

The Hard Times Seem Over for Petty

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Rock concerts don't have to be long to be good, as Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers demonstrated to an appreciative audience Wednesday night at the Augusta Civic Center.

Although the band played for less than two hours, Petty and his talented colleagues definitely gave the crowd its money's worth as they stormed through songs from their first three albums and a couple which have yet to appear on vinyl.

While tunes from the first two albums, "Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers" and "You're Gonna Get It," drew a warm response from the 4,000-plus in attendance, the favorites were selections from the million-selling album "Damn the Torpedoes."

A Review

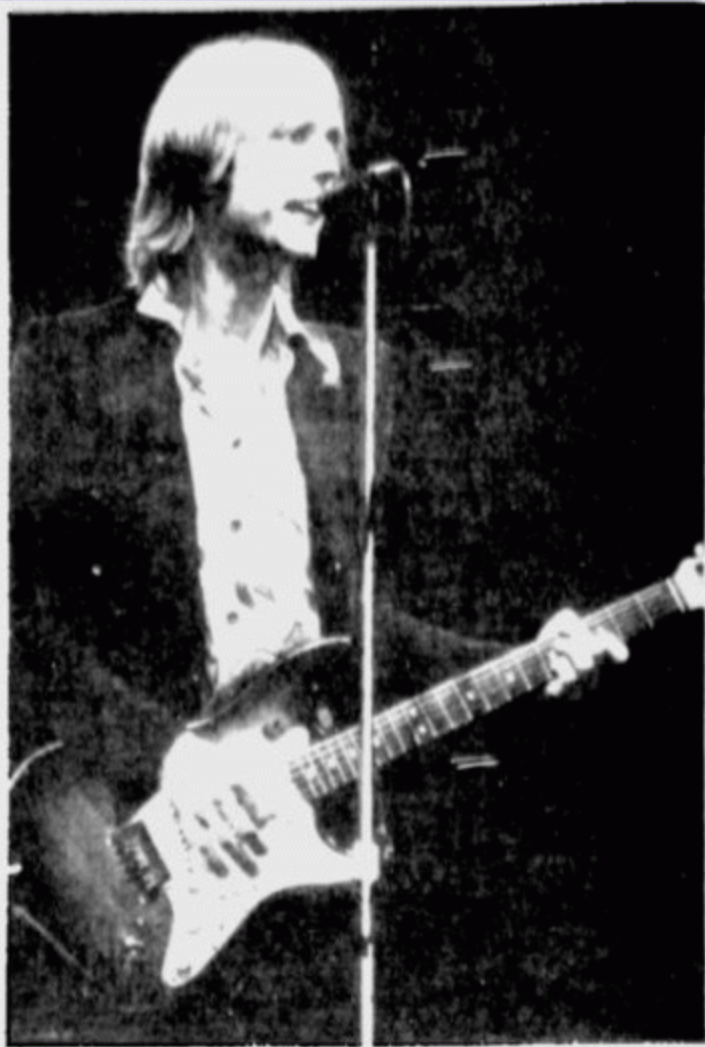
From the opening number, "Shadow of a Doubt," the fans recognized the newest songs at the first note and voiced their approval. The band responded by playing at least as well as on the record and, in many cases, better.

While there isn't a weak link in the group — which includes Benmont Tench on keyboards, Mike Campbell on guitar, Stan Lynch on drums and Ron Blair on bass — the star of the show was Petty. The Florida-born singer and guitarist had problems with his voice on a tour a few months ago, but nothing was wrong with his throat Wednesday evening.

While on some songs ("Here Comes My Girl") he sounds a lot like Roger McGuinn of the Byrds, and on others ("Breakdown") the name that comes to mind is Van Morrison, on most of the numbers the sound is distinctively Petty with plenty of emotion and a biting edge.

In addition, Petty's rapidly-developing sense of theatrics is refreshing to rock fans who are embarrassed by the sight of an aging Mick Jagger prancing across the stage while past his prime. None of Petty's moves seem contrived, and he controls the crowd in a manner that any politician would envy. In fact, Petty seemed genuinely surprised at the extent to which the audience responded. It's clear to see why he gets top billing.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers have gone through



Gromelski Photo

Tom Petty of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

plenty since they started, with personality clashes and bankruptcy proceedings getting in the way of music. If Wednesday's show is any indication, though, the hard times are over and there's plenty more good music yet to come.