

Same old Tom Petty entertains his fans

By Kate Kelley
Times Correspondent

Stemming the tide of relentless reunion tours and stage reorganizations of classic rock bands nervous about their retirement funds is Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

They never broke up, nor have they said "farewell" once in their 13-year history. They look the same as ever, sound the same, and their sold-out Strange Behavior tour is earning them more money than other old-timers because they don't have any showy brass or backups to pay.

Concert Review

It's just Tom, a few of his childhood friends and an extraordinary amount of natural talent. The secret of Petty's success just might be in the childish grin he bears every time he thanks his audience. He simply likes to play, and his appreciation of the audience seems genuine.

The acoustics at Duquesne University's A.J. Palumbo Center may not have been ideal for Petty's Thursday night show. Air-

conditioning didn't do much to move the stale air thick with cigarette smoke. But the Heartbreakers, now a slick Los Angeles band, didn't seem to mind. Perhaps they even felt comfortable in the familiar gymnasium setting touring with the upstarting punkish-but-not-really opener, the Replacements — because that's the way it all started for them, touring with the likes of the Ramones and Blonde.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers began in 1976 as a hard-rocking band escaping any label. They were different from other '70s music, but not punk exactly. New

wave? So skip the definition. The formula was success.

Petty tried to sing one of his self-admitted favorites, "Breakdown," but the audience knew that song too well. Petty just stood center stage, smiling, and joining in on the chorus.

"Don't Come Around Here No More" from the 1985 release "Southern Accents" proved to be one of the evening's showcase pieces. In fact, Petty's voice, though it had its usual Dylan-whine, rang clearer and the lead and rhythm guitars blended better than the recording.

The Clash's classic, "Should I

Stay or Should I Go," is a common concert cover, so no one was surprised to hear it. But Petty's emotional rendition of it was shocking. It was evident that he just plain loves the song — enough to slice his fingers, Townshend-style.

Besides an abundance of their own classics, the Heartbreakers joined Petty on much of his current solo effort, "Full Moon Fever," which is packed with veteran talent including help from George Harrison, the late Roy Orbison, Jeff Lynne, and Heartbreaker Mike Campbell.



TOM PETTY
In concert