

# Petty blossoms on 'Wildflowers'

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Because he seems so low-key and likable, it's only natural to assume there's something equally amiable about Tom Petty's songs. They're certainly catchy enough to pass for feel-good rock, and even though they sometimes focus on life's unfortunates, there's never any of the anger or ugliness that marks the work of more anti-social rock stars.

Don't be fooled, though. Even though "Wildflowers" (Warner Bros. 45759) relies on the same sort of laconic melodies and low-key anomie Petty has used all along, there's a darkness beneath the surface of the music, a sense that people are rotten, life isn't fair, and he isn't surprised by any of it.

Thing is, he doesn't actually come out and say any of this. In fact, he approaches most of the material with such deadpan earnestness that it's easy to assume

the content of these songs is as upbeat as the music — that is, until you actually try to sort out what the words are saying.

Take the title tune. At first glance, it seems an almost hippyish paean to peace, what with the strummy guitars, the wheezing harmonium and all that talk of sweet-smelling flora. Except that as Petty sings on about where "you belong" — "among the wildflowers ... in a boat out at sea ... in that home by and by" — it dawns on the listener that what he's really saying is "get lost."

It's a such a sly twist most listeners may not even notice it. But that's part of the fun with "Wildflowers." "It's Good To Be King" could be seen as just a casual daydream, a harmless bit of wishful thinking; it's also a blithe burlesque of the unconscious megalomania that drives everybody's fantasies. Even better, the music echoes that duality, topping a lazy, shuffle groove and terse piano hook with a biting Mike Campbell guitar solo.

Then there's "House in the Woods," which at first reads like a typical I'll-spend-my-life-lovin'-you ballad. Except, of course, there's something not quite right about the nasty angularity of the music, not to mention the way Petty's protagonist keeps stressing "I ain't got a neighbor for nine or ten miles." By song's end, the thought of how this guy plans to spend the rest of his life loving his gal sends shivers down the listener's spine.

Rather than souring his songs,



Tom Petty

the bile bubbling beneath Petty's material puts an unexpected edge on the music. There's an urgency to the lust of "You Wreck Me" that goes beyond its brisk pulse and tightly harmonized chorus, and a bitterness to the lament, "You Don't Know How It Feels," that adds acidic tang to its braying harmonica and ham-fisted pulse.

In fact, the best moments on "Wildflowers" are as biting and energetic as Petty's best early work. It isn't just the way the lyrics put teeth into Petty's sly, possum smile; there's a punchiness to the playing (most of which features long-time sidemen Campbell, Benmont Tench and Howie Epstein) that adds muscle to the music without undercutting its rootsy understatement.

## Marriage licenses

Jeremy Lane Sheehan to Sarah Belinda Hinojosa.

John Robert Lassman Jr. to Gina Lara Salinas.

Francisco Robles Jr. to Sally Ann Luiz.

Jose Omar Canales to Eva Lynn Trevino.

Margarito Calderon Vasquez to Josefa Loya.

Gary Lamar Homan Jr. to Pally Homan.

Vincent Edward Aldana to Gloria Martinez.

Wilson Dean McBride Jr. to April Noel Cezinha.

Paula Alcantar Bosquez to Yolando Delgado.

John David McLain Jr. to Elizabeth Ann Hill.

Bruno Cabrera to Maria Dorothy Amaya.

Thomas Fredrick Wedemeier to Elvor