

content to stake out a narrow corner of the marketplace, Marvin Gaye demands center stage and is determined to hold it. That Gaye not only commands our attention so forcefully but that he commands it so effortlessly should remind us that he has been one of our most underrated musical forces for a long time (probably since "Pride and Joy" in 1963). No one who hears "Sexual Healing" will doubt this. But then, no one who has heard "Hitchhike," "Ain't That Peculiar," "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," "I Heard It through the Grapevine," "Let's Get It On," "Inner City Blues" or any of about a dozen others should ever have forgotten it.

—DAVE MARSH

Bad Disco Dream

As I slept,
rapping became a
national pastime,
and my wife
had seen some pods
in our garage.

—JAMES LOISEL



LONG AFTER DARK TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Backstreet
★★★★

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers play a finely crafted brand of meat-and-potatoes rock. They shudder to a stop for the occasional ballad or showy guitar figure, but the next surging chorus is never far away. They've been honing that sound for five albums now, and Petty has gradually hoisted himself into the company of such masterful travelers of Route 66 as Seger and Springsteen.

No single thing about *Long after Dark* is startlingly great.

Whatever your favorite Petty song is—be it "The Wild One, Forever" or "The Waiting"—you're not likely to find it bettered here. But overall, *Long after Dark* is Petty's most accomplished record. After a few very precise probes into society's darker doings (*Hard Promises* gave us a pair of characters who could easily share a jail cell with Springsteen's *Nebraska* outlaws), Petty has narrowed his world to a one-on-one emotional connection and decided to cut a few simple truths into stone. He's going about it with a trim, meticulously recorded group sound that makes every fistful of strings grabbed by Petty or Mike Campbell sound as near and natural as a fast river parted by rocks. His singing is bolder than ever, but full of nuance (a George Jones fan would be right at home for at least the first two lines of "You Got Lucky").

Perhaps the reason there's no one killer among these songs is the richly private nature of *Long after Dark's* personality; it's a suite of studies on the possibilities of amorous and brotherly love. The lover of "We Stand a Chance" is so stunned by these possibilities that he's out of his head: "My whole

world that is a fountain of flame." This is the same flame that burned *Hard Promises'* "Insider," and that's why, for Petty, talk of love is never cheap; long after dark, people succumb to the bitter torments of parting. But parting, imminent and remembered, is the motif of most of the songs here. The strayed lovers of "A One Story Town" and "You Got Lucky," the girl who becomes a "loaded gun" in "Change of Heart," and the "flesh and bone" succubus of "Between Two Worlds" are all sending those they leave behind to Petty's particularly bleak landscape of damnation. His notions are practically Victorian, but they make for compelling versifying.

Black sky, lonely streets, the hands of fate the singer wails for deliverance from—they're all part of the "danger zone" where love ends. The quailing friend of "The Same Old You" is even afraid of the kind of healing, blasting rock that powers this album. But, Petty warns, nobody's "bulletproof." Part of Petty's idea of salvation is a barbaric yawp. But against the lonely, dark road these songs look down, a barbaric yawp may be the best response. —FRED SCHRUEERS



IT'S ALRIGHT YOKO ONO

Polydor
★★★★½

Here we have a fifty-year-old Japanese woman performing synthesizer-based pop that's more adventurous than much of the music currently being ground out by Europeans half her age. Indeed, "Dream Love," the most aurally striking of the ten songs on Yoko Ono's second solo album since John Lennon's death, is a lush, electro-seaside chant that puts one in mind of those masters of British lunar elegance, Ultravox. And the eerie electronics concocted for such cuts as "Never Say

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