

CHINA

Inside the Square
with the
Student Leaders

SPIN



TOM PETTY

Won't
Back
Down

RAP SUMMIT

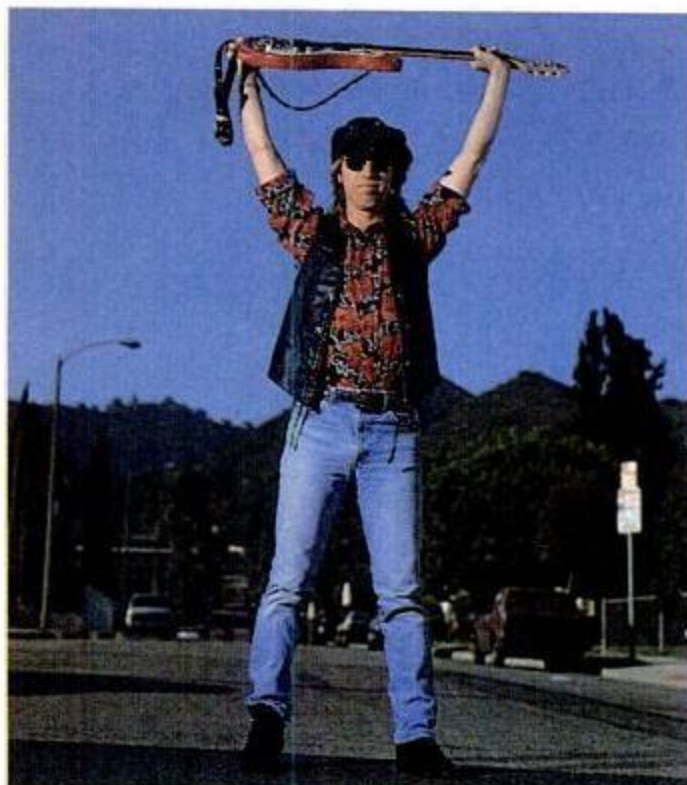
State of the
Hip Hop Nation

INDIGO GIRLS
LOVE AND ROCKETS
SIMPLE MINDS
DINOSAUR JR.
BIKER METAL

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CANADA \$3.50



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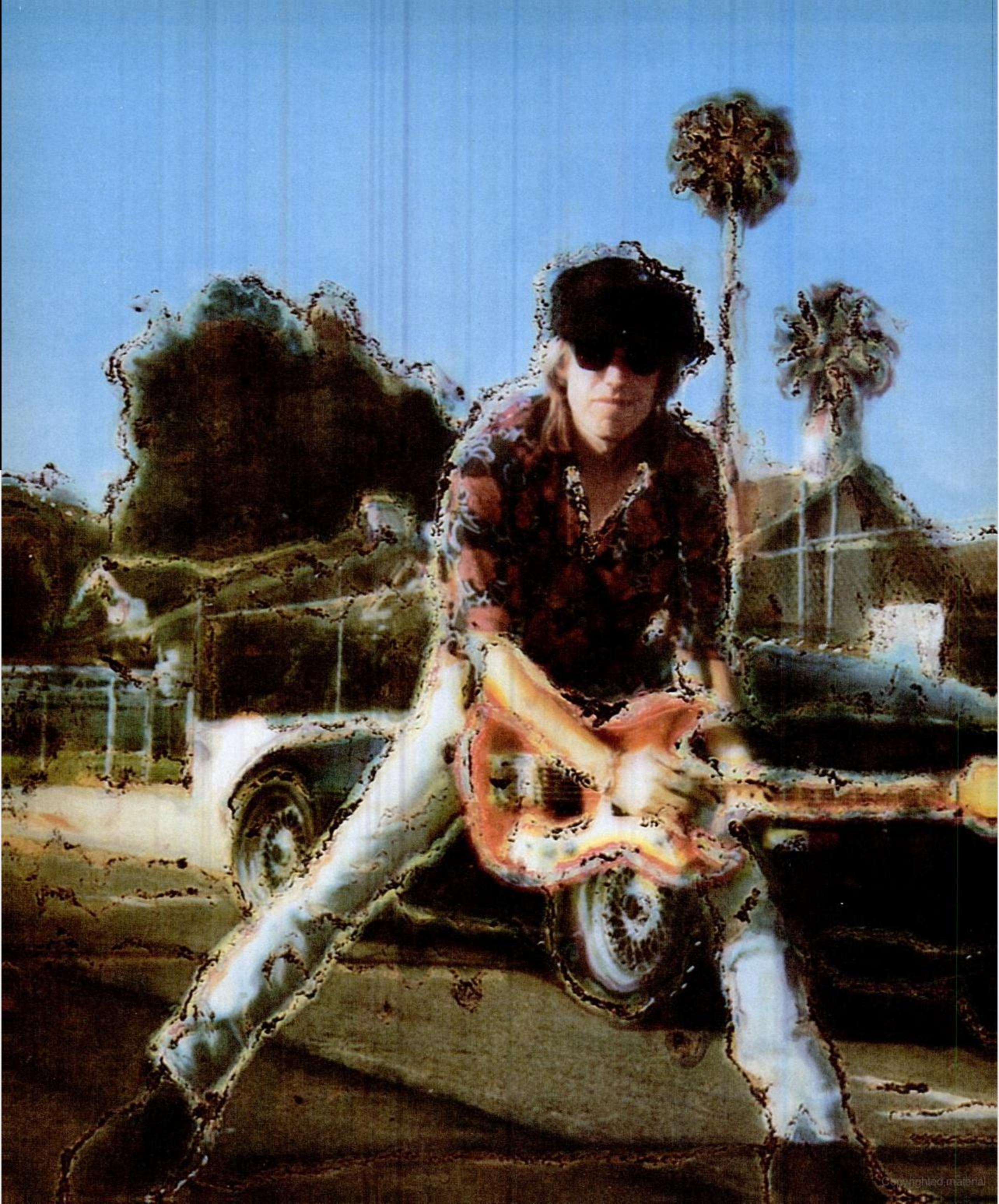
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DYING TO MAKE A LIVING

Some actors live to have their characters killed. Without them this wouldn't be the Summer of Sequels. [By Mark Ebner.](#) 98





Tom Petty
has been a rebel
and a Traveling Wilbury,
a kid who saw Elvis at 7 and grew
up to fight the record
company on principle alone. He
may be one of the great
talents of his generation or just
another creep
from the Valley.
He may be
both.

Article By Michael Corcoran

Raised On Promises

Tom Petty drives a black Corvette Stingray. He could afford a much more expensive car, like a Ferrari, Rolls-Royce or Lamborghini, but as far as he's concerned, a black 'Vette is the ultimate set of wheels. It's the car he wanted when he was a 15-year-old in Gainesville, Florida.

We are driving down Ventura Boulevard, me and Tom Petty, in his black 'Vette. He apologizes for the car phone. "My manager said I should have one," he says, "but I don't know. I'd be so embarrassed if someone I knew saw me talking on it. I mean, what am I gonna do, call my wife and tell her I'll be home as soon as the light turns green?"

Tom Petty is the product of what he calls "swamp people." His father's mother is a full-blooded Cherokee. Petty grew up on the lower frontiers of the Okefenokee swamp, in Gainesville, the home of the University of Florida. On the song, "A Mind With a Heart of Its Own," from *Full Moon Fever*, he sings, "Well I been to Brooker and I been to Micanopy/I been to St. Louis too/I been all around the world." Brooker and Micanopy are podunk suburbs of Gainesville; the small-town attitude is a subdivision of Petty's mind that has never been torn down. "Most

people come to Florida to escape something—cold weather, their past, whatever," he says. "And they're very content about it. I was always discontent. I ran a little faster than Florida. When I left Gainesville in '74, it felt like I was escaping. It's always great to go back, though."

When I was 23, I camped out for tickets to see Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers at the Santa Monica Civic. Took the bus from Pico Rivera, waited in line for 12 hours, then found out it was unreserved seating. Color me chump. It was the best rock'n'roll show I've ever seen, though. God, what a magnificent rock'n'roll machine the Heartbreakers were/are. And Petty was the coolest—the son Patti Smith gave away for adoption when she was 19, raised by swamp people and locked in a room with *Between the Buttons* and *Blonde on Blonde*. The day after the show, I bought a vest and started using conditioner.

As we drive through successive unexceptional blocks, Petty tells me that Ventura Boulevard is "the Broadway of the Valley." That A&P over there next to Popeye's must be Times Square. There is little distinguishable about these miracle miles except that all the first-run theaters are showing *Field of Dreams* and all the dollar houses are showing *Bull Durham*. Kevin

Photography by Christopher Kehoe

Costner owns Ventura Boulevard this thick spring evening.

"I love LA," Petty says. "I love Florida, but LA is home now."

Petty first moved to LA in 1974 with Mudcrutch, a popular Florida bar band which also contained future Heartbreakers Benmont Tench and Mike Campbell. "Driving to LA was the funniest thing," Petty recalls with a great laugh. "I remember stopping the car in Arizona and getting out because we saw a cactus and couldn't believe it." The members of Mudcrutch knew even less about the music business than they did about southwestern vegetation. "We told them we drove all the way from Florida to LA as if we were the first people to drive 3,000 miles to go to Hollywood." Mudcrutch was quite good, though. They received three offers to sign after only a week, and chose Shelter. "We were so naive that when we signed a publishing deal we thought it meant for writing books."

When he first moved to LA, Petty hung around the

says McKagan, extending his hand. Petty's hands are so small that when he cups his ears you can still see his lobes. "We're in Guns N' Roses," Stradlin says, "and we think you're great." Petty smiles, says he's happy to meet them. After they tell him about seeing him at the US Festival or something they leave with their five new vintage guitars. "Can you believe those guys?" Petty asks, without shaking his head. "They're bigger than the Stones ever were." He likes Guns N' Roses mostly because they're from LA, but also because, like him, they took the best from their past and punched it into the present. As he's a Byrds with balls and legs, Guns N' Roses is Janis Joplin with the horsepower to bring that screech out of a skid.

"Norm, what do you want for this hollow-body?" Petty is strumming a huge blonde guitar that he could hide behind. "That one's a thousand," Norm answers. Petty gives him a look that says, "Are you serious, I wouldn't pay more than eight for this piece of shit." He puts the guitar down. Petty doesn't really want the

but I didn't have a mitt so I drove to the Thrifty Drug store because that was the only place open that I thought might have mitts. I was at the red light just before the Thrifty and I looked over and saw Jeff (Lynne). I had just met him a few weeks earlier in London and I waved for him to pull over. It turned out that he was living not far up the road from me so we exchanged numbers. He was working on the Brian Wilson record at the time so I didn't hear from him for about a month and then he started coming over. The first day I played a song for him that I had written called "Yer So Bad." He said he liked it, but how about if I tried a B minor here, and it instantly improved the song. We finished that song the first day and the next day we wrote "Free Falling." Most of the Heartbreakers were spread all over the country at the time so I grabbed Phil Jones, who plays percussion on some of the Heartbreakers records, and me, him and Jeff went to Campbell's garage studio and made demos of these new songs. When I heard them, I



Premiere Motel with the other Shelter acts—Dwight Twilley, Phil Seymour, Gary Busey, Leon Russell—just getting high and writing songs. "Hanging out with the Traveling Wilburys kinda reminds me of those days," he says. "Instead of sitting around the Premiere Motel amongst dirty socks, though, we're in our houses and studios in the Valley. That old spirit is still there. I guess Jeff (Lynne) is sorta the Leon Russell of this group. He's the producer, the catalyst. He makes sure our socks are clean."

Earlier in the day, when Petty met me at the MCA offices, it was the first time he'd been there in years. He's more ordinary than you'd expect, this simple rock millionaire. His face shows every day of his 35 years, with his hairline starting to recede, his skin wrinkling around his basset hound eyes, and his chin doubling. You always hear that rock stars are small in person, and you come to expect it. But when Petty walks into the room, not only short but frail, you're still surprised. His white, skinny fingers look barely big enough to play a guitar. He's been burned by words, so he approaches them cautiously, with long pauses and a still-recognizable drawl. He laughs long before he says something funny, and long after anyone else does. "In the early days," he says, "I bad-mouthed someone every once in a while, and then it would come out in the paper and I'd feel so small. I'd come off much worse than whoever I was talking about."

We pull into the parking lot of Norm's Rare Guitars in Reseda, which Petty calls the poor side of the tracks in the Valley. "The street that divides Encino and Reseda is a lot thicker than it looks," he says, "at least to some folks." The front door at Norm's says they close at 6:00, but we enter at around 6:30. Petty called and asked Norm to stay open, because we were running a little late. Norm knows on which side his croissant is buttered. As we get to the door, we run into Izzy Stradlin and Duff McKagan from Guns N' Roses, who recognize Petty and straighten up. "Man, Tom Petty,"

"To the punks we were slow and wimpy and to the mainstream crowd we were too wild and original. Plus, they couldn't understand a band from Florida not playing 'Free Bird.'"

big Gretsch, he's just setting Norm up for something he does want. It's a small Fender amp, which he tells me, when Norm is too far away to hear, is the first one he ever owned. As he plays "Don't Be Cruel" through the tiny Fender, he asks Norm, "How much for this amp?" Norm strokes his chin and says he'll sell the amp for a hundred and fifty. "Sold!" says Petty, perhaps a little too quickly for Norm's satisfaction. "Hey, Tom," Norm asks as he writes up a receipt, "could you maybe ask Bob about that guitar I lent him for that photo shoot? He still hasn't returned it." Petty answers, "He must've forgot about it. Don't worry, he'll bring it back."

"I know he's good for it, but it's been almost six months," Norm says. Bob is Bob Dylan.

They're younger than the Rat Pack and older than the Brat Pack. They're the Wilbury Doughboys, soft and rich, and their membership includes Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, George Harrison, Jeff Lynne, the late Roy Orbison (collectively the Traveling Wilburys) and also Mike Campbell (Heartbreakers), Dave Stewart (Eurythmics), Randy Newman, T-Bone Burnett and Roger McGuinn. They're the Rolling Thunder of San Fernando Valley; working together, writing together, playing together in a small chunk of high-priced California real estate, and selling millions and millions of records together.

TOM PETTY: It was Thanksgiving Day, 1987, when the seeds of *Full Moon Fever* and the Wilburys were planted. I wanted to play baseball real bad that day,

thought, "Hey, these sound like a record." Hmmm. Why not release them as a solo album? And that was that.

SPIN: Weren't you a little wary about having Jeff Lynne produce your record? He's got kind of a heavy hand on the knobs.

If anyone was worried about that it was Jeff. He was very nervous about overtaking the record. He didn't want it to sound like Jeff Lynne. He wanted it to sound like me. I had no qualms whatsoever with having Jeff produce me, especially after the job he did on George's (Harrison) *Cloud Nine*. That's an incredible sounding record. It's just so much louder and sounds more exciting than other records. Whatever you think of ELO, you have to admit those records were very well produced.

So you're happy with the way Full Moon Fever turned out?

I dig this record so much that it's hard for me to talk about it because I'll sound so gushing and immodest. With the exception of *Let Me Up*, it seems we've tried too hard to make albums. *Southern Accents* and *Long After Dark* were very difficult projects and, though I like them, I think they're pretty uneven records. *Southern Accents* has some good songs on it, like "Don't Come Around Here No More" is probably the best thing we've ever done, but as a complete album it's not quite there. *Full Moon Fever* starts here, goes to there, ends here and that makes a satisfying record.



You kept the lineup pretty simple. There aren't many guest stars.

I didn't want to call all my friends and have a list of famous names. I just wanted a nice little group. I did get George Harrison to play on one song and Roy (Orbison) does some background vocals on "Zombie Zoo."

What was Roy Orbison like?

[long pause] Roy was such a gentle man and a gentleman. He's one of the greatest people I've ever met. He was very bright, very well read, not some cracker. You wouldn't expect it, but Roy knew all of Monty Python by heart. He loved really offbeat comedy and he had a pretty keen sense of humor himself.

Was he into being a Wilbury?

Oh yeah. Very much so. In his last call to me, a few days before his death, the Wilburys had just gone platinum and he was so thrilled. He kept saying, "Ain't life grand?" He was really rebuilding his confidence.

I can't imagine Roy Orbison having confidence problems.

Well, he knew he was the best singer alive, but he hadn't had a big hit record in a long time. God, he could sing! When he'd sing during the Wilbury sessions we'd all just look at each other with big eyes. Even if he was just sitting at a table working out a song and singing, we'd go, "Roy, quit it, you're driving me crazy." He told us that he really felt invincible because he had the support of all these people, the way everyone loved him so much. When he started recording *Mystery Girl* he was letting Campbell and T-Bone run everything, but by the time they finished there was a huge change in Roy. He started coming in and really taking charge of the sessions and we were really pleased to see him get his confidence back. I wish he could've seen the success of that album, because if there ever was a guy who was going to dig it. . . . You know, when someone dies you always hear nice things about them, but Roy really was that way, a very special person.

His album went #1, didn't it?

Yeah, it knocked the Wilburys down to #2.

As a 7-year-old, Tom Petty was sitting in the front yard of his family's townie simplex one day in Gainesville, when his aunt came by and told him that her new husband was working on the set of an Elvis Presley movie, "Follow That Dream," 30 miles away, and did he want to go?

"I knew Elvis Presley was some sort of rock'n'roll singer—I remembered all the ruckus that was going on in our living room when he was on Ed Sullivan a few years earlier, but I wasn't too familiar with his music," Petty recalls. There wasn't anything else going that day/that week/that month, so Tommy went with his aunt to watch Elvis get out of a car and go into a bank for six hours. "It was an unbelievable scene at the filming. There must've been a thousand screaming girls on the other side of a chain link fence. After what seemed like an eternity, Elvis got out of a long white Cadillac and walked across the street. It was the most fucking awesome thing I've ever seen. Elvis didn't look like the people I'd known. He had a real glow around him, like a full-body halo. He looked like a god to me. When that day's filming was over he came over and shook my hand and a bunch of other kids' hands. I'll never forget that."

From that day in 1961 Tom Petty has done little else except follow the rock'n'roll dream. Bruce Springsteen once said that if you saw Elvis Presley and didn't want to be like him there was something wrong with you. There was nothing wrong with Tom Petty that a box full of Presley singles couldn't cure. "After I saw Elvis that one time, I became obsessed. A friend of mine had a bunch of records that his sister had left behind when she married and moved away. I traded him a Wham-O slingshot for them, which was quite a big deal in those days, but there were about 30 Elvis records, plus stuff by Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis. For the next two years all I did was sit in my room and listen to

those records. My dad was worried about me because I didn't go outside, I didn't play sports, I didn't do nothing but listen to those records.

"I can't tell you how much rock'n'roll consumed me. It wasn't a matter of choice. It was something that came over me like a disease. It was all I lived for and it's only been lately, like the last three or four years, that I realized that there is more to life than rock'n'roll."

Tom Petty has six platinum records and two gold ones hanging on his wall in Encino. He and his remarkable Heartbreakers have torn up crowds for 13 years now. They've toured the world with Dylan. Petty has also cowritten huge hits for other performers, including "Stop Draggin' My Heart" with Stevie Nicks, "You Got It" with Roy Orbison, "Ways to Be Wicked" for Lone Justice and Rosanne Cash's #1 country single, "Never Be You." Through it all, Petty remains, first and foremost, a great rock'n'roll fan. His voice, tiny and expressive, is a fan's voice. Though detractors might call Petty a ripoff, pointing out how the melody of "Breakdown" is a direct lift of the Animals' "Cheating," and how "Listen to Her Heart" and several other Petty "originals" are right out of the Byrds songbook, Petty just shrugs off the derivative tag. "The Byrds are to me what Chuck Berry was to the Stones and what Buddy Holly was to the Beatles," he says. Roger McGuinn of the Byrds covered "American Girl," like a stamp of approval, soon after it was released in '76. He knew early on that there was something exciting and different about this Byrdsophile.

When your first album came out, you were considered punk rock, weren't you?

At first, yeah. We played with a lot of punk bands like the Clash, the Ramones and Blondie, and played at clubs like CBGB's, so we got lumped into that whole punk thing. Then people started saying, "Well, they're different, but they're not punk," so they called us new wave. I think we were the first band to be called new wave, not that it's any honor you'd want to hang on your wall.

Did you like playing with punk bands?

Yeah, it was wild; wilder than anything we saw in Gainesville, I'll tell you that. I saw some great bands. Mink DeVille, I thought, was going to be the next Stones. They killed us. We were in London for the first or second time Elvis Costello ever played in front of an audience. I thought, hmmn, ballsy name, and then he comes out, just him and a guitar, and he was great. Those were wonderful days, though we really took shit from both sides. To the punks we were slow

Continued on page 88

IS 2 MINUTES' TIME TOO MUCH TO SPEND FOR AN ALL-EXPENSES-PAID TRIP FOR 2 TO THE CONCERT OF YOUR CHOICE?

The guys listed below didn't think so and neither did their gals. In fact, it was on an all-expenses-paid concert trip that one of these gentlemen rockers decided to spend at least two months' salary to present the object of their affections with a rock of an Engagement Ring. Or so the legend goes.

Now if you take 2 minutes' time to correctly match the husband on the left with the wife on the right, you can win an all-expenses-paid three-day trip to see the concert of your choice in the continental U.S. courtesy of SPIN. If you've got a gal, she'll love you for it—the rock of a ring, that is.

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Keith Richards
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Patti Smith
Aly Hewson
Patti Hansen
Tina Weymouth
Kathleen Brennan
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Lauren Hutton
Valerie Bertinelli

Now that wasn't so tough, was it? So here's the payoff for 2 minutes' time: simply write your name, age, marital status, address and the correct couples on a separate sheet of paper and send it to SPIN, 6 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011, attention "2 Months' Salary Is All It Takes." Replies must be postmarked no later than August 31, 1989, to be eligible. 100 correct respondents will be randomly selected to receive a new music sampler tape. These respondents will then be eligible for the grand prize all-expenses-paid trip to the concert of their choice courtesy of SPIN. You'll be a legend in her own mind.

*Is 2 months' salary
too much to spend
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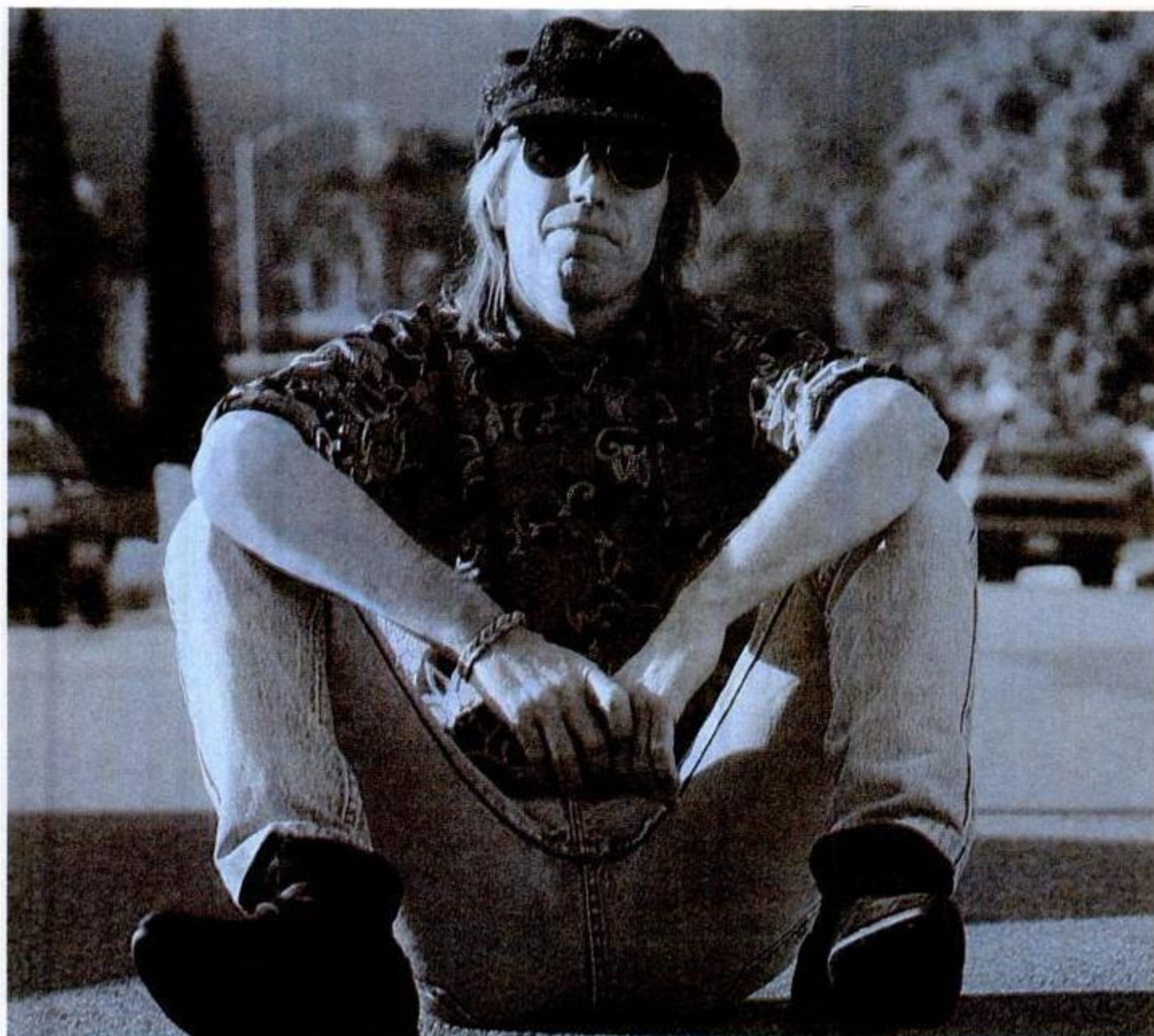
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Petty from page 46

and wimpy and to the mainstream crowd we were too wild and original. Plus, they couldn't understand a band from Florida not playing "Free Bird."

Was there a lot of backstabbing from the scene when you made it big?

Oh, yeah. A lot of people had the attitude in those days that it was wrong to be successful. John Doe [of X] was telling me how fucked it was that some of the LA bands were copping attitudes like they didn't want hits. He said, "I'd love to have a fucking hit!" That's what rock'n'roll is all about. Musicians want to be heard by a lot of people. That's a basic thing. After we got big and famous and everything, we'd go back to the Whiskey and there'd be all these kids in spiky hair giving us shit, and that really hurt. When we started playing the Whiskey there was no scene, but we stuck it out and helped create one.

Though the Heartbreakers weren't considered punk for long, they did maintain some of the spirit, especially in their dealings with MCA, which had bought Shelter and thus them. When radio resisted the single "Listen To Her Heart" because of the drug reference in the line, "You think you're gonna take her away/With your money and your cocaine," Petty refused to change the last word to champagne, even though it meant sacrificing the chance for a hit. Shortly afterward, refusing to be dealt with like a slab of rump roast, Petty and the Heartbreakers took MCA to court for a lengthy and costly battle. The band ended up filing for bankruptcy before settling with MCA, but out of the legal dust rose their best-selling album to date, *Damn the Torpedoes*, which went on to sell four million copies. Petty tangled with MCA on the band's

next release, *Hard Promises*, as well. The company wanted to raise the price on the record from the norm of \$8.98 to \$9.98. Petty threatened to title the album \$8.98 if MCA didn't withdraw the hike. It stayed at \$8.98.

"You know what was the worst thing about the whole *Hard Promises* ordeal? We spent so much time fighting about the price that we didn't realize it was a real boring album cover," Petty says. "Since then I've always been real particular about the album covers. I still cringe when I see *Hard Promises*."

As the black 'Vette turns right down La Something street, Petty says, "You know, *Full Moon Fever*'s a very Los Angeles record." He says it defiantly, proudly. "One of the great things about LA is that you can be all alone in your car—alone and moving fast. It's very therapeutic."

I almost ask him about the fire, but I can't. On May 17, 1987 at around 10 a.m., Tom Petty was home having breakfast with his wife of 14 years and his youngest daughter when someone set his house on fire. The arsonist was never caught, and the house burned to the ground. The Pettys escaped unharmed, though their maid was overcome with smoke inhalation but survived.

Petty spent almost a year after the fire driving all over LA looking for a new house. A new home. He drove through the canyons, down the beaches and up the hills. He had the radio on. Much of *Full Moon Fever* seems written from behind the wheel of a dream car speeding from a nightmare. It's all alone and moving fast. It's very therapeutic.

Tom Petty drops me off at the hotel and waves back from the red light. When it turns green, the black 'Vette makes a mighty roar and takes off.