

“IF A MARTIAN ASKED WHAT IT’S LIKE TO BE ALIVE, I’D GIVE THEM A BUNCH OF TOM PETTY SONGS”

LAST WEEK, THE WORLD LOST **TOM PETTY**, ONE OF THE GREATEST AMERICAN MUSICIANS OF ALL TIME. HERE, SUPER-FAN **BRIAN FALLON** PAYS TRIBUTE TO HIS FALLEN HERO...



TOM PETTY wasn't simply a great singer and songwriter. Through his work with Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers and supergroup The Traveling Wilburys with Bob Dylan and Beatle George Harrison, his music made him one of the most iconic American artists of the '70s and '80s. His honest lyrics, incredible music and set of good-guy ethics (he once refused to allow his label to add a dollar onto the price of one of his albums when they expected it to sell hugely, saying he'd prefer it not to come out at all than indulge in such tactics) struck a chord, eventually selling over 80 million records.

One musician whose love for the man stretched into his own lyrics is Brian Fallon, who sang 'I still love Tom Petty songs and driving old men crazy' on The Gaslight Anthem's *Even Cowgirls Get The Blues*. Here, he shares why Tom was so important to him...



away.' And he had about 50 careers in one! I think any songwriter who sits down will tell you that if they could be anybody career-wise, they would be

Tom Petty, because he was consistently good. His influence is vast, and I'm sure if you asked Ed Sheeran who he looks up to, it would be Tom Petty.

"Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers were one of the first things I heard on the radio, probably on the way to the laundromat. That was my youth! The song *Free Fallin'* came out in 1989 when I was nine, and it was the earliest music I remember that wasn't for my parents – it was mine. My friend had the cassette of

“HE SAID WHAT WE ALL THOUGHT, IN THE MOST SIMPLE FORM...”

BRIAN FALLON

the album it was on, *Full Moon Fever*, and I remember the cover so well, where it's got the pink and faded greens and blues. And then there was the video with Tom in a jean jacket, with the typical American '50s girl and the punk rockers. I remember thinking, 'This is everything I like, right here. Sign me up!'

"He didn't seem to be the kind of guy who would rub elbows with other legends and say, 'Look how legendary we are.' Tom just seemed to be like, 'Yeah, I've got work to do. See you later.' For me, that's

awesome. You've got to really think, this is the guy that Bob Dylan invited to be in his backing band. You don't see Dylan handing out too many compliments, y'know what I'm saying? And he was *really* close friends with George Harrison. This guy is not your average celebrity! He got with the best, but Tom also stayed focused, because nothing else mattered but the song.

"Everyone has a line of his that speaks to them. Take '*The waiting is the hardest part*' [from *The Waiting*]. He was the best at those phrases, and I can't believe there's not going to be any more. The one when I was a kid was, '*I wanna glide down over Mulholland / I wanna write her name in the sky*' [Free Fallin']. If you've ever been in love with somebody, that's how you feel. I wrote the song *Mulholland Drive* about the movie, but that line in *Free Fallin'* was what made it significant. Every single time I've been to Los Angeles, I've driven all the way across the Hills and Mulholland, looked out over the city and thought of that song. I've never been to Reseda, but I know what '*A long day livin' in Reseda*' feels like. And that line, '*There's a freeway running through the yard*' – that's New Jersey. I can hear the freeway right now!

"And that's the genius of Tom Petty: he said what everyone was thinking, in the most simple form, that any man, woman or child could understand. He never elevated himself above the people he was speaking to, ever. His music doesn't need a genre to define it, and it doesn't need a generation to define it, either. It's everyday life. If somebody from Mars asked me, 'What is it like to be alive?' I'd say, 'Here's a bunch of Tom Petty songs. Check it out.'"