

When Petty goes it alone, he brings plenty of company

MOST BANDLEADERS who decide to make a solo album wouldn't think of hiring their group to play on it. It kind of defeats the purpose.

But that's the strange route Tom Petty takes on his maiden solo effort, "Full Moon Fever." Oddly enough, the trick works.

Relying heavily on Heartbreakers lead guitarist Mike Campbell (with cameos from band mates Benmont Tench and Howie Epstein), Petty keeps "Full Moon Fever" within the general parameters of the Heartbreakers sound. But by calling it a solo album, Petty gets to stretch out, and the results are more loose and playful than the Heartbreakers' recent LPs. "Full Moon Fever" is like "The Traveling Wilburys, Vol. One," only better. Fellow Wilbury Jeff Lynne plays a big role here, producing the album, co-writing five songs, playing guitars and keyboards, and singing. Like all records Lynne produces, "Full Moon Fever" winds up sounding a bit like Electric Light Orchestra, chock full of dreamy keyboards and precise acoustic guitars bouncing against colorless drums. But even Lynne's slick production can't squelch Petty's roaming spirit.

"Love Is Like a Long Road," fueled by Campbell's Who-like fanfare opening, is the hardest Petty has rocked in years. The acoustic shuffle "Yer So Bad" updates the Kinks' "Dedicated Follower of Fashion," while "The Apartment Song" recalls Buddy Holly, and "A Mind With a Heart of Its Own" borrows its beat from Bo Diddley. Petty and Campbell even tackle an early influence, the



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SOUNDINGS

Byrds, with a version of Gene Clark's lovely "Feel a Whole Lot Better."

That's a lot of cue-taking for one album. But the record never has the studied feel of an artist paying tribute to his musical roots. Without the Heartbreakers' legacy to think about, Petty takes a wonderful, free-wheeling romp with "Full Moon Fever."

■ What a waste. Milwaukee's Frogs have the makings of a great comic / psychedelic band, but they squander it on a series of infantile gay jokes titled "It's Only Right and Natural" (Homestead).

The gay bashing is done subtly here, with the Frogs assuming the gay viewpoint and describing fantasies in lurid detail. No matter what the approach, the intent is obvious. Anyone who spends this much time and energy making fun of homosexuality suffers from a serious mean streak.

What makes "It's Only Right and Natural" all the more troubling is the caliber of talent at work here. The Frogs make great trippy folk-rock, and their pretentious, mock-British



Tom Petty isn't exactly playing solitaire

vocals are a scream. But the main impression the Frogs leave on "It's Only Right and Natural" is a penchant for vicious, grade-school behavior.

■ George Michael isn't expected to release a new album until at least Christmas. But fans of Mr. Stubble can get a quick fix with "Soldier of Love," a slick, funky dance-pop hit whose singer bears an incredible vocal likeness to Michael.

The singer? Donny Osmond.

It's been more than 15 years since "Puppy Love" made teenage girls swoon over Osmond. After years of

trying to recapture the limelight, Osmond, 31, finally has a hit with "Soldier of Love." The song, currently No. 15 on the Billboard singles charts, is the first single from the album "Donny Osmond" (Capitol), which was released last week.

Although Osmond seems to be getting his musical inspiration from Michael, he got his break from another current pop star, Peter Gabriel. Gabriel met Osmond at a benefit concert and (for reasons no one has been able to explain) invited him to work in his studio in Bath, England.