

Sequel just echoes *Bat Out of Hell*

JIM STEINMAN — *Bad For Good* (Epic FE 36531):

Well here it is, the long-awaited follow-up to the classic rock album, *Bat Out of Hell*.

Though billed as Jim Steinman's debut album, in essence this can't be regarded as anything else but a sequel to *Bat Out of Hell* even if it is lacking a main ingredient

Meat Loaf, the powerhouse singer whose vocals were, more than anything, responsible for making *Bat Out of Hell* one of the best selling albums ever, has reportedly lost his singing voice. Virtual non-stop touring during the two years after the first album was released apparently caused permanent damage to the famed Meat Loaf vocal chords. There is still a chance he may record again but no definite plans are in the works

But don't underestimate Steinman. First off, he was the brainchild behind *Bat Out of Hell*, writing and arranging all the material and playing keyboards on the album.

Secondly, aside from the absence of Meat Loaf, this album features basically the same cast that made *Bat Out of Hell* such a sweeping rock epic.

Steinman has again written and arranged all the music, echoing the dynamic style he established in his first masterpiece.

Production chores are shared by Steinman and Todd Rundgren, who produced, engineered and mixed *Bat Out of Hell*. Rundgren and E. Street Band keyboardist Roy Bittan also assisted in the arranging of this album. All do an excellent job.

Rundgren on guitar, Bittan on piano and fellow E. Street Band member mighty Max Weinberg on drums are absolutely superb and again fashion a truly dynamic instrumental pulse. Their work is probably the best thing on the album.

Additional vocalists include Ellen Foley, who has found further solo fame since her dramatic duet with Meat Loaf on *Paradise By The Dashboard Light*, Karla DeVito who sang Foley's part on Meat Loaf's live tour and Rory Dodd.

Renowned synthesist Larry Fast and the Blues Brothers' horn section are also featured.

The only major change is that Steinman takes over the role of lead vocalist.

He does an admirable job but his voice is too thin, lacking the vocal power or presence of the mighty Meat Loaf. In fact one quickly suspects that much of the music has been slightly toned down here to keep it from overwhelming Steinman's voice, which is too bad because Steinman's music works best when pushed to the limit. *Bad For Good* falls a little short of the soaring electric grandeur that made *Bat Out of Hell* so scintillating.

Steinman worked two years with Meat Loaf on *Bat Out of Hell* and no doubt played a big part in helping shape the distinctive phrasing that he repeats so well here. But as with his voice, his writing isn't quite as strong which makes *Bad For Good* somewhat of an echo of past brilliance.

But once one accepts that fact that this is a less dynamic reprise of *Bat Out of Hell*, one can get down to enjoying the music anyway and there's lots here to be enjoyed.

The opening title track doesn't have the blazing sur-



Jim Steinman wrote new epic

EVOLUTIONS

by Bill Provlek



Meat Loaf's vocals sorely missed

face speed or screaming energy of *Bat Out of Hell* (the song) but is nicely propelled by some superb guitar, drums and piano.

Lost Boys And Golden Girls nicely evokes *Two Out of Three Ain't Bad* without being an outright rehash.

Steinman's new melodramatic monologue *Love And Death And An American Guitar* — is a little thin and hokey but works anyway.

Stark Raving Love is simple enough with good hooks but there are a lot of startling little touches listen for the scream of the banshee in heat — and it climaxes beautifully with some blistering guitar work.

Out of the Frying Pan is a good little love-in-the-city song that sets things up nicely for *Surf's Up*, a plaintive ballad that features guitar work that weeps and more solid keyboard work leading into some heavy waves of percussion that sweeps the listener like thundering breakers on the shoreline.

Dance In My Pants takes the emotion-charged dueling of *Dashboard Light* and transfers it to the dance floor where it really hops.

The album closes with *Left In The Dark*, a suitable sequel to *Heaven Can Wait*.

The package includes a seven-inch EP featuring an instrumental prologue, *The Storm*, performed by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and an epilogue, *Rock And Roll Dreams Come Through*, produced by Steinman and Jimmy Iovine. The first is merely alright but the second one features Steinman not trying to recreate the *Bat Out of Hell* sound, suggesting that he sounds much more natural and effective when not trying to carry the load left behind by Meat Loaf.

Hard-core fanatics may find *Bad For Good* too weak in comparison but if given a chance, this album ends up having more going for it than against it.

And if *Bat Out of Hell* had never been recorded, this probably would have been a minor masterpiece in its own right.

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TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

— *Hard Promises* (Backstreet BSR-5160):

No doubt about it, this is a great album.

Hard on the heels of Petty's breakthrough release, *Damn The Torpedoes*, this outing should solidify Petty's position as an established musical force.

Hard Promises shines with promises being kept and potential being realized.

Aside from the fact he writes good rock songs, Petty's chief asset is that he doesn't sound like a professional singer. It's a fascinating, facile voice with a quavering vulnerability that adds compelling emotional textures to Petty's bright but bittersweet sound.

With the most-able Heartbreakers, Petty has fashioned a distinctive sound strong enough to acknowledge allegiance to some top pop-rock influences without suffering in comparison.

There's Beatlesque flavorings to *Nightwatchman*, a Dylanesque *Highway 61* feeling to *Criminal Mind* and an evocative Rolling Stones plaintiveness (along the lines of *Coming Down Again*) in *You Could Still Change Your Mind*. And yet these well-crafted touches are all bonuses rather than crutches for Petty

carries them off beautifully without dampening his own provocative presence.

There's another rewarding influence, that of the Byrds. Petty and the Heartbreakers have patented a bell-like guitar sound — sometimes it jingle jangles and other times it peels and tolls. Both are used to great affect in *The Waiting*.

Promises is much more cohesive and consistent than *Torpedoes*. With slightly less raw surface excitement, it is much more rewarding with Petty and the boys coming off quite poised as they mix numerous imaginative touches with a basic pop-simple catchiness.

Every cut is a dandy but two particular highlights are *Kings Road*, a great little Petty rocker, and *Insider*, a country-flavored evocative ballad featuring a superb duet with Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac fame.

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SPLIT ENZ — *Waiaata* (A & M SP-4848):

Last year, the New Zealand band Split Enz was on the verge of packing it in when they finally broke through internationally, gaining widespread popularity and respectable success with their album *True Colours*.

Outside of their home base, Australia, Split Enz were best received in Canada where their critically-acclaimed sold-out tour of small clubs helped push the album to almost double platinum status and gave them a big hit with *I Got You*.

With such a foothold in the all-important North American market, the pressure is on Split Enz to consolidate and expand their success.

This they do quite admirably with *Waiaata* (a Maori word for "a song").

They tackle the issue head-on with the opening cut, *Hard Act To Follow*, and amply prove they've got an abundance of creativity left to work with.

Split Enz is a new wave band in the true sense of the word, as opposed to the ritualistic post-punk posturing of numerous bands that has devalued the phrase. Split Enz really does have something new to offer, a multi-textured musical creativity molded into a catchy, almost haunting rock sound.

Split Enz actually bridges the avant garde adventurousness of a Peter Gabriel on the one hand and a simple, pop catchiness of Blondie on the other. The band — recently augmented by drummer Noel Crombie — manages to be fascinating and extremely pleasurable at the same time.

Songs like *One Step Ahead* and *Ships* make one wonder if Split Enz might not prove to be the Super-tramp of new wave. (Or, listening to *I Don't Want To Dance*, could that be the Bee Gees of new wave?)

Waiaata abounds with great material that blossoms nicely under repeated listening.

Two cuts in particular prove quite telling in that they're both instrumentals and yet both are as strong as anything else on the album. *Wail* features high-speed jazz-rock that does just that — wails. *Albert Of India* offers an intriguing musical bow to close out the album, suggesting that a band this good seems set to just get better and better from here on in.

(See also Ex-Beatles, page 13)



Tom Petty turns in great album