

The Intriguing Sounds of Jaimé Morton

by JHL

To meet Jaimé Morton in person, apart from her music, is to meet a woman of contained presence. She is reserved, unassuming, and succinct in words. Hand her a guitar, invite her to sing, and her presence explodes into a feeling blossom unfolding.

Morton's music is reminiscent of Ricki Lee Jones with a soulful difference. This difference is indicative of the reflective, self-searching of an early Joan Armatrading. Yet, Jaimé Morton's music is uniquely her own.

She incorporates a broad-based use of style, which makes her music difficult to categorize. Folk is prominent while a distinct blues vein runs throughout each song. She uses an interesting blend of acoustic jazz and modern folk in her guitar playing. And the steady, moving rhythm of her accompaniment would appeal to even the most die-hard popper. Basically, Morton's music has the potential to attract a wide range of listeners.

Morton's guitar playing is consistently strong, energetic, and creative. She uses an

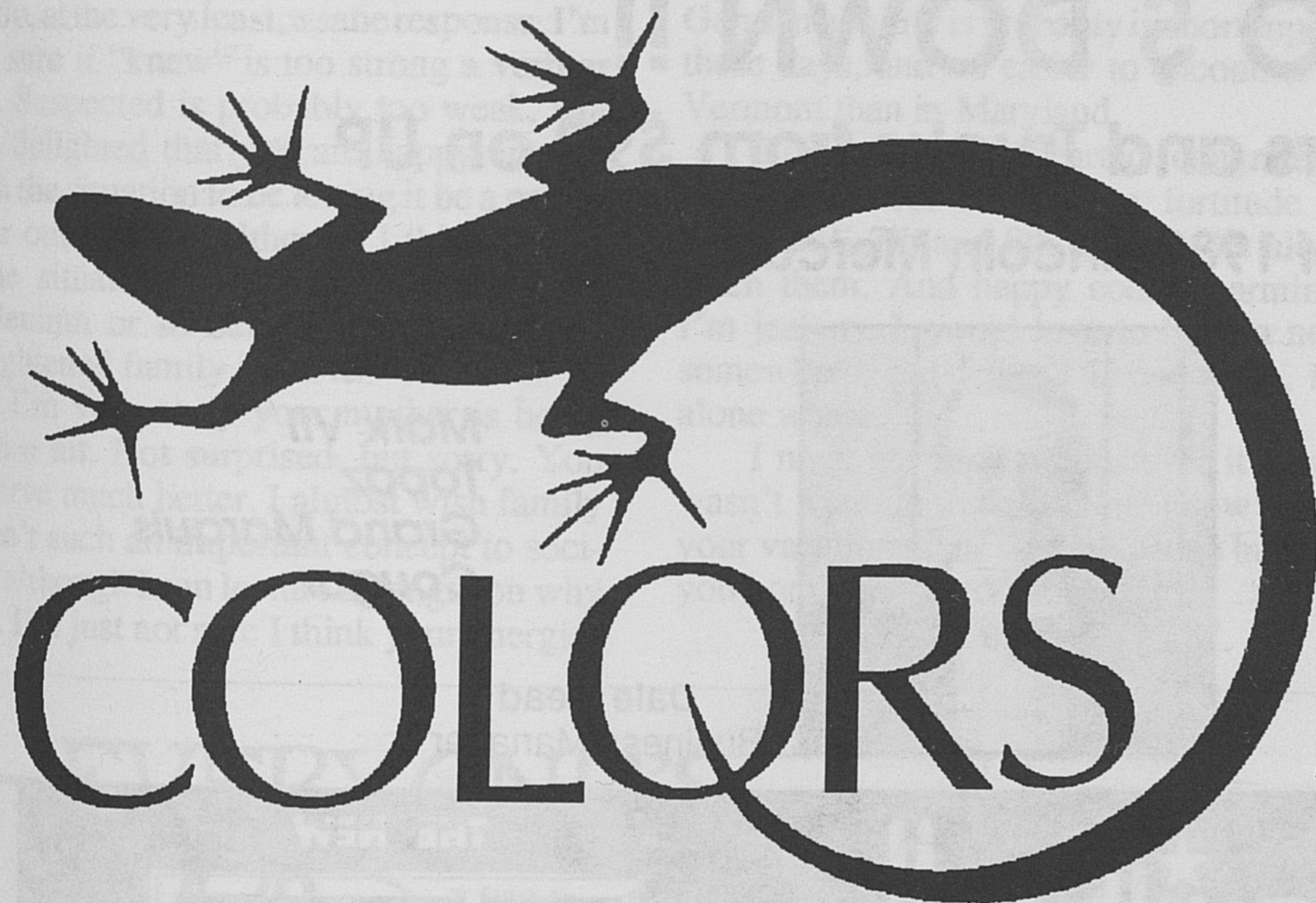
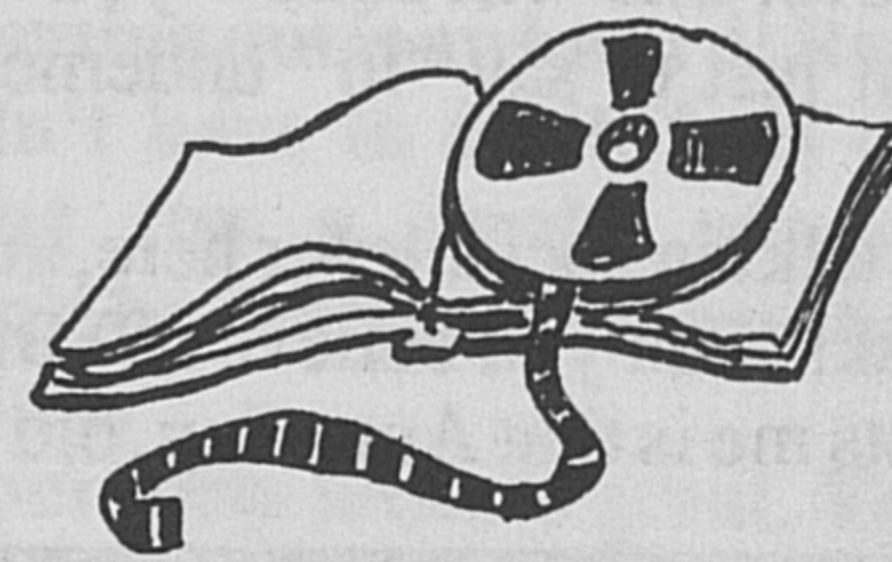
interesting blend of modern chords and her progressions are mature and varied. Morton effectively utilizes traditional movements in her music, to create a sound that is original and intriguing.

Her lyrics reflect tangible experiences of life and love. Morton easily conveys analogies of feeling to image, and vice versa, in real, heartfelt terms. She artfully links the elements of nature to those of human nature. There are no catchy line hooks and few lyrical repetitions. Morton invites her audience to listen to and connect with that which is not spoken yet known; a lover's smell or sound, the secrets and signs we hold, and the home of the heart.

Morton's love songs thankfully deviate from the sappy, flat, and whining renditions which overpopulate the airwaves. "Wolftracks" presents the yearnings and indignations within the struggle of lost love. "High Hill" honors the rising of love—the work of relationship in constant flux. And, "Something New" is a lusty rejoicing in the challenges and discovery in found love.

Away from her love songs, Jaimé Morton offers a broader view of her self-search and wordly reflections. "Walls Around the Heart" seems to be the most biting and wise. Her words are concise, quick to illustrate her meaning: "I know a woman with a wicked tongue/ who frost bit hearts with unkind words/ of the ones she said she loved." Here Morton effectively connects the inner process of creating walls to that of the external/political world. She illustrates an analogy worth thought.

The ultimate calling card for Morton's musical prowess is her voice—which may as well be the ace of spades. Morton is to voice as Raitt is to slide guitar. Her singing is gutsy and emotionally raw and if art is defined as the ability to illicit a feeling response, Jaimé Morton has it in vocal chords alone.



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