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Review

# Dylan Rolling Thunder Revue satisfying, but worth \$8.50?

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Bob Dylan and his Rolling Thunder Revue played hard for a full house at the Bangor Auditorium Thursday evening. In spite of a few blemishes, the four-hour concert, which could have suffered from a star-studded overkill, was ultimately a satisfying production.

"Welcome to the Grand Canyon."

With that oblique comment on the auditorium's V shape, Bobby Neuwirth and the backup band got Rolling Thunder rolling on schedule with a tight set of originals ranging from country rock to boogie. Their delivery was spirited throughout and might have provided enough meat for an independent concert if they hadn't been overshadowed by the superstars with whom they shared billing. As it was, after about half a dozen numbers, the crowd began to get restless, calling for Dylan.

At this point Ronee Blakely came out to perform two troubled numbers, a tribute to Hank Williams (sung with Neuwirth) and a rather pedestrian ballad. Best known (and better heard) as Raejean in the film "Nashville," she just could not bring her husky alto under control. Maybe it simply wasn't her night.

Ms. Blakely was followed in short order by the concert's surprise guest, Joni Mitchell. She didn't hold the spotlight very long, but her impression was well made. Her performance consisted of a trilogy, two songs of which appear on her new album THE

HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNS (Asylum 7E-1051), while the third was composed two days prior to the concert. Mitchell proved herself a consummate vocalist and lyricist whose highly personal images, when they reach us, register deeply. Witness "a hitcher, a prisoner of white lines in the free, free freeway" in her song of an encounter on the open road.

Neuwirth was back for a short segue into the next act with Kristofferson's novelty "Ramblin' Jack."

Now in his early fifties, Ramblin' Jack Elliott has always been little more than a cult figure to folk purists. This tour has given him some well-deserved exposure. Energetically working over some folkie staples such as "San Francisco Bay Blues," he obviously was having a good time and indeed communicated his exuberance to the audience.

But Elliott was finally succeeded by the awaited Dylan, who, unannounced, got right down to business with a no-nonsense set of old standbys and new material from his unreleased album. Unfortunately he seemed to be hampered by a slight cold which gave his voice a hoarse, strident quality. He overcame this liability later in the evening, though, for sensitive readings of "Sara," a loving song about his complex relationship with his wife, and "Simple Twist of Fate." Aside from the charisma he exuded, however, Dylan's performance was pretty straightforward.

Special mention should be made of the adept support

given by his violinist, Scarlet Rivera. Her supple playing fleshed out the generally trite arrangements of his material, giving it a fluid coherence.

Dylan's deadpan pose was broken only when he and his soulmate Joan Baez clownishly fumbled through "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

Baez' appearance was easily the best segment of the entire concert. After a series of informal duets with Dylan, she developed a rapport with the audience on her own terms. Her performance of "Diamonds and Rust" was so record-perfect she could have been lip-synching. The high point was her soulful, acappella "Swing Low Sweet Chariot," the only number to elicit a standing ovation.

After a short, smoothly rocking contribution by ex-Byrd Roger McGuinn and some more Dylan, the entire troupe came back on stage to close collectively with "This Land Is Your Land."



Headliners in harmony

Joan Baez came on stage in knee length jeans and a tank top to accompany Bob Dylan, whose face was palated with two white war paint crosses. The pair performed their musical favorites on a stage covered with a well-worn Persian rug and surrounded by a maze of lighting and sound equipment.



Grand finale — 'This Land Is Your Land'

The whole Rolling Thunder Revue troupe came on stage at the Bangor Auditorium Thursday for the grand finale with the house lights up and the crowd on their feet. From left to right are Roger McGuinn, Joni Mitchell, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, an unidentified backup man, Ronee Blakely, and two accompanying guitarists. (NEWS Photos by David Bright)