



Best Betts

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Stephen L. Betts

Gretchen Peters, *Burnt Toast and Offerings*, Scarlet Letter Records

On this, her fifth album, songwriter Gretchen Peters ("Independence Day," "The Secret of Life") delivers honest, often heartbreaking observations of life at the end of a 23-year marriage. Not surprisingly, there's plenty of bitterness and melancholy in many of the tracks here, but there's hopefulness as well. It's a breathtaking tightrope act that could have gone horribly wrong for a lesser artist. Gretchen Peters makes it look way too easy, even when every track tells you there's no way it could have been.