



Tom Waits
Alice



Blood Money



Anti Records

By Dan Marek
College Times

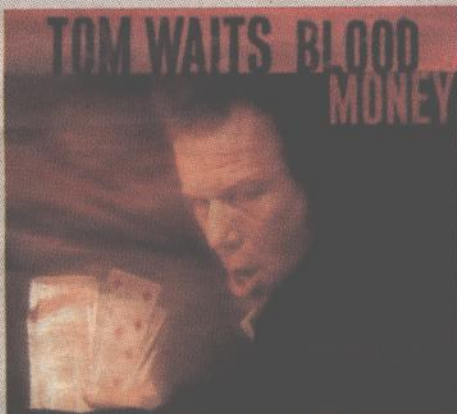
Singer and
songwriter Tom
Waits broke the

mold when his 1973 album "Closing Time" hit stores. His dramatic and gritty voice sang the troubles of every man while keeping enough of his apocalyptic carnival of music and sound to differentiate himself from all others.

Later fans, picked up by 1999's "Mule Variations", found his grimy saloon music dark and howling, while older fans remember his big round hat protruding from behind a piano and a thick haze of cigarette smoke while his whiskey torn voice belted on about broken hearts and old lament.

For an artist who usually takes his time between albums, Waits has been quite prolific in his recent releases. Releasing "Alice" and "Blood Money" on the same day drove many penny-pinching fans crazy over which album to buy – the album of creepy love songs or the dark and tormented one.

"Blood Money" was actually penned in 1992 to accompany a Robert Wilson (who also made the Grammy winning "Black Rider" with Waits) avant-garde opera in Hamburg called "Woycek." The album's torment and anguish matches the 1837 Georg Buchner play about an insane soldier subjected to bizarre medical experiments by the army until he snaps and kills his lover.



On the other hand, "Alice" is loosely based on the obsessions that writer Lewis Carroll ("Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass") had with inspiration Alice Liddell and the love that could never be.

Both albums project a German expressionist jazz balladry that pours out of the cabaret of grime and freaks, but "Alice", with its love torn lyrics and back-to-back metaphorical genius, tops the two.

Love is a ghost haunting the album, where cinematic memories turn into sardonic pity for the characters of broken hearts and inescapable loss.

The title track transforms the innocent little girl into the deep icy depths of the heart with, "And the skates on the pond they spell Alice...But I must be insane / To go skating on your name / And by tracing it twice / I fell through the ice of Alice."

The instrumentals on "Blood Money" – "Calliope" and "Knife Chase" – flow fear and dander of the ragged and demented while "Alice"'s two-faced "Poor Edward" and the 1920s-like jazz film noir melody of "Kommienezupadt" will keep your ear until the final note drops.

While "Blood Money" is just as important as its sister in Waits closet of skeletons, "Alice" by far precedes many of his collected 'dirty shirts' gathering dust by his so well worn shoes.

New Releases 1.21: Bobby Bland Blues at Midnight; Bombshell Rocks From Here and On; Burnside Project The Networks, the Circuits, the Streams, the Harmonies; Coronet Blue Coronet Blue; Crooked Fingers Red Devil Dawn; Dance Disaster Movement We Are from Nowhere; The Delgados Hate; Endless Struggle Till the End; d. Henry Fenton Autumn Sweet; Future Bible Heroes The Lonely Robot (CD); Carlos Amador I Evahoy; Jeff Mancini So; Mint Mint So Is Everything; Holonaw Holonaw; The (International) Noise Conspiracy Bigger Cages, Longer Chains and U for Sale (EPs); King Missile III