

His Bobness delivers the goods

MAKE of this what you will. On Wednesday morning, a Vancouver newspaper carried letters from heartbroken girls and angry parents, upset that ticket brokers were asking as much as \$350 for tickets to see the Spice Girls play GM Place in August. On Wednesday evening, a scalper outside The Rage would sell you a ticket for Bob Dylan's show at the 1,000-seat club for \$70, less than \$20 over cost.

Well, as the man once said, money doesn't talk, it swears.

Whatever you make of that bit of rock economics, it's probably impossible to put a price on the performance Dylan gave on Wednesday as a warmup for last night's show at GM Place with **Joni Mitchell** and Van Morrison. Backed by a four-piece band — a basic rock trio joined by a steel guitar and mandolin player — Dylan played a 90-minute set that moved between

POP REVIEW

BOB DYLAN

Reviewed by Chris Dafoe

electrifying rock 'n' roll abandon, delicate, graceful country-tinged introspection and deep, haunting blues grooves. Dylan, decked out in the same silver country gentleman suit he wore at the recent Grammy Awards, seemed as delighted by the proceedings as the two — or was it three? — generations of fans who packed the club. There was a glint in his eye and the hint of a grin on his craggy old mug as he traded guitar solos with band leader Larry Campbell and there was a sense of connection that came as a real surprise to anyone who hadn't seen Dylan since his distant, indifferent and sometimes downright perverse shows of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It was apparent from the moment that he opened the show with Buddy Holly's *Not Fade Away* that it was going to be a rollicking evening. The song is a little rockabilly number about love, written by a kid barely out of his teens, but when it's sung by a man who nearly bought the farm a bit more than a year ago, it's hard not to hear it as rock 'n' roll's version of John Donne's and Dylan Thomas's defiant letters to death: a promise that the beat and the word will live on.

The rest of the show made that promise seem credible indeed. After winding down the energy with a couple of folk and blues-tinged numbers, including a lovely and generous version of *To Make You Feel My Love*, Dylan cranked it up again with an electrifying version of *Silvio*, a song he wrote with Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter for 1988's *Down in the Groove*. As the song turned into a jam, the band pushed the energy level higher and higher, weaving guitar and steel guitar lines into the groove as Dylan wailed out the chorus.

And so it continued, a delicate acoustic treatment of *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue* giving way to a smoking version of *Tangled Up in Blue*; the blues of *Million Miles* setting up the wild ride of *Highway 61 Revisited*; old hits such as *It Ain't Me Babe* giving way to the new, but hauntingly timeless numbers such as *Love Sick*. Fans threw flowers or, in the case of one middle-aged woman, crowd-surfed to the front of the stage to deliver a bouquet to His Bobness. By the time Dylan wrapped up the evening with *Rainy Day Women #12 and #35*, the whole room was part of the show. As balding grey-beards passed joints to skinny young *nouveau*-hippies, 1,000 people sang in unison, "Everybody must get stoned."