



Tom Petty

OFF THE RECORD, from 1C

when things get just too intense. Unlike Bob Dylan and Dire Straits, Petty doesn't mess around that much with the melody, structure or texture of his music in concert. Outside of the LP's cover versions, the songs here are almost the same as the ones on Petty's studio LPs, with two major differences: Mike Campbell (rock's most underrated guitarist) stretches out his scorching solos just enough to add that extra injection of high-octane fuel to this already raging fire, while Petty's voice takes on a surging, hypnotic energy not found on his studio vocal tracks. Anyone who saw "Live Aid" and/or "Farm Aid" knows that Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers stole both those shows with this same kind of lethal musical attack despite the fact that most critics commented more on TP's mutton-chop sideburns than his incredible music.

"Pack Up the Plantation — Live," as well as all of TP's LPs, prove he isn't afraid to experiment while somehow still holding onto the same traditional American rock 'n' roll values as when he first began. In a bizarre sense, that has become Tom Petty's own Catch-22. By being true to his school, he's caught in an ever-tightening, musical-fashion vise. The little girls no longer seem to understand, because Tom Petty refuses to give in and tease his baby-fine hair, don dangling diamond earrings and slip into glittery spandex pants. Tom Petty — trendsetter as anachronism. When everything today comes shrink-wrapped, pre-packaged and easily categorized, TP just might be a little too much to comprehend.

In December, Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers will release a theatrical film and ensuing video-cassette of "Pack Up the Plantation." On Dec. 15, Shaker's nightclub in Fort Lauderdale will present "The Byrds in Concert." Only two of the original Byrds — vocalist Gene Clark and drummer Mike Clarke — will be there. Roger McGuinn will be at home wondering where his next dollar is coming from. Tom Petty will be at home wondering if straight hair and straight music still have some place left in this world.

— There's only one John Keasler. His home is the pages of The Miami News, Monday through Friday.