

# Records



## LIVE ALBUMS

By Denny Angelle

**R**OCK STARS ARE just like everybody else: Occasionally they take a vacation. Except that their "vacations" from the recording studio can stretch on for years at a time, depending on how well their last record sold.

When our favorite musicians are on holiday, they sometimes unleash a "live" album with music gathered from one or more concerts. Some live LPs are excellent samples of artists' live sound. Others are garbage.

The recent crop of live albums certainly spans the spectrum of quality, so let's take a peek.

**Pack Up the Plantation** by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (MCA): Tom Petty's snarling, Southern rock voice saves the day on this double-record set.

This 16-song set, recorded on tour in 1985, is really a greatest-hits collection disguised as a live record. But that really doesn't matter, because these versions of Petty favorites like "The Waiting" and "American Girl" are performed with pedal-to-the-metal power. On every cut, the Heartbreakers pour out thunder behind Petty's rough, emotional singing.

Petty and company toss in a few rejuvenated moldy oldies to further enrage the party. The best of these are "Shout," an Isley Brothers rocker from 1962, and "Needles and Pins," a duet with Stevie Nicks.

This record reveals why Tom Petty has such a huge following. Even a predictable live show blasts off when jump-started by Tom's remarkable singing. That alone puts him in a league with Bruce Springsteen and Bob Seger.

**Live in London** by Ricky Skaggs (Epic): One of the most searing instrumentalists around today is Ricky Skaggs. Wait a minute—are we talking about Ricky Skaggs the country singer? Yep, and this LP proves the point.

Although his backup band is hot in its own right, Skaggs himself is matchless on guitar, mandolin, fiddle and who knows what else. Skaggs likes country music's traditional virtues, so he uses classic songs like "Uncle Pen" to spotlight his instrumental ability.

The live showcase gives Skaggs a chance to stretch out as he can't do on studio LPs. But the English audience captured on this live album seems a bit too easy to please. So the versions of Skaggs favorites offered here don't quite measure up to the studio recordings.

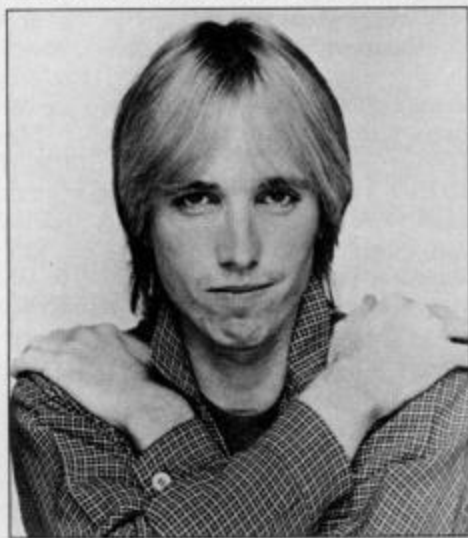
Still, *Live in London* is a must for long-time Skaggs fans. For those not familiar with his music, here's a chance to discover why all those Englishmen are screaming.

**Double Trouble Live** by Molly Hatchet (Epic): Anyplace you'd care to drop the needle on this double-record set will reveal the standard Molly Hatchet approach: tough, gritty vocals and lightning guitar runs.

Recorded at concerts in Dallas, Texas, and Jacksonville, Fla., *Double Trouble Live* is as expansive as all the South. It has lots to offer.

Singer Danny Joe Brown sings with conviction, revealing a rarely seen side of the band. A few songs even show Molly Hatchet venturing into new territory; for example, the swaggering "Walk With You" puts the band in E Street territory. The highlight of the 15-song selection is an emotional reading of the Lynyrd Skynyrd favorite, "Free Bird."

From "Flirtin' With Disaster" to "Beatin' the Odds," this set is a solid sampler of the band's live sound. Molly Hatchet accepted Lynyrd Skynyrd's fallen boogie banner and continues to wave it with pride.



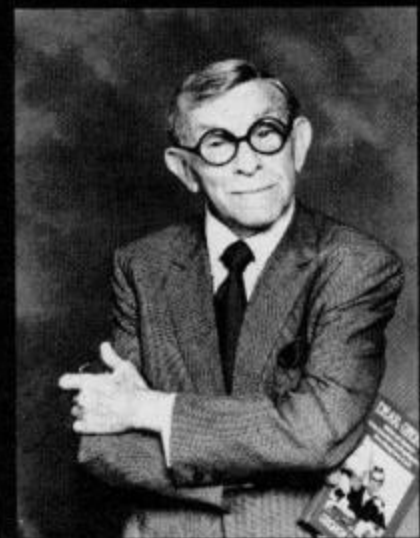
Tom Petty

**9012 Live** by Yes (Atco): The 1980's model of Yes is still trying to cash in on one hit album (from 1983) and one world tour. That explains the utterly horrible song selection on *9012 Live*, from a so-called "supergroup" living a vampire-like existence long past its natural death.

What's even worse is that the LP's liner notes promise that the seven songs here are part of a soundtrack for an upcoming movie titled (you guessed it) "9012 Live." The lackluster playing and singing on this record makes that seem more like a threat.

If you must, get the single "Hold On," which is the best thing here. Or find the much better studio set, *90125*, from 1983. Otherwise, say "no" to Yes. ♣

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