

REVIEW

HE'S STILL A TOM CAT

Welsh singer Tom Jones is as magnetic to women as ever as he struts his stuff in an Anaheim show.

By **STACY DAVIES SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER**

If there's one place a man should never want to see a woman, it's at a Tom Jones concert. The 63-year-old Welsh belter had the ladies unhinged Tuesday night at the Grove in Anaheim, with shrieking, stage storming and the expected barrage of underwear pelting. Jones shook his hips, mugged and pranced, the women hooted and stood on chairs while their husbands sat patiently – many sporting a sour-grapes smirk. Perhaps this type of teeny-bopperdom seems ridiculous, especially for middle-age women, but it's only after you've seen Jones live that you realize all the hype is not hype at all.

Looking a wee overtanned, hair a bit too poofy and sporting an attractive goatee, Jones energetically took the stage Tuesday night, fronting three backup singers, a four-man brass section and the standard rock band ensemble. He yelled the customary "Is everyone feeling good tonight" bit and said he planned to sing new remixes of old songs and material he's recently composed with former Fugees lead rapper Wyclef Jean. Then he broke out into a rappy, groovin' tune called, "Tom Jones International" that revealed once again why Jones will never be a relic of the past.

Jones doesn't "reinvent" himself – that would mean discarding the past – but he does acquire and blend, and he's always game for new experiences. The man keeps up with the times – and he can rap. He's an expert at melding his

full-throated, robust baritone with any genre, new or old, and especially excels at soulful numbers, making tired tunes like "Mama Told Me Not to Come" seem brand spanking new, which he did this night.

He also pumped up his signature hits "Delilah" – which prompted a slingshot load of panties to hit the stage, narrowly missing an amused Jones – "I'll Never Fall in Love Again," "Green, Green Grass of Home," "It's Not Unusual" and "What's New Pussycat?" For "Pussycat," Jones, who does not make actual contact with the adoring lassies at his feet, finally laid a single smooch on the thirty-something groupie who showed up in a wedding veil.

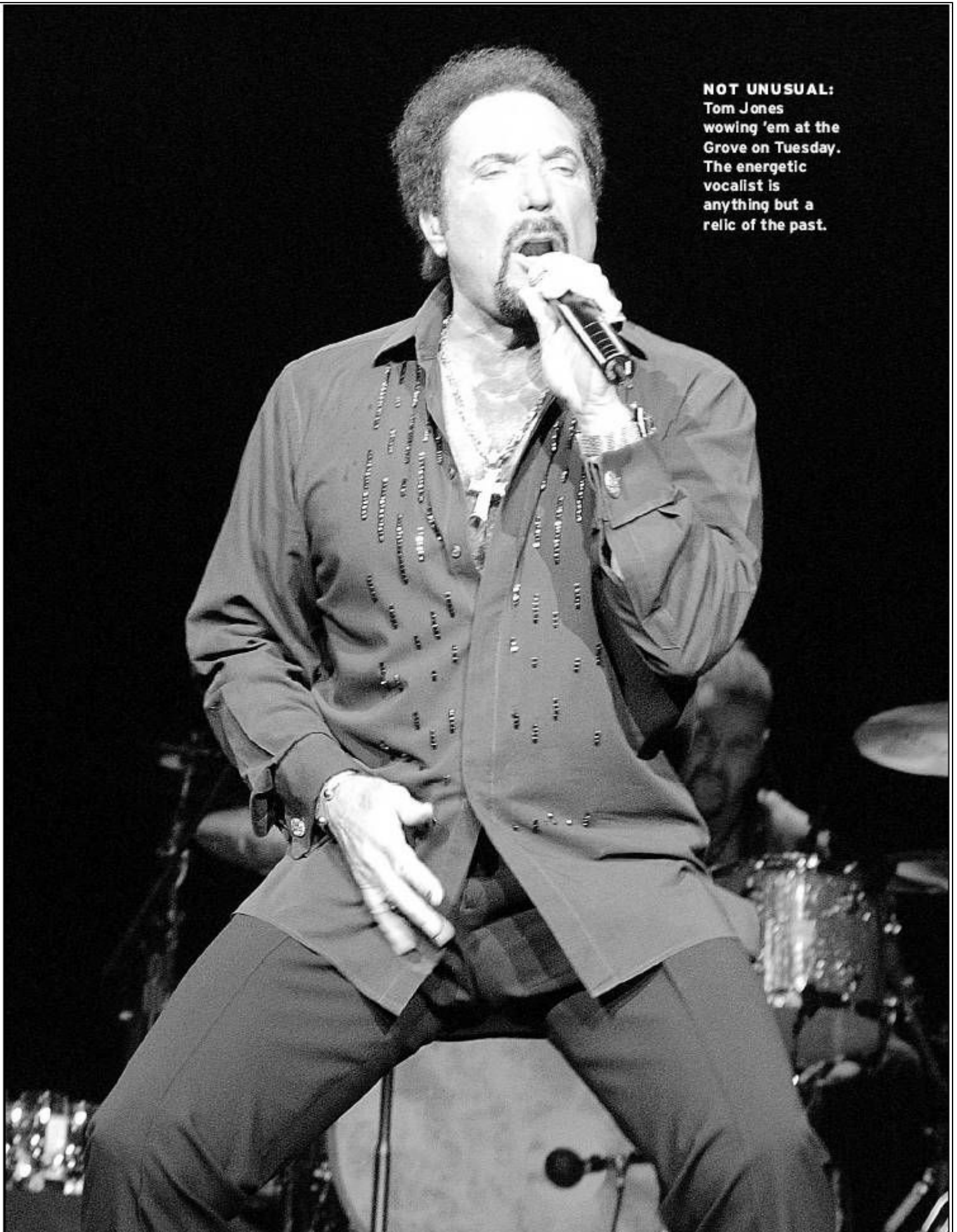
He peppered in some new, adult-contemporary material he wrote with Jean as well, including a duet with one of his backup singers, "Without Love (There is Nothing)" about "dancing under the moonlight drinking sweet wine." It's a sexy bit from his new release "Reloaded," which is sure to appeal to the Top 40 crowd. Jones then stepped out even further, delivering a breathtaking acoustic guitar rendition of the never-released "What Am I Living For?" and showcasing his ability to convey nuance and subtly when he's of the mind to.

It was a brief moment, and then he reeled back into funk-rock, blasting out a surprisingly grooving "We've Got Tonight," and too-hot-to-handle renditions of "Sexbomb" and "Leave Your Hat On" complete with pelvic thrusts and hairy-chest flashes that were clearly more humorous to Jones than a sincere effort to turn on the crowd – which it did, nonetheless.

And that's what really makes a Tom Jones show a spectacular event: He blows you away with his megawatt sound and creativity and then seduces the underwear off you with his boyish charm.

Husbands beware.

<p>Tom Jones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where: The Grove of Anaheim • When: Dec. 9



NOT UNUSUAL:
Tom Jones
wowing 'em at the
Grove on Tuesday.
The energetic
vocalist is
anything but a
relic of the past.