

## Mitchell Joni

### "THE JUNGLE LINE"

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Rousseau walks on trumpet paths  
Safaris to the heart of all that jazz  
Through I bars and girders-through wires and pipes  
The mathematic circuits of the modern nights  
Through huts, through Harlem, through jails and  
gospel pews  
Through the class on Park and the trash on Vine  
Through Europe and the deep deep heart of Dixie blue  
Through savage progress cuts the jungle line

In a low-cut blouse she brings the beer  
Rousseau paints a jungle flower behind her ear  
Those cannibals-of shuck and jive  
They'll eat a working girl like her alive  
With his hard-edged eye and his steady hand  
He paints the cellar full of ferns and orchid vines  
And he hangs a moon above a five-piece band  
He hangs it up above the jungle line

The jungle line, the jungle line  
Screaming in a ritual of sound and time  
Floating, drifting on the air-conditioned wind  
And drooling for a taste of something smuggled in  
Pretty women funneled through valves and smoke  
Coy and bitchy, wild and fine  
And charging elephants and chanting slaving boats  
Charging, chanting down the jungle line

There's a poppy wreath on a soldier's tomb  
There's a poppy snake in a dressing room  
Poppy poison-poppy tourniquet  
It slithers away on brass like mouthpiece spit  
And metal skin and ivory birds  
Go steaming up to Rousseau's vines  
They go steaming up to Brooklyn Bridge  
Steaming, steaming, steaming up the jungle line

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