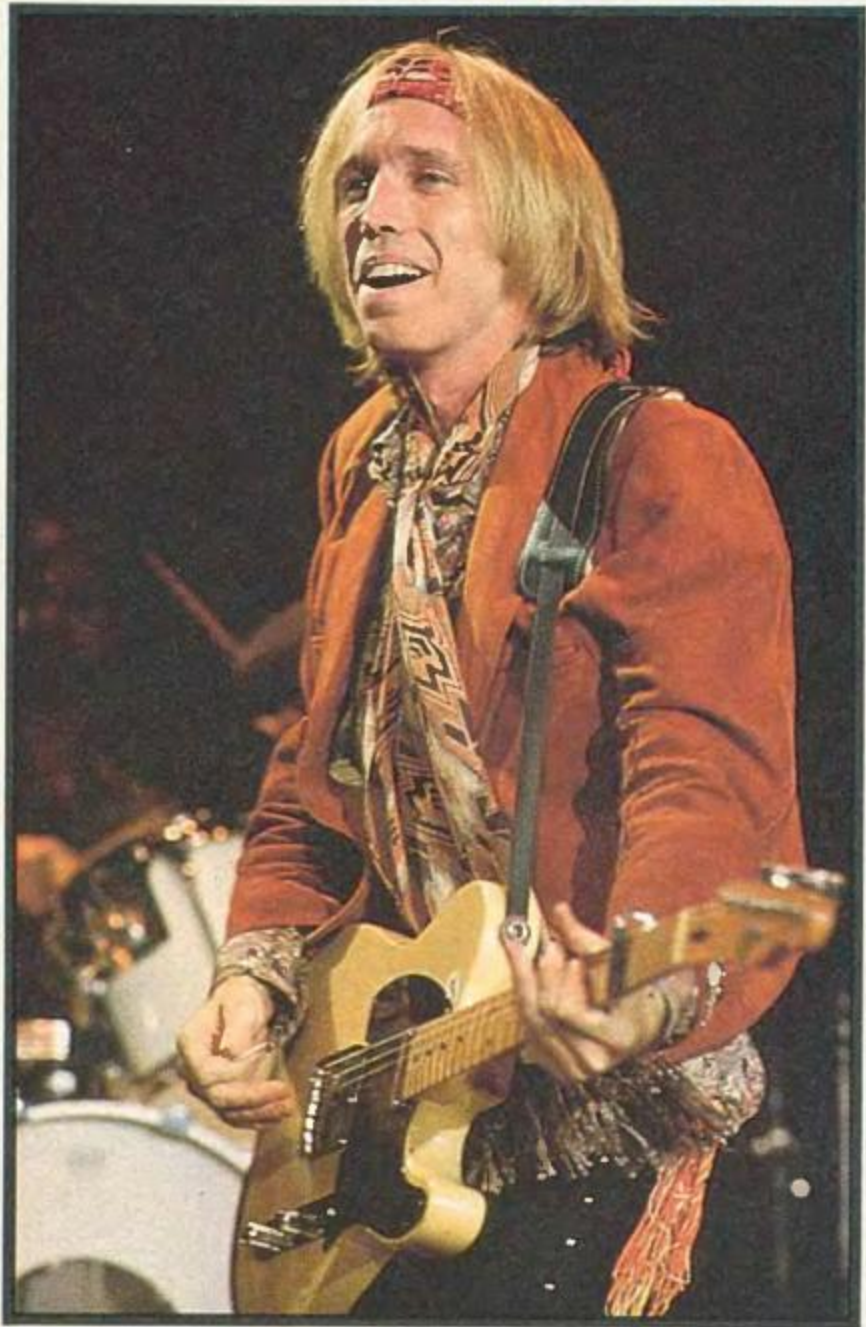


PERFORMANCE



Tom Petty

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS CHRIS WHITLEY

*Fiddler's Green Amphitheater
Englewood, Colorado
August 29th, 1991*

DWARFED BY A GIANT INFLATABLE tree that loomed over the stage like a Keebler-elf condo, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers launched their forty-city American tour by going out on a limb. At the risk of alienating longtime devotees sprinkled among the 16,000 fans who packed this suburban Denver amphitheater, Petty put "Breakdown," "American Girl," "I Need to Know" and other trusty war horses out to pasture, dedicating most of the two-hour performance to songs from *Full Moon Fever* and the engaging new *Into the Great Wide Open*.

There were other offbeat twists to this opening-night showcase. The stage setting—a funky forest with a staircase that led up the tree, chandeliers and a totem pole—rivaled the elegant plantation-man-

sion backdrop used on 1985's *Southern Accents* tour. And for the first time, Petty indulged in theatrical shtick, including a chase scene in which he brandished an oversize peace sign, fending off roadies disguised as Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George Bush, during the coda to "Don't Come Around Here No More." He even let drummer Stan Lynch handle lead vocals on a ransacking cover of the Count Five's 1966 classic "Psychotic Reaction."

Smartly dressed in green suede boots, silver-studded black pants and an orange suede jacket and sporting a red bandanna around his head, Petty led the Heartbreakers through a feisty set that kicked off with the rousing "Kings Highway," seamlessly blending such

hits as "I Won't Back Down," "Learning to Fly" and "Free Fallin'" with menacing rockers like "Out in the Cold," "Runnin' Down a Dream," "Love Is a Long Road" and a blistering rampage through their 1979 classic-rock anthem "Refugee."

Augmented by backup bassist-guitarist Scott Thurston, the Heartbreakers—Lynch, guitarist Mike Campbell, keyboardist Benmont Tench and bassist Howie Epstein—displayed the solid execution and relaxed authority that have made them one of rock's most celebrated groups this side of the E Street Band. Epstein and Lynch provided the sturdy backbone to the punchy arrangements, which were spiked by Tench's aggressive acoustic-piano and organ playing. Campbell ruffled off stinging solos with a laid-back but focused determination that was refreshingly free of flashy posing.

Petty's decision to sideswipe his past and concentrate on newer material was a mixed blessing. The *Into the Great Wide Open* numbers—particularly the hopeful title track and a rowdy finale romp through "Makin' Some Noise"—were delivered with a rambunctious relish that was obviously lacking in the band's pedestrian pass through 1982's "You Got Lucky."

While the retirement of "Breakdown" (which had deteriorated into a tiresome

crowd sing-along over the last few tours) was inevitable, the absence of "American Girl" and other favorites from Petty's late-Seventies heyday left a nostalgic hole that was only partially filled by a riveting encore of "The Waiting" and a midset acoustic segment featuring a folkie, mandolin-driven reworking of "Listen to Her Heart" and a touching stroll through Van Morrison's *Avalon Sunset* ballad "I'm Tired Joey Boy."

Petty's most endearing trademark, however, has always been his desire to challenge, rather than pander to, his audiences, inviting them to share his vision of rock & roll as a thriving vehicle for both revolution and evolution. The risky reshaping of his reliable live show at this stage is a sterling testament to his idealistic integrity.

So is his commitment to choosing opening acts that share his affection for rock & roll's rootsy essence. Thirty-year-old newcomer Chris Whitley's shy demeanor and atmospheric, poetic songs from his compelling debut, *Living With the Law*, weren't best suited for this cavernous outdoor setting. But his bluesy slide-guitar licks and rugged voice managed to sustain most of the crowd's interest, earning the biggest applause with such haunt-



PAULA ABDUL: Orlando, FL, 10/28; Miami, FL, 10/29; Atlanta, GA, 11/1; Charlotte, NC, 11/3; Greensboro, NC, 11/5; Pittsburgh, PA, 11/7; Auburn Hills, MI, 11/8,9; Richfield, OH, 11/11; Hartford, CT, 11/13; Worcester, MA, 11/15; Landover, MD, 11/17; East Rutherford, NJ, 11/18; Buffalo, NY, 11/24.

BLUES TRAVELER: Indianapolis, IN, 10/15; Athens, OH, 10/16; Detroit, MI, 10/18; Cleveland, OH, 10/19; Washington, DC, 10/23; Ithaca, NY, 10/25; Canton, NY, 10/26; Boston, MA, 10/29; New Haven, CT, 10/30; New York City, 10/31.

THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND: Columbia, SC, 10/17; Jacksonville, FL, 10/18; Pensacola, FL, 10/19; Raleigh, NC, 10/21; Ocala, FL, 10/22; Joliet, IL, 10/25; Nashville, IN, 10/26; Fairfield, IL, 10/27; Parsippany, NJ, 11/1; Devon, PA, 11/2; Westbury, NY, 11/3; Tacoma, WA, 11/11,12; Spokane, WA, 11/13; Denver, CO, 11/15.

FATIMA MANSIONS: New York City, 10/15,16; Cambridge, MA, 10/18; Detroit, MI, 10/22; Chicago, IL, 10/23; San Francisco, CA, 10/27; Cincinnati, OH, 10/29; Los Angeles, CA, 10/30,31; New York City, 11/1; Philadelphia, PA, 11/3; Washington, DC, 11/4; New York City, 11/6; New Haven, CT, 11/7; Cambridge, MA, 11/8; Providence, RI, 11/9.

RICKIE LEE JONES: San Francisco, CA, 11/3,4; Los Angeles, CA, 11/7,8; Madison, WI, 11/10; Minneapolis, MN, 11/11; Chicago, IL, 11/12; Ann Arbor, MI, 11/13; Burlington, VT, 11/19; Boston, MA, 11/20; Glenside, PA, 11/22; New Haven, CT, 11/23; Washington, DC, 11/25; New York City, 11/26.

LENNY KRAVITZ: San Diego, CA, 10/15; Los Angeles, CA, 10/17-19; Chicago, IL, 10/23; Cleveland, OH, 10/24; Detroit, MI, 10/26; Toronto, ON, 10/27; Washington, DC, 10/29; New York City, 10/31; Boston, MA, 11/1.

LITTLE FEAT: Las Vegas, NV, 10/15; Reno, NV, 10/16; Phoenix, AZ, 10/18; Santa Fe, NM, 10/19; Arlington, TX, 10/20; Antioch, TN, 10/22; Birmingham, AL, 10/23; Raleigh, NC, 10/26; Charlotte, NC, 10/27.

KENNY LOGGINS: Los Angeles, CA, 10/17; San Diego, CA, 10/18,19; Phoenix, AZ, 10/20; Salt Lake City, UT, 10/22; San Francisco, CA, 10/28,29; Kansas City, MO, 11/6; St. Louis, MO, 11/7; Royal Oak, MI, 11/8,9; Toronto, ON, 11/11; Chicago, IL, 11/15; Pittsburgh, PA, 11/16,17; New York City, 11/19,20; Washington, DC, 11/21,22.

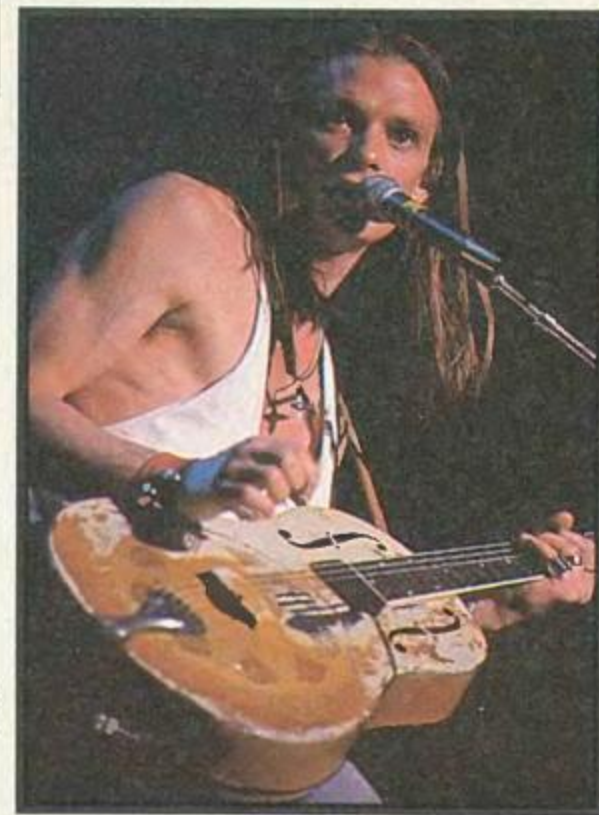
GEORGE MICHAEL: Houston, TX, 10/15; Dallas, TX, 10/16; Auburn Hills, MI, 10/18; Rosemont, IL, 10/20; Toronto, ON, 10/22; New York City, 10/25; Worcester, MA, 10/28; Philadelphia, PA, 10/29; Landover, MD, 10/31.

NIRVANA: St. Louis, MO, 10/16; Lawrence, KS, 10/17; Dallas, TX, 10/19; Houston, TX, 10/20; Austin, TX, 10/21; Tempe, AZ, 10/23; Hollywood, CA, 10/25; San Francisco, CA, 10/26; Portland, OR, 10/29; Vancouver, BC, 10/30; Seattle, WA, 10/31.

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS: Miami, FL, 10/22; Gainesville, FL, 10/23; Orlando, FL, 10/25; Tampa, FL, 10/26; New Orleans, LA, 10/29; the Woodlands, TX, 10/30; Austin, TX, 11/1; Dallas, TX, 11/2; Oklahoma City, OK, 11/4; Las Cruces, NM, 11/6; Tucson, AZ, 11/7; Phoenix, AZ, 11/9; Inglewood, CA, 11/11.

SQUEEZE: New York City, 10/16; Durham, NH, 10/20; Providence, RI, 10/22; Springfield, MA, 10/23; Williamstown, MA, 10/24; Fairfield, CT, 10/25; Bowdoinham, ME, 10/26; Toronto, ON, 10/29; Cleveland, OH, 10/30; Royal Oak, MI, 10/31; Chicago, IL, 11/1,2; Minneapolis, MN, 11/4; Boulder, CO, 11/8; Salt Lake City, UT, 11/9; Seattle, WA, 11/11.

TRIP SHAKESPEARE: St. Louis, MO, 10/15; Milwaukee, WI, 10/16; Madison, WI, 10/17; Toronto, ON, 10/22; Cambridge, MA, 10/24; Northampton, MA, 10/25; Philadelphia, PA, 10/26; Baltimore, MD, 10/27; New York City, 10/30; Washington, DC, 11/2.



Chris Whitley

ing standouts as "Kick the Stones," "Poison Girl" and a new rocker called "Guns and Dolls."

By giving exposure to younger artists and refusing to take his commercial success for granted, Petty is ensuring rock & roll's future during a sluggish season when many jaded observers are mourning its demise.

— DAVID OKAMOTO

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