

Associated Press

Music Review: Gretchen Peters

Burnt Toast & Offerings

By Tom Gardner

Gretchen Peters, “Burnt Toast & Offerings” (Scarlet Letter Records): Gretchen Peters underscores the songwriter part of the singer-songwriter label. Even if the words occasionally get a little melancholy on “Burnt Toast & Offerings” – her self-described “divorce album” – they are as well-crafted as words are likely to get.

Peters, better known for writing Martina McBride’s “Independence Day” and Faith Hill’s “The Secret of Life” has always been an under-appreciated singer with a unique voice perfectly suited for interpreting her words and music.

With her 23-year marriage to husband, producer and booking agent Green Daniel ended, Peters could have written a real downer. Instead, she correctly says it has a “lot of happy songs on it.”

And a lot of introspection.

For words, it’s: “This town is a lot like me/Sadder and wiser than it used to be/A little sprawled out, a little rundown/I wonder what’s gonna become of this town ... This town is a lot like me/A little coat of paint and some TLC/and she’ll light right up if you come around.”

Peters goes uptempo with a tinkly piano-dominated “England Blues” and does some nice country-flavored blues with her “Thirsty” and the Johnny Mercer-Harold Arlen chestnut “One for My Baby.”

Her vocals are supported by skillful and varied arrangements that supply a B-3, a cello, violins (not fiddles), a concertina, a clarinet and a euphonium.

CHECK OUT THIS TRACK: “Jezebel.” The singer-songwriter at her best in both genres with a splendid arrangement. The words – “Ah, Jezebel you’ve been to

heaven and hell too/And love's the only refuge that you've found/But Jezebel
love's all that matters now." Biographical? Maybe. But a pretty song.