

## Rock Now

# Petty's 'Hard Promises' was well worth the wait

**TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS;**  
"Hard Promises" (Backstreet)

By JOHN FISHER

Perhaps it's appropriate that the first single from the new Tom Petty album is "The Waiting."

That is exactly what his growing legion of fans had been doing during the year-plus gap Petty had between records — waiting.

Petty scored heavily with his "Damn the Torpedoes," and followed the success of the album with an equally convincing tour. But the question seemed to linger: "Can he match or better his last effort?"

This question was answered a few weeks ago with the release of "Hard Promises" by Petty and the Heartbreakers.

This much anticipated album, on first listening, lived up to any conceivable expectations fans may have had for the artist.

Although he doesn't pioneer a whole lot of new ground with this album (even though there is less of a rhythm and blues feel and more rock 'n' roll than on his previous album) the old ground which he does cover, he covers well.

MCA Records, which distributes Backstreet, re-released this Petty album in a teaser fashion.

The first thing to hit the market was the single, "The Waiting," and that stayed out there, by itself, for about two weeks, basically testing the radio waters for the album to follow.

The response was instantaneous and overwhelming.

Radio stations no sooner had the single spinning on their turntables when the clamor began for the whole album.

After listening to the album, the first thing one realizes is that it must have been a hard choice selecting the single that was released.

There are at least a half dozen songs on the album, which would have fared as well as "The Waiting," on a 45.

Perhaps the strongest of this grouping would be "A Woman In Love, (It's Not Me)" which became my per-

sonal favorite over a month ago.

From time to time, in the world of rock 'n' roll, a song emerges which is destined to become a rock classic. This, almost certainly, should be the case with "A Woman In Love."

Another strong cut, with eventual single possibility, is "Insider," which is a Petty duet with Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac fame.

If any of you were curious as to how this meeting of musical minds occurred, the name beside the production credits should have given you a clue.

Aside from Petty, the album was produced by Jimmy Iovine, who just coincidentally is the producer for the soon-to-be-released Stevie Nicks solo album.

And for you Petty fans, who can't satisfy all of your Petty desire with just "Hard Promises," when Stevie's album comes out, you will find TP in her lineup of backing vocalists and musicians.

But back to Petty himself, his duet with Nicks could be one of the better rock ballads in awhile, similar in substance to the Grace Slick-Mickey Thomas outing on the new Starship album.

"Nightwatchman," the third cut on the first side, is an interesting lyrical trip for Petty and musically, has a bright reggae feel to it, which resolves in the chorus to a straight-ahead rock format.

The stylistic sampling continues on the following cut, "Something Big," which has a decided country undercurrent in contrast to the organ-flavored rock mood established at the top.

With a swelling, swirling organ intro, it almost would seem that Petty took a page from the Bruce Springsteen songbook with "Kings Road," the uptempo conclusion to the first side of the album.

The second side of the album opens with the mid-tempo "Letting You Go," which contains some of the best harmonies on the album. This song is a possibility if it ever is decided to release a softer Petty song from the collection.

"A Thing About You" probably is the closest Petty comes to a new wave sound on this album and even with



Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

this cut, the resemblance is only marginal. It, like most of the other material on the album, could best be called mainstream rock 'n' roll.

The next cut is the before-mentioned Petty-Nicks duet, and that is followed by "The Criminal Kind," another Petty song with a country feel. The vocals on the song, for some reason, are reminiscent of Bob Dylan's style — half talking, half singing vocals which are not normal for Petty but still interesting.

The album closes with "You Can Still Change Your Mind," a contemporary ballad, that would be hard to classify as a love song, but the basic implications of the

lyrics do have love in mind.

Joining Petty, who for this album played twelve and six string acoustic guitars, bass and electric piano, are Mike Campbell on six and twelve-string electric guitar, autoharp, accordion, harmonium and bass guitar; Benmont Tench on piano and vocals, and Ron Blair on bass guitar.

This Petty collection comes in the midst of some fine recordings by hit groups, but the brightness which is captured in this LP has enabled it to rise head and shoulder above the rest.

"Hard Promises" should be easy to keep.

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