

ROCK

Tom Petty:

You're Gonna Get It

BY DAVID M. GOTZ

You're Gonna Get It is the title of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers new album. It's clear, precise and unpretentious rock 'n' roll. There's no use in describing the music in any other way or in detail, you will hear most of it sooner or later anyway. So the rest of this review/article will be what Tom Petty has to say about this new record and music today.

It's been nearly two years since the last record from this band. Half that time was spent on the road, slowly pushing their first album up the charts. Another eight months were spent on legal hassles and getting a new, more favorable contract, and the rest recording. The record company executives expected an album in one month like the first one, but:

"I really got interested in this record, we spent nearly four months on it. I hardly ever left the studio. We took alot of chances. I'd write a song and say lets do it this way, then we'd end up changing it, some ballads ended up rockers! We got into it, we just had a real good time making the record. We loved it so much that we had to work it until it was just right, sometimes that meant writing a different song every day. The trick of getting a good album is very simple, but no one seems to do it. You've got to make every track stand on its own, and fit into the album. I don't know why people don't do that, but they don't. I think that they just get tired and don't maintain the unity of the album.

"I wanted to make a real good electric guitar-rock 'n' roll record, where every track has a song to it. It's what I wanted to do, and where the group should be at this point. Now we're a band, and before, well we were a group but we'd only been together for a few days before we made the record, and we'd never played a gig, so we didn't know anything about that. This time there's five of us with five real strong personalities goin' on. I wanted to get the best out of the band, so we cut 15 or 16 tracks, picked ten and refined them down to what they should be. I wanted the record to be a certain sound, we really wanted it to sound more like a four-tracked recording. I liked the presence of the old four-tracked records. We wanted to make a good rock 'n' roll record; not caught up in any sort of pretense.

"We set out to make this album the way we wanted it; we're going to have the cover the way we want it and the ads the way we want, because before (on the first album) we really didn't, we didn't have the control over our own record, we were hurried. Everything about the new one is a reflection of the group's mentality, right down to the art-

work.

"It's amazing what you have to go through

to convince the record people that you know more about your audience than they do. The music business looks at everything as money rather than music, you have to take that for granted. They're not evil, it's just the fact that you can't get the power unless you can back it up. I'm probably pretty difficult to work with, because I'm so particular, and sometimes they can't understand why I want to be particular. When you see something you've worked really hard on, you don't want anybody to screw it up, you want it to be right. Maybe one day the musicians will control it all, then we'd really have a mess, wouldn't we!

"The only way I can admire another musician is if he maintains a consistent trip. That's what we want to do, it might be different from one album to the next, but the quality won't go down. There are really only a few who are keeping the quality up.

"We saw alot of new groups in England last year, I dug some of it; you know, this aspect was good or that tune was alright, but this bit was wrong or that aspect didn't fit, just not consistent.

"He's (Elvis Costello) very good, I think he's very good. He played with us once, and I watched his show, he was very good. I understand where he is, and I respect him because he's in the same boat we are. Basically we're all trying to say; 'I know better.' He's adamant about it, I can tell there's a conscience behind what he does. He works hard to get his songs right, not many people do that.

"I still listen to The Everly Bros., people think I'm crazy, but the old stuff is all there is now. Somebody sent me over to the record store, said I could have all the records I wanted for free. I went up and down the aisles and left with nothing, there wasn't one record that interested me.

"The 70s haven't done nothin' have they? It's really been a let down, nothin's happened. It's all there, there are alot of young bands who want to do it, they want to make records. But the business just brainwashes the kids with apathetic and boring stuff. They don't make them love the music, they make them apathetic to it. When they play something new, look what happens; Elvis Costello is doing well, we're doing well, the kids want different music, they say; 'Now

that's different, that's a breath of fresh air.'

It's (radio) getting worse and worse and worse, it's not right and it has to be changed. The jocks know that they can't play "Stairway To Heaven" for the rest of their lives, they're going to get tired of it, something's got to come. They can't depend on the superstars to give them all they need.

"How many people can write songs today? Not many, you can count them on one hand. So many performers write their tunes around a riff, and if you take that riff away the song goes too. If you take the riff out of "Day Tripper" or "Satisfaction" you've still got a good song, the riff makes it better of course.

"It's alot in what the song is saying. Do you understand that this is a song and it means something? I write alot of love songs, and people say that's rubbish; but I don't care, I know that anybody can relate to some sort of boy-girl relationship, or girl-girl, boy-boy, or whatever it is they've got something to relate to. And when we put songs down we don't think it has to be in any other language that you hear on the street. You really don't have to get more out of it than that, 'cause if you do that right, it's believable. If I can't believe a record, it's no use at all to me, no matter what it is. I bet nine times out of ten that the records you don't like are the ones you don't believe.

"Getting the thought onto paper is the hardest part. We wrote "American Girl" in five minutes, one stream of consciousness, but it's usually much harder than that. You know what you want to say and you know what you want the music to sound like; now how do I translate that to the punters, I mean how's the cat out there going to hear it and pick up on it. I don't want them to pick it up so it's heavy on their head, I don't want to get too heavy lyrically, because then it starts to become art. I don't dig rock 'n' roll as art, I think it is an art, I guess, but what does art have to do with rock 'n' roll? The true art form of rock 'n' roll is rock 'n' roll, it's not rock 'n' roll to get political, it's not rock 'n' roll to get involved with the economy; let's just get high and rock 'n' roll.

"We just want to be a working American rock 'n' roll band. You can buy our records and see us play and it's an honest trip, it's just an honest musical trip, you can see what it is."



Record Review

Aug. 1978