



TOM JONES

PRAISE & BLAME

"...a record that doesn't waste a note."

The New York Times

"Tom Jones brilliant new album, Praise & Blame is what his mighty voice is made for"

Evening Standard ★★★★★

“It’s astonishing with which certainty he feels into his new role as subtle convertible voice in front of a reduced rhythm section, be it an interpretation of Traditionals, John Lee Hooker, a late Bob Dylan or the directions of such different singers like Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Jessie Mae Hemphill or Susan Werner.” – Robert Rotifer – Profil

***“Jones is travelling through the land of blues and gospel. He plays this role fantastic, because he has a fantastic voice.”
DE STANDAARD ★★ ★***

***“few singers are going to emerge with an album as incredible as this in 2010”
Mojo ★★ ★★***

***“It’s grand, and at last Jones the artist is the match for Jones the entertainer.”
The Guardian ★★ ★★***

***“Poignant at times, exhilarating at others, ‘Praise & Blame’ marks an exciting new direction from a national treasure.”
Clash 8/10***

“...delivered with due reverence, turning on the power when required but never edging into showbiz.” Mojo ★★ ★★

***“An incredibly inspiring album between Blues and Gospel, letting the Tiger seem more relevant than ever.”
Franz Kaiblinger, Boerse-Express***

It's not unusual to have a No 1 album - even at 70

Tom Jones set to be oldest man to top the chart

Collection of gospel and blues songs earns praise

Alexandra Topping

Wales's favourite crooner is set to beat the record for oldest male artist to have a No 1 album, as Pontypridd's finest's 40th studio album, *Praise & Blame*, looks to top the chart this weekend.

Sir Tom Jones, who was yesterday sitting at No 1 in the midweek chart sales, is on course to beat the record - one which he has held before - if he knocks Eminem off the top spot.

The septuagenarian sex bomb has said that he would like to collaborate with the Detroit rapper.

"I couldn't be more proud of this album and I'm really blown away by the response," he said. "It's great to be top of the charts with Eminem, maybe next time we could be top together."

Speaking on the telephone while touring the UK to promote his new album - a critically lauded collection of gospel and blues-infused songs - Jones, who turned 70 last month, said he had no qualms about being the oldest ever chart-topper. "For me that would be the icing on the cake," he said.

Jones previously held the record when his 1999 album, *Reloaded*, went to number one. But he lost the crown to Bob Dylan - a year younger than Jones - when last year's *Together Through Life* took the top spot.

Some have called the album his "Johnny Cash moment", a reference to the country



Tom Jones with singer Cerys Matthews. *Praise & Blame*, out this week, is his 40th studio album. Photograph: TTV/Steve Feingersh

"...Praise & Blame is clearly one of the best albums of Jones's entire career."

The Independent ★★★★★

"At moments like this, you could almost forgive the wasted years." Q

star's late, reflective American recordings - although Jones rejects any suggestion that he might be on his last legs.

"I've always been a God-fearing person. This album is spiritual but it's not like I'm coming to the end and seeking redemption," he said.

He does admit, however, that his performances have become less "frantic" as he has matured.

"When I was young I was just exploding all the time, whenever there was an instrumental, I never thought of letting

the guitar player take a solo - I used to hammer every song."

The advice to tone it down on stage was not given recently, but did come from a decent source. "I hate to name-drop," he said. "But Frank Sinatra told me that you didn't have to push that hard all the time. I've learnt to let the songs speak for themselves instead of ramming them down people's throats. Maybe I should have done that before, but I was full of vinegar or whatever."

Praise & Blame gained column inches

recently after David Sharpe, a vice-president at his label Island Records, reportedly criticised the album in a "leaked" email to colleagues, dismissing the songs as "hymns" and not the "upbeat tracks" the label had wanted.

But music writers and PR experts have questioned the email, pointing out that it bandily came to light the same week as the release. Jones insists that he first heard of it flying from LA to London. Asked if he thought the email was a PR stunt, he said: "It sounds like it. I don't understand it."

The Big Interview Tom Jones

Wisdom of a soul survivor

When I first walk into the hotel suite where Tom Jones is staying, the 70-year-old Welsh rocker looks like he's trying to break for freedom; he's forcing his broad-shouldered frame against the fifth-floor windowpane. Has the stress of five decades in the music business, countless swooning fans and a strangely controversial new album, *Praise & Blame*, finally got to this consummate showman? Suddenly, he swings around and visibly relaxes. "Oh, hallo, love," he booms in his fruity baritone. "I was just admiring the view..."

Jones has generally been adept at taking pressure in his stride, be it kiss-and-tell scandals (he's remained married for more than 50 years) or career reinventions. However, the bluesy, back-to-basics *Praise & Blame* (featuring covers of tracks by John Lee Hooker and Bob Dylan) has seemed like Jones's most provocative move for ages, thanks to a leaked e-mail from a vice-president at his record label lambasting the album as a "sick joke". "You need to pull back this project immediately or get my money back," the VP frothed. "For God's sake, what are you thinking when he went all spiritual?"

What does Jones make of this strange future? "I don't even know this pencil-pushing pr--- the only 'sick joke' is this fell'a," he exclaims, though his blue eyes twinkle jovially. "Island Records' creatives knew what I was doing on *Praise & Blame* - he's in accounting, so he's got no say anyway. I was p---ed off but the label said: 'We'll make good - can we buy you a bottle of Scotch?'" That doesn't sound like much of an apology. Jones smiles: "It was very good Scotch."

Praise & Blame was originally conceived as a collection of Christmas hymns, although neither its track-listing

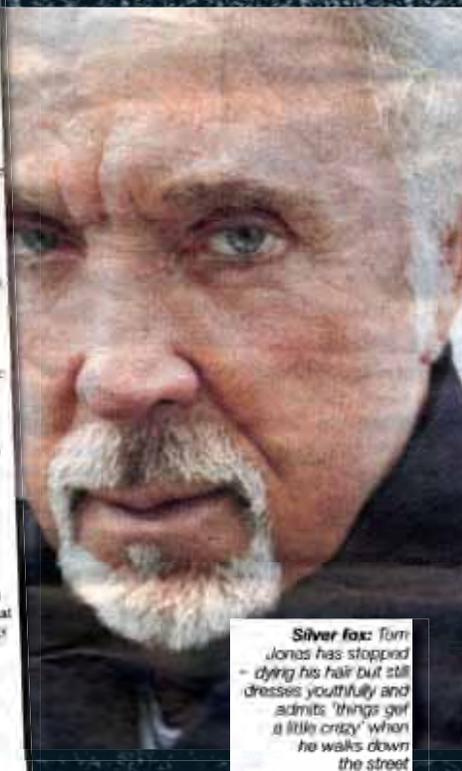
(*Burning Hell, Ain't No Grave*) nor release date have turned out to be particularly festive. It showcases an unusually stripped-down, rueful side to this hyper-masculine entertainer, produced by Ethan Johns (Kings Of Leon).

"When I started recording, I thought I'd be able to do all kinds of records: jazz, country, dance - and I've always wanted to do a gospel album," explains Jones. "If I'm singing a song like *If I Give My Soul*, I put myself into that predicament, because it's about starting in showbusiness, playing 'the devil's music' and forgetting your family. I didn't lose the love of my wife and son but I can understand how that might have happened. I'm baring my soul more: *Praise & Blame* wouldn't have sounded the same 30 years ago."

Producer Johns also encouraged the singer to rein in his famously belting vocals for this album - although Jones also mentions some good vocal advice he received years ago: "Not to be a name-dropper but Frank Sinatra once told me: 'Tom, you don't have to hit everything hard. If you keep hammering everything, you're gonna hurt yourself.'"

There has always been something appealingly contradictory about Jones: he's simultaneously earthy and pure showbiz; he's stopped dyeing his hair but remains youthfully dressed; he's legendarily raunchy yet points out: "I've always been God-fearing. And I'm a man of pretty simple tastes. It's just that if I went down into the street now, things might get a little crazy."

Over the years, Jones's musical repertoire really has spanned multiple genres, though when he claims: "I'm a lyric man - I'm always looking for meaningful songs," I'm curious: is he arguing that *Sex Bomb*, his 1999



Silver fox: Tom Jones has stopped dying his hair but still dresses youthfully and admits 'things get a little crazy' when he walks down the street

Eurodisco hit with Mousse T. is profound? "They are interesting lyrics, if you listen," he insists and, for the next few minutes, we deconstruct the words to the song ("This bomb's made for lovin' and you can snort it far") before he replies: "Yeah, but they're clever!"

He's good-natured enough to get away with the odd novelty - and despite the brooding tone of his latest material, he still exudes the assurance of a superstar who's had masses of devotees' lingerie buried his way. What's the most unusual gesture Jones has ever received from a

female fan? "It's one extreme to the other," he says. "I've had a lot of crosses and Bibles given to me but then one woman made a ceramic penis - she figured that's what mine looked like, I suppose." Is it easy to accept that kind of gift graciously? "Well, yeah, at least it was packaged in a box so I could go: 'Oh, wow.' You can't take that kind of thing home, of course - luckily, it was easily breakable."

Jones thrives happily. He easily handles everyday chaos - perhaps that's why he's the seasoned king of smash hits. *Praise & Blame* (Island) is out next Monday

Brushing off leaked criticism from a boss at his record company, the Welsh superstar tells ARWA HAIDER why he's baring his soul with a softer sound

"...he delivers an impressively accomplished album."
Time Out ★★★★★

Comment

Ask anyone in the Vale of Glamorgan about Tom Jones, and they'll probably tell you the same story. It's the one about the time in the Nineties when the singer owned a house in Wyrd-owen, a well-to-do country village off the A48 near Cowbridge. Whenever he was in residence, Jones would invariably visit the local pub for a pint. The arrival at the bar of the most famous Welshman on the planet would inevitably cause a commotion, upon which he would turn around, face the patrons, and good-naturedly announce: "OIL, you've got 10 minutes if you want to take photos, get autographs and what have you, then please leave me alone I'm going to sit in the corner and have a drink with my friends." The villagers would, without fail, respect his privacy. He was, after all, just one of us, who'd made it big - about a little more tangerine in hue.

"Big", of course, is an understatement. In his 45-year recording career, Tom Jones has sold 150 million albums. If he overtakes Eminem tonight with his 39th studio album, *Prince & Name*, he will be, at 70, the oldest male singer to top the charts. If he falls short, it will be only by a handful of copies. No mean achievement for a kid from the terraced streets of Treforest who was destined for the life of a coalminer, and nearly died of tuberculosis at the age of 12.

It's easy to understand his appeal, especially to a female audience. Just look at any early photos of the sexual tornado christened Tom Woodward, taken at the time of his first forays into live performance when he was playing venues such as the Ffestypridd YMCA and every work-

'His orange tan and white curls do leave him looking like a pint of draught bitter'

'If you want to reach a young audience, make the most old-fashioned music you can'

ing men's club in South Wales by night while scraping a living as a factory worker and builder by day. Devilishly handsome in his drampie-trousers and Cuban heels, he looks like a Hamburg-style Beate played by a young Ryan Giggs. In those days, the young belter billed himself variously as Timmy Scott and Tiger Tom The Twisting Vocalist, with a backing band whose identity changed from The Squires to The Senators to The Playboys. He settled on the name Tom Jones after the hero of Henry Fielding's comedy novel of 1749. This simple handle stuck, although the tigerish vocalist never did stop twisting. In the context of the early Sixties, when the mod aesthetic was on the rise, Jones - influenced by Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis, and unmistakably a rocker - was something of an anachronism. And being Welsh didn't do a lot for his credibility. After several failed attempts to crack the London music business, including an abortive liaison with the legendary Joe Meek, Jones's career seemed to be stalling when local boy Gordon Mills spotted potential in his belted-rattling bellow and seismic stage presence.

It was Mills who set him up with "It's Not Unusual", an infectious song intended originally for Sandie Shaw. Released on the Decca label and featuring, as every pub quiz nerd knows, a guitar solo from the then unknown Jimmy Page, it reached No 1 on *St David's Day* 1965, and also broke the *Hilltop* charts in America, where no lesser authority than Wilson Pickart described Jones as "the only white man who can sing soul".

Suddenly, Jones's anachronism was his USP. At a time when Elvis had been neutered by Colonel Tom Parker and flower-power androgyny was



You're not unusual, Sir Tom. You're totally unique

Simon Price celebrates the world's most famous Welshman, tonight expected to become, at the age of 70, the oldest male artist to top the album charts

"...it's a blistering album, at it's best when Jones and his band...cut loose."
The Guardian ★★★★★

"...the album even has something of his old pal Elvis Presley's '68 Comeback about it. Either way, it's a revelation."
Daily Telegraph ★★★★★

everywhere, Jones was a lone beacon of raw masculine sexuality. The formula worked, and the hits kept coming, along with music themes including "What's New, Pussycat?" and "Thunderball". Clearly, Mills started pitching Jones towards an older demographic with the middle-class country standard "The Green, Green Grass Of Home", which earned him his second No 1 single. Further smashes followed with the cheeky melodrama "Delilah" and the easy-listening monstrosity "Help Yourself", and Tom's new-found respectability earned him a transatlantic TV show.

America was calling, and Jones didn't hesitate. Relocating to Las Vegas, he became a huge draw on the casino-hotel circuit, and it was during this time that the popular image of Jones, frilly shirt naked in the waist, gyrating lewdly in leather trousers to screaming, knicker-throwing ladies of a certain age, became fixed. From a British perspective, the Seventies were Tom Jones's wilderness years, but they were also the era when he made his biggest bucks, reportedly £m a year on the casino circuit. By 1974 he was living in Dean Martin's former Bel Air pad, and was part of the showbiz elite, befriending Elvis Presley and knocking around with Muhammad Ali.

He was also having all the sex in the world. For a man whose reputation is that of the decent, salt-of-the-earth bloke - comedian Rob Bryden does an unerringly accurate impersonation of the singer, eagerly sincere and over-explaining everything - Tom Jones's marital situation sits awkwardly. At the age of 16, he married his childhood sweetheart Linda, and a son, Mark, was born the following month. Half a century later, Tom and Linda are still married, but his infidelities in the interim are well documented.

When she discovered he had begun an

18-month affair with Mary Wilson of The Supremes in 1968, the long-suffering Linda opted to stand by her man, telling him: "I'm not going. It would be too easy for you. But I'll cut off your balls if you carry on like this."

But carry on he did. Jones, who jocularly rationalised his conduct by telling an interviewer "marriage keeps me single; it keeps me from marrying again", would go on to enjoy a dalliance with 1973 Miss World, Margorie Wallace. She rated him top out of her famous lovers, awarding him 1970 *George Best* scored three.

In December 1990, his affair with 21-year-old Californian journalism student Cindy Mangione became public and, most damagingly for him, in 2008 it was proven after much legal tussling and DNA testing that 20-year-old Jonathan Berkery was Jones's illegitimate son, resulting from a one-night stand with his mother, a model, while the singer was on a US tour.

His apologies tend either to sweep his indiscretions under the carpet, or to point to Linda's undoubted financial comfort. Jones's career earnings are reported to be in excess of £17m. Nevertheless, her ogrophobia is well documented: she is said to leave their Los Angeles home only rarely and has, on the few occasions that her husband brought celebrity friends home, hidden herself from view.

Jones has expressed guilt about his dalliances in his later years, telling *TV Times*: "I regret I've made [Linda] unhappy... She can't walk away from me, and I can't walk away from her." Jones's honesty about his foibles doesn't end there. He cheerfully admits to a nose job and other plastic surgery, and that, surprise surprise, he dyed his hair for years before allowing it to grey. It's this lack of self-delusion and his evident appetite for performing that continue to endear him to us. A recent newspaper interview describes *look*, before the photoshoot, he is left alone to psych himself up for his portrait.

When he turns up on talkshows to promote his music, as he frequently does, it's hard not to be won over. Take his appearance on Jonathan Ross's sofa a few weeks ago. He was not fazed that his shirt was sopping with sweat, while happily playing stooge to Ross's patter about tight pants and baggy shirts. He barely said anything at all, and yet looked as if he was having the time of his life.

In fact, Jones's career longevity can be attributed to his happy-go-lucky approach to his image. In 1986 Gordon Mills died and Jones's son Mark took over the role of manager, masterminding an unexpected resurgence in the singer's fortunes. The following year he and the conceptual popsters The Art Of Noise had a hit with

a self-parodic romp through Prince's "Kiss". Jones was rehabilitated as an icon of ironic kitsch; the leathery lothario who was willing to send himself up on chat shows, but who was also recognised - albeit belatedly - as the owner of a phenomenal soul-belt voice. Not for the first time in his life he was, truly, having it both ways.

In the Nineties, he would even receive the blessing of rock's empress, Tina Turner, recording with the likes of Mavis Staples, The Roots, Stevie Nicks and Catatonia on the Stephen Hague-produced album *Reload!*. This also featured one of his finest late-period singles, his cover of Talking Heads' "Burning Down The House" with Cardigans singer Nina Persson.

Another single from the album, the Mouse T monster "Sex Bomb", was a worldwide hit, but Tom's insistence on wearing that, and his 2002 album *Mr Jones*, largely recorded with Wydel Jean of The Fugees, was a flop.

Since then, Mark Woodward and Jones himself have pursued a decidedly more dignified path. When he stopped dyeing his hair black, there was general approval, although his orange tan and white curls do leave him looking like a pint of Brains SA.

The back-to-basics Tom Jones & *look* restored him to the Top 10 in 2005, and the Mark Ronson-esque retro soul sound of 2008's *24 Hours* was equally well-received, if not nearly such a big-seller.

Prince & Name is more radical still - a collection of raw blues and gospel that his label boss at Island called a "sick joke". But with its success, he's learned the lesson Johnny Cash taught all elderly artists with his American Recordings series: if you want to reach a young audience, sometimes the best way is to make the most old-fashioned music you possibly can.

In 2006, Jones was knighted for services to music, an honour which was greeted with much pride in his homeland. He may not quite have moved back to Wales, but he keeps a house there and unlike the remote, exiled Dame Shirley Bassey, he has yet to release an album under the name Sir Tom Jones. That just isn't his style. And it's another reason why Jones is still viewed fondly by the people of Wales: he's one of our own, out there, living it large.

SEPTUAGENARIAN SEX BOMBS TALK, THEN THEY TALK TO



He's actually quite unusual

Set to go into the record books today with a No 1 hit in a whole new genre, the veteran singer once again displays his astounding ability to reinvent himself. By Jonny Davis



As we write you for Tom Jones we're flying back to London from Doncaster and he's in the house where he's been since he got married to his second wife, when he got married to his first wife, when he got married to his second wife... (text continues)

Let's hope David Sharpe is better at accounting than he is at sporting hit records

...the arrangements are crisp, earthy and a perfect vehicle for that still most powerful of voices."

The Sun ★★★★★

When you get older you're not as horny as you were. The desire to do all that just isn't there any more

By CARL STROUD Sunday, 70-year-old Tom Jones looks like the oldest ever to top the UK charts... (text continues)

Profile

A new peak for the voice of the valleys

His record company doubted him. But this pop legend hasn't stayed at the top for 45 years without understanding what his fans want. By Ian Burrell

M... (text continues)

Says TOM JONES



Tom keeps the faith



Tom at the top again New album on course to knock Eminem off the No 1 spot - and put Welsh star back in the record books Page 5b

Tom Jones

In my head I'm still 30

Hair to stay

NEWS OF THE WORLD

NEWS OF THE WORLD 11.07.10 RATED

"Jones' delivery has rarely been so convincing." Time Out ★★★★★

IT'S not unusual to be over 70 and still rocking.

At least it isn't if you're Tom Jones.

The white-haired hard-working pop legend even reckons he's still **TOO YOUNG** to write his life story. But when he does, he admits it'll be no holds barred... especially on his womanising days.

"An autobiography should be complete," Sir Tom tells Rated. "And my career isn't over yet. It's ridiculous when singers publish their book when they're 30—you haven't lived that."

"If I write my autobiography, I'd have to tell the whole truth. If I left anything out, the first thing a chat show host would ask me would be, 'We all know you were a bit of a lad—why isn't it in the book?'"

"If I couldn't sing properly any more, maybe then I'd sit down and write. But I've got a lot of singing left to do first."

Now the man who had his first No.1 with It's Not Unusual in 1965 is about to release the most remarkable album of his career a month after turning 70. Praise And Blame is a collection of

religious soul and gospel cover versions that the lifelong Christian feels is his best record—that's despite David Sharpe, vice president of Tom's new label Island, branding it "a sick joke" in an email because of its religious content.

Tom is unfazed. "Island initially wanted me to release a Christmas album—but I wanted to do something a bit deeper than that," he says. His son Mark, who manages him, suggested doing spiritual songs. "And Island said that would be OK," adds Tom.

He believes in using his talent to the full and reckons modern singers don't appreciate how important theirs is. "I feel sorry for Amy Winehouse, because I don't think she's aware of the gift

she's got," says Sir Tom. "She can sing the way she does because God gave her that talent. But, when you're young like Amy you don't appreciate that. You think 'I can do these drugs' because you don't think of the consequences. It's very sad."

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Hangover

"I never bothered with drugs, but I like a drink. I still love beer, wine and a vodka martini to start the night. I've never gone on stage drunk but I've done shows with a hangover. Oh boy, that's punishing." Sir Tom—knighted in 2006—regrets that religion isn't as important in society as when he grew up as a miner's son in Pontypridd in the

STILL GOING STRONG: Sir Tom just can't stop singing

Despite turning 70, Tom Jones insists he's too young to quit

1950s. "Religion brings people together and gives you values—and maybe that's missing a little now," he says.

"The songs on my new record have a spiritual message and there are lessons I've learned myself from the lyrics."

Mated to wife Linda for over 50 years, Sir Tom is grateful that she loves Praise And Blame. "Linda isn't shy of telling me what she thinks," he laughs. "I did a hip hop album with Wyclef Jean in 2002, and she hated that. 'Who are you trying to aim this at?' was her response. But my wife loves this one."

Professionally, he has few regrets—other than never having tried acting. "I should have pursued it when I was younger," he says. "I'd have been a

good actor. I'd have been like Indiana Jones. Maybe I could have been the Welsh James Bond! But I'd have had to take a year out to learn how to act, and music always felt too important."

Sir Tom believes music keeps him young at heart. "I feel the same as I did when I was 30," he says. "It's only when I look in the mirror and see this old feller looking back that I realise I must be 70. I'll think 'God, my back hurts!' but when I get on stage all the aches and pains vanish."

Despite surviving the hecklers of the working man's clubs when he started out, the singer—once a guest judge on American Idol—believes that's not as intimidating as being on X Factor.

"I'd have gone on the show if it was around when I was starting," he says. "I'd have tried any route."

"I like Simon Cowell, but his one problem is that he can dismiss a good singer whose voice isn't to his taste. He shouldn't say 'pack it in' to anyone who can sing in tune—if I'd been told that on TV when I was 21, I wouldn't have been able to carry on."

The kids trying out on that show have more bottle than I ever did."

New single Burning Hell is out now. Praise And Blame is out on July 26.

JOHN EARLS

and pains vanish."

Despite surviving the hecklers of the

KULTUR

«Meine Stimme ist in Topform»
Mit «Praise & Blame» veröffentlicht Sir Tom Jones sein 39. Studioalbum. Im Gespräch erzählt der 70-jährige, warum er nach all den Jahren immer noch Musik macht.

SARAH ELENA SCHWERZMANN,
LONDON

Sir Tom Jones, Sie überraschen Ihre Fans auf «Praise & Blame» mit einer Sammlung von Spirituals. Wie wurde die Idee dazu geboren?

Tom Jones: Ich habe Spirituals schon immer geliebt. Aber Plattenfirmen mögen keine Konzeptalben. Die wollen Musik, die eingängig klingt und sich gut verkaufen lässt. Als mich Island Records dann aber gefragt hat, ob ich für sie ein Weihnachtsalbum machen würde, sah ich meine Chance, ich hatte keine Lust eine «nette» Weihnachtsplatte mit traditionellen Weihnachtsliedern aufzunehmen.

Statt dessen haben Sie sich Songs von Bob Dylan, Billy Joe Shaver und Susan Werner angenommen. Wie haben Sie diese Auswahl getroffen?

Jones: Ich habe mir unzählige alte Gospel- und Rock'n'Roll-Alben angehört und dann jene ausgewählt, von denen ich das Gefühl hatte, dass ich ihnen meinen eigenen Stempel aufdrücken kann. Ich wollte die Künstler nicht kopieren, sondern meine eigene Version des Songs aufneh-

men. Das hat natürlich nicht immer auf Anhieb geklappt. Manchmal mussten wir mit der Tonart und den Arrangements experimentieren, bis es sich richtig angefühlt hat.

Sie haben die Stücke live in einem kleinen Studio in England aufgenommen. Was für eine Erfahrung war das?

Jones: Als mir Produzent Ethan Johns den Vorschlag gemacht hat, auf «Praise & Blame» nur eine Rhythmusgruppe zu verwenden, war ich begeistert. Es hat sich angefühlt wie früher, als ich in Wales angefangen habe. Damals waren wir eine kleine Band, die in Vereinskloakalen gespielt hat. Und das hört man auch auf dieser Platte, dieses Leise und Minimalistische unterstützt die starke Aussage der Spirituals.

Gerade deswegen wurde Ihre Platte im angelsächsischen

Raum mit dem späten Werk Johnny Cashes verglichen. Stört Sie das?

Jones: Ich habe Ende der Sechziger mit Johnny Cash zusammengearbeitet und kannte ihn und seine Arbeit gut. Deshalb kann ich auch verstehen, warum man mein Album «Praise & Blame» jetzt mit seiner letzten Platte vergleicht. Von der Atmosphäre und der Art und Weise, wie die Instrumente nur minimal eingesetzt werden, sind sich die beiden Alben schon ähnlich. Da gibt es aber auch einen grossen Unterschied.



Ich will nicht, dass es lächerlich aussieht und sich junge Leute das Maul darüber zerreißen.

Und der wäre?
Jones: Als Johnny Cash seine Platte aufgenommen hat, war er am Ende seiner Karriere, und wie sich später herausgestellt hat, auch am Ende seines Lebens. Seine Stimme hat nicht mehr einwandfrei funktioniert, sie war brüchig. Meine Stimme aber ist immer noch in Topform. Und was die Interpretation der Songs angeht, hoffe ich, dass ich ein bisschen mehr Energie in die Musik gegeben habe. Weil ich nämlich nicht das Gefühl habe, dass ich bereits aus dem letzten Loch pfeife.

Woher nehmen Sie die Energie?
Jones: Ich liebe es zu singen, und wenn man etwas wirklich gerne tut, dann investiert man nicht nur viel Energie, sondern man bekommt auch viel zurück. Das Singen ist wie eine Art Drang für mich. Kürzlich habe ich meine Schwester in LA in ein Restaurant ausgeführt. Ich gehe immer sonntags mit ihr essen und normalerweise ist es dann eher ruhig, aber an diesem Tag war Valentag und das Restaurant war voll. Eine Band hat gespielt und nach ein paar Liedern haben sie mich gefragt, ob ich mit ihnen singen will.

Und Sie haben Ja gesagt?
Jones: Klar, ich bin auf die Bühne gestiegen und habe mit ihnen gesungen. Aber irgendwie hat das jemand aufgenommen, heute kann das ja jeder auf seinem Telefon machen, und jetzt ist es im Internet. Das macht mir ein bisschen Sorgen. Ich hoffe, was ich da gesungen habe, hat nach all den Gläsern Wein noch Sinn ergeben. (lacht)

Sie stehen seit 50 Jahren auf der Bühne. Ende Monat erhalten Sie eine Auszeichnung für spezielle Verdienste in der Musikindustrie. Wie fühlt sich das an?

Jones: Ich bin stolz darauf, dass ich über die Jahre Platten gemacht habe, die auch heute noch gut und von Bedeutung sind. Aber eigentlich habe ich mich seit den Sechzigerjahren, als ich angefangen habe, nicht gross verändert. Ich mache einfach immer das, was mir Spass macht. Klar bewege ich mich heute auf der Bühne anders als damals. Obwohl ich mir manchmal den einen oder anderen Hüftschwung doch nicht verkneifen kann. Da muss ich lernen, mich zu bremsen. Aber es ist schwierig, mich nicht zur Musik zu beugen.

Warum wollen Sie sich bremsen, wenn Sie doch Spass daran haben?

Jones: Ich will nicht, dass es lächerlich aussieht und sich junge Leute dann das Maul darüber zerreißen, was dieser alte Typ jetzt da macht. Trotzdem versuche ich aber nicht, 70 Jahre alt zu sein, weil ich mich von diesem Alter meilenweit entfernt fühle. Nur wenn ich in den Spiegel schaue, kommt es mir wieder in den Sinn. In erster Linie, weil ich aufgehört habe, mein Haar zu färben. (lacht)

hören&sehen.

BaZ | Samstag, 31. Juli 2010 | Seite 41

Tom Jones fährt auf tiefen Touren über den Highway

Der Tiger von Wales begibt sich mit seinem Album «Praise & Blame» auf Spurensuche

NICK JOYCE

Nach vielen erfolgreichen Abstechern in Richtung Pop und Dance taucht der walisische Sänger Tom Jones 2010 in die Rock-, Country- und Blues-Musik ein.

Beinah wäre «Praise & Blame» nicht auf den Markt gekommen: Vor wenigen Wochen soll David Sharpe, der Vizepräsident von Island Records, noch einen Veröffentlichungsstopp für Tom Jones' neues Album gefordert haben. Die Firma habe beim Künstler Party-Hits im Stile von «Sex Bomb» bestellt, so Sharpe in einer konzern-internen E-Mail, nun habe dieser triste Kirchenmusik abgeliefert. Statt der angeforderten Limo sei mit «Praise & Blame» ein Leichenwagen vorgefahren. Jetzt kann je-

der selber darüber entscheiden, ob der 70-jährige Jones einen stilistischen Fauxpas begangen oder ein würdiges Alterswerk vorgelegt hat. Beim Repertoire beweist die walisische Gesangskanone einmal mehr grossen Geschmack: Hier versucht sich Tom Jones an Songs von Bob Dylan («What Good Am I») und John Lee Hooker («Burning Hell») sowie an Traditionals («Nobody's Fault But Mine»). Trotz der spirituellen Grundthematik kann von verstaubter Pietät keine Rede sein.

Mit «Praise & Blame» geht Jones bei Rock, Gospel und Blues auf Wurzelsuche, alles Einflüsse, die er schon lange in seinen Las-Vegas-Shows zu integrieren wusste. Überraschend an seinem neuen

Werk ist weniger die Stilrichtung als die Gangart. Für «Praise & Blame» stand Jones zum ersten Mal seit Langem wieder mit einer kompakten Rock-Band im Aufnahme-raum: Wüsste man nicht, dass es in Peter Gabriels Real-World-Studio eingespielt wurde, hätte man auf eine Bar irgendwo im Süden der USA getippt, so herrlich schnörkellos klingt dieses Album.

DOMINANT. Die Kompaktheit bringt allerdings auch eine programmierte Konzeptschwäche mit sich. Egal, wie behutsam und bedächtig Jones an das Songmaterial herangeht, seine mächtige Stimme hat immer etwas Bombastisches. Zu dominant ist sie für die angeheuerten Meistermusiker, die mit ihm mit-

“When he sings
‘There ain’t no heaven’,
that’s exactly where we are”
Fyens Stiftstidende ★★★★★



Schnurrt erneut charmant. Tom Jones, 70, Tiger.

halten müssen. Das ist die Krux: Um sich der Musik unterzuordnen, ist der Sänger schlicht zu charakterstark, und um ihm Paroli bieten zu können, hätten die Begleiter richtig aufdrehen und ihn herausfordern müssen. Dafür spielen sie zu zurückhaltend und aufgeräumt.

Dennoch geniesst man es, wie der Sänger dreckigen Blues und klimpernden Rock'n'Roll anpackt. Eine Limo ist «Praise & Blame» nicht, aber heileibe auch kein Leichenwagen. Eher ein Cadillac, der niedertourig über den Highway rollt. Auch damit lässt sich ganz gut reisen.

> Tom Jones: «Praise & Blame», Island/Universal, www.tomjones.com

Publikation: Prinz - Berlin
Datum: 22.07.2010

Blues / Country
Tom Jones
Praise & Blame

★★★★ Für „Praise & Blame“ grub man nach Tom Jones' Wurzeln und hob einen Schatz: seine Stimme. Lebensklug wie ein liebevoller Großvater, röhrend wie ein Ringsprecher und sündig wie der Teufel macht sich der Siebzigjährige die Gospel-, Blues- und Country-Songs zu eigen, die ihn als Heranwachsenden prägten. Vieles erinnert an die „American Recordings“, Cashs letzte Alben. Doch diese Legende strahlt vor Leben.
► Island / Universal, ab 23,7. skd

FÜR FANS VON: Johnny Cash, John Lee Hooker, The White Stripes

Publikation: Musik
Datum: 03.07.2010

TOM JONES
Praise & Blame
Island/Universal

Der „Tiger“ ist zurück! Tom Jones präsentiert sein neues Werk „Praise & Blame“ und zeigt sich damit von einer anderen Seite. Mit Gospel, Traditionals, Country-Songs und Blues-Stücken von John Lee Hooker oder Bob Dylan kehrt er zu seinem Ursprung zurück. Den Songs drückt der 70-Jährige aber seinen unverkennbaren Stempel auf und lässt sie so klingen, als wären sie eigens für ihn komponiert. Der Sound: roh und kernig, ohne Overdubbing und sonstiger Effekte. Nur eine Rhythmus-Gruppe begleitet die Gesangs-Bläser. „Ich bin auf dem richtigen Weg mit dieser Platte“, so Jones. Und dieser Meinung sind wir auch! (id)

Prinz:
A lot of things remind us of Cash's last albums "American Recordings". But this legend does bristle with life.

Publikation: Welt, Die Bundesausgabe
Datum: 21.07.2010

von Harald Peters

Das Verhältnis von Stars zu Religionen ist vor allen Dingen wechselhaft. Es ist ein ständiges Suchen, Ausprobieren und Verwerfen, denn wie in allen anderen Bereichen des Lebens ist der Star auch in weltanschaulichen Dingen ein anspruchsvoller Konsument. Man muss sich das in etwa so vorstellen: Ihr gesamtes Dasein sehnen sie sich nach Reichtum, Ruhm und Anerkennung, drängen mit aller Kraft in den Mittelpunkt des öffentlichen Interesses, doch wenn der Applaus verklungen ist, fühlen sie sich plötzlich wertlos und leer. Also muss dringend ein Welterklärungsmodell her, etwas, das Halt verschafft in Zeiten transzendentaler Not.

Seit die Beatles in den Sechzigern ihr Seelenheil in Indien suchten und Car Stevens auf dem Höhepunkt seines Erfolges erst mühsam alle gängigen Glaubensrichtungen ausprobieren musste, um nach ei-

nem Badeunfall schließlich an den Ufern des Islams zu stranden, hat sich ein ganzer Dienstleistungszweig gebildet, der die religiösen Defizite der Stars bequem und umstandslos bedient. Mal standen fernöstliche Gurus hoch im Kurs, mal die Scientology, zuletzt war dank Madonna Philip Bergs recht kostenintensive, aber dafür relativ bedienerfreundliche Auslegung der Kabbalah beliebt.

Dabei fällt auf, dass Stars selbst bei ihrer Glaubenswahl stets großen Wert auf Originalität legen. Was insofern bemerkenswert ist, als jetzt zwei so unterschiedliche Künstler wie Nina Hagen und Tom Jones das Christentum für sich entdecken haben. Beide haben praktisch zeitgleich die Gospelalben „Personal Jesus“ (Hagen) und „Praise and Blame“ (Jones) veröffentlicht. Nina Hagen hat sich vergangenes Jahr sogar in niedersächsischen Schüttauf in einer evangelischen Gemeinde taufen lassen.

Wenn man bedenkt, dass Hagen Zeit ihrer Jahrzehntlang währenden Karriere schon an so ziemlich alles geglaubt hat, wofür besonders an Straßenlaternen mit handgekritzelten Flugblättern geworben wird Hinduismus, Außerirdische, Kristalle, die Aids-Lüge -, erscheint der Originalitätsfaktor der evangelischen Kirchen plötzlich enorm. Bei ihrem Glaubensweg versteht es sich fast von selbst, dass Nina Hagen sich als Vorkämpferin der Ökumene sieht, schließlich gehört alles irgendwie zusammen.

Tom Jones hin-



Kleines Senfkorn Hoffnung, mir umsonst geschenkt: Tom Jones und Nina Hagen rocken für Jesus

gegen war schon immer spirituell, er hat es nur nicht so sehr gezeigt. Stattdessen hat er sein Image als Tiger gepflegt, sang mit lauter Stimme brünnliche Schlager und ließ sich dafür von liebestollen Fans mit Damenunterwäsche bewerfen.

Als er im Alter von fast 60 Jahren „Sexbomb“ schmetterte, schrieb die Musikzeitung „Spex“, dass es sich bei Tom Jones um „sexuelle Belästigung mit menschlichem Antlitz“ handele (über letzteres könnte man allerdings streiten). Dass er nun, zehn Jahre später, meint, er müsse für seine Sünden zahlen und Bußlieder anstimmt, mag mit seinem Alter zusammenhängen – andererseits hängt es ganz bestimmt mit seinem Alter zusammen, dass sich das Image als Sexprotz nicht mehr weiter aufrecht erhalten lässt. Und was soll ein Sexprotz schon machen, wenn die Zeit des Protzens langsam vorüber ist? Im Rahmen eines christlichen Weltbildes sind Kirchenlieder nach all den Ausschweifungen eben die logische Konsequenz.

Warum Tom Jones wie Nina Hagen allerdings auf das Christentum setzen und sich dabei nicht einmal verwegene, interessante oder völlig abwegige Splittergruppen aussu-

chen, von denen es bekanntlich reichlich gibt, bleibt im Rahmen der popkulturellen Religionsnutzung weiterhin ein Rätsel. Vielleicht ist es tief empfundener Glaube. Vielleicht ist es origineller, zur Abwechslung mal nicht originell zu sein, vielleicht sind Religionen auch nur Zeitgeisterscheinungen, die gewissen Zyklen unterworfen sind. Und vielleicht ist Jesus Christus gerade jetzt der letzte Schrei.

Wobei man fairerweise nicht verschweigen sollte, dass weder Jones noch Hagen im popkulturellen Tagesgeschäft einen derart großen Einfluss haben, dass sich an ihrem Tun irgendetwas ablesen ließe. Sie sind auch nur zwei Sänger, die irgendwie vom Wege abgekommen sind. Und die Kirche hat ja schon seit jeher für jede verlorene Seele eine offene Tür.

Nina Hagen „Personal Jesus“ und Tom Jones „Praise and Blame“ erscheinen beide bei Universal

Welt: *“Also The Tiger is looking for inner contemplation and he sings spiritual”*

„Gott ist auf meiner Seite“

Jahrzehntelang war Tom Jones der beliebteste Sexprotz im Showgeschäft. Jetzt singt der Mann, den sie Tiger nannten, über Jesus. *Laura Ewerl hat ihn getroffen*



Tom Jones hatte 1964 seinen ersten Hit. Der 70-jährige ist so dabel, dass er auf gleich zwei fulminante Comebacks stolz sein darf: 1988 mit „Kiss“ und 2000 mit „Sex Bomb“

MARCO GAMBINO/UNIVERSAL MUSIC

„KEINE FRAGEN über Sex!“, ermahnt die Pressefrau streng auf dem Weg in die Londoner Hotelsuite. In der Tom Jones gerade noch sein Mittagessen für die Pause nach dem Interview bestellt. Was er isst? Die Pressefrau legt den Zeigefinger an ihre Lippen. In der Suite angekommen, kommt der Tiger pfeifend aus dem Badezimmer, strahlend und keinesfalls so Casanova-artig, wie man befürchtet hatte. Die Nacht zuvor hat Jones „Praise and Blame“, sein neues Album voller Gospelsongs, dem Anlass angemessen in einer alten Londoner Kirche vorgestellt. Grauhäutig, im sommerfrischen Leinenanzug steht er manchmal fast unsicher auf der kleinen Bühne. Zwischen den Stücken wischt er sich den Schweiß mit spitzen Fingern von der Stirn und versucht ihn unauffällig in die Luft zu schnippen, ganz so als würde er jegliche Rockstar-Anstrengung verbergen wollen.

Welt am Sonntag: Sir Tom, waren Sie nervös, die neuen Lieder das erste Mal vor Publikum zu spielen?

Sir Tom Jones: Ja, man wird schon etwas nervös. Normalerweise erweitere ich meine Shows nur um ein paar neue Lieder, gestern waren es acht. Deswegen habe ich auch einmal kurz den Text vergessen. Als ich nach dem Banjo-Part in „Trouble Me“ wieder einsetzen wollte, fielen mir die Worte einfach nicht mehr ein. Aber ich glaube, das war ganz gut so, es hat dem Konzert etwas Besonderes gegeben.

Ihr neues Album heißt „Praise and Blame“. Wen machen Sie denn verantwortlich und wofür?

Jones: Mich selbst. Denn um Erfolg zu haben, muss man auch die damit zusammenhängende Verantwortung anerkennen.

Wie meinen Sie das?

Jones: Wenn an einem Tag in der Zeitung steht, wie gut ich singe, kann am nächsten Tag schon wieder eine Geschichte erscheinen, in der ich falsch zitiert werde. Man kann nicht ausschließlich gelobt werden. Es gibt immer etwas, für das man Verantwortung übernehmen muss. Die Folgen meines Ruhms muss ich selbst tragen. Mich stört die Berühmtheit zwar nicht, aber mein Umfeld manchmal schon.

Haben Sie ein Beispiel?

Jones: Ja, meine Enkelin geht nächstes Jahr nach Cambridge, also haben wir vor Kurzem den Campus besichtigt. Die Studenten wollten Fotos mit mir machen und fragten, warum ich da sei. Also fing ich an zu erzählen, dass meine Enkelin bald hier studieren werde, aber mein Sohn stoppte mich. Er wollte nicht, dass jemand erfährt, wer sie ist. Ich genoss das Interesse der Studenten, aber der Nachteil war, dass ich nicht sagen konnte, wer meine Enkelin ist.

Das ist sicher keine neue Erfahrung.

Jones: Nein, aber sie passt gut zum Albumtitel. Es ist so wie in dem Song, den ich gestern durcheinandergedrückt habe. Wenn man zu übermütig wird, passiert etwas, das dich wieder auf den Boden bringt. „My Lord will trouble me“, Gott wird mich begleiten und mir, wenn nötig, ein paar Scherereien bereiten. Als wir uns gefragt haben, wie wir das Album nennen sollen, schlug jemand „Praise or Blame“ vor, aber es gibt kein Oder, sondern nur ein Und.

Ihre Plattenfirma sagt, dass dieses Album sehr wichtig für Sie sei. Ist das PR-Sprache?

Jones: Es ist ein sehr ehrliches Album. Es gibt Leute, die sagen, es klinge nach mir. Einige meiner Platten waren zwar gut, aber sie hätten genauso gut von anderen Künstlern aufgenommen werden können.

Das Album klingt allerdings mehr nach Sir Tom als nach dem Tiger.

Jones: Ja, es hätte nicht glaubwürdig geklungen, wenn ich es zehn oder zwanzig Jahre früher aufgenommen hätte. Man muss ja ein wenig gelebt haben. Und auch meine Stimme ist tiefer geworden, genau richtig für Gospel und Blues.

Im letzten Lied „Run On“ geben Sie den Ratschlag, besser nicht mit den Frauen anderer anzubündeln.

Jones: Ich sage aber nicht, dass ich das nicht tun würde, und ich schreibe auch niemandem etwas vor. Alles, was ich sage, ist, wenn du andere betrügst, wirst du schon die göttliche Antwort dafür erhalten.

Glauben Sie, Gott vergibt Ihnen?

Jones: Ich denke, er ist auf meiner Seite. Ich bin gesund, meine Stim-

me ist noch immer stark. Das muss eine gottgegebene Stimme sein.

Aber Sie hatten Probleme mit Ihren Stimmbändern.

Jones: Vor wenigen Monaten hatte ich Probleme mit Sodbrennen, jetzt ist alles wieder gut. Auch etwas, das mich an das Lied „Trouble Me“ erinnert. Für mich war meine kräftige und gesunde Stimme immer selbstverständlich, bis ich plötzlich krank wurde, das hat mir wieder gezeigt, dass ich verdammt noch mal nicht unzerstörbar bin.

An anderer Stelle singen Sie, dass jeder Tag merkwürdige Dinge passieren. Was sind das für Dinge?

Jones: In dem Lied heißt es (stammelt, überlegt, man sieht, er singt sich den Text grad im Kopf vor): „Jesus is the holy light, he turns darkness into light.“ Wie verrückt: die Dunkelheit in Licht verwandeln! Es bedeutet, dass er den Blinden wieder sehend gemacht hat. Es sind also Wunder, wenn Sie so wollen.

Glauben Sie an Wunder?

Jones: Ja.

Auch an die ganz großen?

Jones: In meinem Leben ist schon so einiges passiert. Und wenn ich Dinge getan habe, die ich vielleicht besser nicht hätte tun sollen, wusste ich, Gott wird mich prüfen. Das fühle ich.

Ist das Album ein „kranker Witz“?

Rechtzeitig zum Erscheinen des Albums hat die „Sunday Times of London“ eine Mail veröffentlicht, in der sich David Sharpe, der Senior Vice President von Tom Jones Plattenfirma Island Records, bei einem Mitarbeiter beschwert, dass der es zugelassen hat, Jones Kirchenlieder aufzunehmen zu lassen. „Wir haben ihn von EMI weggelockt, damit Du mit ihm ein Upbeat-Album machst mit Stücken wie „Sex Bomb“, wird der Labelmann zitiert. Das Werk sei ein kranker Witz. Aber vielleicht ist die Aufregung auch nur ein Versuch, dem Album Aufmerksamkeit zu beschieren.

Waren Sie schon immer spirituell?

Jones: Seitdem ich ein Kind war, ja. Meine Mutter war eine Spiritualistin. Aber irgendwann konnte sie nicht mehr zu den Versammlungen gehen. Ihre Empfindungen wurden zu stark und es sind Dinge geschehen, die sie verängstigt haben. Aber mit der Gewissheit, dass es da noch mehr gibt, als wir uns vorstellen können, bin ich aufgewachsen.

Sie sind gerade 70 Jahre alt geworden, planen Sie eigentlich noch weitere Alben?

Jones: Oh ja! Aber das hängt davon ab, wer mit welcher Idee auf mich zukommt. Ich warte immer auf gute Ideen. Für das neue Album etwa, wollte Island Records eigentlich, dass ich christliche Weihnachtslieder einsinge. Ich dachte, mit einem Orchester und einem Chor, das wäre sicher nett, aber nicht ...

... so sehr das, was man von Tom Jones erwartet.

Jones: Genau. Wenn sie etwas Religiöses haben wollen, können wir es doch auch mit Gospels probieren, dachte ich. Ray Charles fing damit an, Gospelakkorde zu spielen und Rock-'n'-Roll Texte dazu zu singen. Man warf ihm Blasphemie vor, aber er fand, dass es keine Grenzen geben dürfe und sich beides wunderbar ergänzen würde. Beide Stile kommen aus dem Süden der USA, dem sogenannten Biblebelt, sie haben dieselbe Akkordstruktur, denselben Flavour. Darum hat der frühe Rock 'n' Roll die Leute so aufgeregt, weil er dem Gospel so ähnlich war. Manchmal entstehen Ideen auf die merkwürdigste Weise. „Strange things are happening everyday“. Das ist etwas, das ich im Musikgeschäft mag. Es ist aufregend, weil man nie weiß, was als Nächstes passieren wird.

Das ist immer noch so, nach all den Jahren?

Jones: Ja, ich liebe es, auf der Bühne zu stehen. Es gibt nichts in dem Job, das ich nicht mag. Ich will ihn so lange machen wie es geht. Ich will mich nicht später – also wenn ich mal alt bin – ärgern, dass ich aufgehört habe, obwohl ich das noch gar nicht musste. Ich will mein Bestes geben, so lange wie möglich.

■ Tom Jones: „Praise and Blame“ erscheint am 23. Juli bei Universal

Immer noch nicht reif für die

Auf „Praise & Blame“ steuert Tom Jones einen altersgemäßen Imagewandel

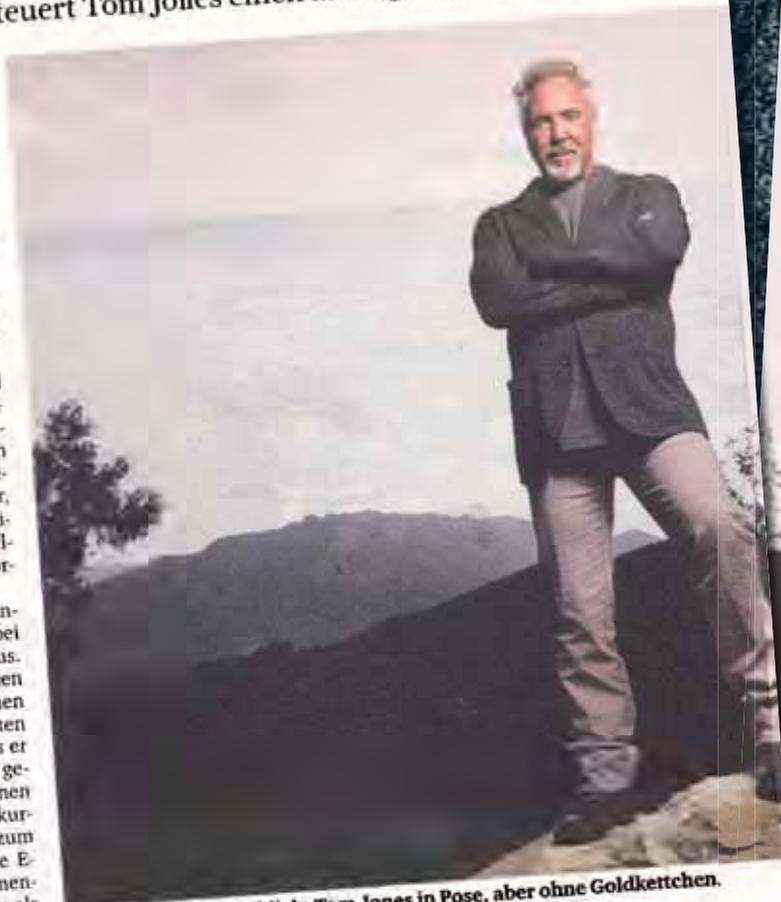
Von Thomas Winkler

Der Trick funktioniert doch immer wieder. Die musikalischen Wurzeln aufsuchen, den Rhythmus runterdrehen und dann ein paar Songs über existentielle Probleme wie den Tod, das Leben und den lieben Gott mit schön hingehauchter Stimme interpretieren: Schön macht sich selbst ein zum ewigen Tigersein verdammt Sänger auf ins altersgerechte Musikmachen.

So hat sich das Tom Jones wohl jedenfalls gedacht. Und mit „Praise & Blame“ ein Album eingespielt, das den Bergarbeitersohn und Goldkettenträger, den ehemaligen Staubsaugervertreter, den notorischen Frauenbeglücker, die „Sex Bomb“ par excellence noch einmal ganz neu verorteten sollte.

Die Ankündigung dieses Ansinnens löste eine kleinere Krise bei seinen meist weiblichen Fans aus. Der erste Testlauf mit dem neuen Tom Jones verursachte einen Wutanfall beim Vize-Präsidenten seines Labels. Der schickte, als er im Frühling das neue Werk des gerade für ungefähr 1,5 Millionen britische Pfund von der Konkurrenz abgeworbenen Stars zum ersten Mal gehört hatte, eine E-Mail durch die Plattenfirmenstuben, in denen er das Album als „kranken Witz“ bezeichnete. Abgemacht gewesen, so jammerte der Musikmanager, seien aufbauende, tanzbare, erotische Songs in der Tradition des Hits „Sex Bomb“, Abschließend fragte er zürnt, wer auf die Idee gekommen sei, Jones mit einem „Folk-Produzenten“ zusammenzubringen.

Im Zweifelsfall wohl der Künstler selbst, auf der Suche nach Ausdrucksformen, die seinem Alter angemessener sein mögen. Tom Jones hat schließlich am 7. Juni



Was vom Tiger übrig blieb: Tom Jones in Pose, aber ohne Goldkettchen.

seinen 70. Geburtstag gefeiert und es sich verdient, nicht bis zu seinem Ende Höschen älterer Damen aufzusammeln zu müssen.

Männliche Restbestände

Dass er darauf keine rechte Lust mehr hatte, bewies er bereits vor zehn Jahren. Jones umgab sich mit einigen damals angesagten Popmusikern, sang New-Wave-

und Punk-Songs, ließ sich vom Frankfurter House-Produzenten Mousse T. zeitgemäß aufhübschen und ironisierte mit dem Hit „Sex Bomb“ überzeugend das eigene Image. Aus dem abgehalfterten Tiger, der selbst in Las Vegas kaum noch ein Bein auf eine Showbühne gebracht hatte, wurde plötzlich wieder ein moderner Popstar. So ging es fröhlich weiter, die Produzenten wurden im-

Rente

an, bewahrt sich aber seine Lebhaftigkeit

Publikation: Frankfurter Rundschau

Datum: 23.07.2010



Tom Jones:
„Praise & Blame“
(Island/Universal)

schwunden. Stattdessen versucht Jones immer wieder zu klingen wie der späte Nick Cave oder auch der späte Neil Diamond, als sie von Rick Rubin produziert und auf das Allernötigste reduziert wurden. Sehr offensichtlich daran orientiert sich nicht nur das Klangbild von „Praise & Blame“, sondern auch die Themenauswahl mit Songs über Selbstzweifel („What Good I Am?“), Religiosität („If I Give My Soul“) und Sterben („Ain't No Grave“). Aber es ist eine gelungene Wandlung, denn Jones' Stimme kann das natürlich, dieses dunkle, sonore, bedeutungsschwangere Gummeln.

Diese Mutation zum altersangemessenen Troubadour ist allerdings nur halbherzig. Unterbrochen wird sie immer wieder von Aufregungs- und Temposteigerungen, die dann aber in Form von erdigem Blues („Lord Help“), sehr vorsichtigem Irischem Pub-Geklimper („Did Trouble Me“) oder auch nicht allzu euphorischem Gospel („Strange Things“) absolviert werden: Genres also, die allgemein zwar als so ehrwürdig gelten, dass man als Musikant mit ihnen alt werden darf, die aber auch noch eine gewisse Restvirilität vorweisen können.

Das war Jones wohl wichtig. Das Album, mit dem Tom Jones endlich so klingen wollte, wie er aussieht, wenn er morgens in den Spiegel sieht, endet dann doch mit einem flotten Gitarren-Riff und einem Song, der „Run On“ heißt. Tom Jones mag 70 Jahre alt sein, aber reif für die Rente – so weit ist er dann doch noch nicht.

mer angesagter, die Duettpartnerinnen immer jünger und irgendwann hatten sogar die älteren Damen die Ironie verstanden und warfen wieder Höschen.

Zeit für eine weitere Wandlung, hat sich Jones gesagt. Doch ganz so radikal, wie man hätte erwarten können, ist der Stilwechsel diesmal nicht ausgefallen. Die „Sexbomb“ und ihre modernen Dance-Beats sind zwar völlig ver-

★★★★
Metromix

★★★★
Arizona Republic

SonntagsZeitung

TippsKultur

25. JULI 2010

GOSPEL: Tom Jones, „Praise & Blame“ (Universal)

Johnny Cash und Neil Diamond haben vorgemacht, wie man den Karriereherbst vergoldet. Nun haucht auch der im Juni 70 gewordene Entertainer Tom Jones der Musik seiner Jugend neues Leben ein: Gospel, Blues und Rock 'n' Roll. Dylans «What Good Am I?» interpretiert er mit brüchiger Stimme à la Cash und «Strange Things» von Rosetta Tharpe gibt er im Stil eines Rockabillysängers. Der Tiger laucht zwar nicht mehr, knurrt aber noch ganz verwegen.

(TF) ★★★



Frankfurter Rundschau: “With Praise & Blame an age-appropriate image change,

Tom Jones is heading for but he keeps his vitality.”

NEUE CD VON TOM JONES

Fremdem Liedgut verpflichtet

Mit 70 Jahren ist noch lange nicht Schluss: Auf «Praise & Blame» singt Tom Jones Spirituals von Bob Dylan, John Lee Hooker & Co.

Sein Leben liest sich wie die klassische Tellerwäscherkarriere: Tom Jones, vor zwei Monaten 70 geworden, begann einst als Staubsaugervertreter und tingelte mit seiner Rock-'n'-Roll-Band durch die Vereinshallen in seiner Heimat Wales, bevor er 1965 mit dem Solohit «It's Not Unusual» den Durchbruch schaffte. Darauf eroberte er mit Elvis Las Vegas, stürmte mit der innovativen Technogruppe Art of Noise die Charts und widmete sich dem Rhythm & Blues. Im neuen Jahrtausend wurde er von Königin Elizabeth II. zum Ritter geschlagen.

Intuitive Entscheidungen

Die Experimentierfreudigkeit und Wandelbarkeit, die der Ausnahmekünstler mit vibrierender Inbrunst über 45 Jahre an den Tag legte, prägt auch sein jüngstes Werk «Praise & Blame». Doch wie erfindet sich ein Künstler neu, der in seiner Karriere fast alles erreicht und ausprobiert hat, was das Musikerherz begehrt? «Normalerweise entscheide ich

«Spirituals zu singen – diese Idee geisterte schon lange in meinem Kopf herum.»

Tom Jones

intuitiv, in welche Richtung mein nächstes Album gehen soll», erzählt der Entertainer im Gespräch. «Die Idee, eine Sammlung von Spirituals aufzunehmen, geisterte aber schon lange

in meinem Kopf herum.» Diese umzusetzen, war ihm bisher allerdings immer abgeschlagen worden. «Plattenfirmen mögen keine Konzeptalben. Die lassen sich nur schwer verkaufen.» Erst als Island Records ihn bat, ein Weihnachtsalbum aufzunehmen, sah Sir Tom Jones seine Chance gekommen. Zusammen mit Produzent Ethan Johns, der bereits mit der US-Rockband Kings of Leon und dem Sänger/Songwriter Rufus Wainwright arbeitete, zog er sich in ein kleines Studio im Westen Englands zurück, um eine ausgewählte Sammlung an Spirituals einzuspielen.

Neuinszenierung mit Herz

Mit einer kleinen Rhythmusgruppe hauchte der Sänger elf Songs von Künstlern wie Bob

Musix:

“I am on the right way with this album, says Jones. We totally agree about this.”

★★★★ American Songwriter

Focus:

“His striking voice succeeds facile to inculcate new freshness to the old pieces”

Dylan, Billy Joe Shaver und Susan Werner, die er selbst suchte, neues Leben ein. «Ich habe mir unzählige alte Gospel- und Rock-'n'-Roll-Alben angehört und dann jene Songs ausgewählt, von denen ich das Gefühl hatte, dass ich ihnen meinen eigenen Stempel aufdrücken kann.» Das habe nicht immer auf Anhieb geklappt. Manchmal habe er verschiedene Versuche starten müssen, bis es sich richtig anfühlte.

«Praise & Blame» gefällt nun als eines der wohl eindrucklichsten Werke seiner Karriere. Bereits die ersten Klänge lassen den Herzschlag ruhiger werden, die Welt kommt zum Stillstand. Sanft und gefühlvoll umgarnet Jones' Stimme in Bob Dylans «What Good Am I?» das Schlagzeug und bezirzt die Gitarre, die sich daraufhin leidenschaftlichste Töne entlocken lässt. In John Lee Hookers «Burning Hell» zeigt er sich von einer ganz anderen Seite: Da schmirgelt seine Stimme rau um das Instrumentenarrangement und hinterlässt spürbare Kratzer im harmonischen Zusammenspiel.

Ein später Meilenstein

Durch dieses Wechselspiel von Emotionen und der fast schon greifbaren Intensität, mit der Tom Jones sich auf «Praise & Blame» fremdes Liedgut zu eigen macht, entsteht jene magische Atmosphäre, die bedingungslos fesselt. Das erfordert einiges an Mut und Kraft. Woher er diese nimmt? «Ich liebe es zu singen. Und ich bin noch nicht bereit abzutreten», meint er lachend. Und macht sich auf zum nächsten Termin.

SARAH ELENA SCHWERZMANN

CD: Tom Jones, «Praise & Blame», Island Records/Universal Music.

«Ich liebe es zu singen. Und ich bin noch nicht bereit abzutreten.»

Tom Jones

Instead of knickers, audiences

Tom Jones has waited a long time to record a gospel and blues album — and he's glad, because he now has the voice to sing it

JIM FUSILLI

HAVE lunch with Tom Jones and of course you'll discover that he's known just about everyone in show business. It's the context for the conversation that's surprising. At age 70, Jones is releasing *Praise and Blame*, a bluesy gospel recording produced by Ethan Johns. Listen to this remarkable album and you're reminded that he's always had a golden voice.

"Tom Jones can sing anything!" Van Morrison once shouted during an impromptu set with the singer at the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood. Frank Sinatra liked the way he sang, too.

But rarely has Jones laid bare his voice in the service of profound spiritual emotions.

Praise and Blame features traditional gospel and blues originally recorded by Jessie Mae Hemphill, Mahalia Jackson and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, among others. Bob Dylan, Billy Joe Shaver and Susan Werner represent contemporary songwriters.

On the down-tempo numbers, the arrangements are solemn but not stodgy, and when the band kicks in hard, as on *Didn't it Rain* and *Strange Things*, it churns away at the spot where gospel and early rock 'n' roll intersected.

Thus *Praise and Blame* has an earthy quality not usually associated with Jones, who is best known for his hip-shaking days onstage when he opened his shirt to the navel, wore skin-tight slacks and belted out *What's New Pussycat?*, *It's Not Unusual*, *Delilah* and his other brassy hits, backed by big bands.

For *Praise and Blame*, Jones did his vocals live with a small, tight group of musicians. There was some thought given to overdub-

THE AUSTRALIAN
THE HEART OF THE NATION

02.08.10

ing a variety of instruments to fatten the sound, but "the more we did", he says, "the more we realised we weren't off when I was just singing with the rhythm section".

"When I started playing in pubs and clubs, I worked with only a rhythm section," the singer says at a restaurant just a short drive from his mansion in Bel Air, California. "We'd do rockabilly and boogie-woogie."

When I mention that his 1966 hit *Green, Green Grass of Home* tapped into country, the singer says that a lot of his albums have been "a mishmash" of music. "There's been bits of a bluesy, country thing."

Jones says he's been a fan of what today is called roots music since he listened to the radio as a child in Treforest, Wales.

"We only had two channels: Home Service, which was news, and BBC Light. I wanted more gospel and blues because they didn't play much of it, they had to play everything."

"When I first heard blues music," he continues, "I didn't realise it came from the hardship blacks were going through in America. It was the sound that got me, I didn't know why or how. But the thing of it kept jumping out at me."

Still, he'd long resisted the temptation to cover authentic gospel and blues. "My voice wouldn't have been quite right 20-25 years ago," he says.

Now his voice is a smoky baritone. "It seems to me it's more guttural now."

He's always enjoyed singing gospel among friends, including Elvis Presley, whom he knew when they both worked the Las Vegas Strip. Presley encouraged

Jones to record a gospel album. On *Praise and Blame*, Jones covers *Run On*, a gospel standard Presley recorded.

"I remember singing gospel with Elvis in his suite... But I didn't want to do it like he did. Ethan said, 'Why don't we rock it up more?'" On the stark track, Jones is accompanied by Johns on

boogie guitar and Jeremy Stacey on drums. Similarly, on his raging version of John Lee Hooker's *Burning Hell*, he's backed only by Johns on a raw slide guitar and by Stacey's simple drum pattern.

"I met John Lee in 64," Jones says. "We were on the same show on BBC2. Years later, he called me in Vegas... He didn't have to introduce himself. I knew him by that voice."

"All of my heroes, I met," he says, then adds: "No, Sam Cooke I didn't meet. Never met Al Jolson."

The album's opener, Dylan's *What Good am I?*, establishes the tone, but perhaps the disc's most affecting ballad is Jones's reading of Werner's *Did Trouble Me*. It opens with Jones singing by himself. A guitar's growl and a bass drum enter discreetly, then a banjo skirts underneath the vocal, rooting the performance in folk and gospel. Gillian Welch joins in on the trembling chorus.

Praise and Blame reconnects Jones not only to roots music but to his own roots.

The album was recorded at Peter Gabriel's studio in Box Wiltshire, the village where Jones's grandmother spent her childhood. Between sessions, Jones would walk in the countryside.

"There was a waterfall, and I found myself wondering if my grandmother came around here as a kid. She loved Nelson Eddy

may start throwing prayer books

and Jeannette MacDonald. *Rose Marie*, she loved that song. I sang it. On my fifth birthday, she gave me a card and signed it, 'To the little gentleman who sang *Rose Marie*.'"

A new generation may know Jones best from his version of Prince's *Kiss* or his hit *Sex Bomb* from his 1999 album *Reload*, in which he covered Iggy Pop, Talking Heads, the Kinks and others. It's his voice that appeals to these followers, not his gyrating moves of the past.

"In Europe, especially in Great Britain, for a lot of these kids, *Delilah* is a great singalong," he says.

When he performed *What Good am I* on the BBC's *Later with Jools Holland*, he got a sense of what a rock audience's reaction to *Praise and Blame* would be.

"Everything just stopped," he recalls. "You could hear a pin drop. Corinne Bailey Rae came over with tears in her eyes, and I thought, 'Thank God it's having the same effect on people that it had on me.'"

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"My voice wouldn't have been quite right 20-25 years ago. It seems to me it's more guttural"

TOM JONES



"It's sparse, hot and powerful"
The Oregonian

"Tom Jones is in the best keeping between Singer/Songwriter, Blues and Soul. A wise later work without due date. Tips for listening: 'What Good Am I?', 'If I Give My Soul', 'Run On'."
Reinhold Gruber, Lukas Luger –
Oberösterreichische Nachrichten

At 70, Welsh singer Tom Jones is leaving the lights of Vegas and heading towards the music of home, **Laura Barton** writes

He's not altogether what I expected. Surveying the menu in a half-empty restaurant in central London this lunchtime, Tom Jones appears a rather toned-down version of the man I expected to meet. He is 70 now, of course, and perhaps time has muted the bravado and the innuendo, the hair dye and the tan, perhaps he has realised he has little left to prove.

In truth, Jones has made a career out of the unexpected. In the 1960s, when the charts were filled with Beatles wannabes, he sang solo, belting out hits such as *Delilah* and *What's New Pussycat?* He conquered America and recast himself as a country singer before he succeeded in reviving his chart career in the late '80s with a cover

of the Prince song *Kiss*.

This year, he performs another volte-face, returning with what may well prove the finest recording of his career. *Praise & Blame* is a collection of blues numbers and spirituals, Bob Dylan and John Lee Hooker songs, material that showcase Jones's remarkable voice: pared back and unadorned, it carries the weight and the ruminative quality of late Johnny Cash's final recordings.

It began as a Christmas album. Island Records, presumably surveying the lucrative festive market, asked Jones to record "some carols, or something religious for Christmas", he recalls. "And it was suggested, thank God, that we approach the producer Ethan Johns," he explains.

Johns is famed for his raw, organic

approach to recording, and for being the son of an even more famous producer, Glyn Johns.

"He said, 'I like it to be real, we pick the songs, get in the studio, get in there with a rhythm section and try them out.'"

They started with two songs, *Did Trouble Me* and the gospel number *Rum On*. It was while recording the latter that the direction revealed itself.

"Suddenly it happened," Jones says, "it caught fire."

After that, the path seemed obvious. "We thought, 'Let's look for some spiritual things, uplifting things, things that mean something.'"

He says it almost tenderly. "And they have to be strong when you've only got a rhythm section, they have to speak for

themselves, really..."

For Jones, it was in many ways a

return to the beginning. He grew up the son of a miner in Pontypridd, in south Wales, "where music was a very big thing, especially singing. I don't know whether it was because you didn't have to have an instrument - because you've already got it, it's built in. And it's expressive - I think the voice is more expressive than anything else..."

They sang everywhere, he says, at birthday parties, at weddings and at funerals. "There's one in Wales that we do called *The Old Rugged Cross*," he says a little mistily. "It's sung at all funerals. And I wanted to get it on here, on this album, as a cappella version, but it didn't fit."

At school, they tried to make him sing in the choir. "I didn't like to be restricted, because when you're in a choir, you have a part to sing and you sing it. I always liked singing on my own. Even when I was carol singing door-to-door, I would go by myself..."

By his own estimation, he "didn't shine much" in music class. "Because they wanted you to sing in a certain way," he explains. "But then on a Friday afternoon in the junior school, we had little concerts. So I'd get up and sing - just songs of the day... *Ghost Riders in the Sky* was a big song when I was a kid, Vaughn Monroe did it, and Frankie Laine. But again it was one of those songs - cowboy, country, gospelly."

He drums the restaurant table, rolling from thumb to palm to finger. "That rhythm, it's the bass drum, and I used to do that while I sang," he smiles. "My father showed me how to do it, so I could do it myself at school."

He sang in church, too, of course, a Presbyterian chapel where he was always late for the service and the heavy sound of the organ put the fear of God into him.

Even in the late '50s and early '60s, when he began his music career in earnest, singing in the clubs and pubs with a cover band, he sang with just a rhythm section and drew on the songs that stirred him. "It was a cover band, you know?" he says. "And they were doing pop songs when I met them, they wanted to do more sort of Beatles songs and things that were happening then. But what I did was get them to do more '50s rock'n'roll, which I loved. And I was reverting to gospelly stuff. I used to do ballads like *I Believe*, which is a religious song."

At first, people didn't take Jones's ambition seriously. But the young Jones was undeterred, spurred on by a television program he had once watched as a boy. "It was *The Al Jolson Story*, and it showed him growing up and how he got into show business, and I was really interested in that. I thought, 'Wow! I want to be like this fella! He's moving and singing!'"

The moves came naturally, he says. "I've always liked to dance - I've got a natural rhythm. My mother tells of how she used to carry me, Welsh-fashion: you know, where you wrap a blanket around the baby and the mother so she could do things around the house, and something would come on the radio that was rhythmic and I would start to move in the shawl."

By the time he was playing the clubs, the moves had developed into something more raunchy, a little less family-friendly. He laughs, and looks bashfully at his plate of fish and chips. "Oh, yeah, I got that - 'Ooh, that Tom, he's a naughty boy!'"

Sex has always been a key component to the Tom Jones appeal. His was a mischievous raunchiness, propped up by a reputation for being a ladies' man, despite a marriage to his childhood sweetheart that continues to this day.

But obvious sexiness is absent from *Praise & Blame*; the album is seductive, certainly - his voice has never sounded so sultry or so rich - but the themes are more autumnal, issues of choice and responsibility. Even the title, he's quick to explain, is a reference to the life he has lived. "I've been praised throughout my career, and I've been blamed for things, too," he says neatly.

What has he been blamed for? "Well, you know," he near-blushes, "maybe my pants were a little too tight. Maybe they were. And the knicker-throwing. As if I'd instigated it." "But once things happen, you try and turn it around to your advantage."

After the death of his long-time manager and friend, Gordon Mills, in 1986, Jones's son, Mark, took over as his father's manager. His career had entered a lull, and he was busy recording country music for the American market. "But I was digging my own grave then, I realised," he says, "because I was ignoring the rest of the world." It was a strange position in which to find himself.

There was a lack of decent material sent his way, "and I was doing a lot of live shows; and when you're doing a lot of live shows you're not so concerned about the recordings. Which I should've been. People have asked me, 'If you had

your time again...', and I always say I would concentrate more, in the 1970s, on the recordings."

Instead, he was getting knickers thrown at him. "You get caught up in it," he says. "They were getting in the way, they were making it look..." he looks mildly despairing, "and I didn't want it to be that way." It took a few words of advice from his son to mark a change. "Mark said to me, 'Look, if they throw them, leave them - don't go catching them and wiping your brow with them.'"

It's been 25 years since then. Certainly, you sense that Jones himself is more than ready to move on: he's more contemplative than one might expect, and there is a faint sadness to him too. He talks of his wife's emphysema, of realising he himself is not invincible, of how singing a particular line in *Did Trouble Me* catches him: "If I let things stand that shouldn't be," he sings it softly.

"I suppose the older I've got, the more I've thought it, about the fact that if you do an album, you've got to think, 'Now, what is this album?' Not just do a mish-mash of songs, like I used to do." The surprise, for him as much as us, is that the real Tom Jones is not found between the Vegas lights and the knicker-strewn stage, but here among the hymns of home.

Praise & Blame is released on Island and out now.

Guardian

Look, if they throw them [knickers], leave them - don't go catching them and wiping your brow with them.

"...70 year old Jones sings with such a force that it leaves no doubt he is still a very competent vocalist."

Jyllands-Posten ★★★★★

"There's lots to smile about when it comes to this, Jones' strongest effort in a decade"

Gaffa ★★★★★

West Australian

Friday, July 30, 2010

Tom Jones

Praise & Blame: Universal
Review: Michael Dwyer
★★★★



If great singers are great actors, Tom Jones deserves a lifetime achievement Oscar for this one: an album of God-fearing tunes borrowed from traditional sources and blues/soul giants such as Sister Rosetta

Tharpe, John Lee Hooker and Pops Staples. Unlike Johnny Cash or Elvis Presley, this Las Vegas devil has never evinced an inkling of spiritual devotion or penitence for his wicked ways but, after 39 albums, he can sure read a script and hit his marks.

His route to Damascus begins with a simmering growl through Dylan's *What Good Am I?* then hits a high note with Jessie Mae Hemphill's similarly themed call to humanity, *Lord Help*. Roots rock producer Ethan Johns (Ryan Adams, Kings of Leon) deftly steers him from the upbeat hollers of *Burning Hell* and Don't Knock to the banjo ramble of *Ain't No Grave*. After decades chasing the club/pop market, it's incredibly refreshing to hear Jones sweat to slapping rockabilly and church organ. His conviction may be suspect but it beats singing the phonebook.

★★★★
Los Angeles Times

The Age
Friday, July 30, 2010
EG Reviews



Praise & Blame
Tom Jones
(Universal) ★★★★★

IF GREAT singers are great actors, Tom Jones deserves a lifetime achievement Oscar for this one: an album of God-fearing tunes borrowed from traditional sources and blues/soul giants such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe, John Lee Hooker and Pops Staples. Don't dwell on the obvious parallels. Unlike Johnny Cash or Elvis Presley, this Las Vegas devil has never evinced an inkling of spiritual devotion or penitence for his wicked ways but, after 39 albums, he can sure read a script and hit his marks. His route to Damascus begins with a simmering growl through Dylan's *What Good Am I?* then hits a high note with Jessie Mae Hemphill's similarly themed call to humanity, *Lord Help*. From there, roots rock producer Ethan Johns (Ryan Adams, Kings of Leon) deftly steers him from the upbeat hollers of *Burning Hell* and *Don't Knock* to the banjo ramble of *Ain't No Grave*. After decades chasing the club/pop market, it's incredibly refreshing to hear Jones sweat to slapping rockabilly and church organ. His conviction may be suspect but it beats singing the phonebook.

MICHAEL DWYER

***"...a record that doesn't waste a note."
The New York Times***

***"... gutbucket and gospel, delivering 12 emotionally
charged sermon-songs with
raw-throated abandon." Entertainment Weekly***

***"Listen to this remarkable album you're reminded
that he's always had a golden voice."
Wall Street Journal***

***"It's Jones's 'O'Brother,' 'Raising Sand' and
'Ain't No Grave' all rolled into one..."
Washington Post***

***"...so raw and pure that every impassioned note and
every percussive beat hits the heart."
Grade: A Dallas Morning News***

***"...Jones sounds genuinely convincing -
and redeemed." USA Today***

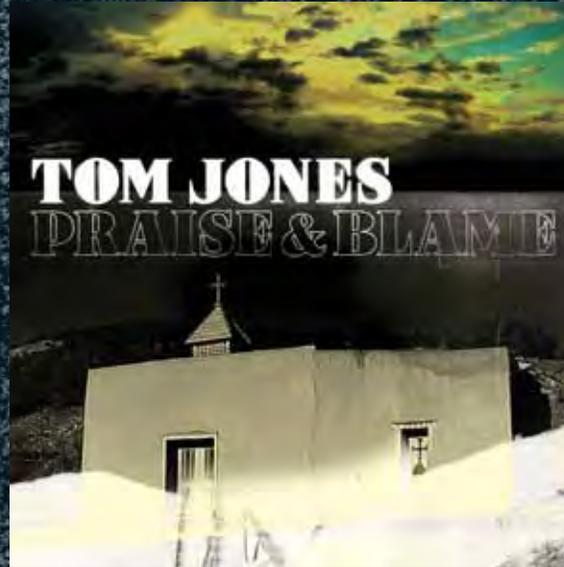
"Tom Jones is no joke." Fresh Air, NPR

***"This is not a quiet rumination; this is testifying.
There may not be a bolder noise
in popular music this year than Jones..."
St. Petersburg Times***

***"...Tom Jones is getting plenty right on
"Praise & Blame." My Old Kentucky Blog***

***"...constantly emotive and impeccably crafty in its
selection of covers, each tailor-made for Jones'
still-explosive belt." Austin American Statesman***





Produced by Ethan Johns (Kings Of Leon, Laura Marling) Praise & Blame includes interpretations of works by Susan Werner, Bob Dylan and John Lee Hooker, alongside takes on traditional songs previously rendered by the likes of The Staple Singers, Mahalia Jackson and Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

"...it's an extraordinary achievement..."
The Independent ★★★★★



www.tomjones.com