

Petty finishes first solo album with a little help from his friends



AARON RAPOPORT

Even though *Full Moon Fever* is Tom Petty's first solo album, most of the Heartbreakers and the Traveling Wilburys make an appearance.

By GEORGE ZIEMANN

For the first two songs, Tom Petty's latest album, *Full Moon Fever*, almost sounds like it could have been called

Traveling Wilburys, Volume 2. Almost.

It also could almost be a Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers LP somewhere around the middle.

ALBUM REVIEW

Full Moon Fever

Tom Petty
MCA Records

There are a number of reasons for comparison in either direction. Most of the Heartbreakers make an appearance on *Full Moon Fever*, as do all of the Wilburys with the exception of Bob Dylan. Add Jeff Lynne's production and the similarity to the Wilburys increases geometrically.

But even with all of these influences and excellent cohorts in place to allow critics to make easy comparisons in either direction, *Full Moon Fever* is embodied of an identity all its own. Yet it really has no identity at all; the album wanders from influence to influence, drifting here and there, flitting from one style to the next.

And that's what I like about it so much.

But there is another factor that makes me like it even more. It simply sounds good.

Sometimes I like an album merely out of the fact that I have respect for the musicians. As an amateur guitarist, I figure that if I can play a song, it must not be too good. And when I listen to music, I like to listen to

complicated, snappy, difficult music. Simple music bores me.

Full Moon Fever is a collection of simple songs, most of them primarily acoustic. But they are structured so well that it's hard not to like them just the same. Nothing mind-boggling here, but a pleasant album to listen to. It's the kind of stuff to put on right after you get home from one of those tedious, dragged-out, annoying days at work when you just want to sit back, relax, and let the day seep back out of you.

Even Lynne's production in held in check a bit more than usual. Sometimes he seems like he's trying to be the George Martin of the '80s as far as a "Wall of Sound" effect, which he has a tendency to overdo sometimes. It worked with ELO, but not for everybody else. And that tendency of Lynne's is reined in nicely on *Full Moon Fever*. Here he fills out the sound instead of overwhelming it.

There is an old Byrd's song ("Feel a Whole Lot Better"); one that Harrison had to influence because it sounds so much like early Beatles ("Yer So Bad"), although Petty and Lynne wrote it. Neither of these forms would probably ever find its way onto either a Wilbury's LP or a Heartbreakers album.

It's doubtful that this direction

indicates a permanent shift in gears for Petty (he's already back in the studio working on a new Heartbreakers album). It is, after all, supposed to be his first solo album, even though almost every musician he knows is on it. It's probably just a tangent, but an interesting tangent it is. Some of it rocks, some of it rolls smoothly on by, and some it is just out for a casual walk.

As good as this album is, though, Petty says that "it sort of happened by accident."

The accident began back in 1987, when Petty had a chance encounter with Lynne. "I ran into Jeff at a stop light and found out that he lived up the street," says Petty. "So he started coming over to my house and hanging around a lot. We wrote a couple of songs, a day or two after Christmas, and we

thought they sounded real good. So we went to Mike's (Campbell, the Heartbreaker's guitarist) studio and everything grew from there. It all caught me off guard — I wasn't planning to cut a solo album."

Most of *Full Moon Fever* was recorded in early 1988, but then some other people started floating in and before they knew it, the whole group was working on another spontaneous project that would come to be known as the Traveling Wilburys. *Full Moon Fever* ground to a halt and Petty didn't get back to it until the end of 1988 and the beginning of this year.

The wait was worth it.

"This album has given me a little more freedom to try something new," says Petty. "You don't want to stop growing."

Richard Marx's latest will probably yield multiple hits



By GEORGE ZIEMANN

Richard Marx's self-titled debut album put four singles into the top three on the pop charts, with the final one making it all the way to number one. Odds are that his latest effort, *Repeat Offender*, will do just as well.

That's because *Repeat Offender* is exactly what Top