

music



Tom Petty led the Heartbreakers to Detroit Thursday

# Tom Petty an escape to youth

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Thursday, Cobo Arena.

DETROIT — Up in Tier C, Cobo's cheap seats, I thought I had fallen into a high school sports event. My fellow residents in nosebleed heaven looked like they were skipping their homework for Tom Petty's concert.

So, for that matter, did Tom Petty, at least from afar. In his sneakers and blond page-boy hair and neat grey sports shirt he looked, and sounded, a decade younger than his 29 years.



JOHN LYCKOCK

If not exactly straight, he certainly put on a straightforward show.

For an hour and a quarter or so he led the Heartbreakers through the hits from his Damn the Torpedoes album and current Hard Promises which, after years of toil, finally put him in a position to draw 11,000 devotees to a concert.

# Steppenwolf hero gunning for imitators

TORONTO (CP) — Steppenwolf, the band that produced such hard-edged, late-1960s hits as Born To Be Wild, The Pusher and Magic Carpet Ride, was hardly known for cultivating a clean image.

But the dirt that clung to the band's name less than a year ago was entirely different and far harder to clean up.

After Steppenwolf split up five years ago, a number of imposters borrowed leader John Kay's trademark title and left it looking shabby.

Four fake versions of Steppenwolf — the copyright to the name is owned by Kay and partner Jerry Edmonton — have performed for fans. Two used members of past legitimate incarnations while the other two operated simultaneously on opposite U.S. coasts.

But Kay started to tour again last year, shooting down the imposters with U.S. state and federal injunctions. And on the band's current tour which brought them to Toronto this week, Kay's out to take Steppenwolf fans back to the past with performances that feature his songs, his voice and his distinctive fervor and style.

Kay's music is up to its old grinding perfection, but he says it is hard to "contend with the bad taste left in a lot of people's mouths by the bogus bands."

"Some of them were just plain bad," he said. "One of them even had a singer who was intended to look like me, with dark glasses and everything."

Since the Heartbreakers are a guitar band with Petty's raspy, rather whiny voice scruffing up the surface, their faithful on-stage renditions of their recorded songs tend to separate into two categories:

— the droning, bottom-dragging songs that bring back memories of the Byrds: A Woman In Love, She Don't Need You, Waiting Is the Hardest Part;

— the faster, pushier rockers with piano chords speeding up the action and putting more bounce in the beat: A Thing About You, I Need to Know, Don't Do Me Like That.

Several times the band stepped away from the two most familiar albums, doing American Girl, the Petty Song that Roger McGuinn (of the Byrds) recorded, or a respectable Don't Bring Me Down that was also respectful toward the original by Eric Burdon and the Animals.

Until that song, late in the set, their performance had been more honest than inspired. But King's Road followed with Petty turning playful and the Heartbreakers expanding the song into a driving outburst. Then came the band's first hit, Breakdown, sensuous and bluesy. Only the biggest song, Refugee, could top it, to end the show with the audience on their young feet.

Maybe, when they've seen more shows, they will realize that Petty could extend himself further, that the musicians can do more than reproduce the album when they start to interact. The last couple of numbers Thursday gave them a good taste, and maybe that's enough to be worth climbing back up Cobo's cliffs the next time Petty comes to town.

The Fabulous Thunderbirds opened the show with a batch of neat rhythm 'n' blues songs featuring nifty harmonica. Maybe fabulous in 1958; now just nice.

The real group has toured constantly since early last year, indicating that the creator of Born To Be Wild is back on track. The former hit song is still played frequently.

"Sometimes these 17-year-old kids come up to me — they were maybe in diapers or a little older when we were recording — but they say, 'Hey, you're John Kay, you're the one who does Born To Be Wild.'"

"They think I'm still current because they hear the thing with a certain regularity."

Kay, who started with Jack London and the Sparrows, a locally successful Toronto band, formed Steppenwolf in 1967, setting off a four-year string of gold records.

Although his post-Steppenwolf career was an uphill battle — Kay describes the first of his two solo albums as "a spectacular failure" — his comeback tour will take him to Australia and Europe, ending just in time for a Christmas return to Kay's California home.

It's his fourth time running through motions that have become all too familiar over the years, yet it doesn't get him down.

"We're still quite a way from taking on the Fleetwood Maes of the world, but we're light years away from the toilets we played 18 months ago," said Kay.

# ROM galleries opening in summer

TORONTO (CP) — The Royal Ontario Museum will start reopening its main galleries to the public next summer, board chairman Sydney M. Hermant said Tuesday.

The ROM board meets today to discuss the opening date, but museum director Dr. James Cruise expects no opposition to Hermant's "strong desire" for a Dominion Day, 1982.

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