

INNER TUNES



The New Romance

The love songs of the Seventies are not of the bill-and-coo variety. They are about two people trying to make a life together and often failing. The strained topic of lost love and the breakdown of old romantic myths dominate the music of all highly personal performers.

To many the prime love poet of the Seventies has been **Jackson Browne**, who says he views romance as "not necessarily positive." Yet some of his biggest fans find him almost classically romantic in his deeply personal love songs.

On his album *The Pretender*, Browne sings about shaky love affairs and his failures to "open up and let you in." His lyrics rarely speak comfortably about love ("Never should I have had to try so hard to make a love work out"). But Browne's songs attempt to deal with his own romantic problems honestly. And that sells in the Seventies.

Rock Biography

The confessional tone of Seventies' music is not limited to the mellow songsters. Rock groups often use personal experiences as a basis for their songs. Fleetwood Mac's top-selling album *Rumours* is a highly personal account of the breakup of the members' marriages and attachments and the traumas created by the splits.

Much like a picaresque novelist, **Bruce Springsteen** tells tales of teenage Americana and its fast-living hoodlums. Most of his wild images on *Born to Run* are pulled from his youth in seamy Asbury Park, a decaying New Jersey resort town.



Pop observer Tom Wolfe has tagged the Seventies as "The Me Decade." Judging from the messages in pop songs, he's right. Seventies' singer/songwriters are self-absorbed, if not self-aware. Preoccupied with understanding themselves, they search through their lives, pull out moments of intensity and weave them into songs. This bittersweet process yields a tough and tender kind of honesty: Karla Bonoff pleads for "Someone To Lay Down Beside Me" and Dan Fogelberg admits that love has left him with only "Souvenirs."

Listeners are touched not only by the pain in new songs, but also by the flash of recognition. We've been there also. The songs deal with conflicts and ambiguities we've all faced in the Seventies: love, loneliness, freedom and fear. Judging by our personal response to the Seventies' songwriters, Wolfe could have called this "The Me Too Decade."



Joni Mitchell: Courting fans with personal spark

SOUND SAMPLER

Karla Bonoff: *Karla Bonoff* • **Jackson Browne:** *The Pretender* • **Bob Dylan:** *Blood on the Tracks* • **Fleetwood Mac:** *Rumours* • **Dan Fogelberg:** *Souvenirs* • **Janis Ian:** *Between the Lines* • **Billy Joel:** *The Stranger* • **Joni Mitchell:** *Court and Spark* • **Randy Newman:** *Little Criminals* • **John Prine:** *Common Sense* • **Carly Simon:** *No Secrets* • **Paul Simon:** *Still Crazy After All These Years* • **Bruce Springsteen:** *Born to Run* • **James Taylor:** *Sweet Baby James* • **Neil Young:** *Decade*



Not-So-Private Lives

The leaders of the confessional sound of the Seventies are Joni Mitchell and James Taylor. Both have spent the decade publicly searching their souls in song. Often as not, their intimacies and anguish can serve as lessons to be learned by all.

Joni Mitchell has continually explored the multifaceted problems of love that confront a worldly-wise, modern woman. In hits like "Help Me," she can revel in the delights of our new freedoms, while warning of the perils of falling in love—again.

James Taylor has taken us inside his broken heart on songs like "Fire and Rain," sharing troubled thoughts and the triumph of simply surviving. Recently he has turned to old rhythm and blues tunes like "Handy Man" and "How Sweet It Is," which points out another Seventies trend: sometimes old songs capture modern emotions remarkably well.

Roots

Soul-searching in music is as old as the basic blues.

Fighting the instinct to fall in love is not a new theme, either. Marlene Dietrich launched her career in 1929 with the tune "Falling in Love Again." Her smoldering refrain asked, "What am I to do? I can't help it."

The big difference in Seventies' songs is the often brutal honesty with which the writers bare their souls. It's a trend that became a highly commercial success with **Carole King** and her mammoth hit album *Tapestry* in 1970. King packed a wallop with tight, hard-hitting songs like "So Far Away," "It's Too Late," and "A Natural Woman." The album stayed on top of the charts for five years and opened the way for other top singer/songwriters to deal openly with emotions.

