

Tom Petty - Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (1976)

Written by Rock, Metal

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A1 Rockin' Around (With You) 2:26 A2 Breakdown 2:42 A3 Hometown Blues 2:14 A4 The Wild One, Forever 3:01 A5 Anything That's Rock 'N' Roll 2:23 B1 Strangere In The Night 3:32 B2 Fooled Again (I Don't Like It) 3:54 B3 Mystery Man 3:04 B4 Luna 3:59 B5 American Girl 3:33 Ron Blair - Bass (Electric), Cello, Guitar (Bass) Mike Campbell - Guitar Stan Lynch - Drums, Keyboards Tom Petty - Guitar, Keyboards, Vocals Phil Seymour - Vocals (Background) Benmont Tench - Organ, Piano

At the time Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers' debut was released in 1976, they were fresh enough to almost be considered punk. They weren't as reckless or visionary as the Ramones, but they shared a similar love for pure '60s rock and, for the Heartbreakers, that meant embracing the Byrds as much as the Stones. And that's pretty much what this album is -- tuneful jangle balanced by a tough garage swagger. At times, the attitude and the sound override the songwriting, but that's alright, since the slight songs ("Anything That's Rock 'N' Roll," to pick a random example) are still infused with spirit and an appealing surface. Petty & the Heartbreakers feel underground on this album, at least to the extent that power pop was underground in 1976; with Dwight Twilley providing backing vocals for "Strangere in the Night," the similarities between the two bands (adherence to pop hooks and melodies, love of guitars) become apparent. Petty wound up eclipsing Twilley because he rocked harder, something that's evident throughout this record. Take the closer "American Girl" -- it's a Byrds song by any other name, but he pushed the Heartbreakers to treat it as a rock & roll song, not as something delicate. There are times where the album starts to drift, especially on the second side, but the highlights -- "Rockin' Around (With You)," "Hometown Blues," "The Wild One, Forever," the AOR staples "Breakdown" and "American Girl" -- still illustrate how refreshing Petty & the Heartbreakers sounded in 1976. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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