

MUSICIAN

WAYNE SHORTER SPEAKS

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Dave Marsh Interviews
TOM PETTY



NEWS

PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 34, JULY, 1981

Wayne Shorter breaks his five year silence and talks to David Breskin about his monumental past with Blakey and Miles, his work in Weather Report, his years of drought and a creative comeback that is eagerly awaited.



Tom Petty sobered by a bitter lawsuit, fan violence and a critical bum rap, talks to Dave Marsh about his new album and his new view of the world. Ducking fads and fashions, the Heartbreakers have forged themselves into the quintessential American rock and roll band.



L.A. Punk where the punks are mean as hell and proud of it, a descent into paradoxical pandemonium, where kinetic confusion and euphoric ugliness smash through the placid palms. Mikal Gilmore, Ken Tucker, Steve Pond and Chris Morris report from the front lines.

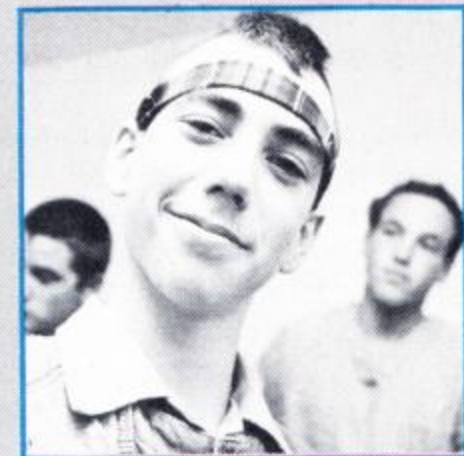


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Cover Photo by Lynn Goldsmith; Corner Photo by Tom Copi



TOM PETTY

Returned from legal purgatory and a vocal meltdown, the Gainesville gunfighter talks about the life and times of the band-next-door, critical chic, the corporate shaft, Hard Promises and cold facts.

By Dave Marsh

When Tom Petty burst into his manager's Sunset Blvd. offices early this April he was exuberant. No wonder. He'd just finished mixing and mastering his fourth and most mature album, *Hard Promises*, and the sessions had gone off without a hitch — indeed, much of the album had been recorded using completely live takes. (MCA had almost managed to create a crisis by announcing plans to release the new Petty album at a \$9.98 list price. But Petty politicked judiciously in the media — at one point threatening to make the LP title *Eight Ninety Eight* — and his desire for a more affordable price prevailed.)

Hard Promises is not a breakthrough record, as *Damn the Torpedoes* was. But it presents everything that the Heartbreakers can do well in quantity, and Petty's writing has grown enormously. Emblematically, *Hard Promises* is the first T.P. record to contain a lyric sheet, which Petty says was a concession to lovine, but which also reflects his new confidence in what he has to say, and his ability to say it well.

But mostly Petty is in good spirits because he is finally getting the recognition he's wanted. Although some of the band's trendier (new wave-ish) fans spurned them after the commercial ascendance of *Torpedoes*, Petty has found his

voice and his public; he's a much more confident person now than he was when *Torpedoes* was released 18 months ago.

Back in the fall of 1979, Tom Petty's life was chaos — bits and pieces of rock and roll fallout. Although his third and best album, *Damn the Torpedoes*, was well on its way to putting Petty and the Heartbreakers on the world's multi-platinum map (sales to date: 2.4 million copies), the blonde Floridian was bouncing from one crisis to another.

Torpedoes had been completed only after the settlement of a legal dispute among Petty, manager Denny Cordell and his Shelter Records, and MCA Records (which had become Shelter's distributor by buying out ABC a few months earlier). Petty wasn't happy about suddenly winding up on MCA without having had any say in the matter. He claimed his contract made no provision for his assignment to a new label in such circumstances and he wanted out. MCA promptly sued for breach of contract and all hell broke loose. The situation was eventually resolved by Petty severing all ties with Cordell, and taking on Elliott Roberts' Lookout Management, and moving from Shelter to Danny Bramson's Backstreet label, also distributed by MCA. But the legal battle had been bizarre in its complexity — incredibly, both Petty and MCA were repres-

ented by members of the same law firm (that's rock and roll...) — and exhausting in its intensity. At one point, only some judicious advice from co-producer Jimmy Iovine prevented Tom from walking out on his own session.

Then, with *Torpedoes* on the shelves and its first single, "Don't Do Me Like That," bulleting to the Top 5, and the band finally off on a full scale U.S. and European tour, Petty was stricken by a severe sore throat. He was rushed back to L.A., tonsillitis was diagnosed and after the resulting tonsillectomy, he was flat on his back for two weeks, unable to speak, much less sing.

When he *can* speak, Petty is surprisingly articulate, peppering every statement with asides, dialects, and drawn out internal narrative and dialogue. During the interview, however, he frequently defended himself from a critical stereotype and drove home a simple but surprisingly direct message: *we're not dumb*. I'm not sure what has led so many critics to take Petty more lightly than he deserves, whether it's the band's good-time reputation, the occasional incoherence of their interviews, or the fact that *Torpedoes*, such a crucial album, seems conceptually unfinished (probably a product of the legal turmoil). Maybe it's that the band is Southern or that Petty's classic rock and roll good looks (which escape All-American stature only by virtue of the traditional rocker's big nose) turn "serious" minds away from him and his work.

In the past, Petty has written mostly love songs, or at least, songs about one kind of romance or another: "American Girl," "Listen to Her Heart," "Breakdown," "Refugee," "Only the Losers" and "Don't Do Me Like That" all have this in common. On the new record, he branches out, fleshing out characters and narratives in songs like "Something Big," "The Night

The crowd incident at the Winterland was very violent, in the sense they were all gonna take a finger and a leg. I lost handfuls of hair and my whole lip was busted. It was this weird sensation of falling.



DENNIS CALLAHAN

Watchman" and the sardonic "King's Road."

Musically, the record is more reflective — not exactly laid back, but from time to time ("Letting You Go") the kind of white soul Eric Clapton has been trying to perfect for the past few years. Lyrically, the record lives up to its title: so much so that even the album's most ferocious rocker, "Thing About You," begins with a cautionary couplet: "I'm not much on mystery/You gotta be careful what you dream."

Petty still sounds like Roger McGuinn with street smarts; chiming twelve-string guitars, Dylanesque organ and Stonesian rhythms dominate the mix. In fact, the album's first single, "The Waiting," is easily the most Byrdsian effort the Heartbreakers have served up since "American Girl" (which was so avuncular that McGuinn himself felt obliged to cover it). Jimmy Iovine's iron-fist-in-a-velvet-glove production that made *Damn the Torpedoes* such a departure from Petty's earlier work is also employed on *Hard Promises*. Iovine brightens and toughens the band's sound, providing polish and punch. *Hard Promises* is as seamless as the best albums of his mentors. The songs are diversely styled but, more than anything, they sound like the work of one man, one group. For Petty and the Heartbreakers, this unity is the most important breakthrough of all.

Meanwhile, Petty and keyboardist Benmont Tench have been working with Iovine on Stevie Nicks' solo album. Nicks turns in a gorgeous duet with Petty on *Hard Promises*, a folk-rock ballad called "The Insider." Petty also contributed a song to her record, "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," originally written and recorded for the new Heartbreakers LP. Nicks and Petty's duet singing goes completely over the top into rock and roll heaven on this one.

All of this perhaps explains Petty's ebullience when he arrived that afternoon for this interview. That, and the fact that he had just returned from the Nike shop in Westwood, loaded down with free goods.

"They'd seen that we wear their wrestling shoes, I guess," he told me. "So they said we could come over and get some stuff for free." Petty laughed. "When we got there they just started piling stuff on us: 'Oh, I like that one.' 'Great, what size would you like?' After we had more than I could carry, they said, 'Don't forget, we've still gotta go over to the sportswear.' Then, when we were all finished, they looked at this enormous pile and said, 'We better give you something to carry it all in,' and brought out these huge leather equipment bags."

He shakes his head in disbelief. "You know," he says in his soft Florida drawl, "when you're broke, nobody gives you nothin' — *nothin'*. But as soon as you can afford it, it's 'Sure, go ahead, take whatever you want.' It's ab-so-lutely backwards." He laughed again, a little more tight-lipped this time. And after some brief chat about Elvis (I'd just been to Graceland and brought him a souvenir Graceland cigarette lighter), the conversation began. This is how it went:

MUSICIAN: Up until *Damn the Torpedoes*, half the world thought you were new wave. Now what do people think you are?

PETTY: [Mumbles] I think people just have this gunfighter image.

MUSICIAN: Aren't you?

PETTY: In those days, when we did a lot of interviews and things, we were. We were like this. [Sniffs loudly, mumbles belligerently] "Screw ya', I doan give a damn. I don't care; I only do this for girls and I doan give a damn." You know, a lot of loose statements. Now, I kinda want people to realize that what we are is an American rock and roll band. I mean, we're not a heavy metal band, and we're not a new wave group. We're an American rock band. And we never tried to have any other pretense. But everyone else had their own idea.

MUSICIAN: When you went into the studio to do *Hard Promises* was there a particular concept you were looking for?

PETTY: I wanted the songs to have a little more depth, I guess. The only concept was to try and do some things we'd never done before. I didn't want to do all 12 strings and organ again.

It's changed quite a bit, if you listen from the first record until now.

MUSICIAN: How close are those early records to what you were looking for, or what the band sounded like?

PETTY: The first record is probably right on the money, because when we did it, we'd only been a band for a week or so. By the end, that album was a real curiosity. "Oh, this is what it is. How weird." I remember taking it around to people and they'd just go: "What is it?" Especially at ABC Records. It was like, "We're not really sure what it is. This must be punk rock."

It was all because they'd look at the cover and they saw I had a black leather jacket on which wasn't abnormal to us, to wear black leather jackets. And they'd say, "Well the songs are kinda short." One time, they said don't you think you should go back and add on another verse to all the songs and make 'em a little longer? It took a little while for people to understand it. It was real frustrating.

You gotta remember that in 1976, they had lost all consciousness of that stuff. The only real rock bands then were bands that played a lotta long guitar solos. I guess a heavy metal band was thought of as a hard rock band. So it was a little bit confusing.

On the second album, I don't think I did what I wanted to do at all. It hasn't ever been one of my favorite records. A lotta people like it, but I made it in such a hurry and I was in a bad state of mind.

MUSICIAN: Was that when the creative problem with your management and record company began to come up?

PETTY: It started to, a little bit. That was when it first started dawning on me that you can't let the industry push you around as much as it will. You have to remember, we didn't know how to deal with a record company or anything. We just thought, we make the record, we give it to you and it's a hit or it isn't. It had been a year, and then "Breakdown" off the first album went into the Top 40. This was as we were starting the second album, and they were saying, "Get it done, get it done." Cordell wasn't like that; Shelter wasn't like that, but ABC, which was really the record company, was.

We'd never really done a tour like we were doing then and we were just kinda nuts. In those days, I think, we'd just discovered cocaine or just come to where we could really afford to have cocaine. It just caused a lot of friction and disorientation; we were more caught up with puttin' another line out and talkin' about what we were doin' than doing it. So we got through that; no real *Enquirer* stuff there, it was just disorientation.

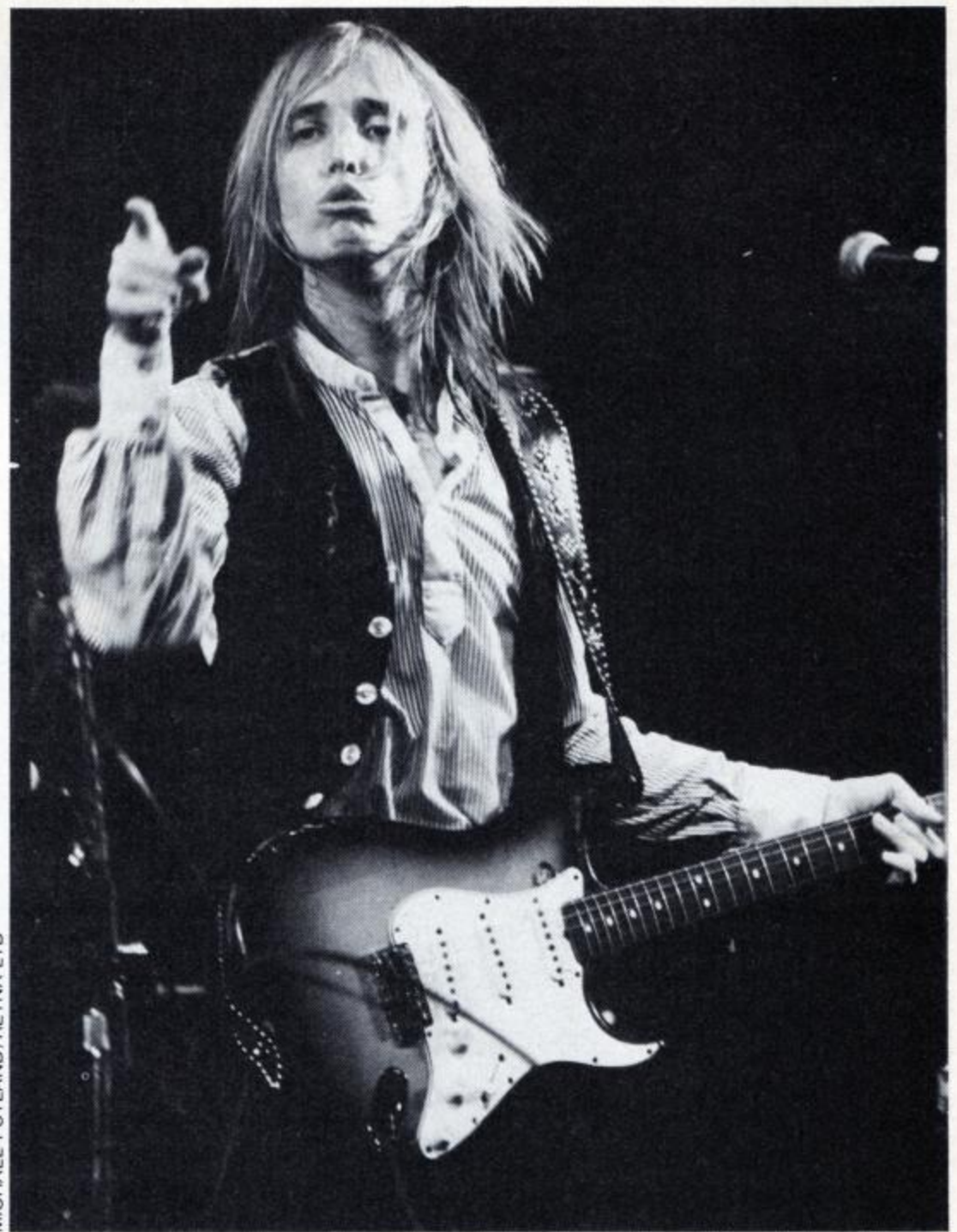
But those first two records — I still like the first one a lot when I hear it on the radio. I just like it because it's such an oddity to me, it's such an unusual sounding record. We made 'em in this studio that was like this room. (About 15' by 15') It was good for us in a way because we saw that all this technology is just a bunch of crap. All we did was take over the office. We went to Tulsa, took all the stuff out, drove it back, built a wall, put the glass in and rolled all the equipment in. I remember, we made the first album and didn't know how to put tones on the tape, or that any such thing existed. "Tones? No, the music's on there, no tones." It was funny.

MUSICIAN: The new record was mostly cut live?

PETTY: Maybe 90 per cent of it is live — vocals and everything. At least eight out of ten vocals are. I overdubbed half of the "Something Big" vocal, because it was too noisy; you couldn't understand it. But I did keep half of it.

MUSICIAN: That's interesting, because the most notable difference between *Hard Promises* and *Torpedoes* is the growth in your singing — it's a lot more confident.

PETTY: In the past, I'd always been afraid. The one thing that I didn't like about the second album is that the vocals are so buried, and so back on a lotta the tracks. I was afraid to put my voice up really loud, and I could always back it up: "Well, I got the Kinks records, and I can't hear the vocals on those, and I love those records." Then, with *Torpedoes*, Jimmy Iovine came in and just started: "You gotta get the vocals up, you gotta hear the singing."



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD

It would've been very easy to say, OK, we are new wave, let's go get the skinny ties. But it never looked like much of a challenge to me; it always looked like a much bigger challenge to try and play to everybody.

I remember something Leon Russell told me once, and it's true. He was mixing a record, and he did one take of the vocal and he put it on. I said, "That's all you do is one take?" He said, "Yeah. I do one take and I put it up real loud. I'll tell ya something, Tom, if you sing as bad as me and you *don't* put the vocal right up front, everybody's gonna think you're trying to hide something. But if you put it right up front, they'll listen to it and think it's neat." That made a lot of sense to me, cause I never thought of myself as a great singer.

Before this band, I'd never gone on stage and sang a whole show; I'd sing some of the songs, but I never sang a whole show. Now, after that last tour, singing is real second nature. So on the album, the only time we really got into vocals was when we started trying to beat the live ones. And I'd start singing and I'd say, "Wow, I just don't like it as much as I like what's on the tape." So finally we just abandoned that approach.

MUSICIAN: How do you and the rest of the band cope with the split identity you have? I know that's been a major problem for Pete Townshend in the Who, for instance, but with one member's name out front, it must double the tension.

PETTY: If you notice, in the second album especially, we were going through a real crisis about that. "They're not taking us as a group, they're taking it as me and a group." The whole reason my name got put in the thing in the first place was because I had a record deal. I'd already been through a deal with Shelter that didn't happen. They'd spent a fortune on this group (Mudcrutch), so they held me over as a solo. There were too many chiefs in that band. I was the bass player, you know. So we broke up, and there I was.

Then I ran into all these guys: Ben and Mike were in Mud-

crutch and Ron and Stan I knew from Gainesville. They were doing a Benmont demo. And Ben said, "We should form a band." Well, the easiest thing to do was to take my record deal, because I couldn't get out of it.

When Elliot Roberts got involved, he took us all in here and said, "Look, you know, Tom writes the songs, he sings the songs, he does this, this and this. Everybody's great, everybody does their thing, but you have to face reality." We just kinda laid it right on the table, and said we can either accept it or if we can't accept it, we should break up. And everybody accepted it. They're a great band, and they're not dumb in ways of letting their ego ruin something good. Four albums in five years without anybody leaving is pretty good in this business. And we've been friends for at least ten years. We know each other so well, and we will call it out. If anything goes on, it'll immediately be called out.

MUSICIAN: On *Torpedoes*, both "Louisiana Rain" and "Don't Do Me Like That" were four or five years old. That made the record much more scattered thematically. Did that have anything to do with the legal situation you were in at the time?

PETTY: Yeah. I think it's amazing we made an album at all during that time. I've said before, I could write a book about it, but why in hell would you wanna read it? It was such misery, and so much a case of "Your Honor, what's *happening*? Why are they doing this to me? I've done nothing but play in a band. For God's sake, *what* is going on?" And it got into these amazing trips of you can't record, yes you can record; you can't play on the road, okay, yes, you can for a week and then you've gotta stop.

We'd be working in the studio and then they'd say, "You gotta look out for the marshals, the marshals are gonna come in tonight and grab the tapes." It got to where poor Bugs (the Heartbreakers' chief roadie) was just carrying all these tapes around in his car, and moving 'em, so on the stand I could honestly say, "I don't know where the tapes are." 'Cause these guys would have released the album in whatever condition it was in.

It got to where the judge came into the studio and they got out all the tapes and they had to make legal arguments as to what is a record and what isn't a record — is this finished? I was kinda just sittin' there mute, listenin' to these guys discuss whether it was done. It was totally ridiculous.

MUSICIAN: What made you fight so hard?

PETTY: I knew it was the end, if I didn't fight it. I knew what would happen to us if I didn't. It would have been the end. Because we never would have gotten enough money to survive as a band, because we were all totally broke.

MUSICIAN: Most people would use that lack of money as an excuse *not* to fight a large company.

PETTY: We didn't have the money, really. But I been poor all my life. I can honestly say [laughs] it's hard to find anybody been poorer than I have. I remember telling the lawyers for the other side, "Screw you. I will go to Florida; I'll sell peanuts if I have to. But I will NEVER give you this goddamned record. At least I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you want this and you'll never get it."

On the other hand, when we did work, we had this vengeance. I don't think there'll ever be a feeling like when that record was a hit. It was such total victory. And it cost a fortune and we paid it all back, and as of today, we don't owe anybody any money.

MUSICIAN: How did you get in such a mess, anyway?

PETTY: We were just a band that hardly knew who they were in the first place. We'd been so confused; every hustler in Hollywood had come through. I don't know, they all thought we could make 'em money or somethin'. We were just playing the Whisky, that was about the only steady gig we had, and everybody in the world was coming in. Then the first album did real well in England and after that, it was really insane. We were always confused as to what we were supposed to do.

Then that bankruptcy thing came in. We had to go to bankruptcy court, but we were never bankrupt. If we had been it would have been an ideal situation, because once you're

bankrupt, no contracts are binding. But once people put that tag on you — whew, everybody's gone. I have to give our producer Jimmy Iovine a lot of credit, just for moral support. He was one of the only people that would call me up, every day, and say, "We're gonna beat 'em, we're gonna do it, we're gonna make this record no matter what happens, and listen to it ourselves." For a good year this went on. A lot of people still don't understand the scope of what was going on. Like we had offers from record companies before *Damn the Torpedoes* that were *staggering*. I mean, it was so much money that I would say, "I just don't believe that at all. I don't wanna hear that." Literally every record company was at the door, saying, "If you can get free, we're gonna take care of you."

So there was that hanging over our heads, and me knowing that, if I lost, we were trapped. They were never gonna promote the records or even buy ads. So I said, "What's the point of making the records if no one's gonna hear 'em?" It really got down to a kind of self-respect, of "I refused to be bullied by these guys."

It really gave me a lot of faith in the country when we won. I don't see too many countries where you could go to court and say, "Your Honor, I have a little band here and these guys have come in and done this to me, and I would like to get rid of it. What do you think? I'll give all the money back, and everything. I just want out. I quit." And they took it dead serious. I gave the judge a platinum record.

MUSICIAN: Was the deal that landed you on Backstreet the judge's notion of a compromise?

PETTY: The judge's position was, just show me a way where I can get out of this that's fair. The big thing was to prove that what was going on with my publishing wasn't fair, it was almost dishonest.

You know, you don't think when you come into town with no money. Somebody says, "I'll give you enough to buy some amplifiers," you go, "Great. Let's go." You don't think. See, I was still trying to get out of the Mudcrutch deal. It had nothing to do with me, it had to do with a deal I'd made in 1974, when I'd been in town maybe three days.

We got seven record company offers in three days, from walking down the street, looking 'em up in the phone book. "Could we play this for ya?" And we'd come in, and they'd say, "Uh, yeah." So we drove back to Florida, said, "Look, get in the car, there's a guy out there."

God, for years I been sittin' down there, trying to get a record deal. All I had to do was drive out and go down the street. [Laughs] Blew my mind. For years, that was the big topic: one day we'll get a record deal. In Gainesville, nobody ever even crossed through town that had anything to do with the music business.

MUSICIAN: Who else was around there?

PETTY: There were guys who had left. Skynyrd we used to play with, but they first went to Macon, to Capricorn, which was close. We went there once but we just kinda turned around and left, because we knew if we went into that, that's what we'd become. I loved the Allman Brothers, I thought they were great and I watched them ever since I was this high, but I didn't want to do that. So it was like, down here, they are NOT going to understand. They hardly understood it out here. So we left and in three days it was all taken care of.

MUSICIAN: You had no lawyer, no agent?

PETTY: We didn't have a manager, we didn't have *nothin'*. We drove out in a Volkswagen van. I had \$37 and I remember packing sandwiches in bags. We'd go, "OK, dinner time," and everybody'd pull out a sandwich and eat it. We slept on the floor of a friend of a friend who wasn't real happy about us bein' there.

Then, I couldn't believe that you just go in and play these guys a tape and they start jumpin' around the room, goin' "Who's your manager?" Don't have one. "Oh yeah?! Well..." I just left a tape at Shelter and Denny (Cordell) called us, the day before we were leavin' and said, "I think it's a great group, I'd love to sign you up." We said, "Well, we're talkin' with this one and this one." He had a studio in Tulsa and he said, "Why don't you stop halfway across the country in Tulsa and just take a



LYNN GOLDSMITH

Heartbreak at the radar station: Ron Blair (bass), Stan Lynch (drums), Petty, Benmont Tench (keyboards), and Mike Campbell (guitar).

With Hard Promises, I've felt we've gone through so much and seen so much, we can't play dumb and make another record of teenage love songs.

breather and record some." We said great. Just to go in the studio was worth something.

Cordell was a great guy, really smart, really talented. I dug him right away. I can say that he gave me a great education in the studios and stuff. He always had the right ideas musically. On the business side, I don't agree with anything that he wanted to do, but on the creative end, I have to appreciate that he did all that for us. So we said no to the others. "We're gonna go with Denny because he talks like we do, and to hell with the rest of 'em."

When the big fight started, it was always back to: "But, Judge, I didn't KNOW. I thought they were all the same thing. I thought, black records with a hole in the middle. I didn't know it was any different, one label to another."

I remember the first time, going through Hollywood, driving down the street. We were goin', "There's one. There's one. Goddamn! There's another. Another. Look, a record company! Look." So we thought, well hell, you know, if we go in all these places, a few of 'em have gotta go for it. Cause there must be a hundred. And it was true, a few of 'em went for it. It was great.

MUSICIAN: The funny thing is that all that sense of triumph came out on the last record. It's as if, on *Torpedoes*, all you could see was how much there was to win. On *Promises*, what you see is how much there is to lose. Is this your response to success?

PETTY: I don't know if I'm ready to respond to success. Because I still don't feel like I've done everything I'm gonna do and I don't know what else to do and life's a drag because

we're rich. I'm really enjoying the money, to tell the truth.

With our public image, I've always felt — and it's our fault in a way — I've always felt that we looked a little dumber than we are, to the public. With this record, I felt, we've gone through so much and seen so much, and there's so much to this, we can't play dumb and make another record of teenage love songs. It was just like playing dumb to me.

There's a lotta pain to it, and you don't really want to dwell on that, because I think it's hard for the audience to understand that there is. When they look at it, they see, "Hell, he don't pump gas all goddamned day. He don't even have to worry about the rent." I can relate to that because I've felt the same way. "You tell me it's bad. Screw you, I'll tell you about bad."

MUSICIAN: How does having a Number One album feel?

PETTY: It only got to Number Two. It made me hate Pink Floyd. [Laughs] I'll tell you something, no matter what anybody ever tells you, life is never sweeter than when you have a hit record. I mean, it is a sweet goddamn feeling. It felt great, especially after all that. It was really the only time in my life I felt like justice was done. "TP, we're gonna let you have it your way today." [Laughs, harder] It was hard not to just get gushy about the whole thing. And that's why, this record I just wanted to up the quality.

I think we can always up the quality; I don't understand rock groups that go down, that get worse. I really don't understand. There is no reason for that, if you just keep aware of what's going on.

MUSICIAN: That vigilance is sort of the message of a lot of these songs, especially "The Insider" and "The Night Watchman."

PETTY: "The Night Watchman" actually started as a joke on the whole thing of security. I have a guard on my house now, a guy who sits outside the door and keeps people back. So I wrote a song for him. It got so amusing to me. "You mean, there's gonna be a GUY outside the DOOR — all the time?" I

went as long as I could without doing it. For a long time, I just said, "No, I will NOT do that." And then it got where, yeah, I'm gonna do it now, because I don't want people standing in the middle of my living room. And worse.

MUSICIAN: Then there's the line about his life being worth more than the minimum wage.

PETTY: Yeah, are you really gonna stand there and shoot it out with these guys for whatever it is — \$4.50 an hour? We have some great talks, all huddled together.

MUSICIAN: On stage, you've always been real careful about keeping your distance, and very concerned that the audience doesn't take you out of proportion.

PETTY: I think it was in '78 that it dawned on me about the audience. We had only been playing big rooms a little while and we went into Winterland. I think Bruce (Springsteen) had been there two nights before, and he built a lower stage across the front and it was still there. We weren't using it because the kids had all their jackets and everything piled up. So by the end of the night, I was just getting a little bit playful and went out, jumped down, just leaned over the crowd. We thought at the time they'd gotten me by the hand, but on the video tape you

can see they get me almost by the waist. And take me into the audience and try to kill me.

MUSICIAN: What?

PETTY: I mean, they were gonna take my life. It was very violent, in the sense that they were all gonna take a finger and a leg. On the tape, I have on a real heavy vest and they ripped that, my whole shirt went, I had a neckerchief tied real tight around my neck and on the tape, it's hanging down to my chest because it had been so pulled and twisted. I lost handfuls of hair and my whole lip was busted. It was this weird sensation of falling and never hitting the ground and people diving in. They're crazy people when they're that worked up.

I remember that night was when it dawned on us: We can't go down there. I didn't intend to go down there in the first place, but it was like, hey, watch it, if they get ahold of you. They'll just get you down...it took a lotta guys to get me out.

MUSICIAN: I remember, you kind of stepped back from the edge at the No Nukes show, during "Cry to Me." I thought you were really going to give Springsteen a run for his money. But you didn't get closer, and I wondered why.

PETTY: I'm just amazed that I finished the set that night. I was



EBET ROBERTS

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' Equipment

The following information was provided by the mysterious Bugs, the Heartbreakers' roadie mentioned in the interview. It's a complete list of what everyone in the band uses, though hardly of everything they own, especially in the case of guitars. "We've got a million guitars," says Bugs, "one of every kind there is." He also notes that "everybody in the band owns at least one of 'em; the ownership is up in the air."

Guitars

Both Petty and Mike Campbell use Vox Super Beatle amps. ("Always have and maybe they always will," says Bugs.) Petty's basic stage guitars are a Fender Stratocaster and a Rickenbacker 12-string (although the beautiful cherry red one on the cover of *Damn* is actually Campbell's). Petty also carries a Gibson Flying V, a Dan Armstrong clear-body, an Ibanez Iceman and both six and 12-string Vox guitars. Additionally, he has a custom-built (by Ted Newman Jones) electric six string, with broken hearts on the fretboard. In the studio, Petty sometimes uses a Gibson Dove acoustic; whether the Heartbreakers will use any acoustic guitars on the current tour (as they do on several songs on *Hard Promises*) is still up in the air.

Mike Campbell's basic guitars are a Fender Broadcaster and a Gibson Les Paul, of which he has two, a gold top and a white top. "For variety," he uses that celebrated Rickenbacker; he also carries an Ibanez Flying V and an Ibanez Iceman, among others.

Neither Petty nor Campbell has made any modifications to these instruments. "They basically don't believe in it," says Bugs. "We just buy things, and if they work, great. If not, we try something else." In keeping with that philosophy, Petty uses no effects pedals and Campbell keeps his to the minimum: an Echoplex for the Broadcaster and occasionally, an MXR Dynacomp.

Bassist Ron Blair's basic rig comes from the Heartbreakers' sound company, Sound Production in Dallas. Usually, it includes a JBL power amp, Alembic pre-amp and Bi-Amp Graphic. His full range cabinet has two 12-inch and two 15-inch speakers. His bass is a Fender Jazz; he carries a Fender Precision as a spare but according to Bugs, it's never been used.

Keyboards

Benmont Tench has both a grand piano, with a Helpinstill pickup, and a Hammond C-3 organ. On top of the organ is a Wurlitzer electric piano; on top of the piano is an Arp String Ensemble. Rack mounted next to him are "assorted toys and graphics."

Drums

Stan Lynch uses a custom-made blonde Tama kit with a 26-inch bass drum, 15-inch rack tom, two floor toms (16-inch and 18-inch) and a 15-inch snare. His cymbals include a hi-hat, two 16-inch crash and a 24-inch ride. He also has a Chinese cymbal, which is explicitly not a gong, although it sounds a bit like one.

so...it wasn't my favorite show, I'll tell ya. It was our first time in an arena that size, and we hadn't played in a year — that was the first gig after the lawsuit. We flew in for two days, rehearsed, and went to play with Elvis in Memphis — or that's what I called it. And we didn't have our gear; it was Bruce's birthday; didn't have our monitors. Nothing. I got out, couldn't hear my voice and couldn't get anybody to turn the volume up. I was so nervous. The audience was very kind, I thought.

I remember, Jackson Browne said, when we were going up, "Well listen, now, if you think they're booing you, they're not. They're just saying 'Broooce.'" I said, "Well, what the hell is the difference?"

MUSICIAN: How did you feel about your segment in the *No Nukes* movie?

PETTY: I never felt good about the show and I didn't like the movie. I didn't like us *at all*. I mean, what I saw of us I thought was really terrible. And these guys were saying, "Naw, it's great. We love it! We've got to have it. I'll just *die* if it's not in the movie." But it wasn't any good, it wasn't even representative of a normal night. Should I let some kid pay his money because Tom Petty's in the movie, and he sees it and Petty's *no good*? No way. I'm all for supporting good causes, but I think the performance should be good or it's all a bunch of crap. I don't think I was unreasonable about it.

MUSICIAN: How have you adjusted to playing in arenas?

PETTY: I think we're one of the only groups that are really good in big halls. I'll tell you what it is about big halls, the band itself has so much more responsibility, just in making the audience comfortable and having the vibe nice, cohesive, where you can go in, sit down and enjoy the show. It's just such a weird thing to sit with 18,000 people and watch a rock show. And there's a lot of trouble to see that everybody can see, everybody can hear properly and everybody can get in and get to their seat without waiting for 19 days before it starts. And the list goes on and on.

To the band, it's even easier than playing a 3,000 seater in some ways because it's so infinite. It's all just black, bobbing heads as far as you can see. You don't really feel the pressure of those guys on the back, and at the sides. I forget about that: I play to the floor, mostly, and those are the only people I see.

But in a 3,000 seater, now, every cat there, you can see his eyes. There ain't no place to hide. But once we're out there, it's kinda like: We're here, we're gonna play till the end of the show and we're gonna leave. Nothing can stop that, everything can break and it don't matter. We're gonna get to the end of this battle; that's the front line.

In fact, the only time I get worried on stage is when I can't hear. That worries me because I'm afraid I'm gonna scream, 'cause it happened to me when I had the bad throat. I'd just scream my guts out and I couldn't sing.

MUSICIAN: What exactly happened with your throat?

PETTY: My tonsils were just severely infected. The first six weeks of that *Torpedoes* tour, every night was just a whole day of not smoking, not talking, getting a shot, a million teas, doctors at gigs and this terrible feeling of "Is he gonna play or isn't he?" Where I really damaged it was in Philadelphia; if I had stopped for two weeks that night, it might not have been such a serious thing. But I said no, we're gonna do it on sheer soul; it did work, it was amazing.

So they took my tonsils out. I couldn't speak for two weeks, but three weeks after the operation I was on stage again, in England, and I've never had any trouble since. But it left a real scary feeling any time I have a sore throat. Actually, Jimmy (lovine) thinks that my voice got a little better in the lower register, but that could be the machinations of a sick mind.

MUSICIAN: How did you happen to give Stevie Nicks "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" for her solo album? And aside from the fact that lovine produces both of you, how did you wind up singing a duet on "The Insider" on your album?

PETTY: It's funny, you get such preconceived ideas about artists. I knew Stevie, but not real well, and she'd been asking me for a long time for a song. I thought that "The Insider" would be the thing for her, because it's acoustic, it has that kind of

feel. She really liked the song, so we went to do the vocal and she started to sing harmony every time. Because my track was playing in her headphones as a guide. So she said, "Just let me sing the harmony one time." So she did, and when it was over, I just sat there, in awe. She walked back in and said, "How was it?" I said, "It's a-mazing." She said, "I can tell by the look on your face, you don't wanna give me this song. I'm giving it back to you right now." I really thought a lot of her for that.

Then I went through this terrible guilt. Jimmy and I thought, we can't take it back, because we promised it to her. So we went to her and said, "Stevie, what if we trade you another song for 'Insider'?" She said, play it for me, and we played her "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around." She says, "Wow! That's why I wanted you to write me a song — it's rock 'n' roll, that's what you do. 'The Insider' sounds like what I do." And I thought, how dumb of me, to think that she'd want me to write like her. We've got some videotapes of those sessions that are very funny.

MUSICIAN: Do you want a video cassette of the new album?

PETTY: We don't have a *Hard Promises* videotape, but it has some of that in it. Ron Blair, our bassist, has been working on it. Two years ago, when we were in Japan, we got these super-8 sound cameras and we filmed literally everything that went on, for ages. And Ron has a real talent for film-making; he's just shown me the first rough cut today. The video and the super-8 cut together great; you couldn't use the super-8 on a big screen, but for TV it looks fine. So we're gonna put it together a little more cohesively — it is cohesive but it jumps time periods a lot, even has stuff from the first English tour. I want to put it out because I want people to see what we're like, that we ain't really at all what the preconceived public image is. The image thing is weird.

When I read the column you wrote in *Musician* a while back,

I remember when we were going up to to the No Nukes show, Jackson Browne said, "Well listen, if you think they're booing you, they're not. They're just saying 'Broooce.'" I said, "Well, what's the difference?"

defending me against some N.Y. critics, it really hit home to me. The first time I read it, I was confused. I just said, "Who's mad at me?" Then we played New York, and I saw. There's a kind of bitterness there.

MUSICIAN: Did you feel that aimed at you, personally?

PETTY: I think a lot of it was directed at me for just getting away with so much, in their eyes. "Why is he on the radio, and the Clash aren't?" I felt the same way; I love the Clash, I like all those records. Why not the Clash?

But then, it's like it should only be the Clash and not be me. Because they're...but then, I always wonder, well *what*? We've never done anything to make them mad. I think a lot of it was because we were coming from L.A. A lot of people thought that nothing could possibly come out of L.A. with an ounce of integrity.

MUSICIAN: But you're not from L.A. Where do you think you're from?

PETTY: A lotta people think we're from L.A.; I've lived here seven years. I'm in a lot of different places all the time. And there's also this misconception that we're from Oklahoma. But I do feel Southern, I always will.

MUSICIAN: Well, except for Ronnie Van Zant, there hasn't been a really articulate rock musician from the South.

PETTY: I even think that Lynyrd Skynyrd, who I consider one of the only absolute real monster rock 'n' roll bands of the decade, never got their due, because they were kinda lumped behind the Allman Brothers a lotta the time. They were amazing. I remember seeing those guys, doing shows with them, just little dollar admission things around colleges. We knew then about Van Zant. A great writer and a very...honest guy. I

really respected him, and I think he should have gotten more.

MUSICIAN: Is it just part of the whole American stigma of being Southern?

PETTY: Well, they don't think that Buddy Holly was Southern, or Elvis. But anyway, what I'm getting around to, it would have been very easy to say, OK, we *are* new wave and let's go get the skinny ties. But it never looked like much of a challenge to me. It always looked like a much bigger challenge to try to work in the mainstream, to play to everybody. I never understood being so cool that nobody heard it. I still don't understand being so *absolutely* chic. Like, why don't you guys want to be on the radio? I always dug the music and the stance, but I never knew where we fit in, because we want to be successful.

There'll always be the up-and-coming new groups, which are always gonna be more exciting, especially to the writers and stuff, because it's something new. But I think it's gotten to the point where there's very few people that can have the platinum album scene and be honest, play and have no pretensions. They've almost always gotta wear space suits or some kinda outfit or be a fag or they do this or there's something weird that they do. Which is fine — I'm not knocking fags, or space suits. But where does it leave all the people who just want a rock band? Where are the people who just have bands?

MUSICIAN: There's this strange notion that rock was what weird kids listened to, and that the weirdest ones had bands. Is that what you remember?

PETTY: Well, maybe they were weird. I remember being in bands and people thought it was weird. But what it was was, those great bands were AM radio bands that you heard every hour on the radio. And I never understood why that became so unfashionable. It didn't — we're really talking about the press here, more than reality.

I just have that old — if it's old fashioned, I don't know, but I feel that if people paid, they should have a good show and that IS more important than anything. If I go to a show and somebody lames out on me, I really feel bad. I'm really angry, I wasted an evening and went through all this crap and told all my friends you were good and then you came out here and were terrible. It's what I got to with drugs: I can't go onstage and not see well. That's one of the things that success did: It shocked me into thinking that now I have to be somewhat responsible. I don't want to be too responsible or I'll be a bore. But I've gotta be responsible enough that I have myself in shape to do the show tonight.

MUSICIAN: One of the interesting things about your records is that you're very aware of your sources, back to Elvis or so.

PETTY: That's because we listened to those songs. The first records I ever had was a box of Elvis singles. You couldn't have picked a better box.

I had an uncle who was working on an Elvis movie in Florida. He invited us down to the set; I was about 11. I didn't know much about Elvis, but we went down, saw him do his little thing, went over and said hi. There was such pandemonium. I can still remember how insane this trip was.

So we got back and the talk around the neighborhood among kids was that we saw *Elvis*, man. So my friend said, "Yeah, what'd he do? My sister's got his records." I'd never heard of them — "Hound Dog," I think I knew. And the guy gets out this box and his sister was married and gone but she'd been a teenager in the Fifties and the box was completely full of Elvis singles and EPs. There was some Jerry Lee and Little Richard stuff. Took the whole box home for a Wham-O sling shot.

I spent the next two years, till the Beatles came, just literally, literally listenin' to 'em every day. It never, never occurred to me to play or that I would sing, it was just "These are great!" I'd listen to 'em all day. When the Beatles came, that kind of took over, and Elvis kind of moved to the back a little bit. By then, I must have been 13. Now I see, ah, you can do this. Here's a way out. Because even at 12, you gotta beat this place, gotta get out of Gainesville.

See, there's two parts to Gainesville. There's the college in


the middle and around it are just rednecks, farmers. My family didn't have anything to do with the college until I started playing gigs. But for some reason, in the mid-Sixties there were so many bands there; I guess because there were gigs.

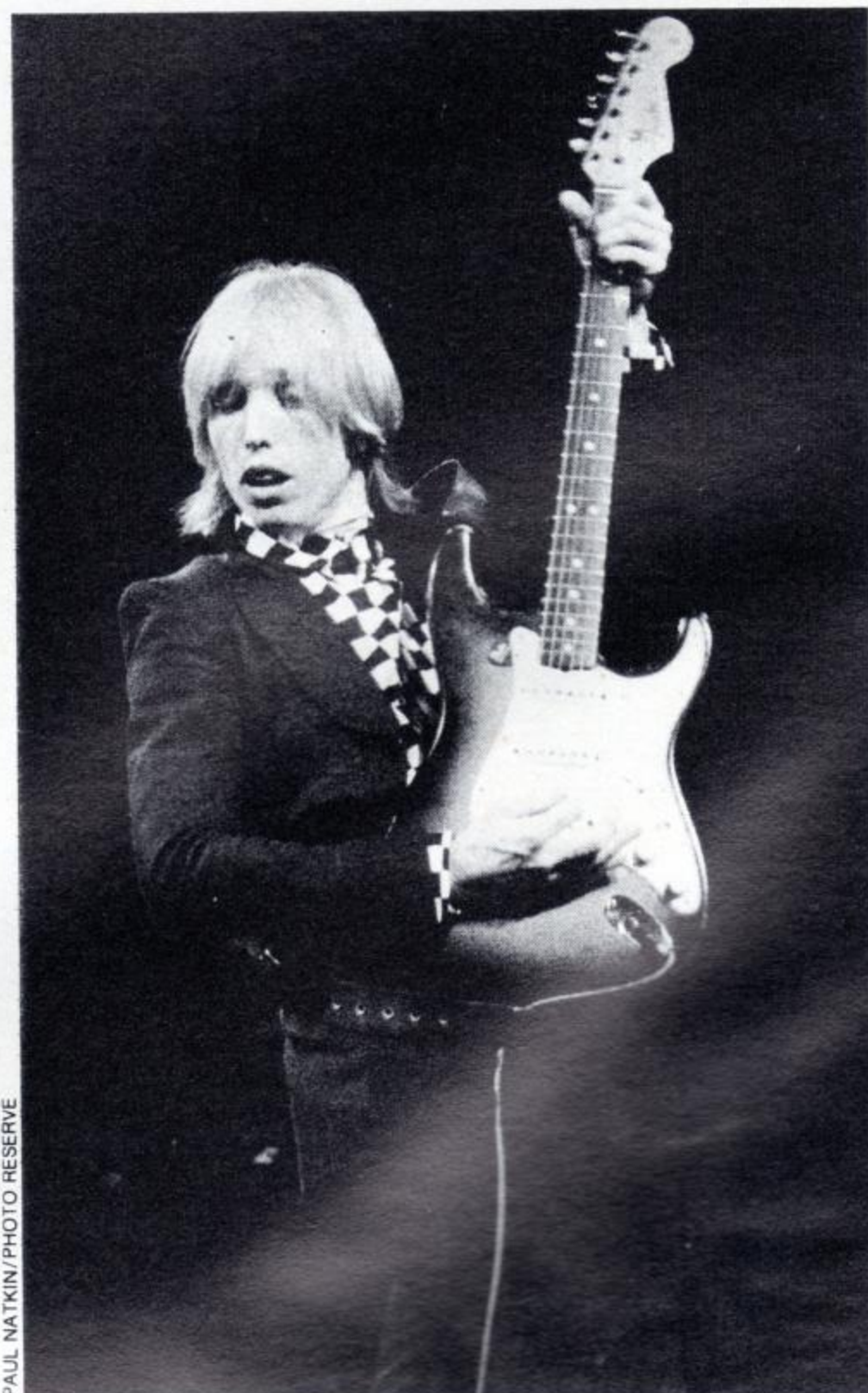
Marty Girard, that guy in the Motels, is a friend from Gainesville and we were talking the other day, we had no idea, when it was going on, that every town didn't have 45 or 50 bands just playing all the time. Because there were thirty fraternity gigs every weekend, and then there were the college gigs and all those college beer bars and the topless bars. We used to play the topless bars, that was the big money: a hundred bucks a week, six sets a night.

Don Felder and Bernie Leadon, of the Eagles, are both from Gainesville and there's a whole lot of players come from there. I think the whole town, everybody I know is here now. But nobody realized it, 'cause there was no studio.

It was a good way to grow up. It wasn't bad. You had to hustle if you wanted guitars and stuff like that. You had to really hustle if you wanted a new Telecaster. It drives me crazy to see these Hollywood bands today; they've got a semi-truck and a P.A., more gear than we got, and they don't have a record deal or nothin'. They're just playing the Whisky.

I took my kid to see the carnival down the street the other day. It was the first time I really felt successful. They had a group, like a garage band and I haven't seen a garage band in so long. It fascinated me. So I went, with my hat on and my hair up, and they had all big guitars and nice amps. I took a ride on the ferris wheel and went over to listen. They played the Who and the Stones and then they played "Breakdown." Amazing.

I'm standing in the middle of this crowd, watching them play this 15 minute version of "Breakdown," over and over and on and on. It was really neat. That's the true heritage of rock and roll, when the garage bands start playing it. 



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