

MUSIC

PERFORMANCE

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

**Rock 'n' Roll
Caravan '87, with
the Georgia Satellites
and Del Fuegos**

**Arizona State University
Activity Center**

Tempe, Arizona
May 27th, 1987

By Steve Hochman

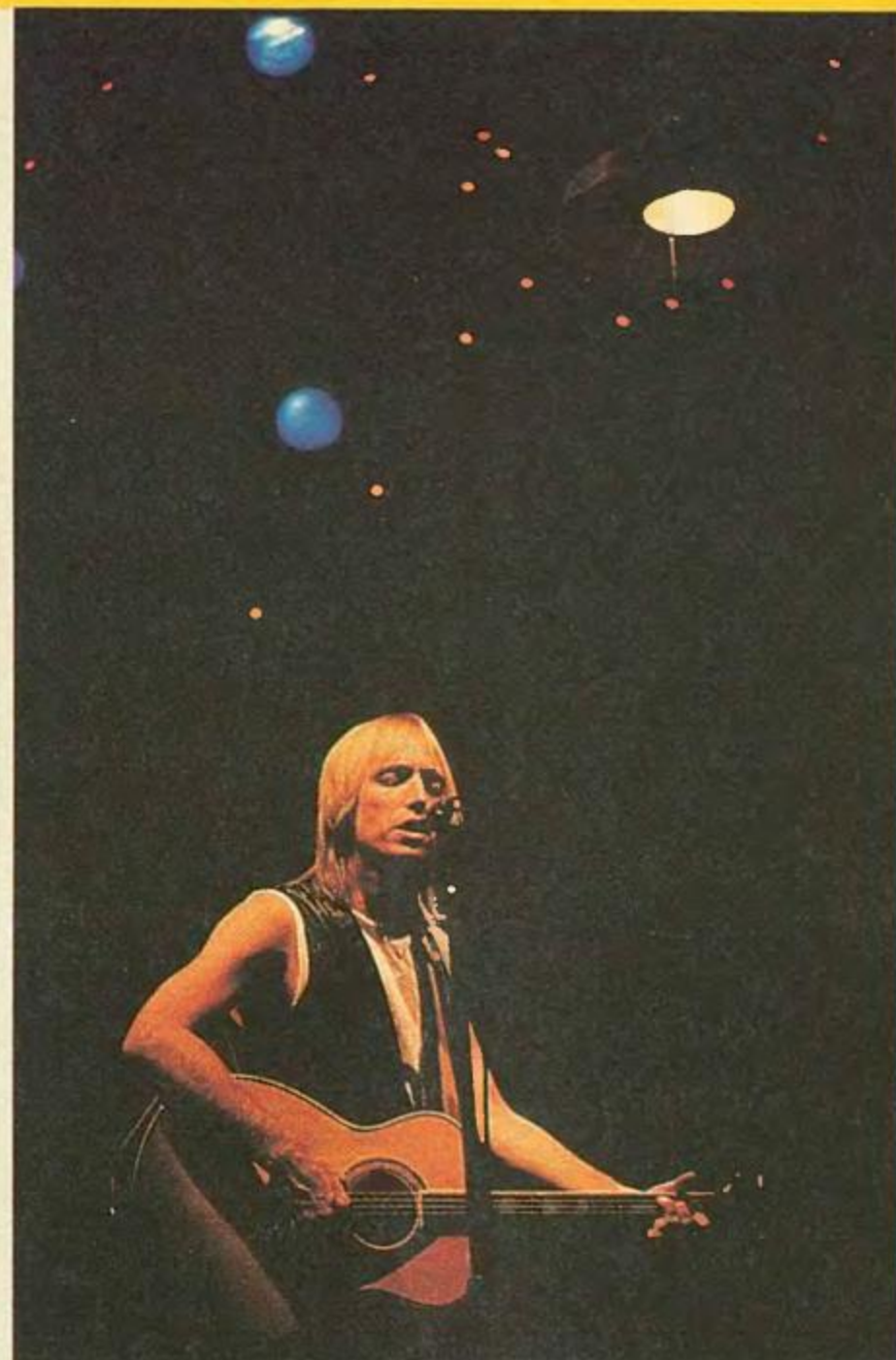


"I HAD KIND OF A WEIRD WEEK LAST week," Tom Petty told the crowd in Tempe, Arizona. "Somebody came and burned my house to the ground. It's all right, really." He paused and held out his twelve-string Rickenbacker. "They didn't burn this." It was an appropriate comment for a concert that was in part a tribute to guitar rock. This was the second stop of the Rock 'n' Roll Cara-

van '87, Petty and the Heartbreakers' tour with the Georgia Satellites and the Del Fuegos.

It's been a while since Petty and the boys have gone on tour simply on the strength of their songs and playing. Last time around they were sharing the stage with Bob Dylan, and the time before that was 1985's unwieldy Pack Up the Plantation Tour - complete with horns,

**Tom Petty
steals the
show at the
second stop
on the Rock 'n'
Roll Caravan.**



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background singers and an elaborate set depicting a decaying Southern mansion, a reference to the ambitious themes of the album *Southern Accents*.

The rare three-band tour – designed to re-create the generous spirit of barn-storming multi-act bills of past rock generations – was a strong testimony of the value of rock for rock's sake. The mood was set by the Boston-based Del Fuegos, who proved that it's possible to sound like a great club band even in an arena setting. Ditto for the Georgia Satellites, whose exuberant brand of gutbucket guitar rock must be experienced live to be appreciated. If the Faces ever played sober, they probably sounded a lot like this quartet.

But the evening belonged to Petty and the Heartbreakers, and they made the most of it with a no-frills attitude reflecting that of their current album, *Let Me Up (I've Had Enough)*, though only five of the set's twenty songs came from that record. Though they opened and closed with crowd-pleasing warhorses ("Breakdown" and the Byrds' "So You Want to Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star," respectively), what came in between sounded invigoratingly fresh.

Taking its cue from the anything-can-happen tone of the Dylan shows, the band – guitarist Mike Campbell, keyboardist Benmont Tench, bassist Howie Epstein and drummer Stan Lynch – played loosely and nimbly, even when Petty ignored the set list to surprise his mates with the likes of "I Need to Know," a song they hadn't performed in a couple of years.

During the course of the show, Petty was able to showcase some of rock's finer qualities: camaraderie (the musical telepathy of this band of buddies), celebration (frisky performances of "American Girl," "Refugee" and the Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go"), personal catharsis (the reference to the burning of his house) and – briefly but firmly – social commentary (a sharp jab at Arizona governor Evan Mecham for his cancellation of the state's observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in the introduction to an appropriate version of Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth"). Added up, it was understated testimony that even in the age of the overt social-spiritual questing of such acts as U2, "just rock & roll" can still have the power to uplift and inspire.

In the end no one was fooled: this wasn't *really* like the rock & roll caravans of old. The sound was great (even for the nonheadliners), and the show ran smoothly, starting promptly on time and with only short breaks between bands. Hell, who needs the good ol' days, anyway? ■



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