

Petty album satisfying

Review

By Michael Lawson
The Canadian Press

The new album from Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers may not be worth breaking a hand over — as Petty is reported to have done in a fit of pique during a particularly frustrating recording session. But if the singer-songwriter never lifted pen or guitar again, Petty will have put the stamp on his career with *Southern Accents* (MCA Records).

His first release since 1982's *Long After Dark*, and infinitely more satisfying, *Accents* has Petty concerning himself less with the musical mainstream and more with stylistic divergence. The result is a song collection that's uneven on the surface but surprisingly appealing.

From track to track his vocals and song styles shift, borrowing liberally from other rock notables, including Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger and Bruce Springsteen — the cut *Dogs On the Run*, in fact, has elements of all three.

But Petty's writing has never been stronger, nor more varied. From a commercial standpoint, his safest tunes, *Rebels* and *Make It Better* (*Forget About Me*), both pack considerable appeal. However, the quirky stuff accounts for the album's real value.

For instance, *It Ain't Nothin' to Me* — one of three collaborations with Eurythmics' Dave Stewart — effectively combines funk with a sort of gospel chant; *Don't Come Around Here No More* (with Stewart contributing a rather basic sitar) is one of the album's most repeatable cuts; and the bluesy *Spike*, a forthright slam at the tough posturings of leather boys, is written and delivered with the sort of sardonic sneer that Randy Newman is noted for.

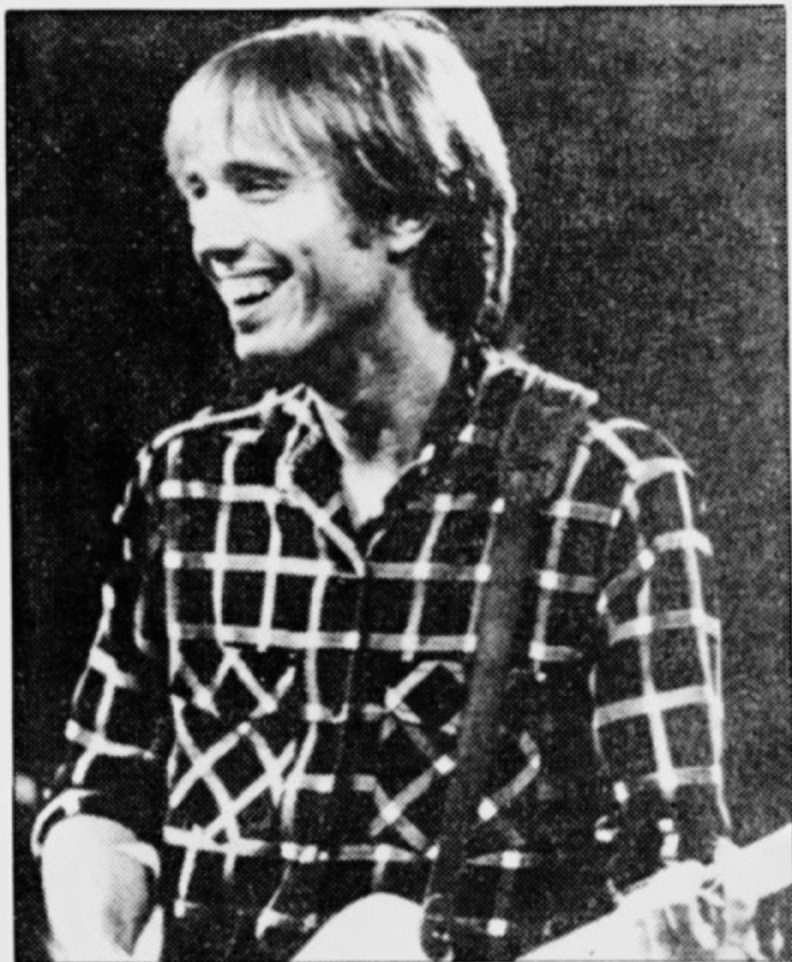
Of the two ballads, Petty's "poor white trash" portrayal of the title tune is especially touching. His other one, *The Best of Everything*, isn't altogether accurately named, but it's hardly a weak number.

Toronto-based Attic Records has acquired Canadian distribution rights to Andrew Loog Oldham's defunct Immediate label, and while some of this material from Britain's '60s invasion appears time-worn today, a surprising amount has weathered the almost two decades since its original appearance. With these albums out of print in North America for more than 10 years, they should particularly interest serious collectors and armchair historians.

Selling for about \$6.98 each, Attic's initial Immediate releases include:

The Small Faces: *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake* — Considered by many to be the best overall work by this mod-styled East London band, *Ogden's Nut* demonstrates the new sophistication that was emerging in rock music spearheaded by The Beatles' landmark *Sgt. Pepper*. What's harder to accept today of this early concept effort is tongue-twisting narration on Side 2, intended to carry the story line but which, ultimately, serves to bog down some superior musical performances.

The Small Faces: *Greatest Hits* — Bassist Ronnie Lane and singer Steve Marriott were still feeling their way as producers on much of these cuts, many of which were not that great. But the tune *Itchycoo Park* — which provided the group with their only North American hit — still



Tom Petty

stands up as a catchy piece of pop. And there's a certain charm to Marriott's Cockney whimsy on *Lazy Sunday*, from the *Ogden's Flake* collection.

Humble Pie: *Greatest Hits* — Led by Marriott, following his defection from Small Faces, and Peter Frampton, who was later to find stardom as a soloist, Humble Pie was with Immediate only a short while before the label's demise. As a result, *Greatest Hits* includes nine of the better known material that the group later recorded with A and M Records. This collection was previously available through Phonodisc.

The Moody Blues: *Go Now* — Justin Hayward's vocals have been responsible for much of The Moody Blues' characteristic sound. This mid-'60s collection, which first appeared on the London label predates Hayward's signing aboard and the group's shift from its R and B beginnings to a more opulent art rock sound with the subsequent *Days of Future Passed*. The tune *Go Now*, leading off the package, was a sizable hit on both sides of the Atlantic. Absent from the album's remade cover graphic by the way, is founding member Ray Thomas's credit