

# Petty comes home to O'Dome

## Performance sets new record for paid attendance

By **BILL DeYOUNG**

Sun staff writer

For his first hometown concert in seven years, Gainesville native Tom Petty set a record for paid attendance in the O'Connell Center. Although Saturday night's show was not technically a sellout, only a few hundred seats remained empty in the hall, which has a capacity of about 11,000.

Mayor-commissioner Cynthia Chestnut, in a pre-concert ceremony, presented Petty with the key to the city and officially proclaimed Saturday "Tom Petty Day" in Gainesville.

Petty later told his audience about the encounter. "I never dreamed when I was living over the Gator Groomer that one day I'd be sitting down talking to the mayor," he said. "People ask me how does it feel to be back in Gainesville. Well, it feels really good."

Opening with "Love is a Long Road," Petty and his band, the Heartbreakers, played for just under two hours. The concert showcased a song or two from each of the group's eight albums, and was liberally laced with material from Petty's solo album, "Full Moon Fever," which is nominated for four Grammy Awards at the February ceremony.

His long blond locks trimmed to shoulder-length, Petty wore gray jeans and a striped jacket. The singer was visibly moved by the filled-to-the-rafters O'Connell Center, and frequently bowed and saluted the audience.

He dedicated "Southern Accents," a ballad about the birthright of every southerner, to the late Dub Thomas, the Gainesville nightclub owner who played a significant role in (Petty's) career. Thomas died Jan. 9.

But most of all the concert was a celebration of rock 'n' roll, the kind Petty and the Heartbreakers have excelled at for their 14 years together. The air was charged as they tore through "Refugee," "I Need to Know," "American Girl," "You Got Lucky" and many others that are now staples of FM radio.

The audience sang along, verse and chorus, with the Heartbreakers' classic "Breakdown" and Petty's current solo hit "Free Fallin'."



MARK DOLAN/The Gainesville Sun

*Singing star Tom Petty and his Heartbreakers returned to his hometown Saturday night where he performed before a capacity crowd in the O'Connell Center at the University of Florida.*

## PETTY

Continued from page 1B

hit "Free Fallin'."

Guitarist Mike Campbell played impeccable lead lines, and doubled on mandolin for several numbers, including a delightful acoustic reading of "Listen to Her Heart."

Campbell lent a psychedelic wah-wah guitar to "Don't Come Around Here No More," which ended in a bright cacophony of strobe lights and featured a suit of armor that danced across the stage.

The suit of armor was but one of the unusual set pieces for the show; the stage was framed by a totem pole and a huge, stuffed polar bear. There was also a wooden Indian, a cow skull, hieroglyphics, shields and lances.

Other highlights: The acoustic lullaby "Alright For Now," the searing rocker "Runnin' Down a Dream," and an all-percussion segment that featured Campbell on hammered dulcimer, and Petty and bassist Howie Epstein playing loose-skinned African drums.

Drummer Stan Lynch sang lead on Chuck Berry's "Down the Road Apiece," the first such occasion "in Heartbreaker history," Petty announced. Pianist Benmont Tench performed an impressive boogie-woogie solo, and Epstein switched to acoustic guitar for several numbers.

After an impassioned plea for the environmental group Greenpeace, which was distributing literature in the lobby, Petty commented on the natural beauty of areas like Gainesville, and how such beauty is fast disappearing.