Pop Talk: Eagles' 'Eden' well worth the long wait

by George_Varga

LOS ANGELES - The Eagles had just finished the second selection of their concert recently at the newly opened Nokia Theater, where they were wrapping up a six-show series, when a smiling Glenn Frey addressed the sold-out audience of 7,000.

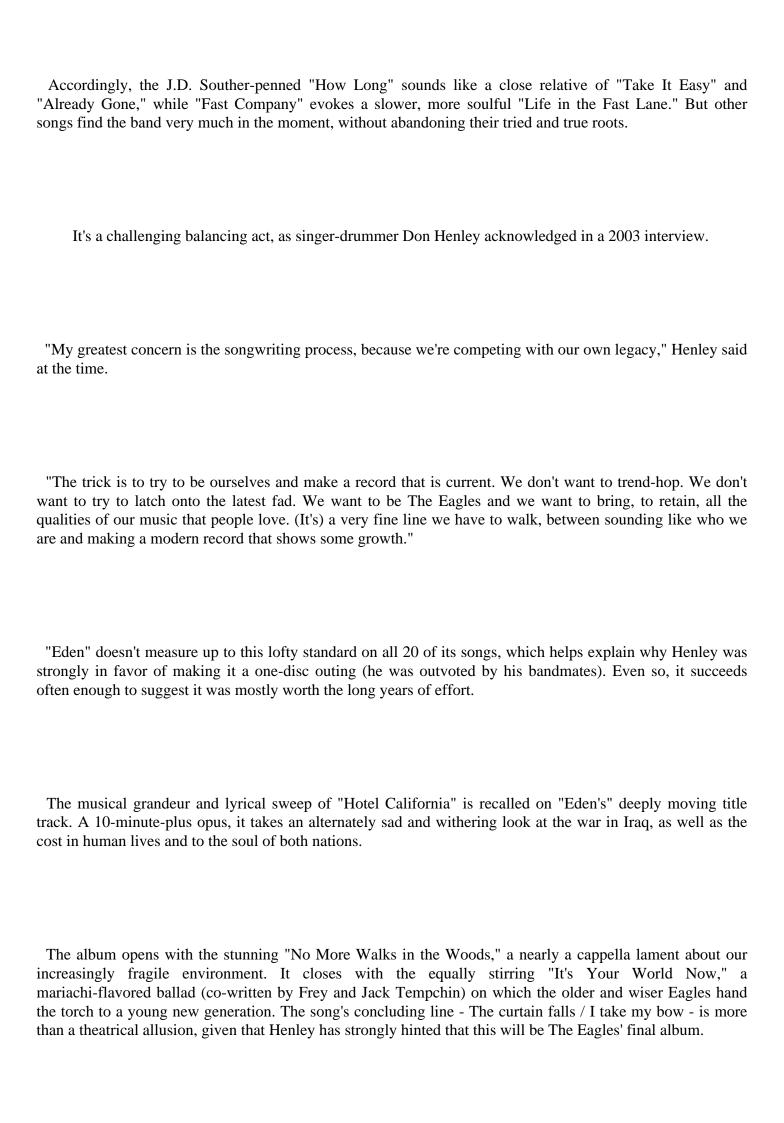
WORTH THE WAIT - The Eagles' first new studio album in 28 years only costs \$11.88 for a two-CD set (\$10.88 if you download it). But you can't get it in any record stores. CNS Photo courtesy of Andrew MacPherson. "Thanks for coming," said the singer-guitarist. "We have new songs. Ha ha!"

Frey's giddiness was perfectly understandable. After all, it's been 28 years since The Eagles released "The Long Run," which, until recently remained the band's newest studio album. But all that has changed with "Long Road Out of Eden," a two-CD outing that will at last enable this legendary group to explore its present and possible future, not just endlessly revisit its very lucrative musical past.

This point was quickly emphasized at the Los Angeles concert, which began with four songs from the new album: the midtempo country-rocker "How Long"; the wry, R&B-flavored "Busy Being Fabulous"; the sleek Timothy B. Schmit ballad "I Don't Want to Hear Any More"; and the honky-tonk-tinged "Guilty of the Crime."

But "new" is a relative term for an album that was nearly six years (and many disagreements) in the making. And what will likely delight longtime fans - while probably fueling the ire of the band's critics - is how instantly familiar much of "Eden" sounds.

Rather than add hip-hop beats, car-shaking bass lines or any flavor-of-the-month production touches, The Eagles play to their strengths. It's a sound move, since the band's "Greatest Hits" collection from 1976 is still the best-selling album of all time (more than 40 millions copies sold worldwide), while its concert tours since reuniting in 1994 consistently rank among the most profitable in or out of rock.



Tempchin also co-wrote the brooding "Somebody," which features some razor-sharp slide guitar work by Joe Walsh. Walsh, The Eagles' hardest-rocking (and most self-effacing) member, contributes just one song, "Staying at Home." It finds him slyly lampooning his now mild, no-longer-wild lifestyle (sample verse: Lately I've been stayin' at home / Workin' the crosswords / Turn off the phone / And I dream I'm on vacation / 'Cause I like the way that sounds.)
Happily, no one is slacking on "Eden," which also features strong contributions from keyboardist/trombonist Michael Thompson and saxophonist/violinist Al Garth.
It's not a flawless album, to be sure, and an air of compromise can be detected on several tracks. But its strengths easily outweigh its shortcomings, so much so that one hopes "Long Road Out of Eden" won't mark the end of the road for The Eagles.
REVIEW
The Eagles
"Long Road Out of Eden"
(available only at Wal-Mart stores and online at www.eaglesband.com)

3 1/2 stars.

Pop Talk: Eagles' 'Eden' well worth the long wait by George_Varga