

Arts & Entertainment

RECORD REVIEW

Life in the wasteland

By JON HEALEY '80, Associate News Editor

In the wake of the second British invasion, led by the likes of Elvis Costello, a number of new, talented American groups have developed unnoticed. Two such groups are Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and Jules and the Polar Bears, both of whom have released new albums, *Damn the Torpedoes* and *Fenetiks*, respectively. These albums demonstrate just how much both groups deserve attention, for they are remarkably entertaining and insightful as well.

The world of *Torpedoes*, Petty's third album, is bleak, but not without means to salvation. The secret to living in a hopeless world, Petty contends, is to find out who one's friends are, and to order one's world accordingly. Petty seeks order, but prefers to let matters sort themselves out: "Let me know when you're finished with me/What you want me to be/Baby you tell me." *Torpedoes* thus represents Petty's attempt to tie up his own loose ends and make sense of what he has left.

Petty's efforts tend to be more than just songs. They are also anthems, hymns to those who save themselves: "Somebody must have kicked you around some/Tell me why you would lay there reveling in your abandon . . . You see you don't have to live like a refugee."

Perhaps it is because he stresses the extremes, emphasizing both the inherent hopelessness of the situation and man's ability to survive, that Petty's tunes often sound inspirational:

I should have known right then it was too good to last

*God, it's such a drag to be living in the past
Baby, even the losers get lucky sometimes
Even the losers keep a little bit of pride
They get lucky sometimes*

The despair of the present is a passing phase, a recurrent cycle that Petty accepts resignedly while banking on the promise of things to come.

As usual, Petty's melodies are the strongpoint of his music. The songs on *Torpedoes* all have good hooks and infectious beats, while the instrumentals are solid, if not flashy. Petty himself handles the vocals with more emphasis on expression than on clarity. His tone, well suited to his lyrics, is tinged with desperate resignation, a sense of having one last chance, of making one last effort.

I'm not angry

Fenetiks, Jules and the Polar Bears' second album, also presents a low opinion of the world, but it lacks Petty's optimism. While Petty puts his world in order, Jules Shear, the Polar Bears' songwriter, vents his anger. Indeed, Shear has little faith in anything, particularly not society, love or modern values. But in the end, Shear, too, is resigned to the weaknesses of his life and his fellow man.

Shear is at his best when angry, as, for example, when spouting off at an ex-girlfriend:

You never even found out what you want from a lover

So far you only found out what we do to each other when

You screwed the truth up



Photo by
Written by
Recorded at
Mixed at
Engineer
Gray Russell
Our
You Tell
Elbo
Mastered by Grey

But Shear can be equally venomous about materialism, as in the song "What Do You Belong To," or just the faults of man's character in general, as displayed by "All Caked Up."

Man's futile frailty, especially his own, is what captures Shear's attention most often. This futility is compounded by man's destructive self-indulgence ("You're stabbed with the weapon you made yourself"), a tendency to which he is not immune ("There's a few ways I pay myself to live/ I give up").

Ahh, but all is not lost. Shear is capable of finding solace in love, although he puts little faith in it, as when he sarcastically intones:

You wish to be sugared with sweetnesses

And in turn you accept my weaknesses

Could this be the something that you call love?

In the end, however, Shear sees no escape from the pain of this world, even when love works: "Miracles occur in this wasteland of time/ But there's always one more wasteland to find."

Neglected pedigree

The songs on the new album do not rock and roll as fiercely as those on the group's first album (*Got No Breeding*, a neglected masterpiece), but they do all have great beats and excellent instrumental work. Shear's vocals are more controlled on this album than before, but that's a mixed blessing. His voice may now sound stronger and more appealing, but his once endearingly random and desperate air has been sacrificed in the process.

You probably will not hear much from either *Torpedoes* or *Fenetiks* on your local radio station; in fact, requesting Jules and the Polar Bears usually brings stupefied silence or derisive laughter. All the same, the talent of these groups is no laughing matter, as their latest efforts prove so conclusively.



Weekend Arts Calendar

FILMS

FRIDAY

Return of the Pink Panther — One of the best in the Clouseau series, this 1975 Peter Sellers comedy features Christopher Plummer, Herbert Lom, Catherine Schell and the funniest animated credits you'll ever see. McCosh 10. 7:30 and 10 p.m. and midnight. \$1.50.

Scarface — Howard Hawks's 1932 film about nasty doings in the mob features Paul Muni as an Al Capone character. The Film Society brags that this one has a still-unequaled number of on-screen killings. Although it has been unavailable for decades, the Society also claims that it is "often called the greatest American film" (Oh really?) Frick 120. 8 and 10 p.m. and midnight. \$1.50, free to

Film Society.

The Producers — Mel Brooks' fast and furious farce about a Broadway swindle that backfires. Filled with semi-nude girls and happy Nazis, this movie is funnier than *Blazing Saddles* and more tasteless than *Hogan's Heroes*. Whig Hall. 8 and 10 p.m. and midnight. \$2, free to Whig-Clio.

SATURDAY

I Was Born But... — Two boys grow to disrespect their father in this early film by Yasujiro Ozu. 185 Nassau. 8 and 10 p.m. \$1, free to Film Society.

Walking Tall — Joe Don Baker swings that baseball bat as a real-life southern sheriff Buford Pusser who single-handedly battles local corruption. Inspiring to Neo-fascists. Frick 120, 7:30 and 10 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. \$1 to members of AASA, \$1.50 to

others.

SUNDAY

The Lost Patrol — John Ford directs Victor McLaglen and Boris Karloff in the story of a British army group stranded in the Mesopotamian desert. Room 01, 185 Nassau. 8 p.m. only. \$1, free to Film Society.

Our Man In Havana — Alec Guinness and Burl Ives head a phenomenal cast in Carol Reed's limp adaptation of the Graham Greene spy satire. Princeton Inn College. 8 p.m. \$1, free to P.I.C., Wilson, and Stevenson.

All Through the Night — Bogie's mobster gang stalks Nazi spies in this funny story set in wartime New York. PIC. 10 p.m. \$1, free to PIC.

DRAMA

String of Pearls — Triangle's

fall musical production, written and directed by Doug McGrath '80 and Canny Strickland '80 is about love, drama school, and waiting tables. Music by Todd Beaney '80. 185 Nassau St. Friday and Saturday, 7:30, Sunday at 2:30 and 7:30.

The Good Person of Szechwan — A parable about a woman who creates a second identity to preserve her goodness when necessity forces her to be bad. Acting Studio, 185 Nassau Street. Friday and Saturday at 9:30 p.m.

All the Way Home — Tad Mosel's beautiful, powerful play portrays how a family copes with the sudden death of the young father. Adapted from James Agee's autobiographical *A Death in the Family*, the play is emotionally taxing but highly rewarding. McCarter Theatre.

Friday and Saturday, 8:30 p.m. Sunday at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m.

The Birthday Party — This nightmare play by Harold Pinter concerns death, birth, parents, children, growing up, and facing the world. Theatre Intime. Friday and Saturday at 8:30 p.m.

MUSIC

Friends of Music — Musica Alta presents vocal and instrumental music of fourteenth-century Florence. Alexander Hall. Friday, 8:30 p.m. Free.

Princeton Inn Concerts — Clyde Spillinger '82 and Friends. Guitar and vocals. PIC lounge. Sunday 1:30 p.m. Free.

Princeton University Brass Quintet — PIC Lounge. Sunday, 4:30 p.m. Free.

—JOHN PACKMAN '80 and RICHARD GREENBERG '80