

# Petty picked for Super Bowl show

■ Being selected for the halftime show caps a big year for the Gainesville-born musician.

By **BILL DEAN**

*Sun entertainment editor*

In October, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers basked in the release of a Peter Bogdanovich documentary and video boxed set, and on Sunday the Gainesville native and band were tapped for another singular accomplishment — playing the Super Bowl halftime show on Feb. 3 in Phoenix.

Joining such other halftime alumni as the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and Prince (and getting the nod over such rumored candidates as The Eagles and Bruce Springsteen, according to Rolling Stone magazine), Petty's choice represents a selection both edgy and popular, industry watchers say.

"It says a lot for the Super Bowl producers, for one thing, to have that kind of taste, and I think it's smart of Tom Petty to do that," said Ray Waddell, Billboard magazine's executive



Petty

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director of content for touring and live entertainment.

"He doesn't do a lot of these commercial-type ventures. And he's maintained a mystique; he's not everywhere you look."

Instead of being a trendy, flavor-of-the-week pop act, Petty and group have the cachet of being somewhat edgy yet wildly popular — as well as a mainstay rock draw that's sold more than 50 million albums — Waddell said.

"And Tom Petty's also got enough class where he's not going to get the... and drop any F-bombs or make them regret their decision. What you do know is he (Petty) is going to deliver a very strong performance of songs that people know and love and it's going to be a good thing."

After the 2004 Super Bowl, the NFL and performers Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake were criticized after Timberlake pulled off part of Jackson's top and revealed an exposed breast.

Since then, the NFL has opted for such well-regarded, longtime performers as McCartney, the Stones and Prince — performers who also brought with them the built-in endorsement of being members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

In that respect, Petty and the Heartbreakers, who were



ROB C. WITZEL/Sun file photo

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers perform at the O'Connell Center on Sept. 21, 2006.

inducted in the Hall of Fame in 2002, fit right in. And this year's release of the 3½-hour documentary on Petty's career, "Runnin' Down A Dream" (directed by Bogdanovich and accompanied by a 240-page coffee-table book) underscore the point.

"There's a lot of integrity about what he does," Waddell said. "Beside the fact that he makes great music and he treats his fans very well, that's part of the reason he's enjoyed

a 30-year career. I would put him in with somebody like Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan."

Petty, who was born in Gainesville and cut his musical teeth with such local groups as The Epics and Mudcrutch, moved to California in 1974 and formed the Heartbreakers with fellow Gainesville musicians Mike Campbell, Benmont Tench and Stan Lynch.

The group went on to record such pop-rock hits and

classic-rock staples as "Free Fallin'," "Refugee," "You Don't Know How It Feels" and "Runnin' Down A Dream" and sell more than 50 million albums after releasing its self-titled debut in 1976.

An estimated U.S. audience of nearly 140 million TV viewers watched last year's Super Bowl, with Prince in the halftime show.

"It's one of the most high-profile, five-minute gigs a band could ever play," Waddell said.