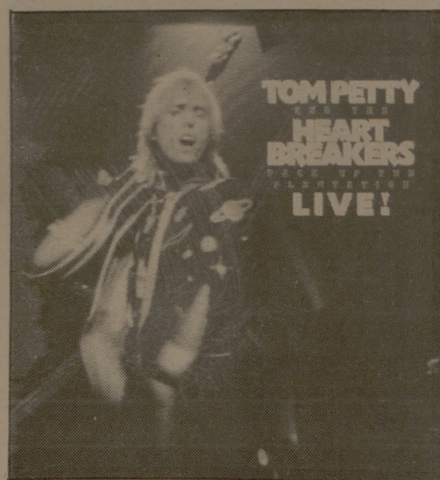


# Record Reviews



*"Pack Up the Plantation — Live"*  
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers  
MCA Records  
★★★★

In these days of synthesizers, computerized drums and high-tech music, it's nice to hear some good, 'ole fashioned rock 'n' roll. Few can crank it out better than Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

For 10 years and six albums, Petty has been keeping the spirit of the '60s alive in his music. Petty's music borrows from the best of the sixties — the folk rock, psychedelia, the bayou sound, the English blues revival, proto punk and Motown soul — all still distinctively his.

"Pack Up the Plantation — Live" is a double-album collection of tunes recorded at various places during Petty's recent North American and European tour. The Heartbreakers, one of the best back-up bands in rock music history, are at their best. Guitarist Mike Campbell and keyboardist Benmont Tench, who have been doing a lot of studio work for Bob Dylan and Lone Justice, are especially impressive. For this tour Petty added a couple of female back up singers and a horn section that help round out his band's sound.

The best moments of "Pack Up the Plantation — Live" come when Petty pays tribute to some of his influences. Petty's versions of the Byrds' "So You Want To Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star" and the Animals' "Don't Bring Me Down" show that good rock 'n' roll ages well. Petty turns the Isley Brothers' "Shout" into a show-stopping good time.

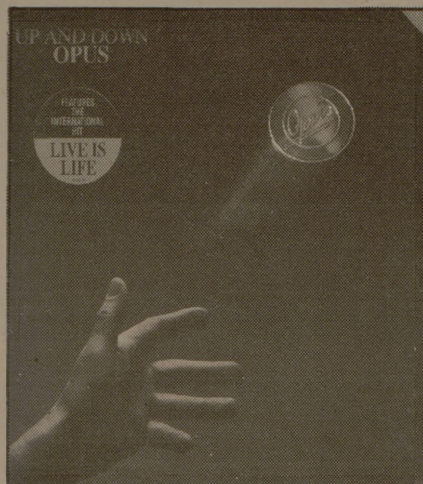
Most of the album is filled with hard-rockin' songs. "American Girl" and "Refugee," hot

songs to begin with, are transformed into raw energy. I'm not to fond of the way "Rebels," from last year's "Southern Accents" album, becomes an ultra-redneck, neo-Confederate anthem.

Petty slows things down for "Southern Accents" and a reverent version of John Sebastian's "Stories We Can Tell." "Southern Accents" offers a more intelligent and optimistic view of Petty's Southern heritage than "Rebels."

Petty sings duets with Stevie Nicks on a version of the Searchers' "Needles and Pins" and his own "Insider." Their voices blend so well together it seems that Nicks is the female half of Petty.

There are a couple problems with "Pack Up the Plantation — Live" that keep it from being a classic album. It's a little too polished for a live album. It's as if the band recorded the music in the studio and crowd noises were added later.



*"Up and Down"*  
Opus  
Polydor Records  
★

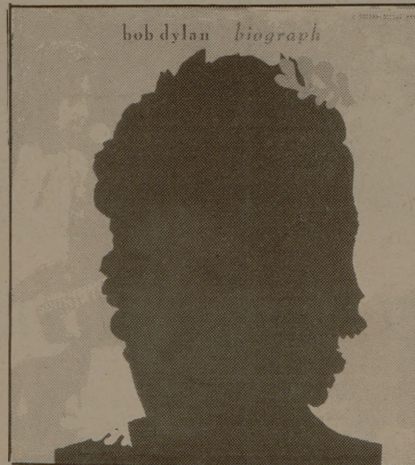
Once upon a time there was a band called Yes. Yes created a musical style that was taken in several different directions by several different bands. Supertramp took the style and made it wimpier than it had been before. Now comes Opus, an even wimpier band than Supertramp.

"Up and Down" is the first American album from Opus. No, this is not the tuba-playing penguin from "Bloom County." This is a boring rock band from Austria. The band, according to their press release, is pretty big in Europe. The first side of the album is filled with live versions of their European hits. "Live is Life" has been getting some play on MTV. It's one of

those silly songs that you find yourself humming all the time. The rest of the live stuff is simply bland and uninteresting except for "Opusocus," which sucks worse than a stadium full of Texas ticks.

Side two is filled with songs recorded in the studio. Opus is even more boring in the studio than they are on stage. I'm probably being too hard on these guys. It's not that they're bad — they seem to be pretty good musicians and their vocal harmonies are clean and sharp. But Opus is the musical equivalent of a McDonald's hamburger. "Up and Down" is a McAlbum which comes in a cardboard sleeve instead of a plastic box.

There are too many other McBands around, so Opus will probably never make much of themselves. They'll be picked up, wolfed down and only be remembered as one of billions and billions sold.



*"Biograph"*  
Bob Dylan  
Columbia Records  
★★★★

For 24 years and 29 albums Bob Dylan has done more for popular music than most other artists combined. Dylan was instrumental in combining folk, gospel, blues and country music styles to make rock music broader in scope. Dylan is one of the few rock 'n' roll stars who's lyrics can be found in college textbooks. "Biograph" is an incredible look at Dylan — the man and his music.

"Biograph" is a five-album boxed set which includes 52 recordings from 1962 to 1981, an extensive 36-page biography of Dylan and Dylan's own comments on his songs. Included with Dylan's best-known songs are 21 recordings that have never before been released on an album.

Dylan fanatics will be glad to find "Mixed-up Confusion," "Groom's Still Waiting at the Altar" and "Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?," B-sides that have been almost impossible to find for the past 20 years, on the album. They'll also be glad to hear Dylan sing some of the songs he has written for other people, including "I'll Keep It with Mine" and "I Wanna Be Your Lover."

The music that Dylan is famous for has been put together on this album in such a way as to give a coherent sample of his brilliant but sometimes incoherent career. Even if you've heard all of these songs before, they take on a new meaning when arranged in this order. Not necessarily chronologically, but thematically, emotionally and musically.

Dylan later made his name as a singer of protest music. His classic protest songs "Blowin' in the Wind," "Masters of War" and "The Times They Are A-Changin'" are put up beside "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" and other lesser-known songs to show that Dylan had a firm grasp of social problems and a strong desire to see them end.

In the late 1970's Dylan, who was born and raised in a Jewish family, announced his conversion to fundamentalist Christianity. Dylan recorded three albums, "Slow Train Coming," "Saved" and "Shot of Love," that dealt exclusively with religious themes. Listening to these albums is like being stuck at the world's most boring tent revival. Fortunately, only the best songs from these albums are on "Biograph." You can listen to "You Gotta Serve Somebody," "I Believe in You," "Solid Rock" and "Every Grain of Sand" without being beat in the head with fire and brimstone.

"Biograph" is probably the best collection album of its type ever released by a record company. It has something for everybody. Newcomers will be overwhelmed by Dylan's powerful music. Long-time fans will be thrilled by the previously unreleased tracks. Everyone will enjoy this insightful look at an American legend.

by Karl Pallmeyer  
music reviewer