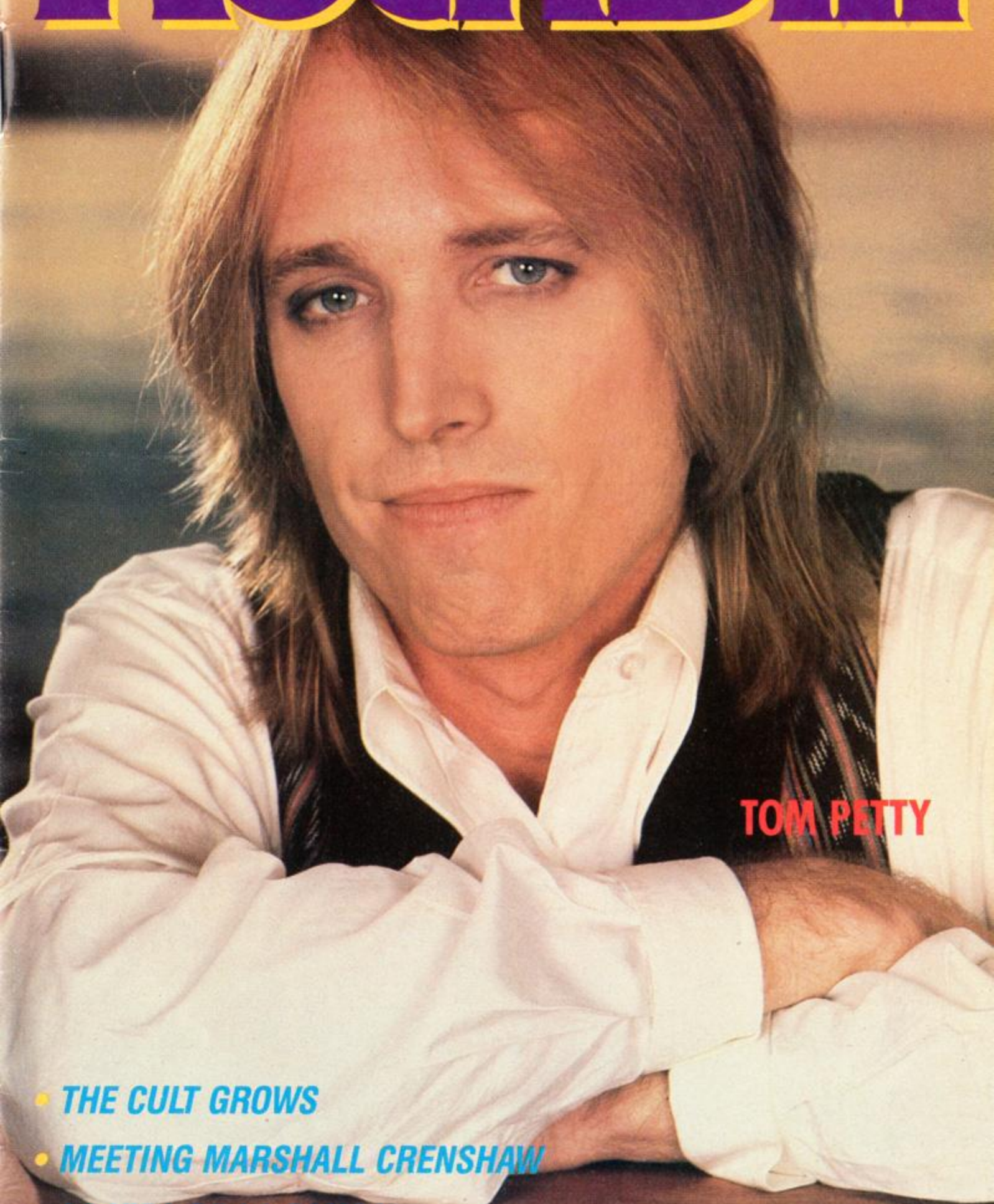


AUGUST 1987

RockBill®



TOM PETTY

- **THE CULT GROWS**
- **MEETING MARSHALL CRENSHAW**
- **LA VIDA DE LA BAMBA**

Inside RockBill®

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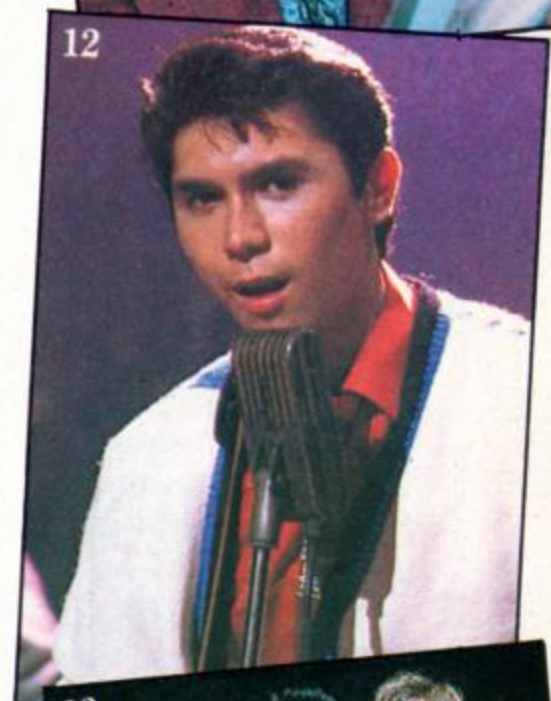
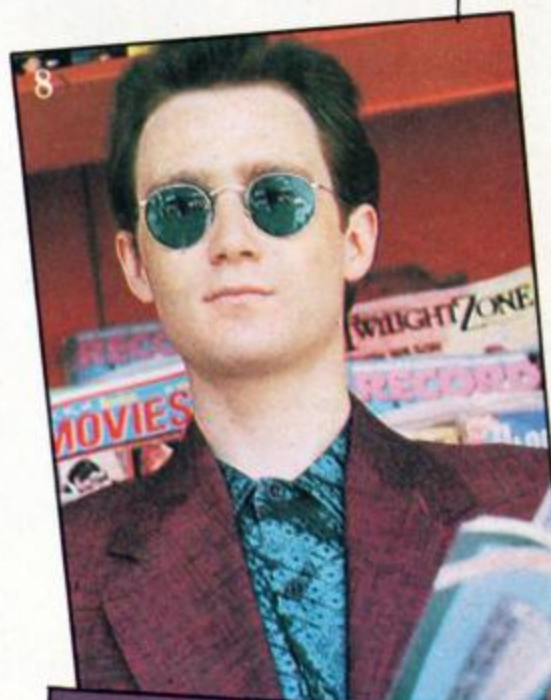
It's a huge industry. It outsells both jazz and classical. And, as far as we know, the Bakkers have nothing to do with it.

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Go for the Gold! A roll of the dice is all it takes.

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TOM PETTY



Fulfilling Hard Promises

BY
MIKE
HAMMER

Why do people always have to screw around with the best things in life?

Vandalism mars some of the finer buildings and artworks in our cities. Our parks are strewn with garbage and crimes waiting to happen. Somebody shot John Lennon.

Now, they've burned Tom Petty's house to the ground.

Oh, and by the way, whoever did it could've killed him. Petty and his family happened to be inside when the structure was set ablaze.

Nice stuff, huh. Here's a guy who's given us some of the best hard-nosed rock 'n' roll of the last 10 years, and somebody turns his pri-

vate life into a charred black patch on a Southern California field.

Still trying to sort out the experience, Petty "packed up the plantation," if you will, and set out on one of the most talked about tours of the summer.

"To tell you the truth," Petty explained, "I really am faring pretty well with the whole thing. There are a couple of hours in the day when you hit the low spots, but I'm still trying to sort out exactly what my feelings are."

Suffice to say, those feelings are alive and well in the music of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. The "Rock 'n' Roll Caravan" tour with the Georgia Satellites and the Del

Fuegos has drawn thousands of enthusiastic fans and rave reviews.

It's going to take more than fire to burn out Tom Petty. He's been burning up the charts and concert stages since his self-titled debut album in 1976 brought his package of no-nonsense rock to people who were overloaded with the excesses of the time. Prophetically, things would not be so different today. Hence,



The Heartbreakers are, from the left, Howie Epstein, Benmont Tench, Tom Petty, Stan Lynch, and Mike Campbell.

most popular music is still too excessive and people still look for the simple, good stuff put out by Tom Petty.

"For some reason, people always seem to know it's us," he said. "I guess we're just not as flamboyant."

For the Heartbreakers, less has always been more. Early songs like "Breakdown," "Anything That's Rock 'n' Roll," and "The Wild One" became unmistakable Petty, and drew great reviews but also inevitable comparisons. He was even accused of mimicking Roger McGuinn on "American Girl."

"Hell, if people want to compare me to the Byrds or the Stones or Dylan, I'm not going to complain about it," he said. "Look, Roger and

I are good friends. Have been for years. In fact, both he and Chris Hillman called me to tell me how much they liked our version of "Rock 'n' Roll Star."

McGuinn paid him the ultimate compliment by recording his own version of "American Girl."

"It's kind of funny," he mused. "Now, they're starting to compare other people to me."

OK, so the guy's career is riding pretty high these days, but, as in any other success story, Petty's is loaded with complete chapters devoted to frustration.

Open up the book to 1978 when MCA records bought out ABC, of which the Heartbreakers' Shelter label was a part. MCA figured it owned the rights to release all future Petty material. Yet Petty's contract stated he had control over being moved from one label to another. He fought the move in the courts until a compromise was reached.

It was worth the fight. The next album was *Damn The Torpedoes* and sold more than three million copies.

"That stuff can make you bitter," he says now. "You just lose your mind when shit like that goes on—but I wasn't gonna give up."

As you are probably picking up; a common Petty trait.

In 1981, when MCA attempted to raise the price of their newfound "superstar's" *Hard Promises* album a buck to \$9.98, Petty squawked again.

Once again he fought and won. His victory gained him the lower album price and the respect and gratitude of a vast public that knew he cared.

"I'm glad I pulled it off," he said. "There's no reason that a kid who works after school to pay for what he wants in life should have to pay those kind of prices. It's like our tour this summer. There's no reason

they shouldn't get three bands for the price of admission."

Lest you start thinking this is Mother Teresa we're talking about here, Petty's next dose of trouble was self-induced.

The *Southern Accents* project of 1984 consumed the deliberate Florida native. It was an affirmation of his roots and background. It meant a lot; and it wasn't working. In a fever-pitched moment of deep frustration over the whole affair, Petty sucker-punched a nearby wall that wasn't looking. The result was a shattered hand and the grim possibility that he might never play again.

But the hand *was* to heal, and the reaction to *Southern Accents* would unify the Union once again and supply sweet vindication after the months of frustration.

"The whole thing was a tough experience," he said. "But it was a risk-taking project, and you have to take chances to move ahead."

They moved so far ahead, people were offering Petty and the boys as their example of "the best rock 'n' roll band in the world."

Their live *Pack Up the Plantation* album was living testimony to their abilities on stage as were their renowned performances at Live Aid and Farm Aid. Bob Dylan was so impressed he asked them to tour with him last year. That went so well it'll happen again this summer.

But what about all this "best band" talk? Well, TP's not all that comfortable with it.

"I don't think it should be a competition," he said. "We're just concerned with making good music. We're really song-oriented. It's not that important we prove ourselves to be the best musicians in the world with each show. It's funny, Dylan called us the best band around. I'd have to say, with any given show, we could be the best."

Touring with Dylan didn't hurt.

Not only did it present the opportunity to work with one of the greatest songwriters of the era, it enabled them to develop more completely as a band.

"We were hot when we hooked up with Bob," he said. "Then, he opened up avenues we hadn't explored before. We became more confident and relaxed behind him, and the new album was made when we were still in that state of mind."

Considering the quality of the new record, *Let Me Up (I've Had Enough)*, that must have been the capital of states of mind.

Inspired by the media overload of the '80s, the record spits back the unnecessary in a collection of *very* necessary songs.

The single "Jammin' Me" was co-written by Dylan and Petty and throws out the names of some relatively famous people who couldn't be more prevalent in the press if they owned it. But Petty insists the song isn't meant to take pot shots.

"We were just focusing on the concept of celebrity," he said. "Those are just some prominent names. I could've just as easily said, 'take back Tom Petty.'"

Considering the record's lofty position on the charts and Petty's similar stature in the hearts of his fans, it's unlikely anyone would heed the advice.

RockFile

ARTISTS: TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

FORMED: 1975

MEMBERS: TOM PETTY, VOCALS, GUITAR; MIKE CAMPBELL, LEAD GUITAR; BENMONT TENCH, KEYBOARDS; HOWIE EPSTEIN, BASS, VOCALS.

NEW RELEASE: LET ME UP (I'VE HAD ENOUGH)

GO for the GOLD!

It may be the chance you've always wanted. Beat your friends to the top of the record world. It's easy. Each contestant uses a coin and, in turn, tries to advance up the mountain. A roll of one dice determines the number of squares to move. The first one to the gold record wins. It's that easy. Okay, so get your guitars ready, roadies prepped, and go for the gold.

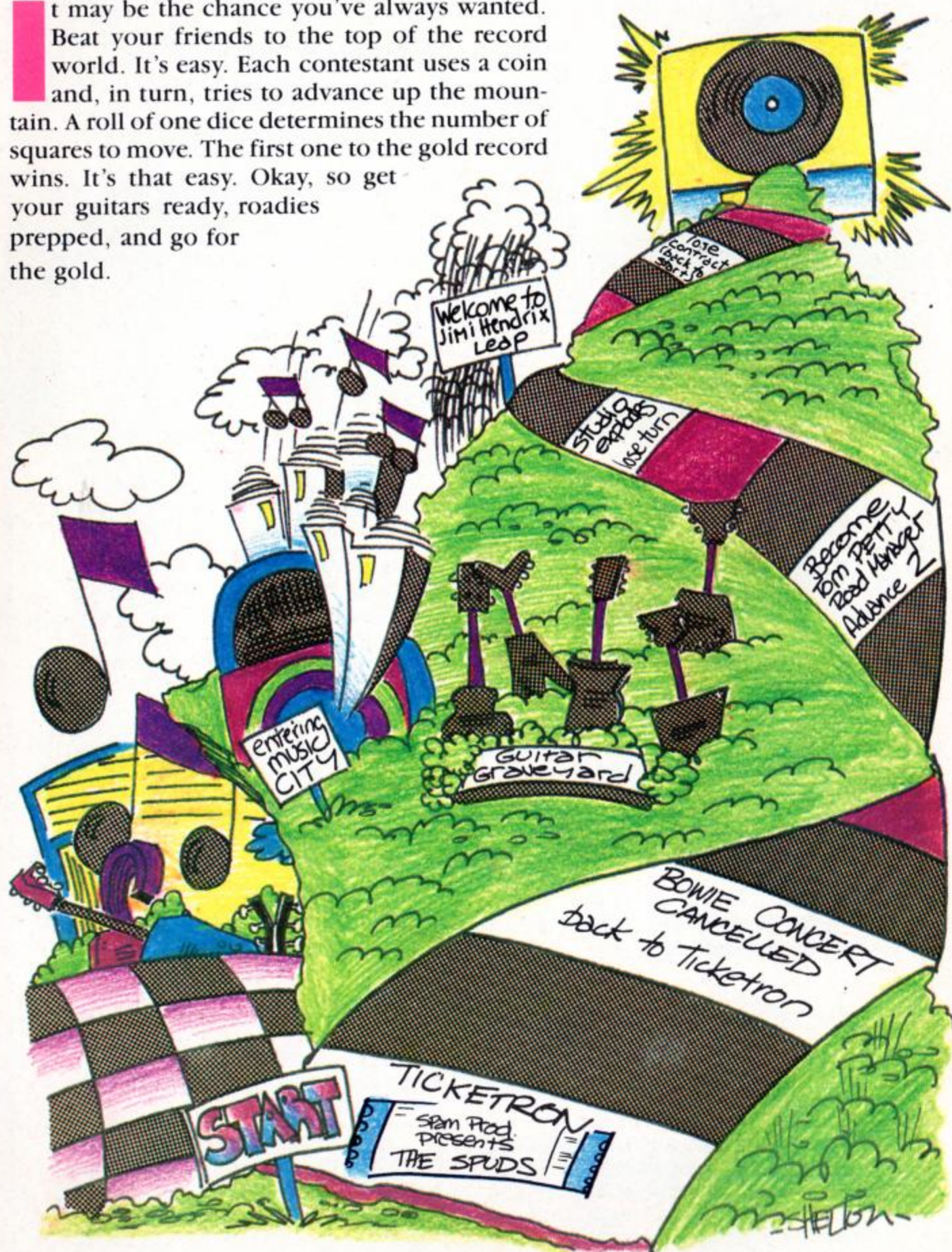


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