

TOURING BY RAY WADDELL

Petty & The Heartbreakers Fly High

Rockers Approach Their 30th Anniversary With Career-High Attendance, Ticket Sales

Nearly 30 years into a Hall of Fame career, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers are putting up their highest numbers on the road. "We've always had incredibly great audiences, but they are absolutely frenzied and manic now," Petty tells *Billboard* in a rare interview. "Which is good for us, because our show has always really been about the audience. It's as much fun as you can legally have, I think."

More than halfway through their summer tour, Petty & the Heartbreakers are averaging slightly less than \$600,000 per night at the box office and 16,500 per night in ticket sales, according to *Billboard* Boxscore.

"This tour is smoking," says Barbara Skydel, the band's agent for close to 30 years, the past few at the William Morris Agency.

Such a blistering pace is leading the band to a total attendance of close to 730,000 and a gross of well over \$25 million. Ticket prices, generally between \$25 and \$60, are relatively low compared with those of other tours.

The magnitude of the dollars and tickets does not seem a primary concern to Petty. "I'm not really involved in the business," he admits. "I'm fortunate—I've been with the same manager since I started out 30 years ago, and he has always been very good at looking after our tours and things. But I'm hearing more and more about this [tour]; every day, someone from the business world is telling me how great it's doing. Who would've dreamed that 30 years later we'd still be doing these kind of numbers? So we're very happy about it."

Tony Dimitriades, Petty's longtime manager, says even he is impressed by the tour's success, given the marketplace. "I assume, with shows as good as these have been over the years, that more and more people will come," he says. "But the way the business is going and the way other people are selling tickets, I guess it does surprise me that we're actually drawing as many people as we are."

Skydel says the band's performance is the culmination of years of delivering the goods onstage. "This is what it means to be a career artist," she says.

Petty & the Heartbreakers have proved remarkably consistent in a touring business known for incon-

sistency. For 2002's Last DJ tour, the band's most recent trek with a like number of large-venue dates, the averages were \$468,767 at the box office and 15,490 in tickets sold, for a total attendance of 681,592 for 44 shows.

Petty agrees his band has been a solid draw on the road for a while now. "Things are always pretty good, but then you look up and this is happening and everyone's excited, and we sort of feel like, 'Well, we do this all the time,'" he says. "We're always there, if people want to notice."

And while his audience has been loyal, Petty says he has noticed a new generation of fans. "We've seen this over the years, the torch being passed down and younger people coming in," he says. "But we still main-



"The audiences are absolutely manic now."

—TOM PETTY



tain a core audience. A lot of them were even there in the '70s."

The current tour, with the reunited Black Crowes in the opening slot, has notched doubles in several markets. Tea Party, the Boston operation of Clear Channel Music Group, nailed down June 18 and July 29 dates, and both sold out the market's Tweeter Center.

"Boston loves Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers," Tea Party senior VP Dave Marsden says, calling this tour the "outstanding bill of the year."

"The June 18 show remains the talk of the town," he adds. "With a long history of great performances for their fans in New England, it took quite a night to set a new standard, but that is exactly what Tom and the Heartbreakers accomplished."

PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS

Though Dimitriades has gone with a national tour pro-

ducer in the past, this time out he worked with a mixed bag that includes national promoters Clear Channel Entertainment and House of Blues along with such indies as Jam Productions, Another Planet and IMP.

"We were going to do a certain number of dates, and we wanted to make sure every situation was exactly the way we wanted it," Dimitriades explains. "Tom hadn't done a national tour in three years, so we felt we would hand-pick every single show."

Meanwhile, Petty says he is having as much fun performing as he ever has. "And the band is really on fire," he adds. "Right now, we all feel like we're the best rock'n'roll band there is, and I think that's a good attitude to have."

Petty's tour ends with a two-night stand Sept. 2-3 at the Gorge Amphitheatre in George, Wash., with no plans to extend the outing.

But it is clear that Team Petty has big plans for 2006, including a new album. The band's first album was released in 1976.

"Look out for next year—that's the 30th anniversary," Petty says. "We're gonna party."

TOM PETTY says he has noticed a new generation of fans at his shows.



16.5K

Average number of people attending Tom Petty's summer concerts

TOURING BY RAY WADDELL

Veteran Petty Production Team Keeps Focus On Music

Production for a Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers concert varies greatly from tour to tour, ranging from splashy psychedelics to lean and mean. Given that the act's outings are not necessarily related to a new album, any theme is fair game.

"Depends on the mood we're in," Petty says. "The production we've got out right now is a really nice one, based on a guy named Saul Bass who did movie titles in the '50s and '60s."

Bass' graphics for such films as "Vertigo," "Psycho" and "West Side Story" are all about weird angles and bizarre shapes. "It's a unique way of presenting the show," Petty says. "I got a little tired of seeing rock shows that are just cones of light. They seem very similar to me, so I tried to do something a little different this time."

As always, the focus is on the music. "We've never had anything that exploded or anything," he says. "But pro-

duction can be fun. In the type places we're playing, these big outdoor shows, it's good to have something for the people a mile away watching the thing. And we've also incorporated the video in an unusual way into the act, so everybody has a good seat in a sense [and] can see everything in detail."

While the band's production may vary, the backstage rider keeps getting smaller. "Somebody showed me one that was supposed to be ours printed

on a Web site—it's not ours. It's completely amusing. I don't recognize it at all," he says with a laugh. "We've cut it down so much. There's not any drinkers in the band. All we ask is a hot meal, really, and in my room I think I have a couple of Cokes and some protein bars, and that's about it. No deli trays; we don't like all that. I think people would laugh if they saw our rider, it's so simple."

That is not to say the Heartbreakers cut corners in getting from point A to point B. "We've

got our own jet—that's pretty ostentatious," Petty says. "I'd say the biggest change is we travel in a lot more comfort than we used to."

It is all about familiar faces on the road, not just within the band but also among the crew. The Heartbreakers roadie roster has been stable through the years; backline crew chief Alan "Bugs" Weidel (30 years), tour manager Richard Fernandez (26 years), assistant tour manager Mark Carpenter (15 years) and lighting director Jim Lena-

han (30 years) are seasoned vets, and house sound man Robert Scovill, monitor engineer Brian Hendry and tour accountant Spence Churchill all have more than a decade with the band.

"We keep a happy bunch," Petty says. "It's a family thing. We've done a lot of work over the years, we keep the same people around and they really look after us on the stage."

Petty places a lot of faith and responsibility in his crew. "You **continued on >>p17**

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	GROSS/ TICKET PRICE(S)	ARTIST(S) Venue, Date	Attendance Capacity	Promoter
1	\$3,416,682 \$72.50/\$28	KENNY CHESNEY, KEITH URBAN, GRETCHEN WILSON & OTHERS Heinz Field, Pittsburgh, July 30	54,133 sellout	Northshore Entertainment Works, The Messina Group/AEG Live
2	\$2,412,062 (\$1,352,250) \$91.16/\$72.93	ROD STEWART National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, England, June 21, July 29-30	30,941 three sellouts	Solo, Clear Channel Entertainment-U.K.
3	\$1,505,105 \$57.50/\$40	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND, MARC BROUSSARD Sound Advice Amphitheatre, West Palm Beach, Fla., July 16-17	38,717 two sellouts	The Cellar Door Cos.
4	\$1,152,356 \$85.25/\$18	OZZFEST: BLACK SABBATH & OTHERS Tweeter Center for the Performing Arts, Mansfield, Mass., July 15	20,100 sellout	Tea Party Concerts
5	\$1,010,314 \$56.50/\$25	TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS, THE BLACK CROWES Tweeter Center, Tinley Park, Ill., July 15	29,313 sellout	Clear Channel Entertainment
6	\$982,538 \$83/\$18	OZZFEST: BLACK SABBATH & OTHERS Tweeter Center at the Waterfront, Camden, N.J., July 19	23,655 25,371	Electric Factory Concerts
7	\$941,270 \$85/\$39.50	EMINEM, 50 CENT, LIL JON & THE EAST SIDE BOYZ & OTHERS HP Pavilion, San Jose, Calif., July 19	12,997 13,768	Bill Graham Presents
8	\$842,248 \$81/\$30.50	OZZFEST: BLACK SABBATH & OTHERS New England Dodge Music Center, Hartford, Conn., July 17	20,430 24,000	Jim Koplik Presents
9	\$830,737 \$53.50/\$36	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND, O.A.R. Riverbend Music Center, Cincinnati, July 21	20,523 sellout	Belkin Productions
10	\$810,455 \$58/\$18	TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS, THE BLACK CROWES Verizon Wireless Music Center, Noblesville, Ind., July 21	24,522 sellout	The Cellar Door Cos.
11	\$775,232 \$85/\$39	EMINEM, 50 CENT, LIL JON & THE EAST SIDE BOYZ & OTHERS Coors Amphitheatre, Chula Vista, Calif., July 22	12,248 19,689	House of Blues Concerts
12	\$759,246 \$41/\$24	RASCAL FLATTS, BLAKE SHELTON, SHELLY FAIRCHILD Nissan Pavilion at Stone Ridge, Bristow, Va., July 29	25,001 sellout	Clear Channel Entertainment
13	\$694,748 \$53.75/\$36.25	DAVE MATTHEWS BAND, O.A.R. Starwood Amphitheatre, Antioch, Tenn., July 20	16,700 17,422	PACE Concerts
14	\$676,065 \$85.25/\$75.25	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN Arena at Harbor Yard, Bridgeport, Conn., July 20	8,199 sellout	Jim Koplik Presents
15	\$666,575 \$85/\$75	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN Pepsi Arena, Albany, N.Y., July 16	8,325 sellout	Ron Delsener Presents
16	\$660,882 \$48/\$38	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, N.J., July 22	14,519 sellout	AEG Live
17	\$640,262 \$69.25/\$20	DESTINY'S CHILD, MARIO, AMERIE, TYRA Philips Arena, Atlanta, July 15	10,742 13,844	Peter Conlon Presents
18	\$633,132 \$47/\$38	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE Wachovia Center, Philadelphia, July 24	14,304 sellout	AEG Live
19	\$628,540 \$69.25/\$18	EMINEM, 50 CENT, LIL JON & THE EAST SIDE BOYZ & OTHERS White River Amphitheatre, Auburn, Wash., July 17	10,902 19,536	Bill Graham Presents
20	\$594,674 \$56.50/\$26.50	TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS, THE BLACK CROWES DTE Energy Music Center, Clarkston, Mich., July 20	15,774 sellout	The Cellar Door Cos.
21	\$587,686 \$48/\$38	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, N.Y., July 23	13,012 sellout	AEG Live
22	\$579,684 \$95.50/\$18	OZZFEST: BLACK SABBATH & OTHERS Darien Lake Performing Arts Center, Darien Center, N.Y., July 21	15,044 21,800	Ron Delsener Presents
23	\$572,490 \$45	DEF LEPPARD, BRYAN ADAMS, RANDY COLEMAN Midway Stadium, St. Paul, Minn., July 29	12,722 sellout	Jam Productions
24	\$553,850 \$49.50/\$39.50	HILARY DUFF Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Ill., July 19	11,943 14,649	Clear Channel Entertainment
25	\$552,194 \$46/\$36	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE MCI Center, Washington, D.C., July 27	12,328 13,349	AEG Live, Musiccentre Productions
26	\$545,429 \$47/\$37	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, Conn., July 29	12,187 sellout	AEG Live
27	\$543,287 (\$658,466 Canadian) \$40.22	AVRIL LAVIGNE, NOT BY CHOICE Air Canada Centre, Toronto, July 15	14,028 14,749	Clear Channel Entertainment
28	\$538,314 \$75.25/\$18	EARTH, WIND & FIRE & CHICAGO Tweeter Center for the Performing Arts, Mansfield, Mass., July 16	11,346 14,199	Tea Party Concerts
29	\$522,070 \$85/\$45	MARK KNOPFLER, WILLIAM TOPLEY Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Morrison, Colo., July 19	8,608 sellout	Chuck Morris Presents, Kroenke Sport Enterprises
30	\$518,568 \$64.50/\$18	EMINEM, 50 CENT, LIL JON & THE EAST SIDE BOYZ & OTHERS Sleep Train Amphitheatre, Marysville, Calif., July 20	12,253 18,500	Bill Graham Presents
31	\$493,458 \$47/\$37	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE BJCC Arena, Birmingham, Ala., July 15	11,004 sellout	AEG Live, Atlanta Worldwide Touring
32	\$477,656 \$41/\$24	RASCAL FLATTS, LEANN RIMES, STEVE AZAR Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Bonner Springs, Kan., July 21	14,565 18,000	Clear Channel Entertainment
33	\$476,360 \$63.75/\$18	DESTINY'S CHILD, MARIO, AMERIE, TYRA Office Depot Center, Sunrise, Fla., July 17	8,333 12,899	The Cellar Door Cos., in-house
34	\$461,084 \$46.25/\$36.25	AMERICAN IDOLS LIVE DCU Center, Worcester, Mass., July 30	10,655 sellout	AEG Live
35	\$456,337 \$39.50/\$34	BECK, LE TIGRE, THE DECEMBERISTS, TV SHERIFF Gibson Amphitheatre, Universal City, Calif., July 22-23	11,662 two sellouts	House of Blues Concerts



On The Road

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Agents, Managers Seek An Audience—With Each Other

Agents to managers: Just call me. That was the primary message from agents who attended the "Fill Your Book . . . And Still Sleep at Night" panel at the International Assn. of Assembly Managers conference July 18 in Washington, D.C.

Moderated by Paul Beard, managing director of Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth, Texas, the panel included Paradise Artists agent Jim Linz; Creative Artists Agency managing partner Rob Light; Artists Group International agent Adam Kornfeld; Zach Radowski and Kenny DiCamillo, agents with the William Morris Agency; and Alan Wasser Associates agent Steve Schnepf.

Beard inquired about the fastest way to find out about impending tours: "The challenge is to get there first before [dates] are snapped up by someone buying 40 cities at a time."

"If you buy on your own, we should be talking to you," Light said. "But if you want information to induce someone else to buy, I need to know that upfront."

Light was quick to acknowledge that often venues know more about what will work in a given market or building than the agent, citing a recent Seal tour of performing arts centers.

"In these days of consolidation, [venues] are the only local promoters that really exist," Light said, adding that in-house arena marketing powers were considerable. "You need to be a little more aggressive in letting us know that. For years, I didn't know that Fleet Center had been doing all of

[Boston promoter] Don Law's marketing." According to Light, any good agent is aware of market conditions, noting that the area between Pittsburgh and Kansas City is soft and that Canadian tours are thriving. "The six of us [panelists] could sell out in Canada right now," he said. "We're very aware it's hot, and we're driving everything we can up there. We're aware of major trends; it's the micro ones that you're aware of."

Asked by an attendee about what made the region between Pittsburgh and Kansas City a "wasteland," Light blamed a history of papering houses, citing a policy he attributed to former Clear Channel Entertainment CEOs Irv Zuckerman and Dave Lucas. "They gave away 8,000-10,000 tickets a show, and that hurt us. Other regions don't paper that way."

When Light called the AGI-booked, Jam-produced Def Leppard/Bryan Adams run of minor-league ballparks "one of the best tours of the summer," Kornfeld said the tour owes its success to affordability, which was attained via cooperation between the acts and the venues on such issues as ticket and concession prices.

"There's more to it than packaging," Kornfeld said. "It has to be artists willing to work under these parameters. Obviously the Rolling Stones aren't going to play ballparks for \$40 a ticket."

Light added that it would also help if the business were more of a 12-month business than a five- or six-month one. "Business for Destiny's Child has been up and down," he said, "and I'm convinced if they had gone out in February, March and April they would've sold out every date." ◆◆◆



SEAL has done strong biz at PACs.

PRODUCTION TEAM (cont.)

from >>p16

know that guitar's going to be in tune and you're going to get the one you want within seconds," he says. "It's really precision. The other night I had to spin around and say, 'Look, I'm changing five songs,' and they covered me. It's very nice to have people you know and that you love."

Petty is particularly high on his sound techs. "We have the best sound people, I think, and the best PAs," Petty says. "We go to a lot of trouble to make sure the sound is good,

and I think that has helped us over the years. The audience knows the sound is going to be good at one of our shows, and we're going to go the extra mile to make sure the audience enjoys it. That way, we enjoy it."

From a tour business perspective, Petty & the Heartbreakers' manager Tony Dimitriades calls the shots. Petty "makes the records, so I can get more involved in the touring side of things," Dimitriades says. "Over the years,

you get to know and understand each other in such a way that you know exactly what to do: which venues to avoid, which days to avoid, when to give them an extra day off."

And Dimitriades' touring philosophy is simple. "What makes something last a long time to me is always about the quality of what you bring and the fact that you're reasonable in what you expect in exchange," he says. "In other words, you don't get greedy." ◆◆◆