Mike Campbell With The Heartbreakers

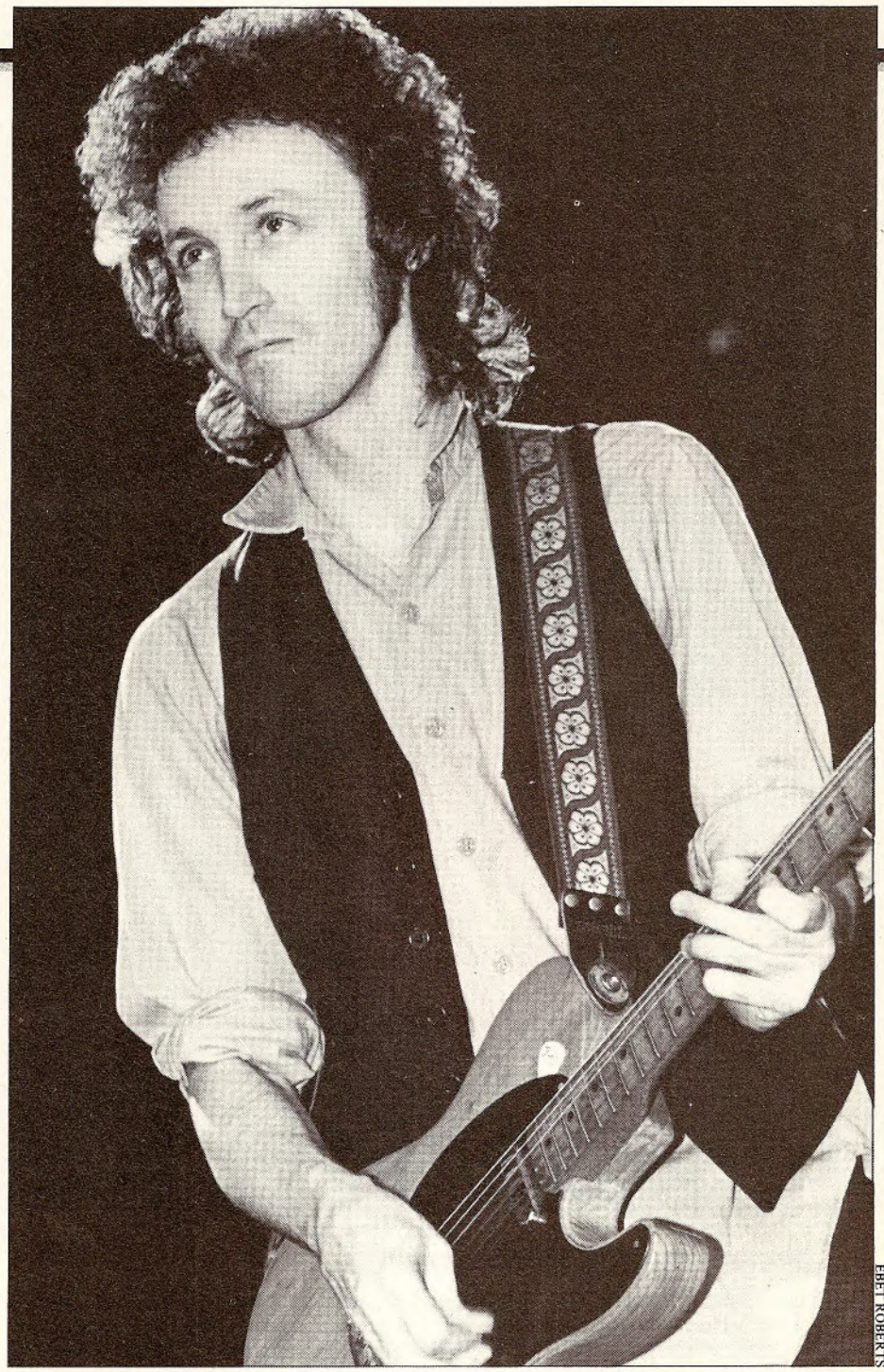
By Jas Obrecht

PALS AND PARTNERS, MIKE Campbell and Tom Petty agree that this is the most exciting time of their careers. After a three-year layoff, Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers issued their acclaimed 1985 *Southern Accents* album and went on tour. Several nights were taped for *Pack Up The Plantation*, a two-record set produced by Campbell and Petty, and Los Angeles' Wiltern Theater became the setting for the film of the same name. Soon the band went back on the road with Bob Dylan, playing "Ballad Of A Thin Man," "Rainy Day Woman #12 & 35," "Positively 4th Street," "Like A Rolling Stone," and other '60s classics. In Australia, they cut a new Dylan song, "Band Of The Hand," and were filmed in concert. After a summer tour of the U.S. with Dylan, they hope to wrap up an album that Petty promises will be "wild and all guitar."

Heartbreakers music is straight-ahead and gimmick-free. A charismatic frontman, Tom Petty supports his edgy, Dylanesque vocals with a wide-ranging rhythm guitar style. Mike Campbell specializes in hooks and counter-rhythms, cool textures and explosive solos. A blues-based player with psychedelic leanings, he's adept at slide guitar, lap steel, and a variety of other instruments. While both Campbell and Petty are accomplished guitarists, there's no sight of one-upmanship in the Heartbreakers: Each man plays for the song.

"Mike really is the best in rock and roll," Petty assesses. "I'd be lost without him. I've played with Michael since 1970, so I wouldn't understand playing with anybody else. We write together, and we've developed a whole style of playing together." While Petty creates most Heartbreakers songs, Campbell co-composed the hits "Refugee" from *Damn The Torpedoes* and "You Got Lucky" from *Long After Dark*. His other writing credits include Stevie Nicks' #3 hit from *Bella Donna*, "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," and Don Henley's "The Boys Of Summer" from *Building The Perfect Beast* [Geffen, GHS 24062].

Inspired by Chuck Berry and the Beatles, Mike Campbell, 36, took up guitar in the '60s. His first band, northern Florida's Mudcrutch, comprised future Heartbreakers Tom Petty, keyboardist Benmont Tench, and bassist Ron Blair. Working hard to gain a following around Gainesville and Jacksonville, the group honed its sound on cover tunes and Tom's originals. In 1973, Mudcrutch moved to L.A., cut an album that was never released, and folded. Campbell and



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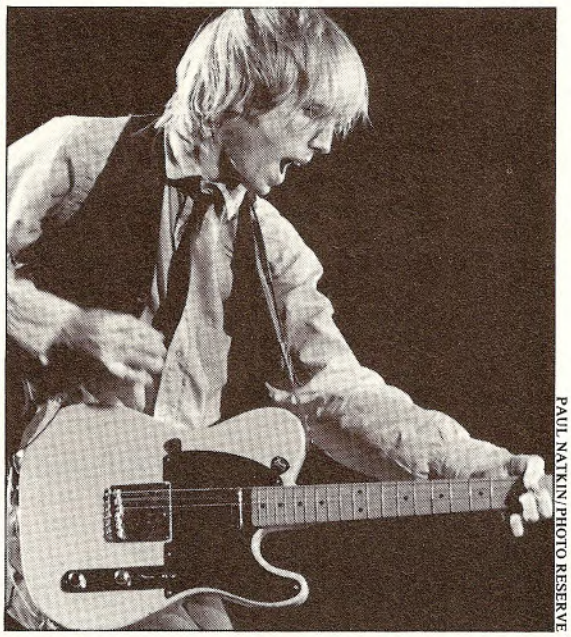
company stayed on the West Coast, regrouping in 1975 when Petty landed a deal with Shelter Records. Stan Lynch came in on drums, and the band headed for the studio.

At first, 1976's *Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers* sold poorly. Powered by Campbell's unforgettable guitar hook, "Breakdown" gradually picked up momentum, breaking into the Top 40 in early '78. By then, the band had toured nationally with Al Kooper and Cheap Trick and finished their second LP, *You're Gonna Get It!* The next tour took the Heartbreakers to England, where they opened for Nils Lofgren and made it into the British Top 20 with "Anything That's Rock And Roll."

Events at home proved less fortuitous. MCA purchased ABC Records, which distributed and had contractual ties to Shelter. Petty, in the midst of recording *Damn The Torpedoes*, disagreed with his assignment to MCA. While working out a compromise, he financed the rest of the sessions himself and filed for bankruptcy in mid '79. The Heartbreakers were assigned to the new MCA-distributed Backstreet label, and *Damn The Torpedoes* was soon on its way to selling more than 3 million copies. "Don't Do Me Like That" shot into the Top 10, with "Refugee" and "Here Comes My Girl" becoming follow-up hits. The album itself reached #2 in *Billboard*. On 1981's *Hard Promises*, Campbell stepped out on autoharp, accordion, harmonium (reed organ), and bass, in addition to guitars. He also played the distinctive hook in Stevie Nick's "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" that year. Ron Blair was replaced by Howie Epstein for 1982's *Long After Dark*. Although the Heartbreakers were now scoring million-sellers with each release, seven years of touring, recording, and legal hassles had taken its toll, and Petty called a break.

Mike concentrated on composing, producing "The Boys Of Summer" with singer Don Henley, and writing a track for Lone Justice, "Ways Of The Wicked" [*Lone Justice*, Geffen, GHS 24060]. The Heartbreakers returned to the studio in 1984, only to suffer another setback when Petty slammed his fist into a studio wall and broke several bones. Rumors that the Heartbreakers were through and that Petty would never play again were dispelled by 1985's *Southern Accents*. The band expanded its lineup—introducing fe-

Tom Petty The Dying Art Of Rhythm Guitar



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

By Jas Obrecht

TOM PETTY, 33, BEGAN FRONTing the Heartbreakers in 1976. Since then, the scrappy native of Gainesville, Florida, has been bankrupted by lawsuits, plagued by throat ailments, and disabled by a severely broken left hand. All the while, he's worked hard to ensure the survival of the music he loves.

On record and stage, Petty comes across as part storyteller, part good ole boy, and part '60s revivalist. Played on acoustic guitar or chimey Rickenbacker, his rhythms are essential to the Heartbreakers sound.

* * * *

DO YOU CONSIDER yourself a rhythm specialist?

Yeah. It's a dying art, I'll tell ya. Rhythm guitar is a very important trip, and a lot of people miss it. A lot of these kids today just learn all these Ritchie Blackmore things, but they don't know a chord to save their life. They don't know how to write a song, but they know how to play a solo. I can carry a band. I can make it chug along. That's an important thing. If I don't play, there's a difference. Being a rhythm player is kind of like being the line on a football team, but I really enjoy it. If it's going to all fall in, it's my job to lock this band up and keep it locked. If that means upbeats or flamenco or calypso, that's what I gotta do.

Were your early musical heroes rhythm guitarists?

I liked a lot of guitar players. I always liked John Lennon. I basically just studied Lennon's playing, even in the films, just watching his right hand and how it worked. Stuff like "And I Love Her" [*A Hard Day's Night*, Capitol, SW-11921] has an amazing rhythm pattern; I learned a lot from that. John Fogerty is a good rhythm player, and Slim Harpo is amazing. Keith Richards is another person I've always learned a lot from. Dylan, actually, since I've been playing with him. The two of us can play rhythm really good in sync. On acoustic, he can't be beat.

Has working with Dylan had an impact on your style?

I'm sure it has. Our styles are different, so I try to get exactly in sync with what Bob is doing. That's a challenge, because it changes every night. It's never the same. Sometimes you have to find where the I chord is, or what exactly the song is about. But we've gotten where the two of us, especially on acoustics, can really lock up and make the band happen. Working with Bob has freed us up a bit. With the rehearsals and the soundchecks, we've been playing four or five hours a night. We've just been playing, playing, and playing. We've done it *so much* together recently, we kind of feel funny now if we don't play.

Continued on page 23

male backup singers and horns—and explored funk, soul, country, and psychedelic directions. Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics added sitar, guitar, and bass to "Don't Come Around Here No More" and "It Ain't Nothin' To Me," while Campbell soloed on dobro in the title track and laced brilliant slide through "Spike."

The band reprised half of *Southern Accents* and past hits such as "Refugee," "American Girl," and "You Got Lucky" for their live *Pack Up The Plantation* projects. Ever true to their roots, the Heartbreakers also covered '60s classics, including the Isley Brothers' "Shout," the Byrds' "So You Want To Be A Rock & Roll Star," and the Animals' "Don't Bring Me Down." At the time of this interview, Mike was in Los Angeles working on the new album and gearing up for the U.S leg of the Dylan tour.

* * * *

YOU SPECIALIZE IN creating strong melodic hooks. Do you edit your playing to essentials to come up with these?

No, I never see it quite like that. I just play the way I play. I like to work around the vocal. I'm not what you would call a real virtuoso-type guitarist. Most of my playing has been in groups with Tom, so my approach is always just to do the right part that fits around what he's singing or the story he's telling. The song is more important than any of the rhythms or solos. If there's a place where I can let go, I try to stick something in there. But most of the time I try to not get in the way of the song.

A SELECTED HEARTBREAKERS DISCOGRAPHY

Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers: *Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers*, Shelter (dist. by MCA), 37143; *You're Gonna Get It!*, Shelter, DA 52029; *Damn The Torpedoes*, MCA, 1486; *Hard Promises*, Backstreet, BSR-5160; *Long After Dark*, Backstreet, BSR-5360; *Southern Accents*, MCA, 5486; *Pack Up The Plantation*, MCA, 2-8021. **With others:** Stevie Nicks, *Bella Donna*, Modern (dist. by Atlantic), 38-139; Del Shannon, *Drop Down And Get Me*, Elektra, 5E-568.

What are your strengths and limitations as a guitarist?

There are a lot of limitations. Maybe one of my strengths is being able to string chord structures together and put them in a rhythm that can be turned into song. It's one of my favorite things to do, as opposed to intricate guitar solos. I don't think I'm really what you'd consider a flashy player. I don't have much talent in the area of playing fast and with a lot of flashy technique. I'm not sure I really want to work on that area very much, but that's the limitation that comes to mind immediately.

Has your work with Bob Dylan caused any change in your playing approach?

I don't know about technique-wise, but just on a playing level it's very inspiring. I have learned quite a lot from watching the way he plays guitar. He's a very knowledgeable guitarist when it comes to chording; he knows positions that I wouldn't have thought of. And he has a real interesting way of approaching the rhythm of a song. You can play a straight beat or a shuffle at the same tempo, and then there's that ground in between where it's sort of swinging in the middle. Bob is really good at that. He's one of the most inspiring people I've ever heard. I'm a big fan.

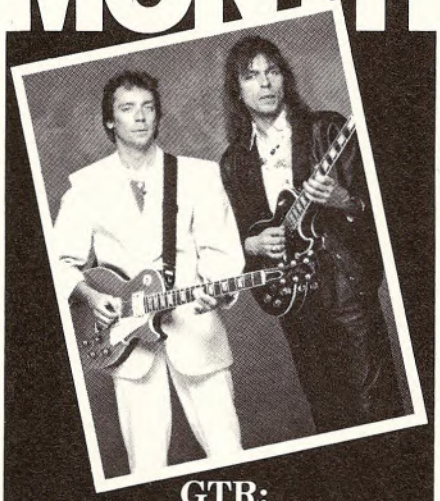
Does Dylan have definite ideas about what he wants you to play?

On certain songs, yeah. But he's pretty loose. He's not too specific with what he wants. He's got a kind of look [*laughs*]—you can tell if he likes it or not. Most of the time, he just starts playing and everybody follows him. He rarely plays the same song exactly the same, so there's no point in trying to work out a part on most of this stuff. You just have to go with however it feels.

What appeals to you about Tom Petty's style?

The thing I like best is when he sings and plays at the same time. His way of playing the guitar against a vocal is just right. He sticks in little rhythm things, and when he's singing,

NEXT MONTH



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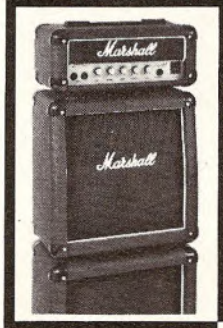

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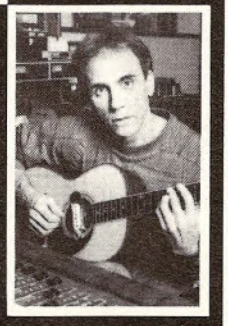

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he backs off and comps his guitar to the vocal. It balances itself real well. He's real good at that. He has a good feel for solos, too. He can play a Chuck Berry/John Lennon-style solo. He's not like Eddie Van Halen, but in his style he has a great touch.

Have you ever worked out unison parts?

Rhythm. No solo that I can think of. We usually play against each other: "There's a hole, so let's stick one guitar here and one over there." We don't really work out our guitars too much. It's just not like Duane and Dickey [Allman Brothers Duane Allman and Dickey Betts]. It's kind of like Hank and Joe [*laughs*].

Does Tom have much input in your recorded solos?

Oh, yeah. The solo in the middle of "You Got Lucky" [*Long After Dark*] was Tom's idea. We had the track pretty well finished, and we wanted to put some sort of unique solo on there. He said, "Why don't you do something like a Clint Eastwood kind of thing with the vibrato?" I call that my *rip-boing* technique [*laughs*]. It's just rocking the old vibrato as I play the solo. On occasion, Tom has a part in mind; he may sing it. But most of the time, we just wing it on the solos and hopefully land something that's spontaneous. Those are usually the best ones. You can also fall flat on your face that way. My favorite ones are where they said, "Go!" and I really didn't know what was going to happen. I just went for it, and everyone said, "Ah, that was perfect." I had to go back and listen to hear what it was because it went by so fast.

Do ideas for solos or melodic hooks ever come when you don't have an instrument in hand?

A lot of times. When they're working on the vocals, I sit there and listen and sing parts in my mind. That way, by the time they say, "Okay, let's put a guitar on," I've already got a few ideas in mind. Sometimes they all get thrown out—they go, "No, no, no!" But the first idea we hit on is almost always the best one. Once we've come up with a hook or a riff, when we try to make it better, we usually end up going back to the first one because that was the right inspiration.

What's your method for recording solos?

There is no method, really. The most important thing I've found is to just go out there with the right attitude for the song. That usually makes up for any shortcomings in the performance or the part. You have to learn not to be uptight about knowing that they can hear every little mistake and that it's going to be on a record forever. You just have to get into the song. Onstage, there's all the energy. The adrenaline level is so up, you're less likely to get uptight. In the studio, sometimes you can get under the headphones and feel like you're under a microscope. You can get a little self-conscious. You learn not to think about it.

Do you usually take several passes at one solo?

Sometimes. It depends. A lot of times we get one and then say, "Okay, let's double it" or, "Let's keep that and see if we can get one that's better." Then we spend some time with it, but 95% of the time we go back to the first one because it always seems to have a freshness about it. One of the spontaneous ones I always remember is in "Too Much Ain't Enough" from *You're Gonna Get It!* I had no idea what I was going to do, and it came out with a real go-for-it theme. Sometimes instead of playing the rhythm straight through and going back later to solo, I solo during the basic track. "Century City" on *Damn The Torpedoes* was like that. I stumbled on one foot into some unknown lands there, but it worked. My favorite solos are where I start going in a familiar vein and then almost paint myself into a corner—like, "Uh, oh. Now how do I get out of this one?" I'm forced to do something to get out of it, and when it works, it's great.

Are your solos ever mapped out in advance?

The one in "You Got Lucky," for instance, was all planned out because we wanted it to sound a certain way. We came up with the melody and decided that we wanted it to be just like this with no extra frills—just get one that's real good and simple. But most of the time we don't work that way.

How do the Heartbreakers work out new material?

When Tom shows us a song he's written, he usually plays rhythm and sings at the same time. I try to come up with either a riff or a counter-rhythm to support the part that he's trying to play while he sings. On some of the songs I've written with Tom, where I have a

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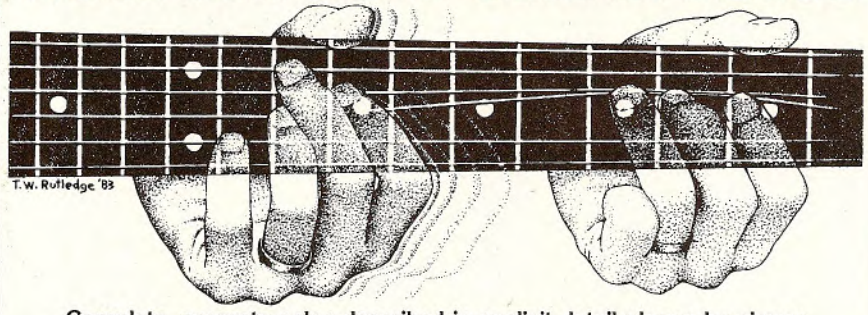

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- ☐ **NOTE FOR NOTE TAPE E** – ROCK BOTTOM – TOO HOT TO HANDLE – LIGHTS OUT – ARMED AND READY – MOTHER MARY – COAST TO COAST – ONLY YOU CAN ROCK ME – INTO THE ARENA
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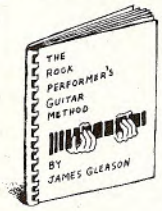

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certain guitar intro on a demo cassette, it works backwards. He listens to what I've done, and then he starts to put his own feeling into one of the parts that I've worked out. It evolves from there. There's no formula, really. Whoever can fill in with whatever is needed just takes up the slack.

What did you contribute to "Refugee" and "You Got Lucky"?

I wrote the music for those songs at home and brought the demos in for the band. We built them up from my original idea and made a few changes. With those two songs, we pretty much tried to match the demo because we had something that worked. So when Tom wrote the lyrics, we wanted to recreate the music as closely as we could. In some ways we made it better, and in some ways we went past the original, but I like how those two came out. Tom did all the words by himself. He's real good at that. I let him do what he's good at.

Do you ever have to relearn a solo after you've recorded it?

A few times. That comes into play when I write a song at home and play a few guitars on the demo to show how I think the song should go. Then we learn it and decide, "Okay, that's great. Let's do it just like this." So we get all the big equipment into the studio, and they go, "Okay, now do it just like you did it at home." Sometimes that's the most difficult thing. I have to go back and learn exactly what I did, and then I have to try to perform it without thinking about it. As soon as I start thinking about it, it's not quite the same. I'm playing all the same notes, but it doesn't feel like when I was sitting at home with whatever felt right that came off the top of my head.

What has experience taught you about taping a good guitar sound?

Sometimes it can be really hard to get one, but I've learned a few tricks. Tom Scholz' Rockman can be real handy for certain types of sounds. If you're having trouble, you can usually plug that in and get a sound pretty quick. I'm still learning, though. You learn one technique and think, oh great, now I know how to get a guitar sound. And then you try it with another song, and it doesn't work for some reason—maybe because of the song's ambience or how much space it leaves for the guitar to breathe. Sometimes you have to go direct, sometimes you have to go to a big amp, and sometimes you have to go to a little amp. I haven't found one sound that always works. I've also learned that once you get a sound up, you have to be sensitive to how you play it. If you overplay through a real loud amp, it's going to sound like garbage. But if you learn to palm it [damp] or hit it a certain way, you can make it sound really big with a little bit of effort. A lot of it has to come from the player. You could hook up the best amp and guitar in the world, but if you're not sensitive to the right way to attack the string for a certain effect, it won't sound right. Most of it has to come from me, not

from the engineer or the equipment.

Do you compose music that would never be used by the Heartbreakers?

Yeah. I have a 24-track studio in my home, and it's a real kick; I can really get crazy. I like to write in a lot of styles, and there is a lot of stuff on tape that can never be used by the group. But anything that I think is good, I consider for the band because that's the biggest outlet for anything I might do. It's strange. Sometimes I come up with an odd piece of music that I think they'll never want to do because it's too weird, and they say, "Oh, that's great. We want to do that one today." Or sometimes I come up with something and say, "Oh, this is perfect for the band. You're going to love it." And they go, "No. We don't want to do that type of thing." We only get nine songs an album, and we do an album every year-and-a-half, so a lot of music gets piled up.

Are your psychedelic and blues-based sides a reflection of your favorite musicians as a youth?

Yeah, they must be. I was learning to play guitar in the '60s, and there was a lot of stuff on the radio that I got excited about—the Beatles, the Stones, Chuck Berry, and all the blues players. Some of the first things I learned were off of their records. Chuck Berry's "Sweet Little Sixteen" was real good, and of course, "Johnny B. Goode." *The Paul Butterfield Blues Band* [Elektra, 7294] with Michael Bloomfield on guitar—I was into that record for quite a while. Just learning how he did bends and vibrato was a real revelation; I slowed the record down to figure them out. I was inspired by the way George Harrison played on the early Beatles records. And then I got into some of the 12-string stuff Roger McGuinn did with the Byrds. Jimi Hendrix was inspiring. That whole era was really guitar-oriented.

Did you ever study music theory?

Not really. I know how to read music very slowly, but it's something I never use. I go by ear and instinct. I don't have much theoretical background. I tried to get into music school once, but they wouldn't let me in because I didn't have the background, the training.

When do you play your best?

I can tell when I'm playing to the best of my abilities, but I can't always make it happen when I want it to. Most of my highest moments are live. There are certain nights when everything feels right and the band's playing great. I just know that when it comes time for the solo, it's going to be right. I'm ready for it, and nothing can go wrong because we're just on. Sometimes in the studio you get that feeling, but usually it's a little more of a work atmosphere. You're not quite as excited as when you're right there in front of people.

Can you change solos around during concerts?

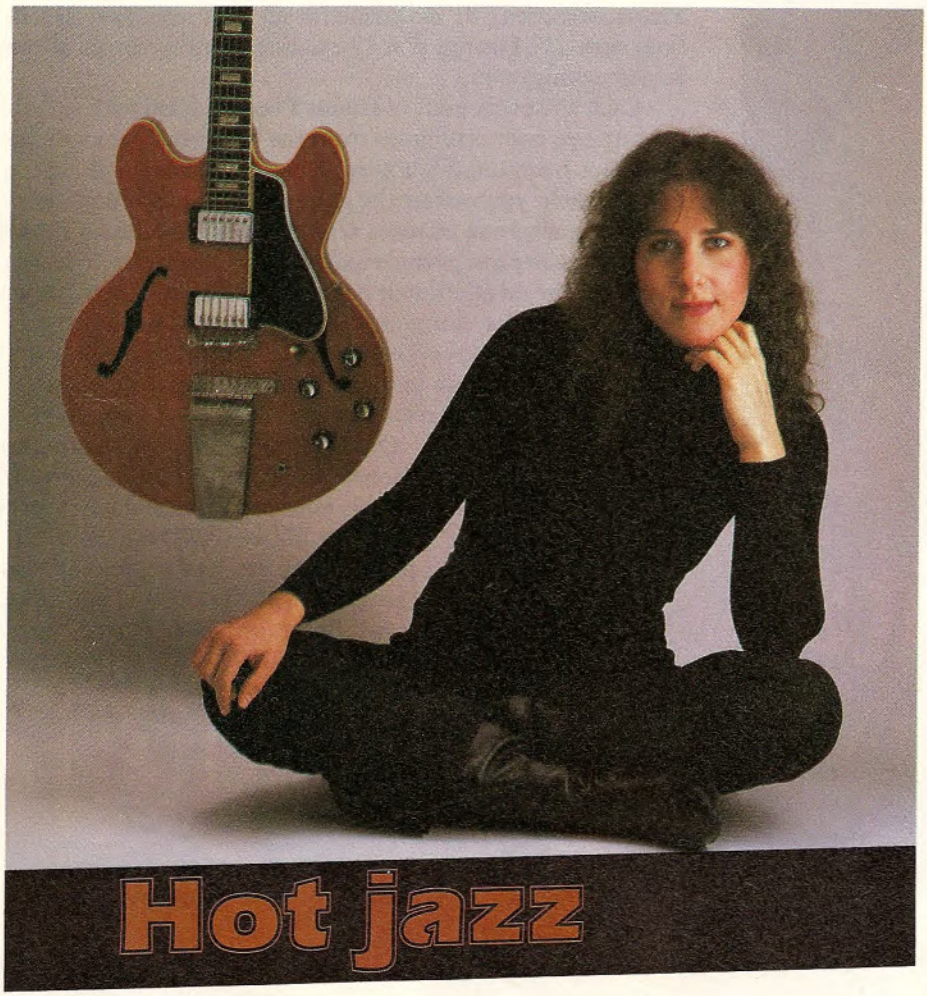
Yeah, in certain areas. It's a little different every night. It has to be. Certain songs don't lend themselves to that type of thing, but others do. At the end of "Refugee," where everyone's bashing and there's a guitar solo through the end of the song, I have a lot of freedom each night to try to take it to a new place—within limitations. I mean, I just can't go into an 18-minute excursion: "Just follow me guys! I'll be back in a few minutes" [*laughs*]. It's necessary to push yourself a little bit, because if you play the same thing every night the same way, it's just going to be dull. So whenever I get bored, I have to do something different; I don't care if it's good or bad. It's usually better because I'm interested.

Have you ever lost your confidence onstage?

Yeah. When you fall down, it shakes your confidence. I've tripped and hit the deck a couple of times, and it shocks you into a slight re-evaluation [*laughs*]. Actually, confidence is a big part of how good you play. If you lose your confidence, you're lost. You have to condition yourself to walk out there knowing that you are going to play good. Then you make yourself play good, and you do not accept anything but that. You have got to have that attitude. You can't even consider losing your confidence. You must have it at all times.

How did the addition of horns last tour affect your role?

It was fun. It sort of freed things up a lot. It was a whole new texture. I found that I didn't have to play as full all the time. I could let up, and the horns would come in and hit the chord. It wouldn't sound empty if I didn't play a full chord but put a riff in instead. It



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was real interesting.

Is your playing ability constantly expanding?

I think so. I don't play every day, but I do play a lot when I'm off the road. On some days I might not actually be playing the guitar, but I might be in the studio working on a track or fiddling with knobs and doing things on the engineering or production level. And other days I just play the guitar for the fun of it. But I do tend to get so wrapped up in it that I reach a point where I have to take a vacation from it. I don't even want to hear or see a guitar for three or four days. And then when I come back, it's real fresh.

What do you look for in a guitar?

Something that sounds and feels good. I really like the few guitars I've got. The only thing that would inspire me to buy another guitar is if I stumbled onto a real old one that was in really nice condition and wasn't about $5,000.00. I've never spent a lot of money on a guitar. It's against my religion to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on something like that. I don't think I've ever spent more than $500.00 on a guitar. Just the thought of that doesn't feel right somehow. But, these days it's hard to find a deal. I haven't bought a guitar in a long time.

Do any of your current stage guitars date back to the beginning of the band?

Yeah. I have a Fender Broadcaster that I use quite a bit. It's blonde, all natural wood. I used it for the solo in "Breakdown" and for almost the whole first album. On "Breakdown," I think I was on the bass pickup for the intro and then I went to my treble pickup for the middle. It's a good all-around guitar. For rhythms, solos, whatever—it always works. Anytime I'm stuck and can't get a sound, I just plug that one in. I almost hate to take it on the road because it's irreplaceable. It was made somewhere between '48 and '51. That's my favorite. I also have a Strat that Tom uses most of the time. It's a real good rhythm guitar. In fact, I hardly ever get to play it anymore. I got that for $200.00 a long time ago. That's why I can't see paying $2,500.00 for a vintage Les Paul. Can't get past it—I'm spoiled, I guess.

In the film Pack Up The Plantation, *you use a psychedelic relic for "Don't Come Around Here No More."*

Yeah. We tried to do it with a Coral Electric Sitar, but every time I'd get it to sound right, it would be right on the edge of feeding back. It just got to be real headache, so I tried a Rickenbacker 12-string for the first part, and that seemed to work real good. For the solo at the end, I switched over to this real cheap guitar called a Magnum Ferrari II. It's made in Korea. It's just a cheap piece of wood, but that song is such an oddball that it seemed right. I got that guitar from a video that we did where they dropped all these $30.00 guitars and broke them on the floor. This one didn't break, so I took it home and threw some paint on it and plugged it in. It's good for a psychedelic sound with a wah-wah pedal.

What are your favorite Rickenbackers?

I like my 12-string a lot, the one on the cover of *Damn The Torpedoes*. It has a unique tone. [*Ed. Note: Mike's Model 625-12 solidbody, which dates from 1963, is one of two made. In the late '70s, Rickenbacker added the similar Model 620-12 to its line.*]. I also have a black, three-pickup, two-horn solidbody [a non-stock, modified or experimental model] that Tom uses. It sounds somewhere between a Fender and a Gibson. It's hard to describe; it really has a unique tone of its own. The Rick just has that good, natural honk.

Do you use other guitars during a show?

Yeah. I have a red Telecaster that actually belongs to Tom. It's called the Red Dog, and it's got quite a history. We traded a few things back and forth, and I grabbed that one because he wasn't using it. It has a Bigsby tremolo. It used to have this incredible built-in power-boost fuzz button that could blow speakers up. It broke once, and it was never the same again. I also have a couple of Gibson Les Pauls—a gold-top [Standard with replacement pickups] that I've had since the first album, and a white Custom that tunes up a little better.

Are your instruments modified?

No. I never change pickups or anything like that. The only modification I've done is to put a string bender for the *B* on a '56 Tele I got a while back. I had it on the *Plantation* tour, but I didn't quite have a handle on it. On the Dylan tour, I got a chance to start

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learning how to use it. It's a great toy. When you run out of ideas, you just push down and make something new happen.

How do you route your onstage signal?

It's simple. I've got a Roland delay unit that's a little quieter than the Echoplex I used to use. For the most part, I just go through that one echo unit, which I use just for solo sections. There were a couple of songs on the last tour where I worked in a wah-wah pedal, like "Spike" [*Pack Up The Plantation*]. I think that's all I had. I keep it real simple. My old Vox AC30 amp sounds pretty good without any effects. I have a backup, but that's the only amp I use onstage. With the AC30, you can get a big sound that's very even and midrangey. You can get real raunchy or clean without having to blast your ears off. You just can't get that sound out of a lot of little amps. I usually set the AC30's volume between 2 and 3, depending on the song. I don't know where the presence and other controls are set; I just put little marks on there so I can go right to them. But the amp sounds the same in most places—it's real consistent.

What produced the '60s-style fuzz in "Don't Bring Me Down"?

Actually, [bassist] Ron Blair had a Gibson fuzztone at the rehearsal, and I plugged into that and it sounded right. I wish I still had it. Plus, there was some great built-in vibrato on the amp I was using at that time, a Vox Super Beatle. So between that and the fuzztone, we created a monster white-noise sound.

What's the lap steel on the Pack Up The Plantation *version of "Southern Accents"?*

That's an old Rickenbacker. It's solid metal and weighs a ton. A friend of mine got it at a junk store for $100.00. The pickup was real quiet, so I had it rewired. Since I only use it on "Southern Accents," which is in *F*, I tuned all the strings up a half-step. I used a Morley volume pedal with that to sort of hide the clinkers at the end and to get a steel guitar effect. That went through the Roland into my AC30.

How do you play slide on a standard electric guitar?

I use a pill bottle with a ridge on it—One A Day Vitamins, I think. I wear it on my little finger so I can use the other three for chording. I damp behind the slide to an extent; with the electric guitar, it's not that crucial to damp. I can damp with my palm, too. It's better to use it on a guitar where the action isn't real low. For "Spike," I was using the Broadcaster, which has semi-high action. It's real comfortable. I like playing in open tuning, but I wasn't doing anything on the last tour in open tuning. I enjoy playing slide a lot because it's real expressive. With "Breakdown," for instance, we were trying to come up with a guitar part, and it wasn't working. I started playing it on bottleneck, and that's how I came up with the line. Tom said that that was the right melody, but then we decided that the bottleneck was too bluesy.

So I just played the part without the bottleneck and it worked. It's just one of those things you stumble onto.

Do you play much acoustic guitar?

A little. I like to play, but there's not that many occasions with the band to use an acoustic. I have an Ovation 12-string that I like a lot; I've used it on quite a bit of stuff. I often play an acoustic at home, just because it's there and I don't have to plug it in.

Are you working on any new techniques?

I've been fooling around a lot lately with using just my thumb and fingers instead of a pick. I like several guitarists who play that way. Ry Cooder has a real nice touch, and Mark Knopfler does certain things that sound like just fingers. Some of the old blues players, like John Lee Hooker—a lot of that sound is from the flesh of the thumb rubbing against the string. On the new album, I've finally gotten to where I can coordinate my thumb and fingers enough to get a good sound. Usually I hold the pick between my thumb and 1st finger, and I pick along with the other fingers. It's not a worked-out technique; I just stick fingers in where they're needed. You're not dealing with Segovia here [*laughs*].

What are your techniques for string-bending and finger vibrato?

I first got into that with *The Paul Butterfield Blues Band* album. Until then, it didn't occur to me that you could push a string up and choke it. When I hit on that, it was like, now I've seen my vision [*laughs*]. I've always liked that sound. To do it, I use my 1st and 2nd fingers behind my 3rd finger to help push and get more strength. First of all, the trick is to be able to push up a whole note. You have to be able to get there without going past it or sounding flat. Then the next secret is to hit the note and waver it to add vibrato. It's a combination of using the left-hand wrist and elbow, but mostly from the wrist. Everybody develops their own kind of vibrato. You just have to feel it the way you feel it.

Is there anything coming up in the near future that you're excited about?

The new album. We already have quite a few tracks finished, and as soon as we get back from the road, we're going to finish up and try to have the album out by the end of the year. We recorded one track with Dylan for the album, but as it turned out, we didn't need it. He liked the track, so he sang over it and he's going to put it on his record. I'm looking forward to the rest of the Dylan dates. Up until now, I've only been on the road with Tom, and that's why this is so much fun for all of us. It's a chance to play with someone else and not be the Heartbreakers. It's very refreshing.

TOM PETTY

Continued from page 11

Have you ever soloed on your records?

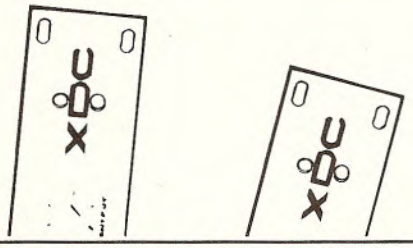
Yeah. I played a great solo in "Between Two Worlds" on *Long After Dark*, but most of the solos on record are Mike, or the two of us at once. Lately, though, with Bob and on the new record, I play a lot more solos.

How do you and Mike plan parts?

We keep it very free. Nobody knows who's going to take the solo most of the time. With this kind of band, if you are going to work it out, it's over. It's just got to happen. We never think of it as rhythm and lead too much. Sometimes I come up with the solo, and Michael plays it. Maybe he'll have an idea, and I'll say, "Now, play something like this," or I'll sing something to him and he'll improve on it. He might suggest things to me, like playing the chords up higher, going to an open tuning, or using a capo. If I want to do a lead or another part, or to stop playing altogether, I just do it and trust that it's gonna keep going. Once that freedom's there, the music is much more exciting than if everybody said, "Okay, you're gonna play this, and you're going to do that." That's a little limiting. But you've got to have the discipline to know when you must do that, too. You hit an energy level and then, hopefully, the song's going to do the work. If you're playing a good song, you're alright. You're in trouble when you're not. We don't think of guitar much; we're really song-oriented.

What are your favorite Mike Campbell solos?

I've got dozens and dozens. He blows my mind [*laughs*]. One of my favorites is in "So You Want To Be A Rock & Roll Star." Roger McGuinn and Chris Hillman [who composed the song and played on the Byrds' original version] called me about that. It's hard to play that way on a 12-string, and they loved it. Michael has played a lot of classic solos; he's very imitated. I heard the solo in



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"Even The Losers" from *Damn The Torpedoes* on the radio the other day, and that's pretty staggering. I remember Bruce Springsteen was sitting there with us when we did that solo, and old Bruce just got religious! You know, Michael is not one to show off. He thinks as a writer a lot, which sometimes I have to kick his ass about. I want to tell him, "Go ahead and give it to me." What he says is essential. The lick in "Breakdown"—I can't imagine that song without it.

How did that lick come about?

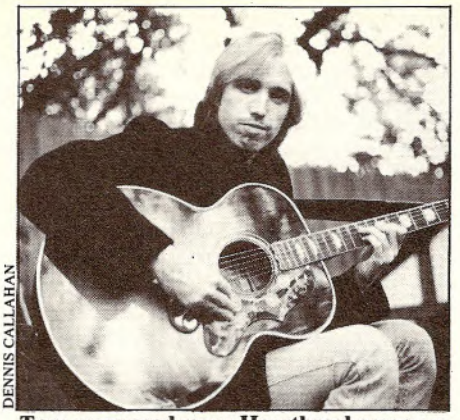
There's a story behind that. I wrote "Breakdown" in the studio about 11 years ago, and the first version was seven minutes long, with this long guitar solo in the end. Everyone had gone home, and I was sitting there listening and in walks [singer] Dwight Twilley. Right in the fadeout of the song, Campbell plays [*sings the song's melodic hook*]. Twilley turns to me and says, "That's the lick, man! How come he only plays it once at the end of the song? It's the whole hook." I listened back, and he was right. So I called the band up—4:00 in the morning—and told them to come back down. We did it again around the lick, took a couple of takes, and there it was.

What has your work as a producer taught you about getting a good electric guitar sound?

Well, it's essential. You could stay there and bang your brains out all day, but if it ain't goin' on, it just ain't goin' on. The secret to getting any sound in the studio is to have something that makes a good sound. The guitar has got to sound good *right there*. You can do everything in the control room, and it still won't work unless it sounds right coming out of the amp. Like, Michael has this Ampeg Rocket tube amp that he uses quite often, and that thing sounds great. I don't care what room you put it in—turn that thing on, and it sounds like that. But when it's not going on, the best thing to do is just take a look at your equipment and make sure you're in the right part of the room. Usually the problem is more in the room rather than in the control room.

Do you typically record your rhythm and vocal tracks at the same time?

Yeah, we try to do everything live. This last album, the double one [*Pack Up The Plantation*], has maybe three overdubs. In the studio, I sing and play at the same time. I've tried doing it separately—the right way—but it's never as good as just doing it. Our new album was written on the spot in the studio, and it's probably our best one. Most of the takes are with the band not even knowing what's going on. When you've only heard the song five times and you don't know what's going to happen next, it gets very interesting. That spontaneity is essential for us. It's very rare that we keep anything past the second take, because it just doesn't sound the same. And I won't play the same song all night anymore. That's nowhere. I won't necessarily scrap it, but maybe I'll say, "Let's play it country or as a ballad," or maybe we'll play something else. And then all of a sudden, when no one's thinking about it, we go back to it and bang, we get it. But you are never going to get anywhere once everyone is tired and weary with it.



DENNIS CALLAHAN

Tom composed many Heartbreakers songs on his favorite acoustic, this Gibson J-200.

Does your upcoming album explore any new guitar approaches?

This new album is going to be quite a shock, I think. It's wild and all guitar. Michael and I are producing it, and I'm really excited about it. It's the most rocking thing we've ever done. People always say, "You know, I wish they'd make records like they did when we were young," and this is wilder than any of that shit. Actually, we play a lot of blues on the new album. I probably play a lot more *guitar* that you'd notice, because there's only two guitars—one over here in the mix, and one over there. So where one of us falls down, the other one jumps in [*laughs*]. That's what we do with Bob. When you have three people going for it, you never know who's going to play the lead. So everybody dives in, and we start backing out when we realize who's got the biggest fish. A lot of times we get comments from people who thought that our records have six guitars, but it's really only two. Mike and I can make a lot of noise.

EBET ROBERTS

Petty: "What Mike Campbell says is essential."

What are your favorite guitars?

Two Rickenbackers that I play most of the time. One's a blonde hollowbody 12-string [Model 360-12] that I've played forever. The other is a red hollowbody 6-string [Model 365] that's a great rhythm guitar—more like an electric/acoustic. Sometimes I might have one tuned open; it depends on what's in the set. I have another solidbody Rick that's tuned up a half-step for "Don't Come Around Here No More," which is in the key of *F*, so I can play around a [first-position] *E* formation to get the full sound. The rest of the time with Bob, I've been using Gibsons—an ES-335 and an SG. So we're not really showing off, changing all those guitars onstage. We need them.

Do you modify instruments?

We don't like guitars that have been messed with. I won't have a guitar that's had some little switch put on it. On the last tour, I started using the SG a lot. It's from the '60s, and when I got it just before the tour, it was brand-new in the case. Now Campbell has taken it [*laughs*]. I'm sort of concerned about getting it back for the tour, because he's used it on the whole new album. He took Red Dog [Petty's old red Fender Telecaster], too, but I took one of his Rickenbackers. We do that. There are some guitars that the ownership isn't quite clear on [*laughs*], and there are some that you can't touch.

Which is your untouchable?

My red Rickenbacker is mine. I was playing Mike's red Rickenbacker 12-string for a while—the one on the cover of *Damn The Torpedoes*—but now I'm not allowed to mess with it. See, he used to let me play this clear Lucite Dan Armstrong guitar, and I broke it three times by running across the stage, causing the cord to rip all the guts out. So that was the end of that. We're pretty hard on guitars.

Do you use effects?

Nah, just a wire [cord] into a Vox AC30 amp. I've played Vox amps all my life, and they tend to work very well for us. We haven't had much luck with Fenders or Marshalls. The new Vox AC30s are great, just like the old ones. I gave one to Bob, and he's playing through it now. They have a very rich sound, a nice tremolo and reverb, and they are very simple. I played a Vox Super Beatle for a long time, but it's really a loud amp. Sometimes that's a little hard to deal with—it's too loud, even in a big place. I used it for "The Waiting" [*Hard Promises*], with my blonde Rickenbacker on the treble pickup.

What kind of picks and strings do you use?

Fender Medium picks. Sometimes I use my fingers with the pick, as well. I'm a pretty good fingerpicker. I don't have the faintest idea what my strings are. Bugs [guitar technician Alan Weidel] puts them on. I don't like to change strings very often. On my electric, I don't like to change them the whole tour. I never let them change strings on my 12-string—ever. A lot of people don't understand how to make a 12-string work. They are always up there nosing around, trying to figure out what I'm doing to it. Nick Lowe used to be up there every night, thinking that

I had some little box somewhere; it was a running joke. But all it is is an AC30 and a very old Rickenbacker. I'm not doing anything to it; it's just the way I play it. But if you put new strings on a guitar like that, there's no way you're going to control them, because they are very thin and they spread out. But when the strings are really old and thick and dead, you get that thickness. My strings are awful—an embarrassment, really.

Did you have to change your string setup after you broke your hand?

No. I came back playing the Rickenbacker a lot of the set because it was easier to play. But now that my hand's strong, I haven't set it up any differently.

In the film Pack Up The Plantation, *you mention that when you broke your left hand, one doctor told you that you'd never play again.*

Yeah. If that should happen to you—and I hope it doesn't—you just have to remain optimistic. That's the only advice I can give. I never accepted that I wasn't going to play again, and neither would the surgeon. He didn't want to have that attitude, although it might've been a reality. It was beyond playing—it was having use of my left hand at all. See this scar down the back of my hand [*points to scar running from his middle knuckle towards the wrist*]—I broke all these bones in half. My hand was closed like a claw and wouldn't open for nine months. I have full use now, some pain now and again. There are four pieces of metal and a little wire inside.

How did the injury affect the way you play?

I got better as a lead player. After the electro-shock and all that awful stuff, the doctor made me play guitar as my therapy because that's what I ultimately do. I had to play literally all day, sometimes when it hurt. So I learned a lot of lead playing. I don't know why I'd never done it before. It's interesting. I started finding things that have been there all the time, but I just never thought about doing them.

Can you play styles other than what you're known for?

I played a lot of bluegrass and country. Michael actually turned me on to that about 1970 or '71. We got a country group together, one of the first ones ever with long hair. I'm really glad we did that, because we learned a lot of guitar stuff. In bluegrass, you have to play pretty fast and precise rhythm, so that helps a lot. If you listen to Bill Monroe, there's a lot of integral rhythm patterns that are really important.

Do you still play much acoustic guitar?

All day long. For 10 years or more, that's what I play all the time. My favorite is a Gibson J-200. Most of my songs were written on my Gibson Dove and the J-200.

How do you amplify acoustic guitars?

I haven't found a good way yet. Last tour, I had one of Bob's Yamaha acoustic/electrics. We used the same model; they look like little J-200s. Those sounded pretty good. We're still looking around. I'm trying to get the J-200 amplified for this tour. Neil Young had a great rig on his Gibson, the best one I ever heard. It's hard to mike them in those big places, like football fields. It's just ridiculous. In the studio, I've come up with a method that works real well. I have a tendency to back away from the mike and be all over the place, so I just clip a little contact mike onto the hole. Then we put a microphone right around where the neck joins the body, and just do a split off the two.

What would you like to improve about your playing?

I'd just like to keep learning more. The nice thing about guitar is that no matter how long you play it, there's always something sitting right there. When I'm playing with Michael, sometimes I'll say, "How did you do that?" And maybe just one different formation will open up a whole other thing for me. There's always something else to learn; that's the real thrill of it.

What should beginners study?

Having a good understanding of basic chord structures that make up most popular songs is a good place to start. Learn the old four chords—*C, Am, F,* and *G*—and know what the minor of each chord is, and that there's another minor that fits into this key. And then learn a lot of songs. I like to think that I can pick up a guitar and sing you a song, and you won't miss anything. That's the test of whether you've written a song or not: You should be able to sit down with a piano or guitar and perform it for someone. Even with songs I've written like "Don't Come Around Here No More"—which is a very complex record—I can get it over to you

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with just a piano or guitar. You better keep a close eye on the ones you can't do that with.

Do you have much of a background in music theory?

I don't know anything about music theory at all. I've learned a lot of, like, lingo over the years. I don't know what a V is, for instance. I hear 'em say, "Play a I, IV, V"—I don't know what that is [*laughs*]. I know millions of chords. I couldn't tell you the names of them, but I usually know what key I'm in. From songwriting, I know things like these chords fit into this key, or I can move into this key from that key. I write a lot on the piano, too, but I've never had any instruction. If you get into a rut on guitar and start to play that song at the piano, where you have the luxury of being able to play a bass line against the chords, something else happens. My best piano songs are all based off mistakes. They let me play piano on some of the records sometimes, but I can only really play one rhythm [*laughs*]. See, I value not knowing what I'm doing. Sometimes Michael says, "That song is exactly like this Buddy Holly song," or something. And I say, "Well, I didn't know that, and I don't care about that." If I got hung up worrying about that, I wouldn't do anything. So I do it, and if it's a total embarrassment, then we back off. But usually by the time you're done, it doesn't sound anything like that anyway. So I like not knowing.

During a performance, does it help to recall what inspired a song's composition?

Certainly. You try to get into that character or frame of mind because you must believe it to convince the audience. It's a lot like acting, in that sense. If you don't believe what you're singing, the jig's up. You really can't fool anybody, not even in a 60,000-seater. They know the difference. So the real trick of performance is getting your mind in shape to take all that on.

Is there anyone you'd like to play with in the future?

I'd love to play with Johnny Cash. John Lee Hooker—he just drives me crazy; I just get fever and chills. There are so many people I admire, so many good players.

Do you enjoy being back on the road?

I'm having a marvelous time. Musically, this has been the best couple of years I've ever had, since *Southern Accents* on. The greatest thing about it is that nobody's thinking about anything but playing. There's not any tension. We've had a lot of trouble over the years; it's been a running soap opera. Michael says that I have a problem with authority [*laughs*]. But I don't think about that anymore. I'm just trying to play some rock and roll music. I can honestly say that I love rock and roll. Since I was a child of 10 or 11, I've lived for it. And the most important thing we're doing is keeping that music alive.