

GRETCHEN PETERS The Night You Wrote That Song: The Songs Of Mickey Newbury

★★★★★

The Sailor / She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye / Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In) / The Night You Wrote That Song / Wish I Was / Why You Been Gone So Long / Frisco Depot / Leavin' Kentucky / Heaven Help The Child / San Francisco Mabel Joy / Saint Cecilia / Three Bells For Stephen

Producers: Gretchen Peters & Barry Walsh
Scarlet Letter Records / Proper Records
51:29

What happens when a singer with a wonderful voice records a collection of stunning old songs? The answer can be found on Gretchen Peters' new release. Here the talented singer-songwriter sings her favourite Mickey Newbury songs.

Country music singer-songwriter Mickey Newbury departed in 2002. He began his career in the late 60s. His first album featured the country classic *Funny, Familiar, Forgotten Feelings*, a Mickey Newbury that has been recorded by Don Gibson, Engelbert Humperdinck, Tom Jones and others. Mickey Newbury's best known track was *An American Trilogy* which was written in 1972 and became a big hit for Elvis Presley. Neither of those songs made it onto Gretchen Peters' album. Lets listen to the ones that are.

The album starts with the folky drama of *The Sailor*. The song features a piano, steel guitar and a strong vocal. Plus through the entire album we get a crystal-clear, superior production from Gretchen Peters and her husband. The songs spring to life. *She*

Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye is one of Mickey Newbury's more country tracks. There have been numerous versions of this song. One of the best is a live version by Lee Ann Womack. This and Ronnie Milsap's superb hit version are on YouTube.

Sadly we have just lost Kenny Rogers. Back in 1968 he had a hit record with his band The First Edition. That song *Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)* was penned by Mickey Newbury. It still sounds wonderful today – a psychedelic classic. Gretchen Peters takes it at a slower pace, it's more subdued but it's loaded with atmosphere. The late-at-night, breathy vocal works well. Clearly a lot of thought has gone into this superior cover version.

San Francisco Mabel Joy is one of Newbury's best known songs. The track dates back to 1971. It has been recorded by many singers including Kenny Rogers, Waylon Jennings, John Denver and folk singer Joan Baez. The song with its rich, evocative lyrics is a classic, telling the story of "a Way Cross Georgia farm boy". Gretchen Peters' version is stunning. She seems to feel every well-written word. The steel guitar and high-quality production drips passion and turns this track into one of the great cover versions of recent years.

The title song from Gretchen Peters album is *The Night You Wrote That Song*, one of Mickey Newbury's lesser-known songs. It's a cracker of a country song. Gretchen Peters imbues the track with a warmth and style that only great singers can manage. This is another track with wonderful lyrics.

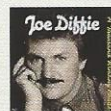
Gretchen Peters' album closes with Mickey Newbury's tribute to songwriting legend Stephen Foster, *Three Bells For Stephen*. Stephen Foster wrote classic songs like *Oh! Susanna* and *My Old Kentucky Home*. The simple piano-led arrangement works well. Gretchen Peters delivers another graceful, stylish vocal.

Gretchen Peters' tribute to Mickey Newbury hits the target. The songs are well-chosen, the vocals top-notch and the production breathes air into the fantastic songs. The backing musicians also add much to the superb release. It's also worth pointing out that this is one of Gretchen Peters' most country releases and, as such, should be of interest to many readers. What are you waiting for? Buy this album!

Paul Riley

★ COUNTRY MUSIC ★

What we've been listening to this month. Includes oldies, indies, vinyl, and some so new they haven't even been reviewed yet.



JOE DIFFIE
A Thousand Winding Roads



WILL BANISTER
Everything Burns



THE CORY GRINGER BAND
Cahoots & Other Favourites



PAT REEDY
That's All There Is (& There Ain't No More)



CRAIG GERDES
Tough As Nails



RANDY ROGERS & WADE BOWEN
Hold My Beer (Vol 2)



GRETCHEN PETERS
The Night You Wrote That Song



POKEY LaFARGE
Rock Bottom Rhapsody



EMILY NENNI
Long Gone EP