

= Closing Time (album) =

Closing Time is the debut studio album by the American singer @-@ songwriter Tom Waits , released in March 1973 on Asylum Records . Produced and arranged by former Lovin ' Spoonful member Jerry Yester , Closing Time was the first of seven of Waits ' major releases through Asylum .

The album is noted for being predominantly folk influenced although Waits intended for Closing Time to be " a jazz , piano @-@ led album . " Upon release , the album was mildly successful in the United States , although it did not chart and received little attention from music press in the United Kingdom and elsewhere internationally . Critical reaction to Closing Time was positive . The album 's only single ? " Ol ' ' 55 " ? attracted attention due to a cover version by Waits ' better @-@ known label mates The Eagles . Other songs from the album were covered by artists ranging from Tim Buckley to Bette Midler . The album has been certified Gold in the United Kingdom and has gained a contemporary cult following among rock fans . The album has been reissued four times since its initial release : on LP in 1976 , on CD in 1992 and 1999 , and 180 gram LP in 2010 .

= = Background = =

Tom Waits began his musical career in 1970 , performing every Monday night at The Troubadour , a venue in Los Angeles , California . Waits ' setlist at these series of shows , described as " hootenanny nights " , consisted primarily of Bob Dylan covers , although it included songs which would later appear on Closing Time and its successor , The Heart of Saturday Night (1974) . Among the songs performed were " Ice Cream Man " , " Virginia Avenue " , " Ol ' ' 55 " , " I Hope That I Don 't Fall in Love with You " , " Shiver Me Timbers " and " Diamonds on my Windshield . " Around this time , Waits began working as a doorman at a San Diego , California , club , The Heritage , which was a coffee house by day . In November 1970 , Waits performed his first paid show at The Heritage , earning \$ 25 for his performance . At a Troubadour performance in summer 1971 , Herb Cohen inadvertently spotted Waits and became his manager . Through Cohen 's contacts , Waits recorded demos in Los Angeles in late summer 1971 with producer Robert Duffey , later released as The Early Years in two volumes , against Waits ' wishes . In order to focus on his career , Waits relocated from San Diego to Los Angeles in early 1972 and performed more frequently at The Troubadour , where David Geffen discovered him performing " Grapefruit Moon . " The performance , which " floored " Geffen , led Geffen to negotiate with Waits ' manager Cohen , and Waits signed to Asylum Records within a month .

= = Recording = =

Prior to the recording of the album , Waits became friends with his designated producer Jerry Yester and one afternoon in early 1972 recorded a pre @-@ production tape in Yester 's residence . The instrumentation , recording arrangements and musicians were also discussed during this session with Waits making " it absolutely clear he wanted a standup bass player . " Drummer John Seiter , guitarist Peter Klimes , trumpeter Tony Terran and additional guitarist Shep Cooke were recruited through Yester and through Seiter , jazz bassist Bill Plummer was hired .

The main recording sessions for Closing Time took place at Sunset Sound Recorders in Hollywood , California ? where Buffalo Springfield , Joni Mitchell , Neil Young and The Doors had previously recorded ? during spring 1972 . Yester fronted production and the sessions were held almost immediately after Waits ' record deal , and were described " quick and efficient . " Waits was " nervous , but confident enough in his own material " during the beginning of the sessions ; however , as the sessions progressed , Waits and Yester " were pulling against each other " over the direction which the album would take , with Waits wanting a jazz @-@ laden record and Yester more focused on producing a folk @-@ based album . Despite this , Waits was " absolutely communicative " with his fellow musicians , articulating his direction and using metaphors to describe how he wanted the songs to sound . The sessions took a total of ten days , with the first two days focusing on " getting

used to [the studio] . " Both Waits and Yester wanted to record during the evening , but as no slots were available , it was recorded through the morning and afternoon " from ten to five every day . " During the recording of " Ol ' ' 55 " , Seiter contributed backing vocals and " came up with a perfect harmony line that started faintly before the chorus even began . " The sessions concluded with a total of nine songs completed . Though unsatisfied with the amount of songs , a second recording session was arranged the following week in United Western Recorders . The final session for Closing Time began the following Sunday , with guest musicians Arni Egilsson replacing Plummer and Jesse Erlich performing cello . The title track , " Closing Time " , was the only song recorded in full , and Yester later described the session as " the most magical session I 've ever been involved with . At the end of it , no one spoke for what felt like five minutes , either in the booth or out in the room . No one budged . Nobody wanted the moment to end . " String overdubs were later cut for " Martha " and " Grapefruit Moon " the following day . The final recordings were mixed and mastered at Wally Heider Studios in San Francisco .

= = Composition = =

Closing Time features an eclectic mix of musical styles . Songs such as " Ol ' 55 " , with its " gentle slipnote piano chords " , and " Old Shoes " , " a country @-@ rock waltz that picked up the feel of ' Ol ' 55 ' " , are usually considered folk @-@ like . Other songs such as " Virginia Avenue " , " Midnight Lullaby " , whose outro features an instrumental segment of the nursery rhyme " Hush Little Baby " , and " Grapefruit Moon " reveal a quieter , more jazz @-@ like temperament . " Ice Cream Man " is often noted as being the most " up @-@ tempo " song of the album , whereas " Lonely " is toned @-@ down and slow @-@ paced . The sophisticated piano melodies are often accompanied by trumpets , typical of the jazz sound that Waits originally designated for the album . Noticeable string arrangements are also featured on the album , on " Martha " and the final song " Closing Time " , the latter being purely instrumental .

The songs on Closing Time are often noted for their lyrical content and vary in form . " Ol ' ' 55 " narrates the story of a man riding " lickety splitly " in a car and is often seen as a song about escapism , " like his near @-@ contemporary Bruce Springsteen . " This theme is also present in " Old Shoes " which narrates another story about " a footloose young stud hitting the road and semi @-@ sneering " , particularly in lyrics such as " your tears cannot bind me anymore " and " my heart was not born to be tamed . " Other lyrics on the album are described as melancholic , particularly " Lonely " , " I Hope That I Don 't Fall in Love with You " and " Grapefruit Moon " , which are " both self @-@ conscious and lacklustre . " The intro to " Midnight Lullaby " borrows lyrics from the English nursery rhyme " Sing a Song of Sixpence " . This form of song @-@ writing became a lifelong habit of Waits following the writing of " Midnight Lullaby " , in which he " assembled lyrics from fragments of oral tradition . "

= = Packaging = =

Closing Time 's art was designed by Cal Schenkel . Schenkel 's front cover art was inspired by " Waits ' own idea of how the album should sound . " It depicts Waits leaning against a bar @-@ room piano which is furnished with a shot of rye , a bottle of beer , cigarettes , an ashtray and a small candle with a blue pool table lamp above Waits ' head . The back cover art is minimal and only features a photograph of Waits staring directly into the camera , reputedly taken after one of Waits ' performance at The Troubadour . Both photographs were taken by Ed Caraeff .

= = Release = =

Closing Time was released worldwide in March 1973 by Asylum . The album 's lead single , " Ol ' ' 55 " , was released a month prior to the album for promotion . The single featured the same song pressed on both sides of the record with the A @-@ side being a version recorded in mono and the B @-@ side recorded in stereo . Waits ' first national tour also coincided with the album 's release ,

and ran from April to June 1973 . The band line @-@ up for the tour consisted of Waits on vocals , acoustic guitar and piano , Bob Webb on double bass , Rich Phelps on trumpet , and John Forsha on guitar . The opening date of the tour was at The Cellar Door in Washington , D.C. opening for Tom Rush . The tour progressed and led to dates in venues such as Max 's Kansas City in New York and The Boarding House in San Francisco , opening for acts such as Danny O 'Keefe , Charlie Rich , Buffalo Bob Smith ? of Howdy Doody fame ? and John P. Hammond . A second promotional tour ran from November to December 1973 , opening for Frank Zappa . This tour consisted of only the stripped @-@ down line @-@ up of Waits on vocals , acoustic guitar , and piano , with Bob Webb on standup bass . Elektra Records re @-@ released Closing Time throughout Europe in 1999 on limited edition CD and in 2010 , Elektra and Asylum reissued the album on CD and LP , respectively .

= = Reception = =

Upon its release , Closing Time was received by the American music press with positive critical acclaim , although its coverage was limited . In its original Rolling Stone review , the album was positively referred to as " a remarkable debut album " , compared to Randy Newman , and was branded as a " boozier , earthier version of same and delights in rummaging through the attics of nostalgia , the persona that emerges from this remarkable debut album is Waits 's own , at once sardonic , vulnerable and emotionally charged " while former Village Voice editor and Pazz & Jop reviewer Robert Christgau noted that with his " jazz @-@ schooled piano and drawling delivery [...] Waits exploits an honest sentimentality which he undercuts just enough to be credible " , also noting his similarity to Newman . Allmusic held the album in high regard , describing " his lovelorn lyrics " as being " sentimental without being penetrating . But he also has a gift for gently rolling pop melodies " and his " self @-@ conscious melancholy can be surprisingly moving . " Billboard referred to Closing Time upon its release as " a hauntingly lovely new album of introspective songs and folk / jazz music which captures the essence of a moment , a thought or a love . "

The album received little coverage the United Kingdom and elsewhere internationally , with its promotion being little more than a featured advert in the NME . Closing Time did not chart upon its release although in 2000 , the album peaked at number 28 in the Irish Albums Chart . The album was certified Silver in the United Kingdom in 2004 with shipments of over 60 @,@ 000 copies and was later certified Gold in 2012 with shipments of over 100 @,@ 000 copies .

= = Influence = =

Closing Time reached a wider audience through cover versions of its songs by more successful artists and have since continued to have been covered . Later in 1973 , Tim Buckley released the album Sefronia , with a cover of " Martha , " the first ever cover of a Waits song by a known artist . Buckley 's version was also included in the 1995 tribute compilation Step Right Up : The Songs of Tom Waits . " Martha " was covered again in 1979 by Bette Midler on Saturday Night Live and by Meat Loaf on Welcome to the Neighborhood (1995) . " Ol ' ' 55 " was recorded by The Eagles for On the Border (1974) . " Rosie " was recorded by The Beat Farmers for their album The Pursuit of Happiness . (1987) " Ice Cream Man " was covered in 1991 by Screamin ' Jay Hawkins for Black Music For White People and " Lonely " was covered live by Bat for Lashes and included on the deluxe edition of her album Two Suns (2009) . Covers of " I Hope That I Don 't Fall in Love with You " can be found on Step Right Up (by 10 @,@ 000 Maniacs) , the The Prince and Me soundtrack (by Marc Cohn) , Hootie & the Blowfish 's Scattered , Smothered and Covered compilation , 10 @,@ 000 Maniacs ' Campfire Songs compilation , and " Heart and Soul , " an episode of Ally McBeal , where it is sung by Jon Bon Jovi .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Tom Waits .

= = Personnel = =

Musicians

Tom Waits ? vocals , piano , guitar , harmonium , harpsichord , celeste

Delbert Bennett ? trumpet

Shep Cooke ? guitar ; backing vocals on " Old Shoes (& Picture Postcards) "

Peter Klimes ? guitar ; pedal steel guitar on " Rosie "

Bill Plummer ? bass guitar

John Seiter ? drums ; backing vocals on " Ol ' 55 " and " Rosie "

Guest musicians

Arni Egilsson ? bass guitar on " Closing Time " (Instrumental)

Jesse Ehrlich ? cello on " Martha "

Tony Terran ? trumpet on " Closing Time " (Instrumental)

Technical personnel

Ed Caraeff ? photography

Richie Moore ? additional engineering

Cal Schenkel ? design , artwork

Jerry Yester ? production , engineering

= = Chart positions = =

= = Certifications = =