Mary Kay Place adds life to music

By Drew Blakeman

Mary Kay Place, best known for her role on the television show "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," has just released a solid first album of country rock. "Tonite! At the Capri Lounge..." is by no means a novelty album.

"Tonite!" is a serious recording attempt, and is done very well. Place's vocals are crisp and clean, without the harsh nasal twang generally associated with country music. She is ably backed up by Emmylou Harris, Del Pitcher, Anne Murray, and Herb Peterson, all stars in their own right.

The instruments, although well performed, have pleasantly sharp guitar parts on several cuts — a more mellow sound would have been better. There is a strong, but not overpowering, rock beat adding some punch to these predominantly country selections.

Place shows her excellent song-writing talents on the two cuts from "Tonite!" which she composed. "Baby Boy," the first single released from the album, is already climbing quickly on the pop charts. "Vitamin L.," also written by Place, is due to be released shortly. Both are performed slightly tongue-in-cheek by Place, who also did them on "Mary Hartman."

Those two songs and "Settin' the Woods on Fire," also performed on the show — are the liveliest tunes on the record. "Streets of This Town" is equally good, but a much quieter piece with an objectionable guitar twang in parts. The song is subtitled "An Ode to Fernwood," the Ohio town in which the series takes place.

"Tonite! At the Capri Lounge..." is a fine, although slightly Rowdy, example of country rock. More should have been done with Mary Kay Place's songwriting abilities, and the instruments should have been toned down a bit so that the vocals could punch through better. It is a good first album, and with more polish future recordings ought to be far better than merely "good."

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