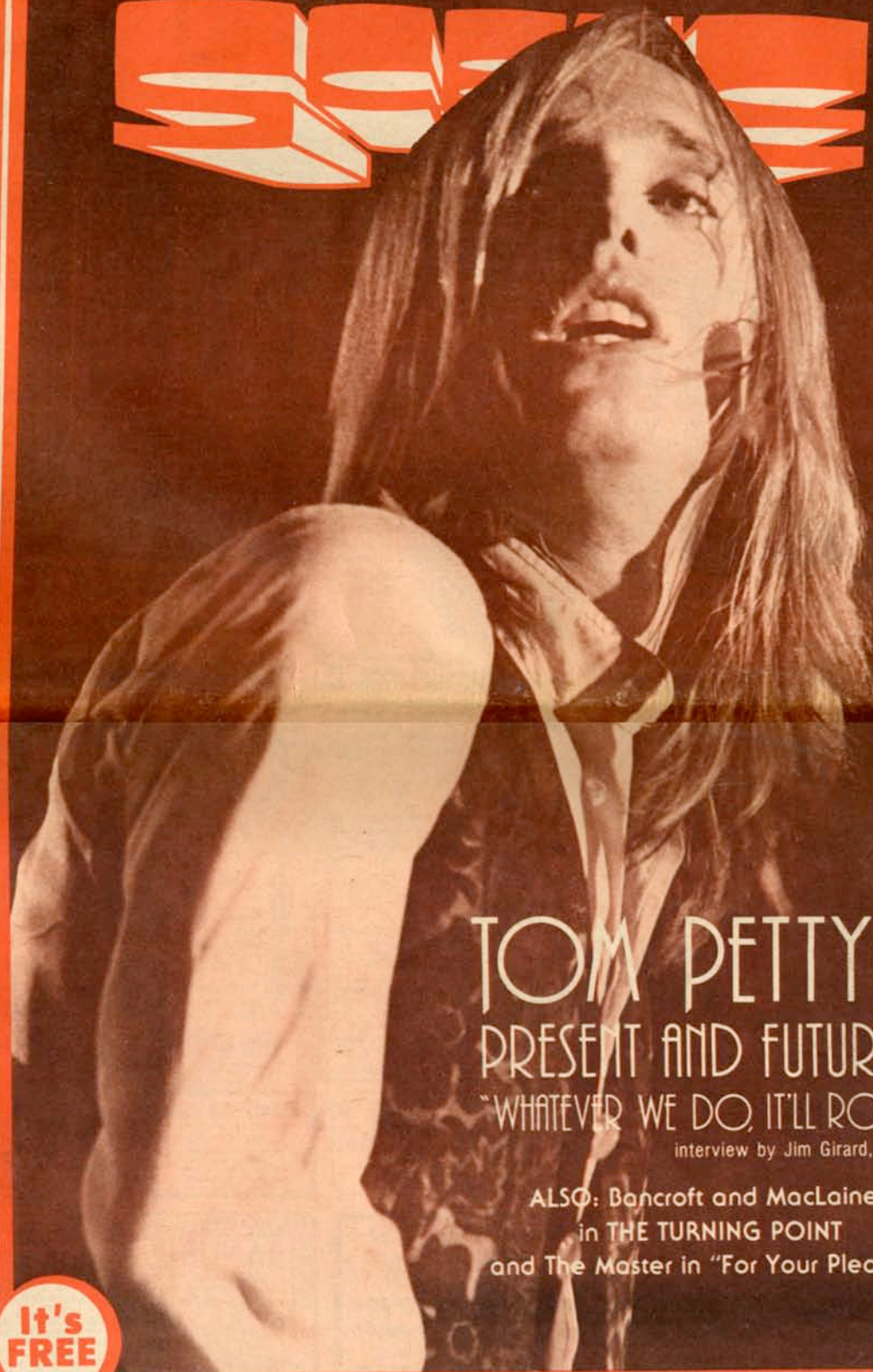


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TOM PETTY  
PRESENT AND FUTURE :  
"WHATEVER WE DO, IT'LL ROCK"

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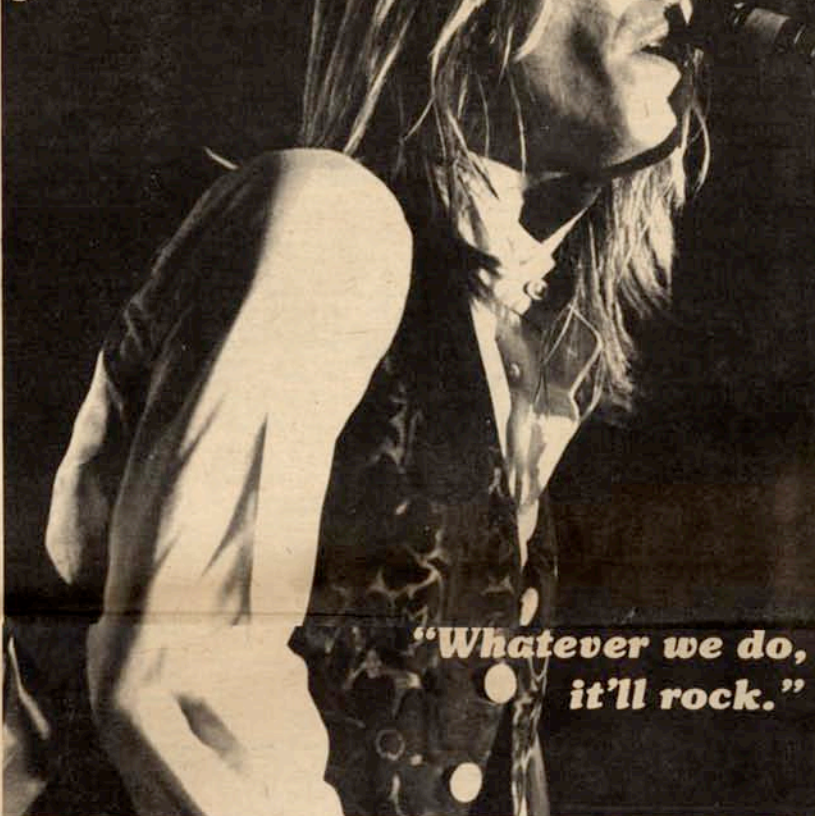
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# Tom Petty

## present and future:



"Whatever we do,  
it'll rock."

Petty photos by Linda Woods

by Jim Girard

Although Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers recorded their first album, TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS, on Shelter Records in the summer of '76, the band is just beginning to cut tracks for a second album. It wasn't that they didn't have any material, but rather that the fiveosome couldn't stay off the road long enough to think about recording.

To say the least, it's been a strange year and a half for Petty and band. The album took off slowly, but built momentum as the group toured the endless stream of showcases, rock clubs and small concert halls. By the time their album had officially dropped off of the music charts, everyone knew about the band and, suddenly, the album re-appeared on the charts when Petty's record company released a single from the album, the dynamic "Breakdown." The rock press gave Petty great reviews, and Roger McGuinn even recorded a version of Petty's "American Girl." Like it or not, Tom Petty wasn't through promoting or giving interviews for his debut album. However, the 26 year-old blond rocker from Gainesville, Florida is taking it all in his stride.

So, after waking him up one fine morning, SCENE finally pegged down the ardent rocker and got to talk with him at length. It turns out that Petty was filming his first movie part at the time.

"It was no big deal," Petty said modestly. "It was just a small part in the film they're doing, called FM. Michael Brandon is the star of the movie, and Martin Mull and

Cleavon Little are in it, too. It's all about radio and all that. I'm just in the film to play a rock star, and I get interviewed and there's a little crisis during that and that's all."

How did the rocking son of an insurance salesman feel about going Hollywood?

"Well, I had to be there on the set at 6:45 a.m. to start shooting every day; I didn't leave until 6 p.m.," Petty said. "It's a lot like making a record in a way — the routine of doing something over and over again to get it right. They had to get the sound and the lights just right, too. I'm glad it's over."

So, for Petty it's (figuratively) "Say Goodbye To Hollywood" for now, and back to the business of making rock and roll music.

"Yeah, in-between making movies and going on the road, I've been in the studio around the clock," he stated. "It's coming along really well so far. We don't have a working title yet — just No. 2, for the moment. But we are playing more with the studio than we did on the first album."

"I am up around the clock, literally. We've been looking forward to coming back to the studio. It's been so long since we got the band together; we were on the road forever. And it's nice to be in one place day after day. And, see, this new album is a real group project. Well, you've seen the live show and you know that the group is usually as involved as I am; everyone seems to forget the group."

The group consists of lead guitarist Mike Campbell, Benmont Tench on keyboards, drummer Stan Lynch and Ron Blair on bass guitar. The four Heartbreakers are as

important to the TP sound as is Petty himself. Moreso at times.

The combination makes for one of the finest live bands I have heard in a long time. They have an uncanny habit of blowing acts, for whom they're opening, off the stage. Seems every time they get their engines revved, The Heartbreakers get so wound up that crowds go crazy and the band gets called back for several encores, leaving the audience begging for more. Usually, the house lights go up before they can decide whether or not to do another encore.

That's why Petty wants to get the second album out by late February or early March: so The Heartbreakers can embark on a headlining tour of the U.S. I jokingly told Petty that there probably weren't any acts they hadn't opened up a show for anyway. He agreed.

Shelter Records teased the media last spring with a Petty mini-album, called OFFICIAL LIVE 'LEG. It was a four-song LP that was recorded in Boston's Paul's Mall club in December of '76. Of course, this release was limited to something like 1000 copies, and the record features Al Kooper (a staunch supporter of the band and a rock legend in his own right) on keyboards. Ironically, 'LEG has become a collector's item, bringing large sums of money to those who own it. But Petty isn't pleased.

"Yeah, the LIVE 'LEG is really historical," he said. "I get letters all the time from people offering me outrageous sums of money for a copy. The funny thing is that it was recorded at our sixth gig ever. Al Kooper was in town, and he played

**"The neatest thing about  
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with us and it was fun. We just played this little dive, and somebody taped it on a four-track for radio. I never thought about it at all. Then, the radio taped it, and it was decided to press it for radio stations. I never considered it an album at all. To me it was just kind of silly. When I hear it, it sounds just like the band getting together and that's all."

"American Girl" remains the most accessible song on Petty's first real album. Somehow, the cut never reached the airwaves at all, but it remains a favorite in concert. Its Byrds-like sound and Petty's Roger McGuinn-ish voice on that song have even caused McGuinn to take notice, as he did the song himself. Petty was honored by McGuinn's gesture, but he contends that the similarity between their styles is, generally, unintentional. Petty explained how the song came about:

"I wrote 'American Girl' on the Fourth of July, 1976, while I was cutting songs for the first album. The working pattern for the album was strange. See, we'd just gotten the group together, and I'd come in the studio in the afternoon to write a song for the session that day. The band would come in later and work it up, and we'd cut it."

"So, I wrote 'American Girl' really fast on the piano on that Fourth of July, and it's just a song about this chick. I remember the night well; the air-conditioning broke down and it was really hot. That was the same night we took the photos for the album cover. Anyway, we did 'American Girl' all night long, and it never occurred to me that it sounded like The Byrds."

Maybe that's not so strange, though. For, in an earlier part of our discussion, Petty was talking about music, and it turns out that we have the same tastes. Needless to say, his taste in music is impeccable; he listens to Elvis, The Everly Brothers and Gram Parsons' GRIEVOUS ANGEL album.

"Yeah, I love Gram Parsons," said Petty. "People are always shocked when I say that, though; they think I'm punk rock or something. I really like all kinds of music and country music, too. I do listen to The Everly Brothers a lot and The Beatles."

"I'd like for our group to get into that kind of music at some point. The neatest thing about The Heartbreakers is that we don't have to do anything; we can do anything we want. I mean, whatever we do, it'll rock, but we'll never just put out album after album of the same thing."

As I left our hero, he was about to go into the studio for another day of sessions with ace producer Denny Cordell (who has done Leon Russell's albums for years, as well as the first Dwight Twilley Band album and many others). Petty is excited and it shows. He's looking forward to another year of growing pains.

"It's been a good year," Petty reflected, "and we're still having fun. We are really having a good time. It's a good feeling that right at the end of the year, everything is paying off. I knew it was gonna be a good year; a year with two sevens in it couldn't go wrong."

Take my word: 1978 isn't gonna be a bad year for Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers either.

# SEX PISTOLS

at CLEVELAND AGORA

New Year's Day

(No age limit) Doors open 7:30