

23

CANADIAN
POP SONGS

5 River

Joni Mitchell, 1971

A couple of decades before Tori Amos & Co. discovered the grand piano, Mitchell wheeled one out for this cool but plaintive song about the heart far from home. The tag line — “I wish I had a river to skate away on” was incomprehensible in her California milieu, but deeply resonant to Canadian ears.

Throughout her career, Mitchell has stayed true to the pedal-note of her origins, while becoming one of the most cosmopolitan and adventurous musicians of her generation. Her influence is incalculable, above all on women songwriters, but also on artists as diverse as jazz pianist Herbie Hancock and choreographer Peggy Baker.