

"All the News That Fits"

RS1000

THE 100 GREATEST COVERS

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Townshend Unbound

ONLY SIX MONTHS AFTER ELEVEN FANS WERE TRAMPLED to death at a Who concert in Cincinnati, Pete Townshend was characteristically blunt during his cover interview in *ROLLING STONE*. "I think what's not apparent to the outside world," he declared, "is our bloody-minded brutality." Writer Greil Marcus wasn't surprised. "He says what he thinks," says Marcus. "And he usually says it very effectively and very pointedly." The cover shoot was held in an Oakland, California, studio that previously had been used to film X-rated movies. "You could smell the amyl nitrate," Townshend recalls. Photographer Annie Leibovitz had the guitarist leap high in the air, as he did during his shows. "We did almost like a dance session in the studio," she says. "He didn't have to do the jump that many times. It had quite a beautiful elegance to it right away. Looking at it now, I realize how lucky I was to actually catch him in the air."

Although Townshend was the star, he was mes-

merized by Leibovitz. "Annie was like a great, overanimated hockey-playing schoolgirl," he says. "Enthusiastic and serious but incredibly persuasive, and for that reason — to a sexual passive like me — sexy. It doesn't surprise me that so many of her pictures involve celebrities with their shirts off." Years earlier, when Leibovitz first photographed the Who in 1973, she persuaded Townshend to smash a guitar for the camera. Set in resin, it now hangs in the *ROLLING STONE* office.

JENNY ELISCU



Petty on the Edge

IN THE SUMMER OF 1968, WHEN TOM PETTY WAS seventeen, he saw his first issue of *ROLLING STONE*. "It was on a newspaper rack in the back of an over-incensed head shop," Petty recollects, sitting in his Malibu home studio. "I thought, 'This is great!' Until then, *16* magazine was probably the only place you could see photos of rock & roll acts." Years later, when he headed to Los Angeles in search of a record deal, he used *RS* as a guide: "We made our first rounds in L.A. from the addresses of record companies we'd written down from ads in *ROLLING STONE*."

1980
FEB 21

When the time came for his first cover, as *Damn the Torpedoes* swept the nation, Petty was at ease with photographer Annie Leibovitz. "It was so easy to trust her,"

he says. But he wasn't as trusting with his life story. He had just spent two years in a record-label lawsuit that nearly broke apart the Heartbreakers and led him to file for bankruptcy. "He was feeling exhausted and dispirited," recalls writer Mikal Gilmore. To make matters worse, Petty blew out his voice in Philadelphia that night and canceled the interview.

Two weeks later, when Petty finally opened up to Gilmore late at night after a gig in St. Paul, Minnesota, he wasn't sure his music was worth taking seriously. "I find it hard to believe anybody cares that much about what I have to say," Petty said, adding the following quote, one that has dogged him for years. "I mean, it's only rock & roll — just disposable crap that won't mean much in ten years." Recalling those words today, Petty shrugs. "That," he says, "was just the most full-of-shit thing I've ever said."

Petty did four more covers for *ROLLING STONE* over the years. But he still remembers the moment he saw the first one. "I was convalescing at a Santa Monica hospital after having my tonsils removed," he says. "A visitor came in and threw it on the bed. I felt I had arrived."

AUSTIN SCAGGS

