

## Tom Waits: Inebriated Poet

BY RON WISHON

Tom Waits: "Nighthawks at the Diner" (2 LP's, recorded live, Asylum 7E-2008).

A live album by an inebriated poet from Los Angeles named Tom Waits, has been on my turntable more than any others recently.

Who is Tom Waits? He could best be described as the last of the beatnik poets, who has been writing and recording song-poems and recitations in relative obscurity until The Eagles and Eric Andersen recorded versions of his song "55." Prior to this live album, Waits has recorded two albums for the Asylum label, "Heart of a Saturday Night" and "Closing Time." His sense of humor is ridiculously funny; he is perhaps the best ad-libber I've ever heard, as is evidenced in his intros to numbers on "Nighthawks."

Waits' appearance immediately indicates that he is the ultimate beatnik; his beard is trimmed in the goateed style of the beatniks of the '50's, and his wardrobe is topped off by a tweed burglar cap of the type worn by Andy Capp in the comics. Highlights of this live LP are numbers done in the recitation style of certain performers spoken to a background of cool jazz music. He also throws in a little "scat" singing during a few numbers in the style of Louise "Satchmo" Armstrong. An inventor of phrases and casual user of expletives, he takes his audience on an "...improvisational adventure into the bowels of the metropolitan region..." describing subterranean hang-outs of the inhabitants of the inner-city L.A. underground, which include waitresses, barflies, prostitutes, winos, truckers, red-necks, cabbies, burlesque queens and patrons of the Ivar Theatre, a burlesque palace in Los Angeles.

The best numbers on "Nighthawks" are the opening cut, "Emotional Weather Report," in which he contrasts his feelings of

with nine sucking pups pullin' a #4 trap up a hill in the dead of winter in the middle of a snowstorm with a mouth full of porcupine quills..." (That's cold!)

"Spare Parts II" continues this sort of thing, relating an account of how a friend advises him to buy some new clothes, and he goes to a well-known men's clothing store in L.A. looking for "...a serious seersucker Saturday evening cranberry acoutramon ensemble, with an ended love affair to the weather outlook for an indefinite period of time (parcipation is expected). "Better Off Without a Wife" is a ludicrous account about the advantages of being single (in the intro he tells about calling himself up on the phone and asking himself out, and ends up concluding that there's no way around "...taking advantage of yourself..." or "...making the scene with a magazine..."). "Nighthawk Postcards (from Easty Street)" describes used car salesmen, truckers, cabbies, and pool room characters. Some examples of his descriptions in this number: "...a Dracula moon in a black disguise..." "...the sun came crawling yellow out of a manhole at the foot of 23rd Street..." "...the El train came tumbling across the trestles, and it sounded like the ghost of Gene Krupa with an overhead cam and glasspacks..." "Eggs & Sausage (In a Cadillac with Susan Michelson)" describes the patrons of an all-night diner, consisting of "gypsy hacks and insomniacs..." In the intro he talks about having "...dangerous veal cutlets at the Copper Penny..." which leave the plate and walk down the counter, and then come back down the counter and try to beat the s--t out of a cup of coffee. (The coffee just isn't strong enough to defend itself!)

"Spare Parts I (A Nocturnal Emission)" describes "...the sky turned the color of Pepto Bismol..." and the wind "...colder than a gut-shoe bitch wolf dog

a levitically deuteronomous sort of catastrophic lunch box Stetson, danger high voltage slacks, and high top mink Nunbrush suede penny loafers, so I can be passin' out wolf tickets no matter where I go."

Waits can also be serious as evidenced in other numbers from this album. "On a Foggy Night" relates the bewildered feeling one gets from being lost on an abandoned road on a foggy night. "Warm Beer and Cold Women" is about the end of an "...emotional cul-de-sac..." in which he is pre-occupied with thoughts of his ex-lady friend, and oblivious to the warm beer and cold women "...and the band playing something by Tammy Wynette at the Last Ditch Attempt Saloon..." around him.

"Putnam County" is a description of a sort of redneck community somewhere in the U.S., and patrons of the club where they hang out in town. "Nobody" is a simple love song in which Waits declares "...nobody, nobody will love you the way that I could cause nobody, nobody's that strong...". The only non-original number on the album, Red Sovine's "Big Joe and Phantom 309" is a recitation about a phantom truck driver and his rig who will stop and pick up a stranded hitch-hiker on a rainy night at the crossroads where he was killed ten years ago in avoiding a collision with a school bus full of kids.

Waits is hard to describe in just a short critique and must be heard to be appreciated. If you like weird humor and spell-binding story-telling, I hope you won't have to be cajoled into buying this double album, either of his previous albums, or his newest one on Asylum, "Small Change."

We can look forward to a lot more entertaining insanity from Mr. Waits, the inebriated poet in the future, if he does not become a victim of his subterranean lifestyle or chain-smoke himself to death first.

## Morning

The sun peeps over the trees and makes the frost on my window pane sparke like glitter,

Dust particles dance on the sunbeams as the sun shines through my window.

The clouds float across the sky. They look like balls of cotton being blown by a soft breeze.

I go outside and feel the cool fresh air, and stop to listen as a new day is being born.

-Linda T. McCann

## Lines

Deadlines, headlines, long lines, short lines, soup lines, chorus lines, welfare lines, center lines, white lines, telephone lines,

power lines and direct lines, all kinds of lines but none that connect me and you

-Shorty

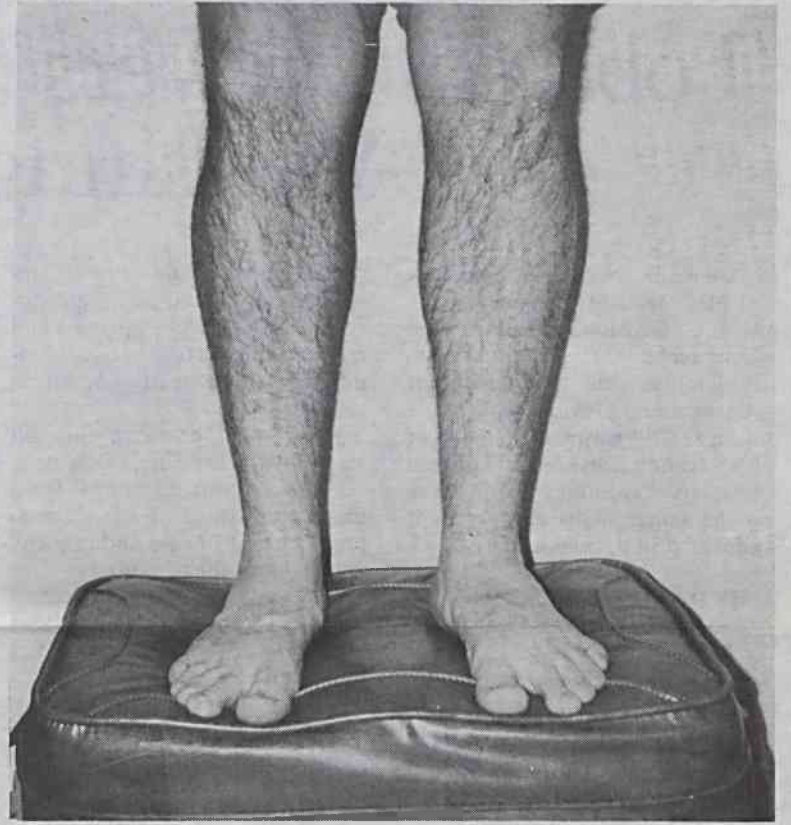
## Graffiti

Sue loves Bob  
Jack & Jane  
Ronnie loves Angie  
Tommy & Rhonda

Bill & Jill

Shorty kinda likes  
Whatsername.

-Shorty



(ABOVE) HOWELL'S WINNING LEGS

(BELOW) BURGESS' GORGEOUS GAMS



## Billy Howell Wins Legs Contest

Having conducted an enthusiastic campaign, Billy Howell, president of Phi Beta Lambda emerged first-place winner of the legs Contest. Vicki Burgess, vice-president of Phi Beta Lambda came in second.

AM-FM radio, and Vicki received 2 complimentary tickets to College Park Cinema.

The contest was a money-making venture for Phi Beta Lambda. Understandably, the club officers were the contest's most ardent boosters. (See photos above.)

Howell was awarded an

## Circle K Activities

Diane Dotson, head of the Circle K Committee for Alleviating Hunger, served punch and cookies to the night students Monday night.

This project is an effort for the club to get food for a needy family at Christmas.

Angie Crabb and other members of the committee worked Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights. The donations of money and food will be given to the Social Services Department for distribution.

The club will be in the downtown area on December 23, singing Christmas carols. Donations will be taken up then for the Lung Association.

A membership drive is planned again for January, so plan to join.

