

Kevin Kelly, Boston Globe theater critic, dies at 64

New York Times News Service

Kevin Kelly, the theater critic for The Boston Globe for 32 years, died Monday of cancer at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. He was 64 and lived in

Norwell, Mass.

The cause was cancer, The Globe said.

In 1991, Kelly received the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism. He also wrote "One Singular Sensation" (Doubleday, 1990), a biography of the director Michael Bennett.

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RECORDINGS

Folk-rock gems bloom in Petty's 'Wildflowers'

By Jerry Spangler
Deseret News staff writer

TOM PETTY: "Wildflowers"; produced by Rick Rubin, Tom Petty and Mike Campbell (Warner Brothers). ★★★

There's good news and there's bad news for Tom Petty fans. The good news, of course, is that Petty is back on record store shelves with a brand new album he calls "Wildflowers."

The bad news, at least for fans of Petty's deliciously anthemic brand of Southern-fried rock 'n' roll, is that the Heartbreakers—Petty's long-time supporting cast—is on hiatus.

Oh sure, Mike Campbell still holds first-chair electric guitar, and piano wizard Benmont Tench is still around. But lacking the guitar-crunch of a "Mary Jane's Last Dance," "Wildflowers" steers in a whole new musical direction.



Tom Petty

It is stark, somber, introspective, retrospective, witty. And largely acoustic.

In fact, the closest thing to a rock anthem is the playful but poignant

"You Don't Know How It Feels" on which Petty pleads "let's roll another joint and turn the radio loud," but follows the invitation with the self-deprecating "I'm too alone to be proud, you don't know how it feels to be me." Petty's winsome harmonicas add to the acute sense of loneliness.

In fact, much of "Wildflowers" is peppered with snippets of loneliness, regret and retrospection on life choices. Like on "Time to Move On," he intones, "Frozen in real time, I'm losing my mind." And on the seductively simple—and beautiful—"To Find a Friend" he observes, "And the days went by like paper in the wind, everything changed, then changed again."

The poignant realism of "Wildflowers" could be depressing if it weren't so well-crafted around superb melodies, simple rhythms and lyrics that evoke empathy, not pity.

There's even a sense that things are never as bad as they might seem. On "Crawling Back to You," Petty comments, "I'm so tired, sure as night will follow day, most things I worry about never happen,

anyway."

Throughout "Wildflowers" there is a very real sense that Petty is writing from the soul. And he is writing not so much with record sales in mind as to allow music to become a vehicle for the most personal kind of poetry, the purging of one's soul of personal demons.

Less commercial than the monstrously successful "Full Moon Fever"—also recorded without the Heartbreakers—"Wildflowers" is a beautiful bouquet of folk-rock gems with just a splash of rock 'n' roll (but hardly a hint of the Byrds-esque legacy he has championed for most of two decades).

Unlike pal Bob Dylan, Petty is content to let the mysteries of life remain just that. There are no deep insights to love or relationships, no diatribes against injustice or infidelity.

Just a keen commentary on life. As he observes on "Wake Up Time," "Well, if he gets lucky, a boy finds a girl, to help him to shoulder the pain in this world, and if you follow your feelings, and you follow your dreams, you might find the forest there in the trees."

And maybe even a wildflower or two.

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