

ALBUMS



TOM PETTY: 'Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers' (Shelter SRL 52006 — Import) *****

In the next 15 column inches, Giovanni Dadomo will attempt to convince you of the excellence of a new American band. Over to you, Mr. D...

I LIKE this record so much that I'd hate for a single person out there to miss out on it because of my failure to communicate.

Okay, howabout 'Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers' is purely and simply the best mainstream rock debut by any American band this year and anyone who doesn't rush out and buy the booger immediately don't know nuthin'!

And yes, I really do believe the first half of that statement to be perfectly true. But then what'll

happen is some PR wise guy cuts it out and pastes it on an ad and suddenly it's just another hunk of hype.

The other alternative is the personal one. Like if I was to tell you that when I first copped an eyeload of the album sleeve with TP staring out of his leather jacket with a heart penetrated by a Flying 'V' suspended above his head in slightly icky rainbow colours and looking for all the world like a grey-eyed offspring of a union between Speedy Keene and Mick Ronson I thought it was likely just some new All-American metallo-punk hero cut from the same mould as Kiss and Aerosmith — neither of which interest me in the slightest. (Oops, there I go again — probably just lost Tom a few score of potential admirers who happen to dig the afore-slagged ensembles).

And then I got sent a copy of the record by Island A&R man Howard Thompson accompanied by a note saying he thought the platter was a cracker.

And Howard isn't the kind of record company employee who does this sort of thing twice a week and I happen to respect his taste in the old pop because it's not too far removed from mine.

So I play the record. And play it. And play it.

And it so happens that I get the flu and end up housebound for the better part of a week and the Tom Petty album's on the deck most of the time so I know

without any elaborate processes of dissection, analysis etc, that it's a guaranteed 5-starrer.

I like the record so much I take it into the office with me and play it every day since. And — surprise, surprise — practically everyone else in Soundsland gets excited about it too.

And now it's your turn and I know that in the end I'll have to resort to phrases like 'gut-churning rock fire' which I'd gladly exchange twenty-five thousand of for an hour of peak-time radio play for the record itself.

So here I am at a point well beyond my allotted wordage and you still don't know that Tom Petty writes and sings beaut rock'n'roll hymns both slow and fast and also plays guitar and some organ.

Nor have I informed you of the names of The Heartbreakers (no connection at all with the New York outfit of the same name, by the way); how finely doth Mike Campbell his guitar play, or the equal dexterity and good taste with which Ron Blair (bass), Stan Lynch (drums) and Benmont Tench (keyboards) approach their chosen musical utensils. Then there's the way all or many of the boys fill out Tom's pliantly gritty vocals with harmonies that never get intrusive or schmaltzy.

Or the sheer power of the opening 'Rockin' Around (With You)', its great drums/bass lead and its amazing zip gun middle section.

Or the abrupt yet perfect changedown to the tugging 'Breakdown', with its splendid cod Puerto Rican punk vocal.

Or about the eight other tracks, how the balance between the slow pumpers and the fire engine rockers is perfect.

Unfortunately what I can't tell you anything at all about is just who Tom Petty and the boys are and where they come from. Only that Tom admits in the skimpy accompanying biographic quiz that he sussed to play by learning early Stones albums all the way through and that, apart from this, he doesn't think the past is too important.

Mercifully, the gambit really does work for once — 'Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers' really does speak for itself.

And then there's the possibility of Island playing safe and cutting the platter down to EP size in case it doesn't take off.

Well, I know it's none of my business but I reckon that'd be crazy because this record deserves to be heard all the way through.

I tell you, if I didn't own a copy already I'd rush out and get me one right now.

And, like I've said elsewhere, if Tom and his band can do live what they do on this record with anything like its sheer magic then they'll make it very big indeed.

Go and hear it. Go and hear it. Go and hear it. Go and hear it. Go and hear it. etc. etc etc. —

Giovanni Dadomo