

## ENTERTAINMENT

## Tom Petty inspires Palumbo Center crowd

By Peter B. King

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Rock stars inspire all sorts of emotions in audiences, from amazement at a guitar hero's technical prowess to envy of a conspicuously rich, scandalous lifestyle.

Tom Petty is one (Bruce Springsteen also comes to mind) who inspires belief in his integrity.

We think nothing of hearing Madonna's music in a Pepsi commercial. But we'd be let down hard if Petty's "Southern Accents" turned up on a commercial for Cajun spices, now wouldn't we?

The sold-out crowd of 5,100 at the Palumbo Center last night gave plenty of signals that their feelings for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers go a little deeper than the usual audience-rock star relationship.

They were on their feet from the first note, singing along with practically every word.

Their thunderous cheering whipped up more decibels than the band itself and caused guitarist Mike Campbell to raise his hands at one point in mock-horror.

Petty is in some ways an unlikely idol — a skinny guy with dull blonde hair hanging down like rope and framing a face that won't win beauty contests.

The opposite of glamour, he turned away from the crowd a few times and spit.

But he has an exceedingly relaxed, friendly way of reaching across the footlights and making an audience feel like living, breathing, significant human beings.

Certainly his songs accomplish the same thing — lean, dramatic slices of the everyday life of common people, set to an artful roar by one of rock's crack three-chord outfits, up there with Springsteen's and Mellencamp's bands.

Petty wore his influences on his sleeve, kicking off with the Byrds' "Feel a Whole Lot Better," complete with jangling, 12-string Rickenbacker guitars.

For that matter, the next tune was their Byrds-like early hit, "American Girl."

The Heartbreakers ranged farther afield with sizzling versions of the Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go" and Willie Dixon's "Little Red Rooster."

Petty dug into his own past for tunes such as "You Got Lucky," "Refugee," and one of the all-time great seduction songs, "Break Down."

He picked up an acoustic guitar and Campbell a mandolin for four or five songs; "Even the Losers" and "The Waiting" were highlights.

From his new solo album "Full Moon Fever," Petty did "Won't Back Down," and "Free Fall-

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in," among others.

Both tunes sounded better last night, thanks to the Heartbreakers and the absence of Jeff Lynne's too-smooth production.

A couple of the tunes from "Full Moon Fever" just aren't up to snuff, however. "A Face in the Crowd" never achieves the grave, mystical mood it attempts, and "Yer Bad" is supposed to be funnier than it is.

Incidentally, Petty made a pitch for the environment, asking the audience to visit the Greenpeace booths in the lobby. He added: "And don't buy Exxon gas."

Opening for Petty were the Replacements. Having seen them twice since March, I can say I like them well enough, but I'm still puzzled by their status among the terminally hip as one of the all-time great rock 'n' roll bands.

Yes, they manage the trick of merging melody, interesting lyrics and grungy garage rock. When they did "I Can See For Miles," the parallel with the early Who became obvious. But sometimes the playing is just too raw to be interesting.

Certainly Slim Dunlap, in particular, is nothing special on lead guitar.

Apparently, their insouciant attitude helps them get over. The band launched into a few bars of "Happy" and "Train Kept a'Rollin'" only to stop and go on to something else without so much as a word to the crowd. That's rock 'n' roll, I guess.

(Peter B. King is The Pittsburgh Press pop music critic.)



Tom Petty brought out the emotions last night