

## RECORDS

## Petty tops, with a little help



Tom Petty: faultless 12-track album.

**H**IS BRIEF stint with the Traveling Wilburys has done Tom Petty a power of good, judging by the calibre of his first solo album **Full Moon Fever** (MCA 255929-1). The freewheeling singer/guitarist has not cut loose from the Heartbreakers — the band members have just taken a break for individual projects.

In fact, Heartbreakers Mike Campbell (co-producer, guitars and assorted instruments), Ben Tench (piano) and Howie Epstein (backing vocals) are around to help Petty out with his solo album, along with Wilburys' Jeff Lynne (bass, keyboards, vocals and co-production), George Harrison (guitar, vocals) and the late Roy Orbison (backing vocals), as well as drummers Jim Keltner and Phil Jones (who has toured with the Heartbreakers).

The album began before the Wilburys, with Petty and Lynne working together on the songs until they were sidetracked by Bob Dylan, Harrison and Orbison. Petty's record is not a spinoff, but it does reflect the relaxed, acoustic guitar-rich production favored by the others, for example the delicious opener, **Free Falling**, with its layered Lynne vocal and laconic lyric containing a neat reference to heartbreaking.

**I Won't Back Down** is a typically solid country rocker that reminds me of Rick Nelson's **Garden Party**, with no-nonsense lyrics reflecting Petty's stubborn stance — he acted to keep his album prices down and took on a tyre company over a TV commercial using a voice and song like his — and the driving, synthesiser-boosted **Love Is A Long Road** was co-written by Campbell.

I can't fault the 12 tracks on **Full Moon Fever**, but if I had to pick a sentimental favorite it would be the lush, romantic **A Face In The Crowd**, with its atmospheric acoustic guitars and echoing slide, closely followed by the sweet lullaby **Close Your Eyes**. At the other end of the spectrum is the hard-rocking **Runnin' Down A Dream** (including a reference to Del Shannon's **Runaway**) climaxing in a terrific Campbell solo.

Petty pays faithful tribute to his major influence, The Byrds, with Gene Clark's **Feel A Whole Lot Better**, inspired by a reunion concert Petty and Lynne saw. Another formative band, The Beatles also come in for attention on the delightfully wacky **Yer So Bad**, and **The Apartment** is Chuck Berry with a Buddy Holly-style **Peggy Sue** guitar chorus thrown in for good measure.

Then there is the dry, Dylanesque lyric on **A Mind With A Heart Of Its Own**, a rousing Bo Diddley-paced rocker with a superb mix of massed guitars. Great fun!

Somewhere in the dense vocal backing of **Zombie Zoo**, a final care-free rocker, is Orbison's vocal contribution. Petty's attack may be harder, but he is a Wilbury at heart. The Big O would have approved,

**T**IM FINN'S self-titled album (EMI ST 748735) is a remarkably honest and clear-eyed collection of songs. The New Zealander has obviously emerged from a period of artistic self-doubt, and the act of writing the material for this record must have proved highly therapeutic.

But don't be put off by this observation: Tim Finn has found in keyboard player Mitchell Froom (who produced albums by his brother Neil's group Crowded House, as well as Richard Thompson and Los Lobos) a producer with the necessary finesse, and some of the finest session musicians, including Peter Gabriel band members Jerry Marrotta (drums), bassist Tony Levin and guitarist David Rhodes. The percussionist, Alex Acuna, has played with Weather Report and Joni Mitchell; Neil Finn helps out