

BOB NEUWIRTH

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ATTI SMITH IS IN FULL SWAGGER, WORKING THE RO Theatre stage in LA with relaxed authority. She takes the st alone, wearing a shapeless warm-up jacket with hood tight framing her face, to deliver a fiery reading of *Piss Factory*. Wi each succeeding song she adds band members until her music complement is complete. Left-hand man Lenny Kaye and drum mer Jay Dee Daugherty are Patti Smith Group confederates while bassist Tony Shanahan has played with Kaye and John Cale (and backed Patti on some solo dates last autumn). This core

trio is augmented by Patti's 23-year-old poetry protegé Oliver Ray on rhythm guitar and, seated stage left behind impenetrable shades and cradling his guitar like some old CBGB's bluesman, Tom Verlaine.

She has a couple of wild cards up her sleeve as well. She introduces Bob Neuwirth as "the

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She has a couple of wild cards up her sleeve as well. She introduces Bob Neuwirth as "the person who encouraged me to sing and gave me my first start," after the legendary personage – Bob Dylan road companion, Jim Morrison babysitter, painter, filmmaker, composer of Mercedes Benz for Janis Joplin – has sung a typically wonderful song called *I Don't Think Of Her*. "Bobby had a new CD out [*Look Up on Watermelon Records*] on which I appear," Patti announces. "It's available almost nowhere."

the singer of Blue Oyster Cult (for whom she wrote songs) instead of setting off on her crusade to save the soul of rock'n'roll with The Patti Smith Group.

The band has a homemade, slightly ragtag quality that reminds this audience member of nothing so much as the earliest Patti Smith Group when it consisted of Patti, Lenny and Richard Sohl. That trio 'toured' California in 1974 to 'promote' *Piss Factory*, and you felt like you were watching something invent itself right before your eyes. This mini 'tour' follows almost exactly the same path, and once again you feel like you're watching something in the exhilarating process of *becoming*.

They attack a fair number of familiar songs – *Ghost Dance*, *Rock 'N' Roll Nigger*, *Dancing Barefoot* (although, curiously, nothing from *Dream Of Life*) – with gusto. The 10 shows opening for Bob Dylan last winter seem to have



MOJO
August 1996



Left, Patti rocks Detroit, 1978. Opposite, The Patti Smith Group in 1975: (from left) Jay Dee Daugherty, Lenny Kaye, Patti Smith, Richard Sohl, Ivan Kral. Top right, Patti in full flood and neckbrace, CBGB's, New York City, June 1977.