

## MUSIC



## Tom Petty rocks his audience

By SKIP SHEFFIELD  
STAFF WRITER

No orator he, Tom Petty lets his music do the talking.

Petty, reunited with his band the Heartbreakers, was in South Florida for the first time in four years in concert Wednesday at Coral Sky Amphitheater.

Somewhere there must be a picture of a graying, flabby, wrinkled Petty, but the actual man looks hardly changed since he released his first album in 1976. Dressed in skin-tight black leather pants and a billowy shirt, Petty's chief stage movements consisted of stalking back and forth, checking his vintage Vox amps, and tossing his straight, blond, shoulder-length locks about.

There were four huge urn-like receptacles above the stage that spewed incense, and the stage itself was adorned with movable tapestries above, upon which psychedelic patterns were video-beamed. Spacey, man.

But you don't go to a Tom Petty concert for a Las Vegas-style extravaganza. You go for the music, and Petty has a

trunkfull of hits of sing-a-long quality. While much of the audience was in Petty's age bracket (48), a surprisingly large amount was kids, many born after Petty left Gainesville, Florida for fame and fortune in Los Angeles.

Perhaps Petty was saluting his Southern roots by the choice of the venerable Blind Boys of Alabama as his opening act. The "boys" are in their 60s and 70s now, but they have lost none of the gospel fervor that has made them an international sensation for 50 years. It was easy to trace the gospel roots of rock 'n' roll from their impassioned performance.

Wearing matching Gibson Firebird guitars, Petty, lead guitarist Mike Campbell and multi-instrumentalist Scott Thurston (backed by keyboard player Benmont Tench and drummer Steve Ferrone) with no additional fanfare launched into "Jammin' Me," then barely pausing to take a breath, segued into that stirring ode to the road, "Running Down a Dream."

Apart from songs that have become American rock classics, such as "Breakdown,"

"Don't Do Me Like That," "Last Dance with Mary Jane" and "I Won't Back Down" (as well as new stuff from his "Echo" album), a Tom Petty show is a gearhead's delight. There are enough new and vintage guitars to stock a music store, and the musicians change axes after almost every song.

Petty went out of his way to salute lead guitarist Mike Campbell, and with good reason. Campbell is the machine that drives the Petty show. I was particularly enthralled with Campbell's work on "It's Good to King," playing a double-necked 6-12 string. Campbell's real showcase came with an virtuoso instrumental medley of surf classics built around "Apache," played on an early 1960s-vintage Fender Jaguar guitar.

Tom Petty may not inspire the mania of The Backstreet Boys or Ricky Martin, but his is a solid musicianship that will never go out of style. You walk away from a Petty concert satisfied that you have seen a live American rock music icon performing at the peak of his craft.

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