

The logo for Coquet-Shack.com is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The text "Coquet-Shack" is in a larger font, and ".com" is smaller and positioned to the right. The entire logo is contained within a light gray rounded rectangular box.

Gretchen Peters's new album, "Burnt Toast & Offerings", illustrates what a great writer she is. It also begs the question: why hasn't this brilliant vocalist made it big as an artist? This is an object lesson in how to write, sing and present Country music at it's very best. This album not only stands comparison with some of Country's "great" lady singers, it surpasses most of those who make the chart their second home. Comparisons are unfair, but the album sets out in the same very personal tone as a Mary Chapin Carpenter album would. When Peters said this is her "divorce" album. She may have meant it as a joke, but there's a lot of very personal stuff in here. Her skill, as a writer, is that she doesn't let that intrude on the listening experience. So you can listen to the album and try to work out what a traumatic experience her split after 23 years was, or you can listen to the wonderful music and take from it what you will. She IS one of country's finest writers. So to the music. That Peters made her name writing hits for Country is proved by "This Town", and it is unquestionably **the** highlight of the album's many highlights. It has all the Country music trimmings: a lilting beat, a great melody, and brilliant lyrics which actually give you the feeling of what decaying small town's are like all across the States. In an interview, Peters admits to something of a mid life crisis. "This Town" is her way of describing that, and that's what makes the lyrics so clever. She compares herself to the town, and concludes that "*there's still a lot of life*" in the heart of that town. Well there surely is a lot of life in Peters, and we can't praise the lyrics of "This Town" highly enough. They are the best. Sadly, it's way too Country for "Country radio". If it weren't for that (an indictment of "Country radio", not Gretchen Peters) this would give this fine singer-songwriter a top ten hit. The opening track, "Ghost", starts as an almost wistful declaration of existence, then moves into the puzzlement of why her partner never saw her. The chorus is so damned catchy, it's criminal, the vocals are brilliant, and the backing almost mystical. Superb. You can almost feel the heat of New Orleans as the brushes stroke the snare and the double bass thuds behind the sultry vocals of "Thirsty". This is a brilliant interpretation of how alcoholics feel: "**Always thirsty, never satisfied**". Peters has a loyal following in the United Kingdom, and tours there regularly. So it was no surprise to come across a track describing the experience. Her biggest hang-up in "England Blues" appears to be the fact that the Brits drive on the left-hand side of the road.