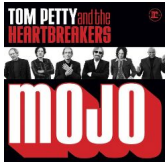


Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers - Mojo (2010)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 18 May 2013 16:03 - Last Updated Monday, 25 February 2019 00:25

Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers – Mojo (2010)



1 *Jefferson Jericho Blues* 2 *First Flash Of Freedom* 3 *Running Man's Bible* 4 *The Trip To Pirate's Cove* 5 *Candy* 6 *No Reason To Cry* 7 *I Should Have Known It* 8 *U.S. 41* 9 *Takin' My Time* 10 *Let Yourself Go* 11 *Don't Pull Me Over* 12 *Lover's Touch* 13 *High In The Morning* 14 *Something Good Coming* 15 *Good Enough* Tom Petty – vocals, rhythm guitar, Bass on (3 credited) as being a Club Hofner bass Mike Campbell – lead guitar, production Scott Thurston – rhythm guitar, harmonica Benmont Tench – acoustic and electric piano, organ Ron Blair – bass guitar Steve Ferrone – drums, percussion

Tom Petty has been fronting the Heartbreakers off and on (mostly on) for over 30 years now, and he and his band have been delivering a high level of no-frills, classy, and reconstituted American garage rock through all of it. Petty often gets lumped in with artists like Bruce Springsteen, whose careful and worked-over lyrics carry a kind of instant nostalgia, but Petty's songwriting at its best cleverly bounces off of romance clichés, often with a desperate, lustful drawl and sneer, and he's usually been more concerned with the here and now than he is about musing about what's been abused and lost in contemporary America, although he's certainly not blind to it. Petty has always been more immediate than that -- until now, that is.

Mojo is Petty's umpteenth album, and technically the first he's done with the Heartbreakers since 2002's sly *The Last DJ*. This time out he's tackling the blues, trying to graft the Heartbreakers' (Mike Campbell on guitar, Scott Thurston on guitar and harmonica, Benmont Tench on keyboards, Ron Blair on bass, and Steve Ferrone on drums) patented 1960s garage sound to the Chicago blues sound of Chess Records in the 1950s. Sonically it certainly works, mostly because this is a wonderful band, but then it all seems a little tired, worn, and exhausted, too, and not a single song here has that certain desperate, determined defiance that Petty has always delivered in the past with a knowing sneer and a little leering wink.

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The opener, "Jefferson Jericho Blues," is a case in point. It starts by being a song about Thomas Jefferson's dalliance with one of his black maids, and it could have been a scathing indictment of an out-of-date Southern attitude, contemporary racism, and so much more. Instead, it tumbles unfocused into, well, a song about missing a girl and how time moves slow, and one can't help but wonder why Petty dragged Thomas Jefferson and his maid into any of it in the first place. Petty has never sounded so emotionally drained and detached as a vocalist as he does on this album, and while it's nice to hear the Heartbreakers flirt with the blues -- and to hear Campbell's clear, precise slide guitar playing -- there's no excuse for not having solid songs to scaffold it. There's a worn-out, regretful, and boringly meditative tone to so many tracks here -- this is not what one expects from a band that rocks as fine as this one can. Again, the playing is solid, but one wishes Petty & the Heartbreakers had simply covered some of those old Chess classics rather than trying half-heartedly to write their own -- it would have made for an album closer to intent. ---Steve Leggett, AllMusic Review

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