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TOM PETTY
INTERVIEW

STREET
TALK

VIRGIN
SUPPLEMENT

MI-SEX
TOUR JUNE



TOM PETTY



For all he's been through, Tom Petty looks remarkably well preserved.

Physically he's about the same as his record covers, rather fragile, but smothering everything with that toothy, cocky grin. No wonder the little girls love him. The deep, drawling speaking voice is a surprise. He laughs a lot and is obviously well pleased with his present state of affairs. A sharp contrast to last year, when it seemed there was nowhere else but down.

The saga has been well documented, but bears brief repeating here. Petty and the Heartbreakers were originally signed to Denny Cordell's Shelter label. Their stablemates included Leon Russell and J.J. Cale, but the skids were already under the label financially. When the contract was re-negotiated, Petty understood there was a proviso that should Shelter go under, the Heartbreakers would be free to go where they pleased. But ABC sold the label and all that went with it to MCA, which immediately claimed Petty as its property. He didn't like that arrangement, but agreed to deliver an album, though he refused any financial ties with MCA. Financing the recording put him a million dollars in debt. On the way, he incurred one lawsuit after another, and promptly sued in return, putting himself even further in hock and finally declaring bankruptcy as the only way out.

Throat Troubles

MCA finally decided to bend a little, giving Petty his own Backstreet label but retaining

distribution rights. *Damn The Torpedoes* finally emerged and things looked rosy again until Tom's throat started to play up, forcing him to cut back a British tour and finally putting him in hospital where his tonsils were removed. The throat's OK now, a little rough with all the touring, but the show hasn't suffered. In fact it's been expanded. Tom smokes low tar fags and drinks Coke, out of respect for his vocal chords.

So back to the present. What effect did that traumatic legal period have on *Damn The Torpedoes*?

"I think there's bitterness there, but I think there's more hope for survival. That album is about standing up for your rights, the certain inalienable rights that nobody can take away from you.

"I think if I'd make an album that said 'I hate you because you sued me and I'm going to take you to court', it would have been a little bit dull after a while. I don't think people want to hear records about court cases. But when I did it, I wrote the songs so you can take them on whatever level you want, which is the way most good songs are.

"It was a very hard album to make because it was a very hard time for all of us. We were under a lot of pressure just to even stay together. Nobody would ever realise how intense those lawsuits got, there were four at once. They were trying to take me away.

War Of Minds

"The only weapon a record company has in a suit like that is to break you mentally. And they don't only try that in the courtroom, they try it in every phase of your life, to disillusion you, to break you down. And you just have to face up that they're going to do that, and it's

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just going to be a war of minds. But we had things like the marshalls coming to take the tapes and hiding the tapes (for *Torpedoes*), going to court all day and recording at night, never knowing when they were going to barge through the door. It was a real experience. It was a gamble."

So what held you all together?

"I don't know. It was the record, probably. I knew how good that record was. We knew if we could just get it to the street, it would take care of the problems. But I think it turned out to be probably the biggest artist-versus-record company suit ever."

Do you still trust people?

"I watch 'em a lot closer" (laughter).

Iovine Fan

Jimmy Iovine, who produced *Torpedoes*, will also be working on the next album, scheduled

to start recording in August.

"I was just a fan of his, and he called me and told me he would really like us to work together, so we just said 'OK' over the phone and we're now best friends.

"He's just like me, he's very rhythm-oriented, and he's very good because it's hard for me to keep perspective on myself in the studio. He's very direct and he doesn't mix words. He generally says exactly what he thinks."

The conversation turns to the first two albums. Petty agrees that the first was a collection of different songs, while *You're Gonna Get It* had a strong linking theme.

"The first one is the band getting together. We hadn't played any shows at that time, the album was written and recorded very quickly. When we were recording *You're Gonna Get It*, I
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was driving down the freeway to the studio every night, and I'd get an idea in the car, come in and try to get something out of it.

High Times

"You're Gonna Get It has never been my favourite, but I think it's an interesting, weird little album. I heard some on the radio this morning and I thought 'Gee, that's a really weird album.'

"I think drugs had a lot to do with it, to be honest. We were on a lot of drugs when we did *You're Gonna Get It*, much more than we are now. The only thing I can remember from those sessions was that I wanted to make an album that was very different from the first album, and I think I was almost too adamant about that. I pushed the band to do things that we wouldn't have normally done, and because of that I've always felt a little uncomfortable listening to *You're Gonna Get It*."

A sense of fun pervades Petty's music, and that's the way he wants it. He has no special future plans, apart from continuing to sing, write and record. Nor does he have any great pretensions about leaving a mark on the world.

"I don't look on what I do as great epics. I mean what they are, fine. I don't mean to take nobody's fun away.

"If you ain't gonna have fun doing this, why would you do it? I mean, there are easier ways to make money, for sure.

"The band is very happy at the moment. We haven't hit each other all week."

The Concert

Could the Logan Campbell Centre have had a better christening? I doubt it. Auckland at last seems to have found itself a decent rock venue. You can hear, you can see (pretty well, anyway), you can light up a smoke, you can get out of your seat and dance, and nobody hassles you. The acoustics sounded fine, none of the "tin box" fears came to fruit.

And this was a Rock'n'Roll Show, in capitals. Love me tender, break their hearts, kiss 'em and make 'em cry, crawl on your belly, shout yourself hoarse, jump up and down, throw your geetar in the air, imitate Chuck Berry, roll over, lay down, Rock'n'Roll.

Tom Petty is the All American Boy, a performer who loves his audience and loves himself just enough to be a great showman. There are few others these days who look and sound this good. The Heartbreakers have been



touring a long time, and it shows in their playing. They have polish and style, yet stay loose enough to retain their freshness.

Mike Campbell is especially outstanding, tearing the hall up with his lead breaks on "Even The Losers" and "American Girl". Petty plays organ on the spellbinding "Luna" and gives "Breakdown" a dramatic, extended vocal workout.

They cover oldies like "Cry To Me" and "Somethin' Else", and finish up, tongue in cheek, with "I Fought The Law". No messin', good honest fun. Clean, powerful, and exhilarating.

My, but these little Florida boys can play.
Duncan Campbell

Chris Moore Kevin Emmett Dick Driver



BAND FILE

HISTORY

Pop Mechanix started life as Splash Alley, formed April 1979. First major achievement was winning 32M Band of the Month in October. Four songs were recorded; "Mr Smoth", "Too Cool for Words" and "Talking". After numerous gigs in and around Christchurch, toured North Island from November to February. Then changed name to Pop Mechanix and returned to Christchurch. In April recorded "Now", "The Ritz", "Commercial Airways", "It's Only Pop" at Tandem. Second NZ tour, April to July 1980.

CHRIS MOORE

Guitar and keyboards

Born June 27, 1960. **Education** 7 years primary, 5 years secondary and 1 year tertiary.

Musical Career various garage bands **Other Jobs** gas attendant.

FAVOURITES

Albums *Live At El Mocambo*, Elvis Costello. **Singles** "Watching the Detectives" and "Accidents Will Happen", Elvis Costello. **Musicians** Paul Stanley, Steve Naive.

EQUIPMENT

Strat, Holden 100w, Korg Synth, Wurlitzer piano, Jansen Transonic, Ibanez Flange.

DICK DRIVER

Vocals

Born 1957, London **Education** yes **Musical Career** Splash Alley, Pop Mechanix **Other Jobs** farm cadet, RNZAF airman, pineapple splitter, refuse collector, truck driver etc.

FAVOURITES

Album *Live at Roxy*, Various. **Single** "I See Red", Split Enz. **Musician** none.

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(May 23-24), **Spelling Mistakes** (May 31-31), **Top Scientists** (June 6-7) and **Techtones** (June 13-14) ... by the way, the Top Scientists is the name chosen by last month's band with no name, John Malloy, Rick Bryant etc.

Bruno Lawrence is leaving, so the **Crocodiles** are looking for a new drummer ... first screening for the **Nambassa** movie is July 20, Civic Theatre, as part of the Auckland Film Festival. Three weeks later it opens in Auckland, Hamilton and Rotorua. The 2LP set will be out to coincide with the film's release ... check out *Nutcase* now at Wintergarden, Auckland. The movie may be for kids but it's not Walt Disney ... new and abused in flat city are **Lollies** and **System X** ... **100m2** is a new gallery, 51 Federal Street. First up, is *The Green Lion* by Richard von Sturmer (ex-Plague), with music by Andrew McLennan of Whizz Kids. It's on 8 pm May 28 to June 7 ... also new is Ray Castle's **Closet Artists Gallery** 520 Queen Street. Show one is **Mixed Mulch**, starts May 19.

THE CORPORATION

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