

Staff Picks

Staffers recommend their favorite classic albums

Tom Petty's breakthrough *After 27 years, Damn the Torpedoes continues to be an enduring classic*

by Enrico

It was 1979. Jimmy Carter was struggling with his foreign policy, gas prices were soaring, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers released their second rock 'n' roll album to combat the disco revolution. In 2006, *Damn the Torpedoes* is still revered as one of modern music's classic albums while the likes of Aretha Franklin and The Beegees have been reduced to karaoke bar fame.

"Refugee" starts the album off with a bang and it is clear that Tom Petty has created a classic song. When the turntable needle graces the edge of the vinyl record, one may get the feeling that a Tom Petty fan had in 1979 after hearing the jangling guitars begin the record that would become Petty's trademark. "Here Comes My Girl" and "Even the Losers" follow with more layered guitars and heart-felt Petty vocals. The beautiful imagery created by a line like "time meant nothing, anything seemed real" became vintage Tom Petty.

The second side of the album contains another famous Petty tune, "Don't Do Me Like That." It is amazing how overlooked some of the other songs on the album are. "Century City" and "You Tell Me" are hidden classics. The album closes with the powerful "Louisiana Rain," another classic that doesn't get nearly enough radio play.

Tom Petty's songwriting talent is incredible.

However, the contributions of the Heartbreakers should not be understated. Mike Campbell provides great lead guitar work, and it is safe to say that *Damn the Torpedoes* was the beginning of a string of Petty albums that would garner Campbell immense respect among peers, while being grossly underrated by everyone else.

The rest of the band is solid and combines the Dylan-influenced folk rock roots of the music with new wave textures seamlessly. This is a big reason why the album became Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' greatest success. This was a fresh sound. Petty catapulted himself into popularity by creating an accessible sound that appealed to the rock and roll posers of the late 70s while building a loyal fan base of people who were in search of something new in the wake of the disco revolution.

While it could be argued that Petty made better albums after *Damn the Torpedoes*, this album could not have come at a better time. Its monumental impact on the pop charts combined with its back-to-the-basics approach to rock 'n' roll make Tom Petty one of popular music's most important and most talented songwriters. *Damn the Torpedoes* reeks of the 1970s, while ushering in the 1980s and leaving a strong imprint on the history of popular rock 'n' roll.



Photo: rocksbackpages.com

Tom Petty (pictured above) shook the music world with his incredible second album, *Damn the Torpedoes*.

Guns N Roses' finest

Why Appetite for Destruction is a hard hittin' classic from GnR

by Eduardo

As the seventies declined, the reigning sub-genre of rock, known today as classic rock, took a dive. As the 80's took off, bands of integrity faded out of existence and were replaced by newer, more theatrical groups. Many bands began to sacrifice music for looks, and money became the drive for these so-called "artists." But a few new bands distinguished themselves as authentic musicians and brought rock 'n' roll attitude into the mainstream. Among these bands was the hard rock group Guns N' Roses, debuting with *Appetite for Destruction* in 1987.

Appetite for Destruction was a well-organized hard rock album influenced by punk, blues, and the classic arena rock established by rock pioneers such as Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, and the Rolling Stones. The album has good balance between rhythm, melody, and hard-hitting verses. Its rhythm section consists of loose yet complex bass lines, along with heavy, driving drums, as heard in "It's So Easy." Two deep-toned guitars become one heavy sound, and the screechy vocals of front-man Axl Rose are layered on top. On the album, there is a variety of themes and musical arrangements. The track listing is organized based on

two themes. The first track, "Welcome to the Jungle," announces the rawness and heaviness of the group, which was contrary to the chorus hooks and pop melodies emphasized in the time period. The few tracks that follow are stories told about growing up where one doesn't always feel accepted, with bluesy riffs flowing under these hoarse descriptions. This is exemplified in songs such as "My Michelle" and the hit song "Paradise City."

The second half is focused on romantic frustration, in which continuous melody accompanies the emotions that tell the tales of various relationships. This is shown through the songs "Think About You" and the hit that rocketed them into the charts, the power ballad "Sweet Child O' Mine."

The attitude presented on *Appetite for Destruction* got the attention of many fans, including fans of pop, glam metal, classic rock 'n' roll, and heavy metal, making it the 20th best selling album of all time in the United States. The classic loudness of Guns N' Roses brought back to the 1980s quality music remembered among the rock youth worldwide. *Appetite for Destruction* is still remembered today as a classic rock 'n' roll album.



Photo: gunsnroses1.com

Guns N' Roses (pictured above) brought back the bad boy image to rock 'n' roll with *Appetite for Destruction*.