

NEW RECORDINGS

Petty, Heartbreakers' latest isn't their best, but it's still good

Michael Bolton

"Time, Love and Tenderness"
Columbia

Between Rod Stewart and Michael Bolton, the summer of gravelly voiced sex symbols looms. That's not altogether good news.

Like fellow Columbia artist Mariah Carey, Bolton is wasting considerable vocal talent on material that's beneath him. On "Time, Love and Tenderness," he wrings considerable emotion out of musical Hallmark cards.

Song doctors Diane Warren and Desmond Child's names are sprinkled throughout the songwriting credits on this album. These modern Tin Pan Alley writers usually deliver on their promise of a hit, but with songs that have an assembly-line quality to them.

Even Bolton's choice of a cover song displays a distressing lack of adventurousness. Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman" is indisputably a classic, but it frankly deserves a rest.

Once Bolton achieves the level of stardom he seeks on this album, maybe he'll be able to concentrate on putting his talent to better use. Bolton performs at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Summerfest's Marcus Amphitheater.

— David Bauder, Associated Press

Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers

"Into the Great Wide Open"

MCA

No surprise about it: Tom Petty's first album since his 1989 solo LP, "Full Moon Fever," sounds a lot like its triple-platinum predecessor. That's not altogether good news. Jeff Lynne's formulaic production dominates the show, leaving Petty and the Heartbreakers precious little room to explore new turf.

Yet despite its familiarity, "Into the Great Wide Open" succeeds on the strength of Petty's irresistible melodies, his wonderful sneer, and



TOM PETTY & the Heartbreakers, whose latest album on the MCA label is "Into the Great Wide Open," include (from left) Howie Epstein, Benmont Tench, Stan Lynch, Petty and Mike Campbell.

his wry tales of romance and alienation. The title track, one of the album's best cuts, is a jubilant rocker about a pair of would-be pop stars who form a relationship on the basis of their mutual love of tattoos.

That tune, like most of the songs here, gets its fire from Mike Campbell's surreal slide guitar. On an

album where the Heartbreakers often play a minor role, Campbell's psychedelic solos and Berry-flavored rave-ups are welcome recurring themes.

Petty resorts to cookie-cutter acoustic guitar rhythms for most of the album and shies from anything remotely experimental. As a result, the LP resembles the easy-going jangle of "Free Fallin'" far more than it does the psycho rock of "Don't Come Around Here No More."

In other words, this isn't Petty and the Heartbreakers at their peak. But stay tuned. The group's first album in four years is, at least, a promising first step back. "Into the Great Wide Open" arrives in record stores Tuesday.

— Thor Christensen,
Journal music critic

Headhunters are a hell-raising backwoods country band. That image ignores the fact that they chew up and let musical influences fly like they're in a spitting contest.

Guitarist Greg Martin, for instance, clearly prefers the blues to weepy country steel. And some of this album's best numbers are not even distant cousins to the Nashville clan: "Diane" is somewhere between early Greg Kinn and early BoDeans; "Always Making Love" is the kind of pop single reminiscent of the Beatles' "From Me to You"; and the only thing keeping "16 and Single" off a Blasters' album is Lee Allen's missing sax.

In fact, once you get past Ricky Lee Phelps' twangy, nasally (and ultimately tiring) lead vocals, the closest this band comes to country is that strange, golden period from the mid-'50s when nobody knew where to draw the line between country and western, rockabilly, R&B, and rock 'n' roll. And nobody cared.

What's disappointing, though, is that the Headhunters don't pick up the same recklessness from that period. As stomps such as "It's Chittlin' Time" prove, they've got the right lack of self-indulgence, appropriately loose arrangements, and not a whiff of studio polish. But they simply refuse to cut loose. That's probably no more evident than on the remake of Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky," which promises a lot with its brilliantly executed fuzz-guitar introduction, then slides into a tame rut.

The Kentucky Headhunters perform at 7:30 p.m. Monday at Summerfest's Marcus Amphitheater.

— Michael Kuchta, Journal staff

Marshall Crenshaw

"Life's Too Short"

MCA

Sensitive and understanding but never sentimental or bathetic, Marshall Crenshaw is the contemporary heir to Buddy Holly. Not in the lounge act "tribute" way, but as the true carrier of the torch for the simplicity and integrity of Holly's music.

But Crenshaw's fans have always known that, and there are no unpleasant surprises for them on "Life's Too Short." Breathy vocals and jangly folk rock, powered by jet stream rhythms, are the undeviat-

Berkeley's Wurlitzer a real toot

Huge old theater organ ready for convention

By PETER STACK
San Francisco Chronicle

BERKELEY, Calif. — The temperature was five above zero on the bleak New Year's Day of 1986 when four men double-parked a U-Haul truck on a downtown street in Cleveland to load grimy, time-worn components of what has become their greatest joy, their biggest headache and a glorious slice of American history.

Berkeley is about to have unveiled a massive Wurlitzer theater organ that can knock your socks off and shiver your timbers.

The 1928 musical treasure has been installed as a permanent feature of the Berkeley Community Theater. The treasure includes a meticulously restored seven-foot-tall stage console with golden floral designs and a remarkable arrangement in the theater's upper recesses of 2,400 pipes and mechanisms that give the organ resonance and musical firepower.

Berkeley's Wurlitzer becomes the largest theater organ west of the Mississippi.

The Berkeley Wurlitzer is impressive, organ fanciers say, because its four ivory keyboards and 33 ranks of pipes make it the sixth largest theater organ in the United States, behind the one at Radio City Music Hall (four keyboards, 58 ranks), and organs of lesser capabilities at Atlanta's Fox theater, the Fox in St. Louis, and the Fox and Senate theaters in Detroit.

The Berkeley refurbishing project has created feverish interest among the 6,000 members nationwide of the National Theatre Organ Society, which is using the organ as an excuse to hold its national convention here next month.

The unveiling of Berkeley's Wurlitzer will be at a special concert for conventioners with organizer Tom Hazelton at 8:30 p.m. July 5. Almost 1,200 tickets already

Milwaukee Ballet gets grant of \$40,000

The Milwaukee Ballet has received a grant of \$40,000 from Meet the Composer, the largest sum in this round of grants by the arts group.

The grant will help choreographer Kathryn Posin and composer

The grants are among \$380,000 to 19 composer-choreographer teams for collaborations in 1991.

The other 17 grants range from \$8,000 (composer Robert Een, choreographers Terry Creach and Stephen Koester, New York City) to \$25,000 (composer James Oliverio,