

Tom Petty Unearths Live Gems

New box set collects three decades of shows including covers, rarities
By David Fricke

AT ONE POINT ON TOM Petty's new box set, *The Live Anthology*, a collection of previously unreleased concert recordings with his band the Heartbreakers, the singer-guitarist introduces a tune called "Surrender" at a 1983 show in Irvine, California.

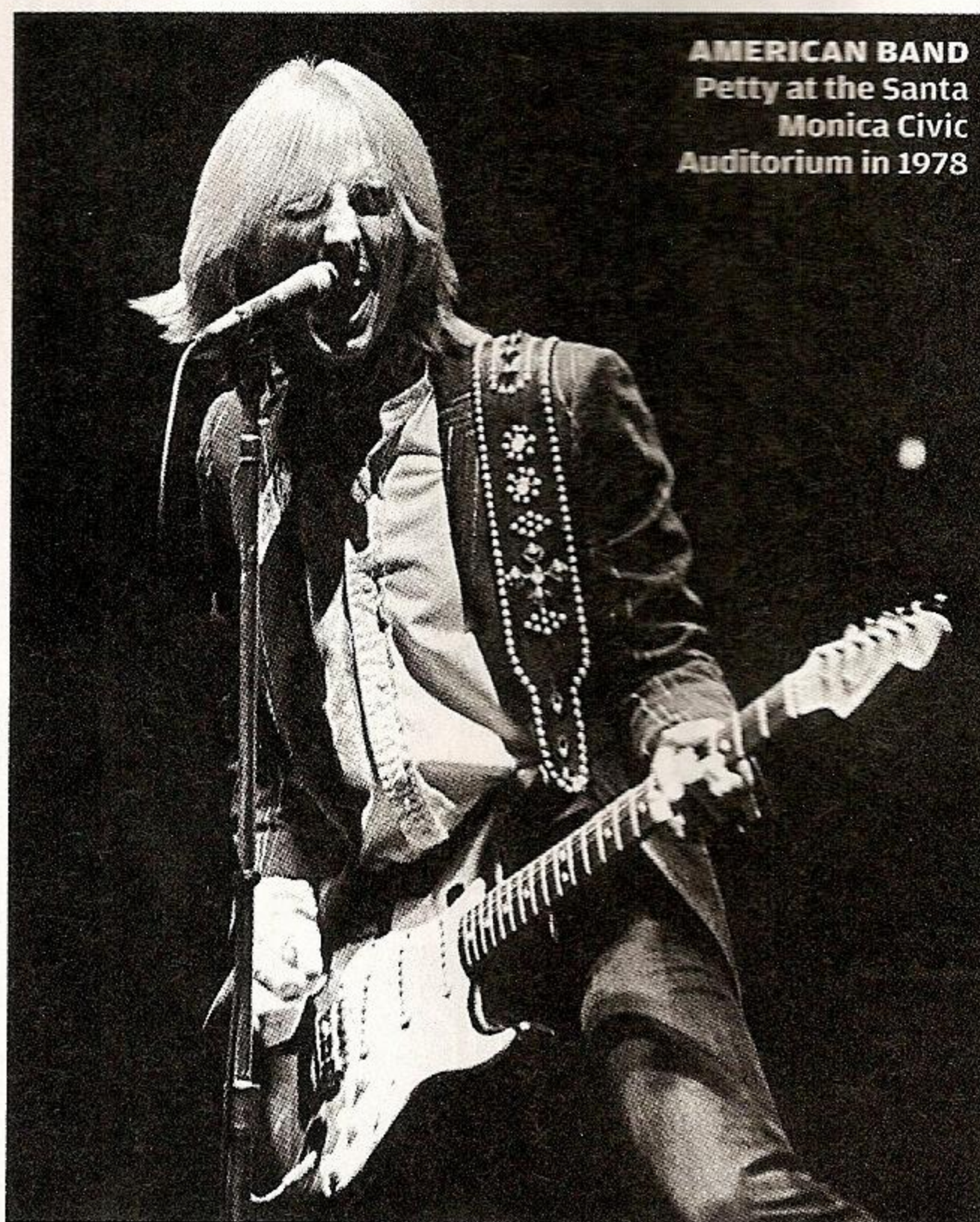
PREVIEW

"This is a song I wrote in 1976," Petty announces. "Never recorded this song." Then another voice pipes up: "That's not true. It was never recorded well!"

"That's Stan Lynch," Petty says now with a grainy chuckle, referring to the Heartbreakers' original drummer. "He always did that onstage, commenting on things back there." In fact, Lynch was right. "Surrender" was a frequent opening number in Petty's shows during the Seventies. But when that 1983 performance came up as a possibility for *The Live Anthology*, he nearly nixed it. "I said, 'That can't be a good take,' because we tried it on every album, and we could never get it right. But we played it good that night."

Compiled by Petty and guitarist Mike Campbell with engineer Ryan Ulyate from three decades of gigs, the box set is peppered with surprises – stage versions of obscure and unrecorded originals; blues, garage-rock and psychedelic covers; unusual arrangements of Petty's best-known songs – amid classic hits such as "Breakdown," "Jammin' Me" and "Refugee." And Petty made sure there was room for it all. Scheduled for release in early November, *The Live Anthology* comes in a four-CD box, priced under \$25, and in a deluxe package that costs about \$100 and has a fifth CD of additional tracks as well as bonus DVDs, a vinyl EP of 1976 club-date cuts and a Blu-ray disc packed with every track in super-high fidelity and 5.1 mixes.

"I put very little video on the Blu-ray, just the credits," Petty



AMERICAN BAND
Petty at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium in 1978

Best of the Box

Petty on five tracks that trace the evolution of his career

"Even the Losers"
3/6/80, Hammersmith Odeon, London

One of the earliest tracks in the set, this is the Heartbreakers in their young guitar-slinger prime, already big at home and poised for world domination.

"Something in the Air"
11/4/93, O'Connell Center, Gainesville, Florida

Thunderclap Newman's 1969 hit, given a loving psychedelic glaze. "I was struck by how well we sang it. It's me and Howie Epstein singing lead in unison. The harmonies are cool."

"Friend of the Devil"
2/3/97, the Fillmore, San Francisco

The Grateful Dead classic, covered on hallowed turf. The Heartbreakers learned it that afternoon – "It was Mike Camp-

bell's idea" – and debuted it that night. "You'll notice people are soloing all over each other."

"Mystic Eyes"
10/27/06, Greek Theatre, Berkeley, California

A nine-minute freakout on the 1965 pneumatic-blues rave-up by Van Morrison's Them. "We leave a lot of room to improvise in the shows. 'Mystic Eyes' is a great example of that."

"I Won't Back Down"
11/15/07, American Museum of Natural History, New York

A rare acoustic take on Petty's 1989 solo hit from a very weird night. "It was a benefit. People were more interested in their salads. The show was terrible except for this, the last thing we played. Later, Tom Brokaw took me aside and said, 'Great show.' I was like, 'Oh, God.'"

says, "because I intentionally didn't want people looking at anything while listening." But he admits he got the idea for the Blu-ray component from Neil Young's use of the technology on his *Archives Vol. 1*. "That came out near the end of our mixing, and I thought it was

worth exploring, because the sound quality is incredible."

"Tom thought a one- or two-CD live album doesn't say much," says Petty's manager, Tony Dimitriades, explaining *The Live Anthology's* two generous editions. "His concern was, 'This is a life's worth of

work.'" Petty had another. "No overdubbing or tricking it out as people often do," he says. "I wanted it to be the real thing."

That meant listening to as many as 40 versions of "American Girl" to find the top take. But in the process, Petty says, "we were really surprised by things we didn't expect" – like "I Want You Back Again," a Zombies cover from Petty's 20-show residency at the Fillmore in San Francisco in 1997. "It was a single I heard in 1965," he says of the song, "and it stuck in my head forever. But I don't think we played it more than a few times."

Ulyate began going through Petty's live archive a year ago, ultimately creating an iTunes library of 170 concerts – 3,509 performances of around 400 different tunes. "I made sure Tom and Mike heard every song they ever did," Ulyate says. "And I ranked the concerts with a star system." Among the years and cities prominently featured on *The Live Anthology* are the Fillmore run, a three-night stand at the Forum in Los Angeles in 1981 and two shows in Petty's hometown of Gainesville, Florida, in 1993 and 2006.

The Live Anthology is only Petty's second official concert release. He dismisses the first, the 1985 double LP *Pack Up the Plantation* – "It was just a tour souvenir" – and live albums in general. Most, he says, "are just the greatest hits faster." Yet from the beginning, Petty documented his band's evolution onstage, recording Heartbreakers shows starting in the late Seventies, despite the technical hassles. "It was a lot more trouble than to record live," he says. "You had to have trucks and do long soundchecks and hope everything got recorded. A lot of times, stuff got recorded and just put on the shelf without me ever listening to it."

"But I'm glad we did it," Petty continues. "I think this is one of the great live rock & roll bands. And you really understand us once you've heard this set. You understand where we came from, what we were trying to do and how much we love what we do."