

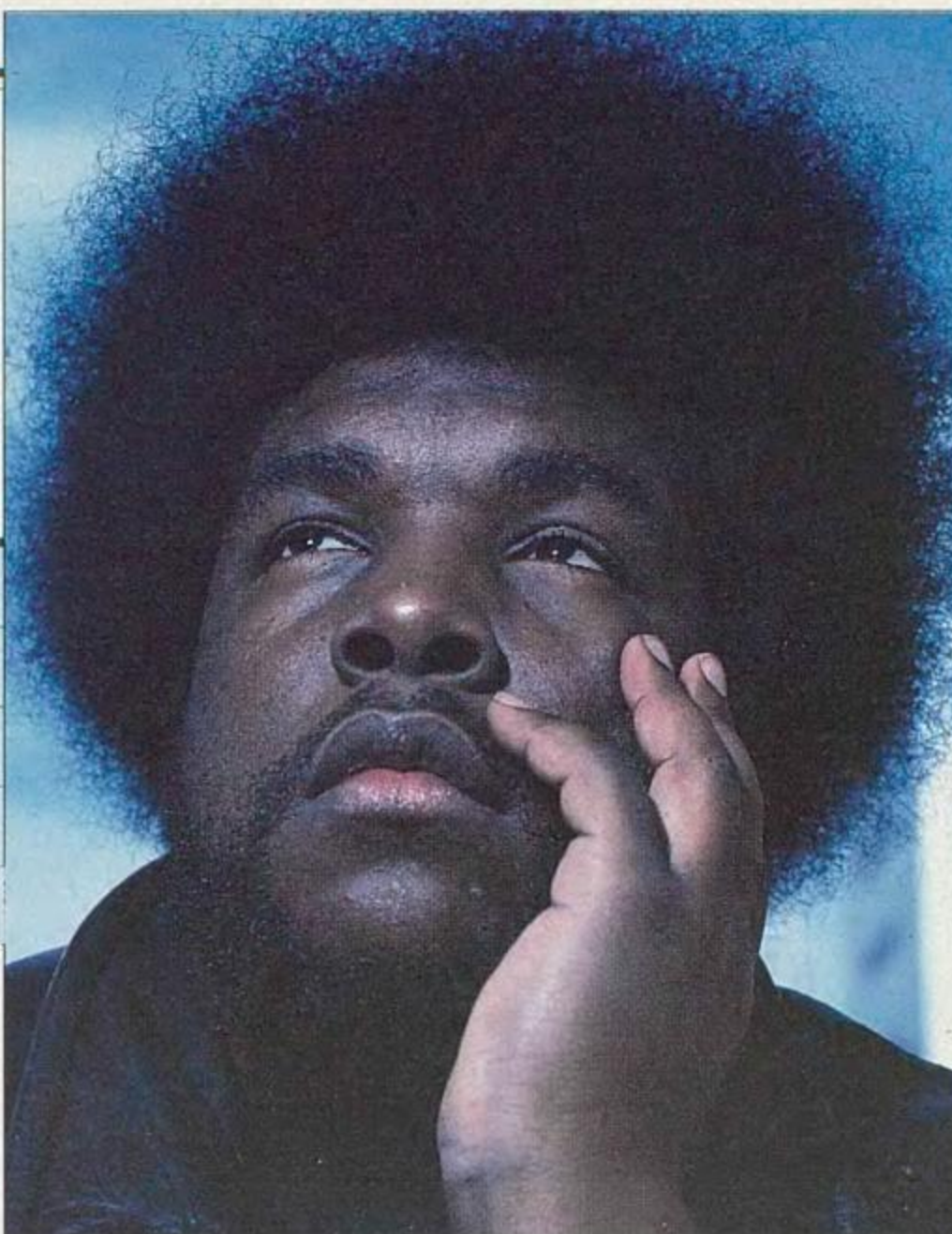
&A

"Respect from peers is important, but nowadays, getting commerce is getting the respect."

AHMIR-KHALIB "PUEST-love" Thompson, drummer and bandleader of the Philly rap act the Roots, is a large man with an even larger Afro. He's also the group's resident obsessive. Example: His liner notes for the Roots' fourth album, *Things Fall Apart*, have footnotes. The twenty-eight-year-old has been just as meticulous about his music. The Roots are a hip-hop rarity: The seven members play their own instruments – often tightly enough to be mistaken for samples – and boast a killer live act. Now, with the success of "You Got Me," a love song about suspicious minds featuring a stirring vocal turn by Erykah Badu, the group also has its first hit. Thompson – who got his start drumming with his father's doo-wop group, Lee Andrews and the Hearts, at age twelve – sprawled on the magazine-covered bed of his Atlanta hotel room and settled in for a chat.

Did you ever think you'd have a hit love song?

Yo, man, I hope this isn't a career-defining song, 'cause if they think I'm gonna play that drum-and-bass part when I'm forty, they can forget it! I'm gonna program it



PUESTLOVE of the Roots

and press the START button.

How important is the respect of your peers?

It's important, but nowadays, getting commerce is getting the respect. Back in the day, a person could say, "I'd rather be broke and have a lot of respect." Now you get love if it's the opposite. Those on the bottom, I think we're called playa haters.

Any drumming idols?

Steve Ferrone – the only black guy in the Average White Band. He was incredible. From the ages of eight to eighteen, my father made me practice every day, three to five hours a day, and Ferrone was definitely someone I'd practice to.

Your dad was a real taskmaster.

He wasn't Joe Jackson [the Jackson 5 patriarch]. But you'd have forty-five minutes to get your ass home from school and be on the drums. I didn't wanna spend five hours a day in the basement. Motherfucker definitely wanted to watch some *Diff'rent Strokes*.

But I'm grateful for it. We were watching the Grammys, I think it was '83, and Wynton Marsalis won all these classical and jazz awards. And – even now I dread this moment – he says, "I'd like to thank my father for making me practice . . . eight hours a day." My dad was like, "Yo, go downstairs now."

What kind of gigs did you play

with your dad's group?

It was all about those giant oldies doo-wop-athons. Get somebody like Dick Clark or Bowser to host it. It would be, like, Chubby Checker, Jackie Wilson. Chuck Berry kicked me out of his dressing room. I asked for his autograph. He was like, "No!" It was the total opposite of that Mean Joe Greene commercial.

Did your dad even think of hip-hop as music?

No. According to him, music died in 1977. So the only way to tell your purist father that you're gonna throw away a lifetime of drum lessons and private school to go into rap music – you do it very carefully. It took me four years to break it to him.

I heard you have a huge collection of "Soul Train" episodes on video. The all-time best "Soul Train" would be . . .

Hands down, Al Green, 1974. Even Don Cornelius said in his introduction, "We expect to see this man walking on water at any minute. He's the messiah of soul." Anyone who steps into my crib, I force 'em to watch it.

So you got to play with the Artist?

The utter most frightening experience. D'Angelo calls me, says, "Pack some night gear. I got a surprise." So he flew me to New York, then told me, "Yo, we about to play with Prince." I was like, "What?!"

Did the Artist request your presence?

He requested D's presence, and D wasn't about to go on the playing field alone. I'm like the Robin to his Batman. It was an after-joint at Tramps. We got up onstage and started jamming, and Prince finally sits on a chair with his back to the audience, with these big-ass Bono fly glasses and this straight face. I was thinking, "Damn, he's not gonna play, and then technically I won't have played with him. I want him to just hit one note." Then he started playing, man, and me and D was nervous.

Did you tell the Artist to stop trying to rap?

I didn't have the heart.

—MARK BINELLI

RAVES

Ricky Martin

INDIA We're so commercialized on this side of the world. I wanted to detach, so I went to India. There, a bed could be made of palm branches, and people are grateful for what they have. There's something in their eyes that we don't have. They just appreciate every second.

EDGY WOMEN I need someone who's not afraid to suck, someone risky, someone who's not in a pose all the time. But I also need a woman who behaves like a woman, who knows how to sit at the table and all that.

FERNANDA MONTENEGRO I saw *Central Station* on the plane back from Italy, and I was amazed by her acting. She's so honest, gentle and elegant at the same time. She touched me some way, somehow.

KRIYA YOGA In Sanskrit, it means "Live your life as directed from within." I thought I'd have to stick my toe in my ear, but it's all about connecting your heart and your mind to get to a point where you get to hear the beat of your heart and the sound of the blood running through your veins. It's really intense.

GEOGRAPHY I've been traveling since I was a kid, and I always need to know where I'm standing and how far from home I am. All the airplane magazines have maps; when I'm flying, the first thing I do is check to see where I was.

"THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL LAWS OF SUCCESS," by Deepak Chopra. It's a guide to life. The message is, you can get anything if you focus and surround yourself with the right people.

Ricky Martin will release his first English solo album in May.

COMPILED BY LIZA GHORBANI

Find out what else Puerto Rico's hottest export is raving about on rollingstone.com and on AOL (keyword: Rolling Stone).

MP3.mess: Petty Single Pulled From Net

HAVE MP3 FILES BECOME SO CONTROVERSIAL that artists and labels don't even want to talk about them? In March, as sort of a goodwill gesture toward fans – and as a way to boost the buzz on his upcoming album release – Tom Petty posted his new single, "Free Girl Now," on MP3.com, the Internet's largest clearinghouse of downloadable music files. It was a bold move considering the unspoken agreement among major labels not to allow acts to post MP3 files, particularly for new songs, until there is a way to contain the technology.



But just two days after the song was offered online (according to MP3.com, 150,000 people downloaded it), it was abruptly yanked. Published reports pointed the finger at Warner Bros. But when asked, Petty's manager said the label never told the singer to take the song down. So why did he? "No comment." Warner Bros. offered the same response. "The artist made the decision himself," says Warner's spokesman Bob Merlis. But did

Living like a refugee? Petty and Warner Bros. are in an Internet tangle.

the label insist on the move? "No comment," says Merlis.

Perhaps Warner Bros. doesn't want to be portrayed as the heavy, the way Capitol Records was when it forced the Beastie Boys to pull down their MP3 tracks last November, or the way Def Jam was when it threatened to sue Public Enemy if the rap act didn't cease and desist on the MP3 front. (PE and Def Jam have since parted ways.) Or maybe Petty and his camp realized that the time to antagonize your label is not weeks before it releases one of your albums.

—ERIC BOEHLERT



TOM PETTY stays in the garage and discovers that it can be a lonely place.

By GREG KOT



Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

Echo

WARNER BROS.

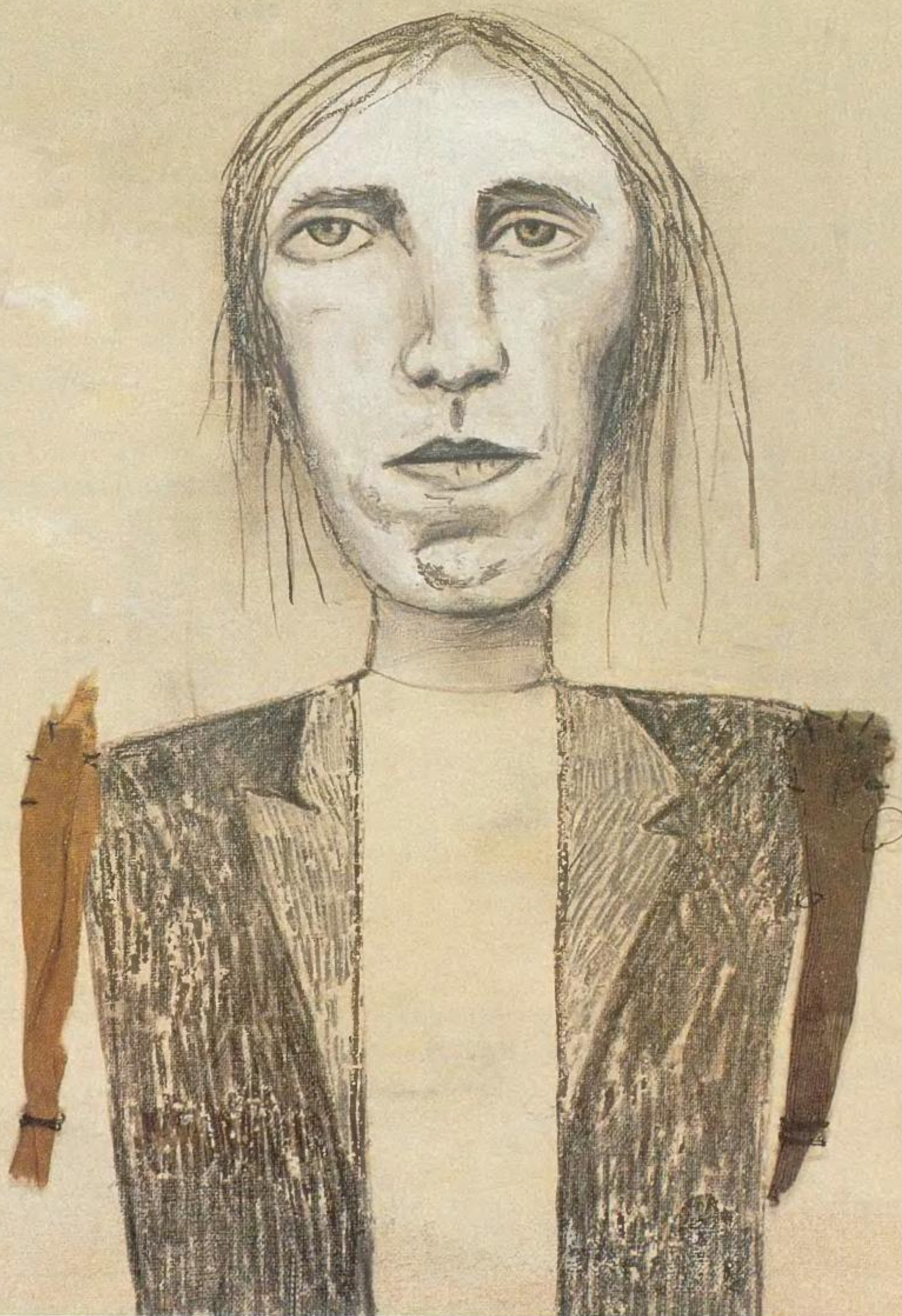
RECORDINGS

Twenty-three years. Twelve studio albums. One sound. Even as peers such as Bruce Springsteen and John Mellencamp have shaken up their formulas by tinkering with dance mixes or solo acoustic folk songs, even as forerunners such as the Rolling Stones have hired hotshot producers like Danny Sabre to gussy up their recent work, Tom Petty remains unflinchingly loyal to the sound of Sixties-era Stones and Byrds.

By refusing to do anything else, Petty and the Heartbreakers define classic guitar rock better than just about any working band. The straw-haired singer obsessively revisits the same territory in album after album, with the same cast of backing musicians; guitarist Mike Campbell and keyboardist Benmont Tench have been with him since the Heartbreakers' debut, in 1976, even guesting on Petty's "solo" albums. If anything, their latest album, *Echo*, is the most striking reassertion in years of what Petty and the boys do best. After a couple of recent albums — especially *Wildflowers* (1994) — on which Petty sounded like he was easing off the pedal and settling for a midlife career of singer-songwriter introspection, *Echo* puts the Heartbreakers back where they belong: in the garage and in front of the amplifier stacks.

That can be a lonely place. From the opening bars of the first song, Petty touches on a theme that recurs on most of his albums: independence in a world that won't easily allow it. "I've got a room where everyone/Can have a drink and forget/Those things that went wrong in their life," he sings in a tone barely above a whisper. It's a comforting voice, but then it hardens: "I've got a room at the top of the world tonight/And I ain't comin' down."

"Room at the Top" sets the tone for the rest of the album, with the singer in the role of the perpetual outsider. Throughout *Echo*, life is a constant struggle to define what matters. On "No More," Petty vows, "I ain't gonna do it/If it ain't real." A few songs later, on "One More Day, One More Night," he reiterates his resolve: "God, I had to fight/To keep my line of sight/On what's real." In grasping for "what's real," Petty sometimes sounds like an anachronism, with shout-outs to heroes from past generations: movie cowboy Roy Rogers, late jazzmen Benny Good-



man and Tommy Dorsey, boxer Sonny Liston. Surely Petty realizes that those references are next to meaningless for the majority of people who buy rock records these days; perhaps they are his way of saying something about the increasingly unfashionable style of music he plays.

Which makes *Echo* feel, above all, like a defiant album. Its most ferocious moments – “Free Girl Now,” “Won’t Last Long,” “I Don’t Wanna Fight,” “About to Give Out” – sound like close cousins to “Come On Down to My House,” a Nirvana-inspired surprise knockout that surfaced on the 1995 Petty box set, *Playback*. This music drills home one unmistakable point: If rock is becoming a dead language for a new generation of listeners obsessed with hip-hop, no one bothered to tell Petty’s band about it.

“Free Girl Now” sounds like a band was handed electric guitars after six months stuck listening to Andrew Lloyd Webber; the Heartbreakers don’t so much play the riff as pound it gleefully into the concrete. Petty uncages the nasty Florida drawl first heard on “Breakdown,” from his debut album, *Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers*; his voice drags a teasing, insinuating half-step behind the walloping, single-minded four-to-the-floor rhythm. Even more elemental is “I Don’t Wanna Fight,” in which Campbell wrenches the lead vocals away from Petty and sounds like he’s in no hurry to give them back. On “Won’t Last Long” and “About to Give Out,” Petty returns the favor, a stray cat yowling with pleasure even as the bloodhounds close in.

What gives *Echo* its resonance,

however, is the softer stuff. These tunes also pack a bite, in large part because the unfussy production (by Petty, Campbell and Rick Rubin) never speaks louder than the songs. Campbell focuses on riffs rather than solos, with bluesy guitar accents on “Counting on You” and rich, Byrds-ian progressions on “Accused of Love.” Tench’s piano and organ fills hover in the spaces between chords. The more loping the groove, the greater the relish Petty takes in the sound of his voice – a fine, Dylan-ish whine on the title song, a sly purr on “Rhino Skin,” a gunslinger’s cocky kiss-off on “Billy the Kid.”

Throughout, Petty suggests that rock reached its apex in about 1968 and there’s no point in trying to reinvent it. Though one could fault *Echo* for its lack of innovation, that would be missing the point. This isn’t the sound of rock & roll vigilantes merely rehashing their past. It’s Petty and the Heartbreakers standing their ground with wise-ass grins and loud guitars, past the point of caring about what anyone else thinks. This is a band smart enough to know what else is out there and sure enough of itself not to be particularly concerned or threatened by any of it.

“Swingin’” takes that won’t-back-down stance with its heavy descending chords and craggy guitar solo, its howling-wind harmonica and elegiac background harmonies. It’s Petty’s salute to a young woman who dared to get the hell out of town instead of sticking around to meekly meet her fate. “She went down swingin’,” he sings, as if that were the noblest thing anyone, or any band, could do. ○

Behind the Rhyme

“I’M AT THE GAMBLING SPOT/MY HANDS ON A knot/New York Yankees cap cover my eyes/Stand in one spot/I take a nigga’s dough/Send him home to his shoe box/You lost that, nigga/I’ll put your dollar in a jukebox,” Nas raps on “N.Y. State of Mind Pt. II.” Since his much-heralded arrival, in 1994, Nasir Jones has raised the stakes for urban elocutionists with mood-setting lines like this scenario of a cool criminal scheming on a vic. But within these glam-meets-ghetto days of hip-hop, the best MCs are those who can pass off their tragic dichotomies as cool: Rage against the machine and subscribe to the *Robb Report*: fuck the world but respect her in the morning. “Dime’s givin’ fellatio/Siete zeros/Bet my nine spit for the pesos/But what’s it all worth?/Can’t take it with you under

this earth/Rich men died and tried/But none of it worked/They just rob your grave/I’d rather be alive and paid,” he observes on “Nas Is Like,” from *I Am...*

★★★★
Nas

I Am...

COLUMBIA

One of rap’s most talented MCs bedazzles and frustrates on his third album



Nas gets help from Puff Daddy and Timbaland.

his third disc, jumping from the virtues of getting head, seven-figure lifestyles and busting guns to existentialism and back again, all in seconds. By comparison, it usually takes KRS-One at least two songs to refute himself so thoroughly.

Despite his years in the game, Nas is still a diamond in the rough – perhaps the rawest lyrical talent of his day but lacking the guidance and vision to create a complete album. He’s at his best on “Small World” and “Undying Love”: Sedative strings and twinkling keys back up winding narratives ripe with Shakespearean calamity. When biting song templates from the late Notorious B.I.G. – the Puffy-assisted tirade “Hate Me Now,” the sex manual “Dr. Knockboot” – he’s full of danceable, grooving entertainment, but the sentimental “We Will Survive” is a mediocre elegy to the souls of B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur. When Timbaland and Aaliyah pop up on the thumping “You Won’t See Me Tonight,” Nas makes double infidelity sound like something to strive for; but “K-I-SS-I-N-G,” an eloquent tale of courtship and the difficulties of married life, is bogged down by a hook as corny as Mike and Carol Brady. Similarly, his quixotic attempts at social activism, “I Want to Talk to You” and “Ghetto Prisoners,” sound hokey. When he sings “I wanna talk to the mayor/To the governor/To the motherfuckin’ president/I wanna talk to the FBI/And the CIA/And the motherfuckin’ congressmen,” you figure that if singing this bad can’t get them to stop their ills, nothing will. But what *I Am...* lacks in content, it makes up for in lyrical acumen; the album doesn’t deliver the introspection its title implies, but it compensates for it in storytelling and craftsmanship. *I Am...* offers tantalizing hints of promise tethered by a need for pop acceptance – in a way it is what Nas is, warts and all. —KRIS EX



★★★★

The Rentals

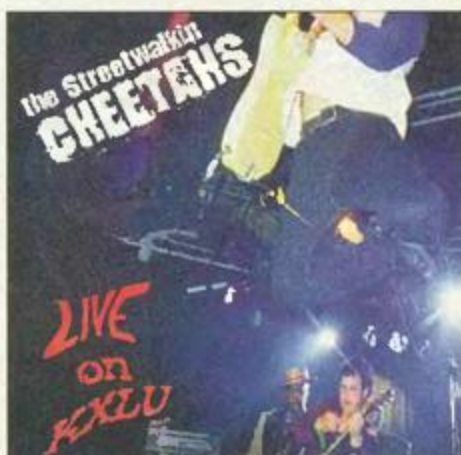
Seven More Minutes

MAVERICK

Neo-New Wavers approach Gary Numan-esque heights (?) on their second album

The Rentals’ frontman, Matt Sharp, sounds eager to make everyone forget that he used to be the bassist in Weezer, and maybe that’s why he

shows surprising signs of pop life in *Seven More Minutes*. The Rentals expand the prefab, candy-o synth grooves of their 1995 debut, *Return of the Rentals*, with guest vocals from second bananas like Elastica’s Donna Matthews, Lush’s Miki Berenyi and That Dog’s Petra Haden. While the liner notes proudly proclaim that the songs were composed in Barcelona and recorded in London, the shit sure sounds like L.A.; like Weezer’s *Pinkerton*, *Seven*



More Minutes is clever modern-rock fluff that buries the catchy tunes in concept-album filler, including the latest (last? please?) song about the millennium. But wade through the hour-long *Seven More Minutes* and you’ll find a half-dozen keepers – especially “The Cruise,” a Gary Numan clone that would’ve been

the third-best song on *The Pleasure Principle*, and New Wave geeks like the Rentals know that’s high praise indeed. —ROB SHEFFIELD

★★★★

The Streetwalkin Cheetahs

Live on KXLU

TRIPLE X

A balls-out, live-to-radio homage to the Stooges and the MC5

Their name comes from the first line in Iggy and the Stooges’ “Search and Destroy”: “I’m a streetwalkin’ cheetah with a heart full of napalm.”

They cover both the Stooges (a raving “Funhouse”) and the MC5 (the two-chord howler “Looking at You”) on this live-to-radio smoker. Two bonus studio tracks were produced by MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer. And in their own “Motor City Rock & Roll,” the Streetwalkin Cheetahs pay manic homage to their spiritual home, 1969 guitar-army Detroit: “I feel it in my soul/Never do what I am told/Never ever growin’ old/It’s

In This Issue

RATINGS AT A GLANCE

TAL BACHMAN	★★★★
DANGERMAN	★★★
GOV’T MULE	★★★★
Live... With a Little Help From Our Friends	★★★★
DIANE IZZO	★★★
One	★★★★

QUINCY JONES	★★★★
From Q. With Love	★★★★
KRUDER AND DORFMEISTER	★★★★
The K and D Sessions	★★★★
LILYS	★★★
The 3 Way	★★★
MEAT PUPPETS	★★★
Live in Montana	★★★
NAS	★★★★
I Am...	★★★★
TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS	★★★★

Echo	★★★★
REICH REMIXED	★★★
THE RENTALS	★★★
Seven More Minutes	★★★
THE ROLLING STONES	★★★★★
Out of Our Heads	★★★★★
THE STREETWALKIN CHEETAHS	★★★★★
Live on KXLU	★★★★★
UNDERWORLD	★★★★
Beaucoup Fish	★★★★

RECORD RATINGS

★★★★★	CLASSIC
★★★★	EXCELLENT
★★★	GOOD
★★	FAIR
★	POOR

Ratings are supervised by the “Rolling Stone” editors.



Recordings can also be found on the Rolling Stone Network at rollingstone.com and on America

Online. Listen to song excerpts, access band bios and discographies, and, if you disagree with our star ratings, post your own.