



Green Day's Armstrong channels Freddie Mercury.

Green Day

Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Illinois August 10th, 2005 ★★

Punk heroes pump their three-chord rock to arena levels

What to make of a punk-rock show that begins with the theme from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, includes a singalong version of "Shout" and climaxes with an encore of "We Are the Champions"? Had it been any other band, this kind of cheese-ball pandering might have ruined the show, which marked the opening of Green Day's summer tour. But considering the group's impressive catalog and propulsive sound, it merely underscored the fact that this tour would be a crowd-pleasing victory lap for a band on a huge roll.

Whereas *American Idiot* was a high-concept punk opera with anti-Bush undertones, tonight's playful set mostly eschewed political rants in favor of ostentatious rock-star moves. Flanked by an extra guitarist, a keyboardist, two horn players and that familiar exploding-heart logo, Green Day took the stage with arms raised triumphantly as the final horn blasts of *2001* rang out on the overcranked sound system. *American Idiot* standouts such as "Jesus

of Suburbia" and the terrifically angry title track benefited from a mix of three-chord abandon and arena-ready choruses. By the time they launched into a disco-ball-lit version of the *American Idiot* ballad "Are We the Waiting," Billie Joe Armstrong had the crowd in the palm of his hand.

After assaulting the front row with a Super Soaker and covering the Isley Brothers' "Shout," Armstrong led the crowd through a ridiculously long series of call-and-response chants of "Ah!" "Ooh!" and (Armstrong's favorite) "Dey-oh!" The last third of the show found Green Day getting back on track with straightforward versions of "Basketcase," "Minority" and the beautiful "Wake Me Up When September Ends," which was admirably openhearted rather than cornily over-the-top.

Calling Chicago "the greatest fucking city on earth" before exiting the stage, Green Day returned for "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" and dropped confetti during "We Are the Champions." Armstrong closed things out with a solo version of "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)," dropping some retarded speed-strumming between the verses as if to keep the Hallmark sentimentality in check. It didn't work, exactly, but the handful of old-school fans in the audience at least seemed to appreciate the effort.

CHRISTIAN HOARD

Time of Your Life

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Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

★★★★

Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Irvine, California

August 14th, 2005

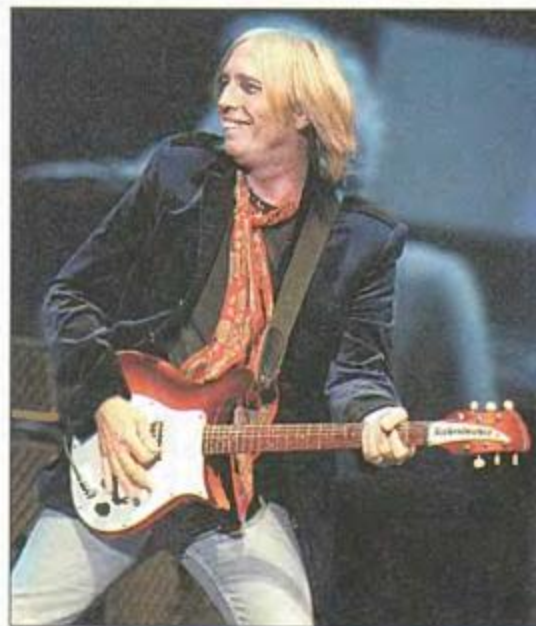
Petty and the world's greatest bar band make the hits come alive

JUST A FEW MONTHS SHY OF THEIR thirtieth anniversary, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers found themselves at home in Southern California near the end of a summer tour for what could have been a valedictory stroll through hitsville. Instead, starting with 1978's "Listen to Her Heart" and "You Don't Know How It Feels," off 1994's *Wildflowers*, Petty burned through his songbook and made a powerful claim to be at a career performance peak.

In a blue velvet blazer, his skinny jeans held up by a gold-plated belt, Petty spent the show on the move, from the first shuffle step of "Breakdown" to slow-motion duck-walking and arms-akimbo spins that would do Stevie Nicks proud. Flanked by two piano players, including lifelong accomplice Benmont Tench, Petty transformed the radio-ready luster of back-to-back-to-back hits "Don't Do Me Like That," "Free Fallin'" and "I Won't Back Down" into pounding gut checks with braying harmonies. During "Mary Jane's Last Dance," big, billowing clouds of stinky-sweet smoke drifted across the open-air amphitheater, but lest anyone grow placid, the Heartbreakers tore into the Animals' "I'm Cryin'" with suitable bar-band abandon.

Age has accented Petty's quarter-Cherokee heritage, his wizened face as finely grained as North Florida pine. But there was nothing wooden about his delivery, as Petty played more than a dozen different guitars, pulling out a box-bodied Bo Diddley model on a version of Them's "Gloria" that included a long rap about Gloria being suspicious of Tom because, among other things, "You stink of marijuana!" During the final encore of "American Girl," as Mike Campbell floored the accelerator on a rockabilly guitar solo, the outdoor amphitheater was a sheet of joyous faces, none happier than Petty himself.

PETER RELIC



Petty: "You stink of marijuana!"

FANS' NOTES



Daniel Glines, 14, Chicago
"I like Billie Joe's political views. I hate George Bush with a passion."



Leslie Hosley, 23, Holland, MI
"Rock on! Green Day fucking rule. Everything was awesome."



Kenneth Kresal, 12, Louisville, KY
"This was my first concert. I loved the pyrotechnics."

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