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RONDA TEMPLETON

Staff Writer

Florida-bred Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers came home to St. Petersburg last night to entertain a near-capacity crowd at the Bayfront Center.

Opening act Tommy Tutone never quite succeeded in his attempts to warm up the crowd for Petty's performance. Most of his songs were unknown to the majority of the crowd and the audience seemed impatient for Petty to take the stage.

Petty and the Heartbreakers were brought to St. Petersburg as part of radio station 98 Rock's third birthday celebration. Petty, 28, seemed genuinely glad to be performing in his home state of Florida, and his fans seemed impressed by the band's performance.

Petty's music has become more popular this year with the release of the band's most recent album, *Damn the Torpedos*. Despite poor reviews at earlier stops on the band's current tour, the Bayfront Center performance was energetic, keeping members of the audience on their feet for the better part of the evening.

The audience, comprised mainly of 16- to 20-year-olds, seemed more attracted to Petty's lyrics than to his music. Petty has a knack for putting the average man's feelings into most of his songs. The song the crowd seemed to particularly enjoy was Petty's performance of *Refugee*, and murmurs came from all corners of the Bayfront Center with his most recognizable line, "Somewhere, somehow, somebody must've kicked you around some."

Petty has a talent for turning trite subjects into songs with which his audience can identify, and perhaps that is because he does not take himself seriously. He talked to his audience in an easy manner, conveying a feeling that he was just on the stage to have a good time.

The success Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers have enjoyed with *Damn the Torpedos* is more than just luck. The band is made up of talented musicians from Gainesville who happened to meet in California and decided to join forces.

The Heartbreakers are guitarist Mike Campbell, drummer Stan Lynch, bassist Ron Blair, and keyboardist Benmont Tench. The four men played with one of Petty's rival bands in Gainesville while he was a member of a group called Mudcrutch.

After an eight-song set by Tommy Tutone, during which a guitarist broke a string with his frenzied playing, disc jockeys from 98 Rock gave away six motorbikes and



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and a TR-7 automobile. The 98 Rock chicken cavorted across the stage as Petty's equipment was set up and people from the back of the arena worked their way into positions below the stage.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers opened their show with an energetic version of *Here Comes My Baby* which got most of the first 20 rows in the audience up. The group pleased most of the audience with more popular songs from *Damn the Torpedos*, including *Here Comes My Girl*, *Don't Do Me Like That* and an extended version of *Breakdown* that prompted concert-goers to take to the aisles and stand on their seats.

The crowd quieted down several times as Petty played new, slower music that was instrumentally as good as his more chaotic and familiar songs. He seemed comfortable and relaxed during the ballads and the audience sat down

to listen intently, only to jump to its feet when a more recognizable song followed.

Petty's concert was good, starting out slow and building to an impressive finish. One of the best moments of the evening was Petty's treatment of a sad love song called *The Best of Everything*.

Small audience response at the beginning of the concert was forgotten by the evening's end, with Petty doing three encores for the more than 8,000 people in the audience.

Bayfront Center: Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, a rock concert Tuesday, July 15, 1980, presented by 98 Rock. One performance only; admission charged.