

MUSIC

Petty experiments on his own with 'Full Moon'

Solo records from the stars of successful rock bands can be scatter-brained and downright self-indulgent (just ask Mick Jagger). Or, they can represent a chance to explore new themes and musical styles, like Bruce Springsteen's bare-to-the-bone 1982 LP Nebraska. Tom Petty follows suit with the latter, coming up with a delightful and engaging first solo effort titled Full Moon Fever.

In Petty's case, though, the term **Album review** solo may not be completely accurate. Reviewing the credits from the LP's jacket reveals that TP did not stray far from "home" in the making of "Full Moon." Everyone from his band the Heartbreakers, except for drummer Stan Lynch, makes an appearance on the album. Heartbreakers guitarist, Mike Campbell, even earns coproduction credit.

And, the LP features all of Petty's new band-mates (except Bob Dylan) from the commercially popular side-project group, The Traveling Wilburys. Fellow Wilbury Jeff Lynne, of ELO fame, receives the lion's share

of credit for the production of "Full Moon," along with assistance from Campbell, and Petty himself.

With all the big names associated with this "solo" project it might be expected that "Full Moon" would be loaded with frills, especially with the inclusion of Lynne as producer, who's Electric Light Orchestra was hardly known for a sparse sound. But to their credit, Petty and Lynne (who co-wrote 7 of the LP's 12 cuts) have made a record that can boast simple, unadorned arrangements as its most attractive quality. No doubt a lesson learned from their Wilbury experience.

Petty has always had a knack for writing about love's darker side as evidenced by such past hits as "Don't Come Around Here No More," and "Runaway Trains."

On "Full Moon," that trend continues but with a fresher poignancy and a deceptive subtlety that is all his own. "Free Fallin'," the opening cut on the album, is an outstanding acoustic track that deals with the abandonment of a perfect love. The song's narrator tells of being on the road, and "free" from his girl, but really, in the end, he is only "free fallin'" out of control.

Dark truths surface again in the haunting synthesized

track "Face In The Crowd," the Rockpile sound-alike "Apartment Song," and the classic upbeat TP rock sound of "Love Is A Long Road." Also fitting neatly into this group is the Byrds' "Feel A Whole Lot Better." Curiously, Petty copies this classic to the note, leaving the listener wishing for a more original cover.

Refreshingly, though, this record also pays splendid tribute to the positives of personal fortitude and love, a sign of Petty's maturity as a songwriter. The current infectious radio single, "I Won't Back Down" (guitar work and backup vocals by George Harrison), is one of those unique pop songs that transcends subject matter, holding a different meaning for each of us. The inspiring light rocker "Depending On You," and the lovely lullaby, "Alright For Now," praise love's good intentions.

"Full Moon Fever" may not be as cohesive as past TP records, but that is to be expected from a solo effort of such broad scope. The album, however, is ultimately a fun-filled test ground for new ideas and sounds, similar to Petty's enriching experience with the Traveling Wilburys. If Full Moon Fever is a sample of future efforts to come from Petty, then the future looks bright indeed.



Petty flies solo on new album.