting phrasing, Joan's sensitive lyrics reach new heights of expression on this fourth album. Her multi-dimensional voice, capable of simultaneously sounding smoothly textured, cutting and lilting, combined with dynamic guitar licks, and an unaffected stage presence have garnered her acclaim as one of the more innovative, versatile and important artists on the music scene.

A new awareness to the demands of her craft is vibrantly heard on her fourth and newest A&M album, *Show Some Emotion*, produced by Glyn Johns. "Glyn brought out the guitarist in me," says Joan. "Writing is still most important to me. But I still want people to know that I play guitar instead of just strumming." Joan's penetrating guitar licks, which one

reviewer has said "knocks you off your feet," is accented on "Opportunity," a jazz flavored showcase for Joan on acoustic guitar.

No two tunes sound alike on this new album, although each maintains a passion found in Armatrading's insightfully candid lyrics, expression-packed delivery and new band comprised of some fine British and American musicians. Abetting Joan are Jerry Donahue (lead guitar), Kenny Jones (drums), Dave Kemper (drums), Henry Spinetti (drums), Bryan Garofalo (bass), Dave Markee (bass), Mel Collins (sax), Georgie Fame (piano and organ), Tim Hinkley (organ) and John "Rabbit" Bundrick (piano).

Whether it's the reggae-tinged "Never Too Late," the dreamy ballad "Willow" or the funky-jazz improvisational "Kissin' And A Huggin'," Joan's distinctively innovative approach to fusing the musical spectrum is everywhere evident.

Joan Armatrading was born in St. Kitts in the Caribbean on December 9, 1950, one of six children. She was seven when her family left the West Indies for the more stable climate of Birmingham, England where Joan spent her adolescence listening to the radio, writing songs and playing guitar.

By 15 she had mastered the second hand piano her mother bought for use as furniture. Only after her brother's constant nagging did Joan hesitantly agree to perform. "I've always thought of myself as a songwriter first," she says. "I write all the time. The last thing I think about is how to sing it."

Her first album, *Whatever's For Us*, a collaboration with poet/lyricist Pam Nestor, was released in 1973. A two-year hiatus from recording ensued which found Joan refining her craft. 1975's *Back To*

(over please)

Biography

The Night was voted one of the top 10 albums in one English critic's poll. That same year also marked her first concert tours with Supertramp and Nils Lofgren.

She told *Rolling Stone* she was "168% positive" she wouldn't look good in glitter and prefers her basic Levi's. She admits "stupid things arouse inspiration" and insists her songs aren't autobiographical because if she doesn't find her life interesting "why should someone else? It's not really a question of having secrets. I'm trying not to let out the secret that I

have no secrets."

And while comparisons come easy these days, the diverse scope of Joan's styles have been so baffling that she's been likened to such varied luminaries as Joni Mitchell, Nina Simone, Van Morrison, Elton John, and Jimi Hendrix. High praise for a lady who has remained indifferent to the clamor. "I don't mind being compared," says Joan unaffectedly, "as long as it's to someone I like."