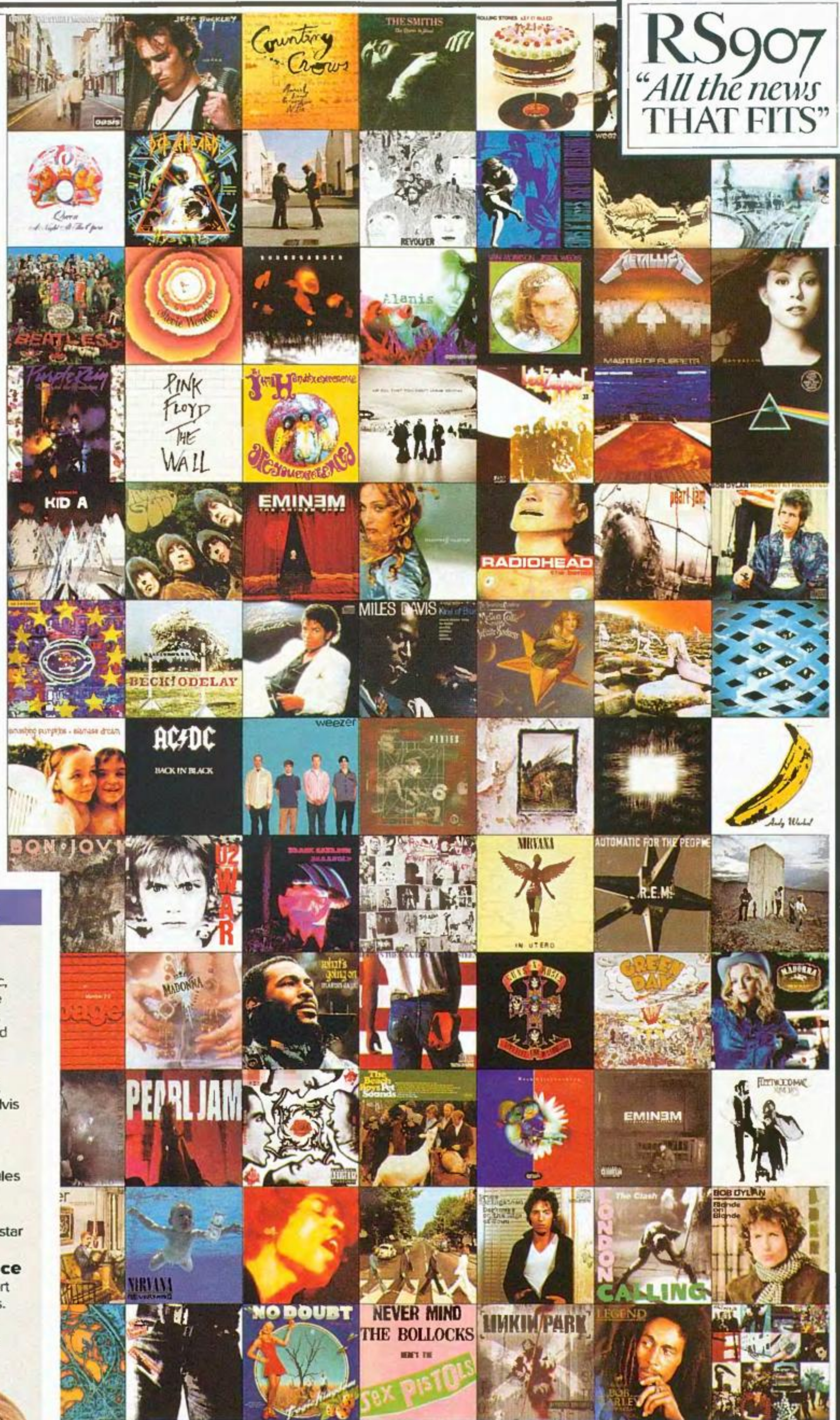
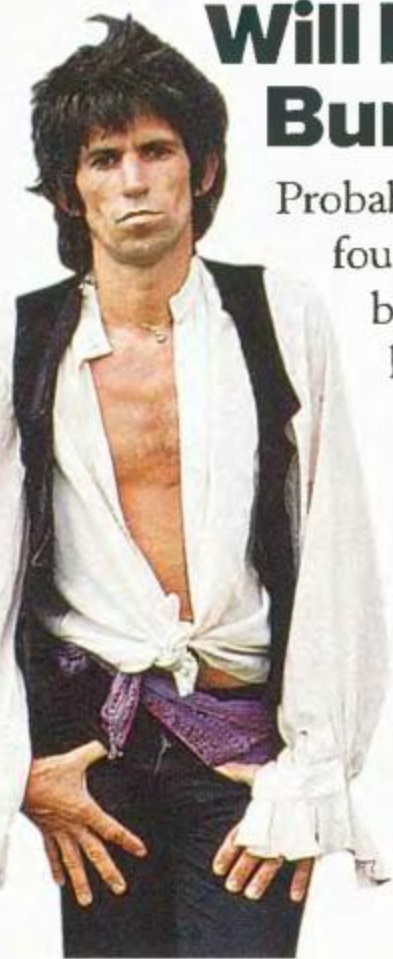


» INSIDE

DON'T MISS THIS!

Will Keith Richards Bury Us All? Page 48

Probably he will, considering that four decades of rock & roll, heroin, booze and Mick Jagger haven't knocked him off. In this freewheeling conversation, Richards waxes about his bad habits ("I'm polytoxic"), Jagger's solo records ("Wimpy") and the possibility of retirement ("Forget it. We play rock & roll because it's what turned us on. You keep going - and why not?") Why not indeed? *By David Fricke*



RS907
"All the news THAT FITS"

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EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT... Readers Poll Top 100 CDs

More than 23,000 of you voted via e-mail, fax, mail and our Web site, and unlike the state of Florida, we have no trouble naming winners. It's a varied list: everybody from Eminem to Miles Davis, Bob Marley to Madonna, plus Nirvana, Weezer, U2, Hendrix, Dylan and the Number One choice. . . .

SEE THE COUNT-DOWN ON PAGE **55**

COVER: Keith Richards photographed by Sante D'Orazio, Boston, September 4th, 2002. Grooming by Nancy Beltrandi. Styling by Maryam Malakpour for Margaret Maldonado Agency. Pants by Todd Lynn.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA (RICHARDS)

Review

DON'T MISS...

Coldplay in L.A.

Brit-pop band enjoys good cry, then rocks out

Live review, Page 79

NEW CDS

Petty makes a concept album about the sleazy music business

BY GREG KOT

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

The Last DJ

★★★

Warner Bros.



ON "THE LAST DJ," TOM PETTY sounds like the crankiest middle-aged punk this side of Neil Young. "Well, you can't turn him into a company man/You can't turn him into a whore," Petty declares on the title track that ushers in his thirteenth studio album in twenty-six years, a loosely constructed concept piece about how much the music industry sucks.

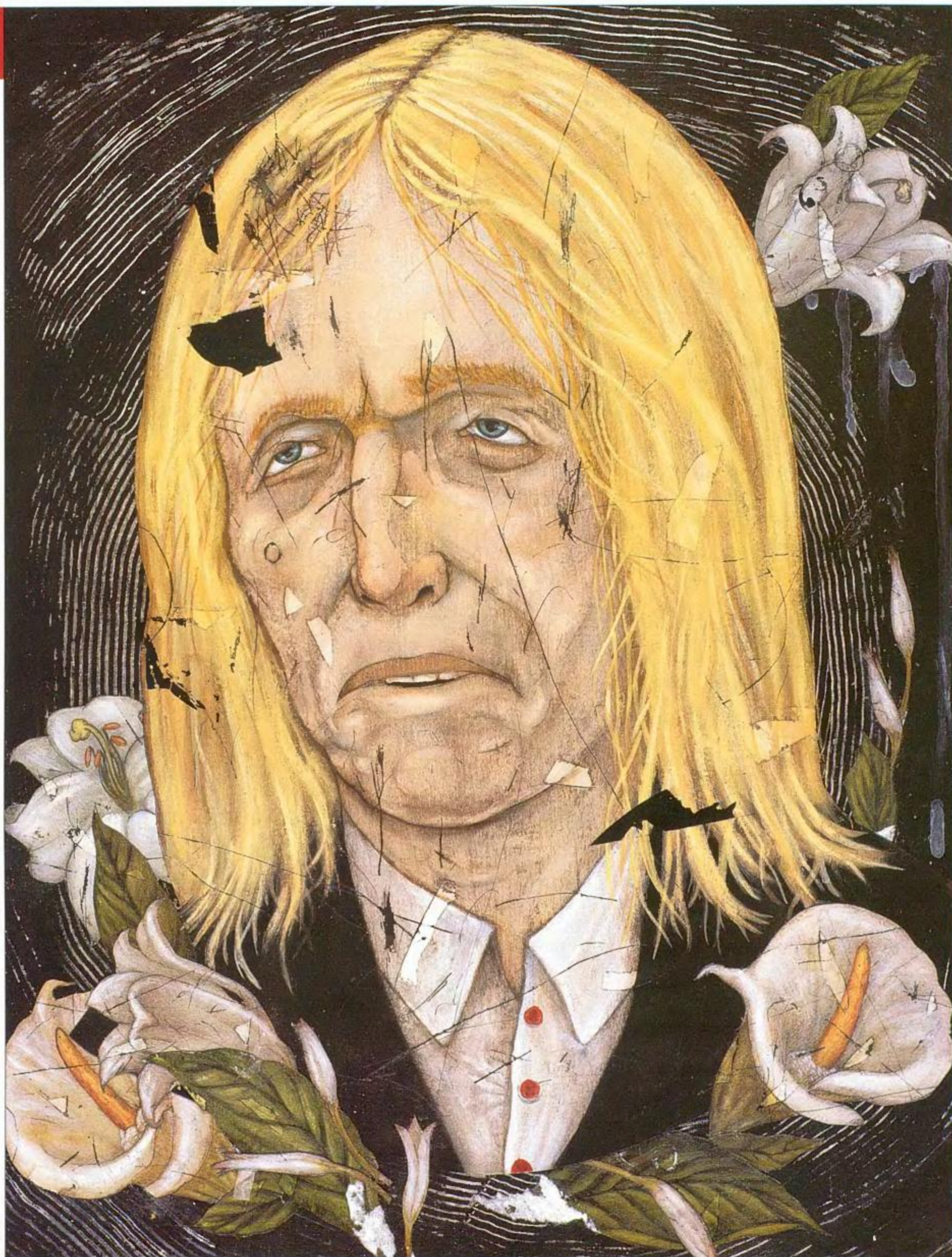
Like Young, Petty's petulance is tempered by classic-rock romanticism. His music continues to reflect an abiding appreciation for the three B's: Byrds, Beatles and Bob Dylan. Put the two impulses together, and you get an alluring archetype: Petty as the last gunslinger, riding out of town in search of something better. At once nostalgic and forward-looking, *The Last DJ* is quintessential Petty, by turns strident and starry-eyed.

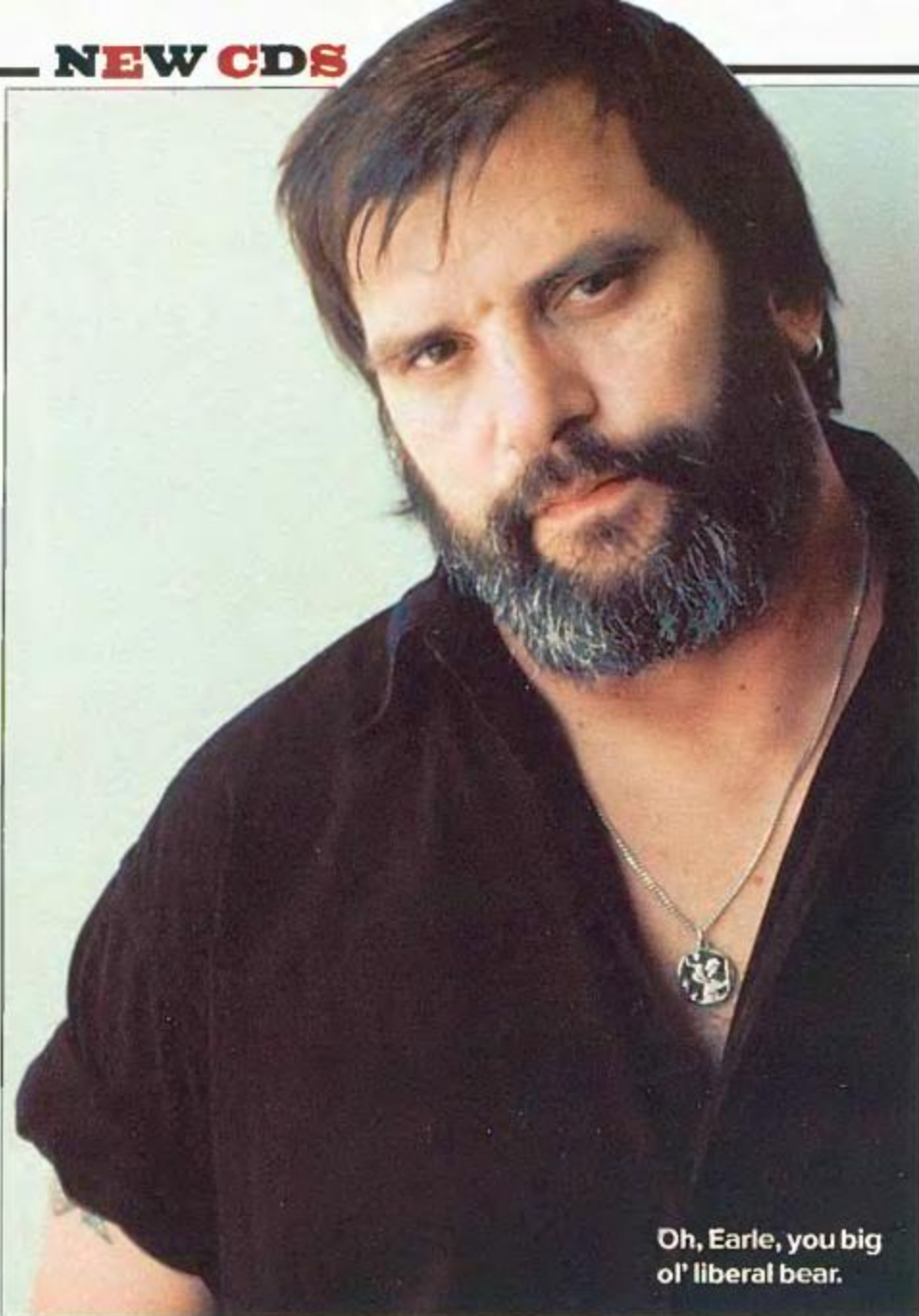
When it comes to attacking the abuses of the corporate-rock monolith, Petty has some credibility. Rock & roll has made Petty a wealthy man, but in an age of overpriced arena shows and corporate-sponsored punk tours, he has kept his tickets at the more affordable end of the rock-star spectrum, has not accepted corporate sponsorships and has never licensed any of his songs to an advertiser.

On *The Last DJ*, he takes on everything that he perceives is wrong with rock in the era of multinational companies. The title song is about the death of free-form radio. "Money Becomes King" argues that marketing has smothered self-expression. Petty can get heavy-handed: "When a Kid Goes Bad" is full of clichés about messed-up ado- [Cont. on 68]

KEY TRACKS

"The Last DJ," "Money Becomes King," "Dreamville"
Hear them at rollingstone.com/recordings





Oh, Earle, you big ol' liberal bear.

The Patriot

Move over, Toby Keith: Earle takes on prisons, the Drug War and John Walker Lindh *By Tom Moon*



Steve Earle ★★★★★

Jerusalem *E-Squared/Artemis*

In the liner notes to *Jerusalem*, his most strident work in years, Steve Earle offers a broad definition of patriotism – one that encompasses not just the authors of the Constitution but Malcolm X, Bobby Seale and Martin Luther King Jr., because they defended American ideals “by insisting on asking the hardest questions in our darkest hours.”

That’s what Earle, proud Tennessee rebel, is trying to do with these ornery narratives about post-9/11 America. Positioning himself somewhere between liberal scolder and beatific wise man, Earle revisits the astringent riff rock of his finest albums. He starts out talking in biblical allegories (“Ashes to Ashes”), and later goes street level to sketch an unwitting pawn in the Drug War on the hill-billy stomp “What’s a Simple Man to Do?” The Stones-y, acidic “Amerika v. 6.0 (The Best We Can Do)” laments the bottom-line thinking that’s infected every corner of American life, as Earle bitterly observes, “There’s doctors down on Wall Street sharpenin’ their scalpels and tryin’ to cut a deal/Meanwhile, back at the hospital, we got accountants playin’ God and countin’ out the pills.”

In other hands, such ripped-from-the-news material would sound like hectoring. But Earle is a sly storyteller – even when he’s peering into the mind of American Taliban soldier John Walker Lindh, on the eerie Eastern devotional “John Walker’s Blues,” he’s really telling a tale of great disillusionment, about a lost Everykid who goes on a lonely search and finds out how faith can be twisted to justify extreme acts. Earle’s vocals are raw and blunt throughout, and though the topical stuff stands out, one of the few personal songs, “Go Amanda,” contains a mantra that seems to have shaped all of the riled-up *Jerusalem*: “Lose the sadness/Use the anger.”

KEY TRACKS

“John Walker’s Blues,” “Ashes to Ashes,” “What’s a Simple Man to Do?” “Amerika v. 6.0 (The Best We Can Do)” *Hear them at rollingstone.com/recordings*

Jennifer Love Hewitt ★★



BareNaked

Jive

As funny as you think it might be

JENNIFER LOVE HEWITT HAS NO INTENTION of being an actress-with-a-pop-record joke. Her mistake, because this faux-rock record (her fourth) is the funniest thing since Ravyn-Symoné’s *Here’s to New Dreams*. Who does this broad think she is? Well, lots of people: Gwen Stefani on the almost-syncoated “Can I Go Now,” Celine Dion on “You,” Sheryl Crow or Meredith Brooks (who produced) everywhere else. Hewitt has a wee little voice and a fondness for the word *bay-bhay*, and she wails and growls through this mellow Southern California roadhouse rock like the best karaoke singer in the joint. The one about a young girl tryin’ to make her dreams come true on “Avenue of the Stars” must be heard to be believed.

ARION BERGER

ESG ★★



Step Off

Soul Jazz

Off-sampled Eighties art funkies make ill-fated return

LIFE WAS BETTER WHEN ESG WERE just an Eighties art-funk girl group with a cult following. Twenty years ago, weird, groovy tracks such as “U.F.O.” – sampled in countless hip-hop songs ever since – captured a moment of accidental inno-

vation and earned ESG gigs opening for Gang of Four and the Clash. On *Step Off*, the middle-aged Scroggins sisters try to replicate the magic of their early singles, and the results are frustratingly mediocre: On songs such as “Talk It” and “It’s Not Me,” ESG sound as if they’re recycling their shtick. Among these seven tracks, there’s only one real goody: the joyful, sloppy “Six Pack,” where a two-note bass line and danceable beat accompany a ghostly guitar part and Renee Scroggins’ endearingly tone-deaf vocals (“Pick me up a six-pack of love”). Most of the rest sounds like decades-old practice tapes.

JENNY ELISCU

Bon Jovi ★★★



Bounce

Island

Pop-rock comfort food, if not exactly post-9/11 catharsis

THE PLEASURES OF BON JOVI ARE INSEPARABLE from their limitations: They will always find a way to please the crowd. The same lack of subtlety that produces supremely catchy choruses also leads to a ballad titled “You Had Me From Hello.” Updating its pop-rock sound simultaneously in opposite directions, the band co-wrote the single “Everyday” with Andreas Carlsson, one of the Swedish studio wizards behind the Backstreet Boys, while “Undivided” has a slurring riff that would be at home on a Korn record. The title *Bounce* is meant to be an exhortation to America after 9/11, and if it doesn’t exactly offer poetic catharsis, the ex-

Star Ratings

- ★★★★★ Classic
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★ Good
- ★★ Fair
- ★ Poor

istence of the eighth Bon Jovi record is reassurance of a different kind: Life goes on. You wouldn’t want Wendy’s to stop making grilled-chicken sandwiches, either.

GAVIN EDWARDS

Karl Denson’s Tiny Universe



★★★

The Bridge

Relaxed

Sax guy brings grooves, not jams

NO MATTER HOW MUCH METERS-INFLUENCED musicians like Karl Denson and Medeski, Martin and Wood play with their formulas, to many listeners, they’ll always just be jam bands. Saxophonist and singer Denson neatly sidesteps this problem on the disciplined, surprisingly accessible *Bridge*. He’s written songs, not vamps, and he builds each atop the kind of tightly wound rhythm associated with James Brown tunes. Just about every track has convincing vocals: Denson delivers “Because of Her Beauty” in an awed, worshipful tone and brings an insinuating blue snarl to Curtis Mayfield’s “Check Out Your Mind.” *The Bridge* is sophisticated backbeat music that never dissolves into the dreaded endless jam.

TOM MOON

Petty Gets Pissed Off *The Last DJ battles the music-biz machine*

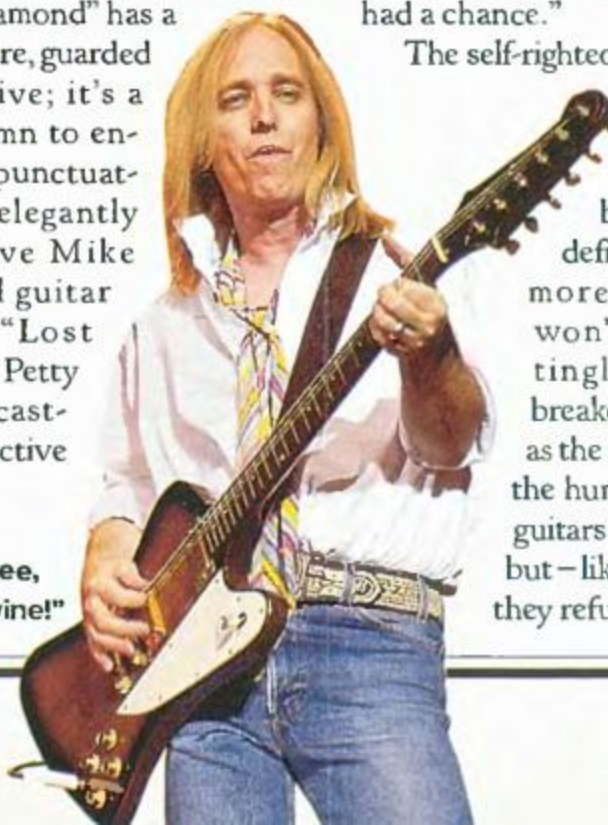
[Cont. from 67] lescents. “Joe” is a plodding rant that tries to skewer a self-satisfied music mogul (“He gets to be famous/I get to be rich”). It sounds like the long-lost sequel to John Fogerty’s ungainly put-down of a manipulative CEO, “Zanz Kant Danz.”

Fortunately, Petty doesn’t drown in bile. Finger-pointing lyrics become finger-snapping melodies in the buoyant folk-rock of “The Last DJ” and in the lilting orchestrations of “Money Becomes King.” In contrast to his last studio release, the stripped-down, garage-rocking *Echo*, *The Last DJ* makes its points with subtly orchestrated anthems. Petty’s drawl is relaxed yet purposeful; he longs for a better world even as he quietly mourns what’s been lost. Petty’s old chum, the late George Harrison, seems to be on his mind as he sprinkles around Beatles references, whether invoking the guitarist’s “Blue Jay Way” in “Dreamville” or

strumming a ukulele – Harrison’s pet instrument – on “The Man Who Loves Women.”

After the bitter opening tracks, “Dreamville” arrives as a reminder of rock’s youthful promise. Strings tug the singer toward an uncertain destination, while horns signal the music’s unlimited possibility. *The Last DJ* is ultimately the “Dreamville” kid’s story, and Petty’s “Like a Diamond” has a more mature, guarded perspective; it’s a lovely hymn to endurance, punctuated by an elegantly expressive Mike Campbell guitar solo. In “Lost Children,” Petty could be casting a protective

Tom says, “Have at thee, industry swine!”



eye on the rock & roll innocent of “Dreamville” as he ventures into the maw of the industry machine. Yet the song refuses to cave in to cheap sentimentality – the guitars tangle as if they were in a Peter Green-era Fleetwood Mac blues breakdown. Similarly, the majestic chords of “Have Love Will Travel” don’t admit defeat, even as Petty acknowledges, “You never had a chance.”

The self-righteous punk returns on the finale, “Can’t Stop the Sun,” robbed blind but still defiant: “There’ll be more like me who won’t give in.” Fittingly, the Heartbreakers do the talking as the song fades. Over the hum of radio static, guitars crash and flicker, but – like Petty himself – they refuse to fade.