

Being Petty: A Tribute To a Legend

On Monday, October 2nd, we lost the heart and soul of American rock and roll. Tom Petty's career and influence spanned decades, leaving hit after hit in their wake. Everyone knows a Petty song. Everyone has a favorite. There are innumerable articles out right now highlighting his music, his career, and his legacy. We won't pretend that our take is the best you will read, but we do hope that for those that loved his music, it will serve as another opportunity to reminisce and reflect on an artist that helped create the soundtrack for many of our lives.

Josh Crowe

The American spirit is vast. It's hard to nail down. Many artists have tried to do so and several have failed. Some who have succeeded are Bruce Springsteen with *Thunder Road* or Bob Seger with *Against the Wind*.

For me, Tom Petty's *Free Fallin'* also gets the job done. From the first chord to the fade out, I'm swept away to the life of a Southern California teen in the 80's. It's broad and simple. It's full of tension. The girl is good and the boy is bad. How many 80's romance movies played this situation out for us? Yet, Petty made us feel it again.

Mike Lytle

When thinking of which Tom Petty song to pick it is very easy to fall back on the old joke that I can't narrow it down to one song since I celebrate his entire catalog. In this case, it is not a joke though. *Free Fallin'*, *Runnin' Down a Dream*, *I Won't Back Down*, *The Waiting*, he has so many great songs that

it is very difficult to pick one to pay tribute to. So instead of choosing a song, I am going with a Tom Petty movie. That movie is none other than the Kevin Costner classic *The Postman*. For those too young to remember (or those who have tried to forget) Kevin Costner decided in the mid to late 90s to focus his acting energies on three hour, post-apocalyptic epics. *Waterworld* received the most attention because it cost so much to make and went so far over budget, but *The Postman* is the better movie. A primary reason for this is Tom Petty and his role as Bridge City Mayor. He actually plays himself in the movie, but since it is set in a world that no longer cares about famous rock stars he is content to inspire people in other ways. Whether it is for his singing, songwriting, guitar playing, or acting, Tom Petty will be missed.

Gowdy Cannon

Chances are you have heard *American Girl* not just on the radio but on any number of TV shows or movies, usually during a climax of a story about a woman triumphing. Americans have heard it in everything from sitcoms like *Scrubs* and *Parks and Rec* to movies you'd expect like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and movies you wouldn't like *Silence of the Lambs*. I read even *The Handmade's Tale* recently made use of it. We can't get enough of this song to help tell our stories. Musically it makes you want to cut loose and "dance all night," even if you can't dance or normally don't (like me). But it's deeper than that, which is why Hollywood keeps calling and why it's been covered dozens of times the last 40 years. It's so versatile it can tell any number of stories but I find it quite appropriate that the song didn't catch on for a while but later became a mega-hit. Because that is probably the story we love best. The story of Ben Carson and his library card, of Kurt Warner and his grocery bagging, of America being the underdog in its revolution. *American Girl* is, like the song's author, as American as apple pie and absolutely what is great

about this country.

Phill Lytle

I don't have a singular story to share – no transcendent moment when a Tom Petty song knocked me over and captured my heart. What I do have is decades of unreserved love for *Learning To Fly*. From the opening guitar to the triumphant, drum-laced bridge, the song is a revelation every time I hear it. It's a simple melody, played with precision and care, wonderfully mixed to bring out the most of each instrument. The guitar solo is reserved and understated, fitting perfectly with the song's laid-back vibe. Petty's voice sounds as confident as ever, singing about living, failing, and trying again. It is a song with redemption echoing in every corner and it is as beautiful a song as I will ever hear.

David Lytle

A couple weeks ago I was listing to Tom Petty and talking to my wife about him. I made the comment that Tom Petty was my go to if I wanted something that made me feel good. I never get tired of the sound of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. Their sound makes a bad day bearable and a good day great. Then Petty died, and while the loss of a legend saddened me, I am grateful that the magic of recording allows the music to live on. For my dime, *Runnin' Down a Dream* is the quintessential feel-good song of an artist that never failed to make me feel better. It describes driving a car with music on and presumably the windows down. It's about life on the road encountering both the rain and the sunshine. The guitar riff "drives" the song so effectively that just hearing the guitar makes you want to jump in a car. Let's celebrate Tom Petty driving down the freeway as we hope for "something good waitin' down this road."