

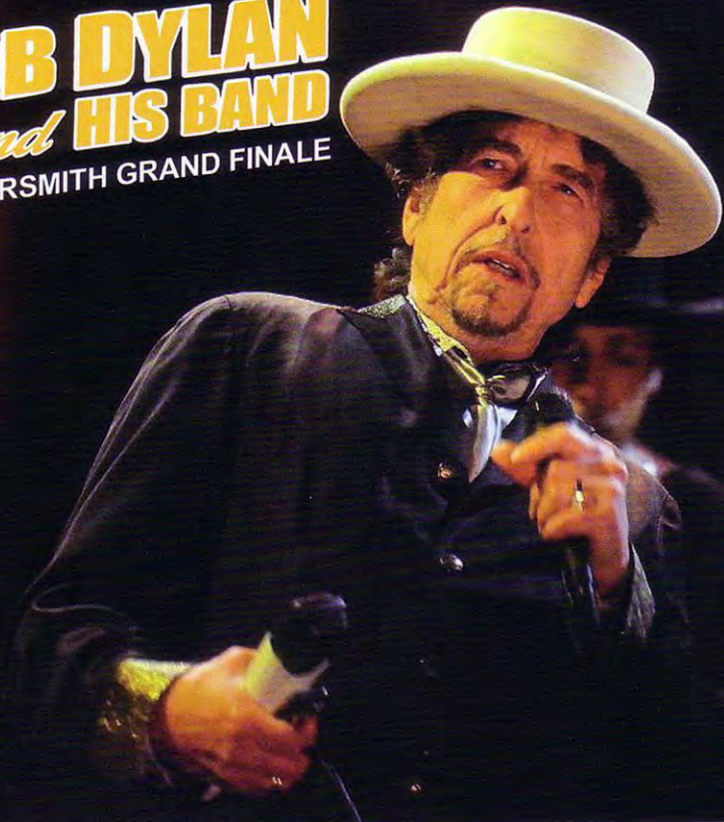
G.R. 710/711/712



Recorded By Ossie

BOB DYLAN *and* HIS BAND

HAMMERSMITH GRAND FINALE



This will be our final take on Bob Dylan's 2011 tour. We find Bob in London at Hammersmith's famed Apollo theatre. The setting for many a classic Dylan gig through out the years - Take for example 2003 when Dylan was happy to wing this way & that through his whole career, picking up & dropping songs as he saw fit. Many classics, many found as he had left them, a few collected from other artists.

The expectations were high for Dylan & the band to rip it up on stage & tear through the song book. Sure, the rest of the tour had had it's go at lurching towards victory - A brilliant small set in Milan, Antwerp showed the spark of electricity was still there, Odense featured the most rarities for this year & while there were no out-of-the-blue shocks or surprises then a lot of the attendees were happy that Dylan was showing out his 70th year at all rather than giving it all up to count his money & his grandchildren.

This three night residency had the back bone in Dylan's recent touring partner Mark Knopfler to which instance a lot of Bobcats raised an interested eyebrow. Mark was, as most of you will remember, the guitarist that brought extra dimension to the 'Infidels' album in 1983 as well as being a renowned guitarist in his own right & one who was revered by a lot of music fans who have followed his career

with some enthusiasm even after the dissolving of 'Dire Straits'. Mark had joined Dylan for this leg of the European tour from the start, his involvement being announced in June, & once the tour was underway, he was regularly invited on stage to join in with the action with his interaction extending to more & more songs as the tour went on.

We begin this chapter, not with the first night, but the second (but there's more about that later..) Sunday the 20th was a good re-entrance from the problems faced on Saturday night - The crowd, a little quieter & more refined, had probably already scanned the internet for news & the set list from the first evening.



Doubtless they were less than thrilled by the grouching that came from that night - Too loud, no or few changes to the set, the crowd unreceptive to who they had come to see but, as I've mentioned before, Dylan is nowadays not completely the sit back, close your eyes & listen type of performer - The song may not always stay the same as one reviewer may have had it - but they're not just the main point of the evenings attention.

Bob strode on to the stage in his Sunday best white hat & immediately tore in to this part of the tours opening song "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat". Bobby plucking at the lines, throwing the words in to disorder & for the crowd letting the music grab at his limbs, shaking him up & coursing through him. Joining Mark for a guitar duet on "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" Bob, while not exactly showing his guest how it should be done, sounded blissfully tender & happier than he had previously.

"Things Have Changed" had Bob emerging center stage again while keeping Mark on stage. A galloping attack on his feelings, Dylan positively sneered out the lyrics then, burnishing his harp, rattled the bones of the Apollo. "Honest With Me" took the same kind of beating as Mark took his bow & left for the hospitality area.

"Tangled Up In Blue" came after a protracted & wordless introduction then he once again barked out the words before the end of the lines. This time though there was singing, it slinked between words, rearing up intermittently, but it was satisfying to hear that Dylan wasn't shy of still trying to hit a note from time to time.

The appearance of "Blind Willie McTell" should have been another highlight but fell slightly short of it's intended interpretation tonight apart from the three extended endings to the song. Maybe if Mark had stuck around for his part in this song then it may have taken a different route?

But regardless, the audience lapped up the atmosphere.

The regular "Highway 61 Revisited" shook the walls out when it entered the room, blowing out the stops like a pressure cooker. "Desolation Row" followed, a robust event featuring a happy Bob who would string out it's verses, smile at the crowd & chime through the songs.

"Ballad Of A Thin Man" had evil in it's eyes & a cruel heart. Mr. Jones wasn't given the benefit of chance & was cast down on sight, Dylan's deep grumbles sweeping up the power & casting it down again with a vengeance & venom.

We come towards the encores greeted by terrific versions of "All Along The Watchtower" & "Like A Rolling Stone".

Two songs that others might set in stone are rendered none more majestic by Dylan & his band. "Watchtower" the thumping, wailing barrage that everyone either hopes for or expects within their

set lists was well played tonight & was as heavy as normal.

"Like A Rolling Stone" was the audience's chance to stand back & bask in the glory from the stage. Dylan doesn't do his lyrics as much justice as he may but knows that when it's time the audience will only end up singing back the song to him so instead he quietly pedals at his organ while the band take up the rest of the pace.

We may not have got the best of the tour tonight but for the attentive & the dedicated, the best was still to come.

The following night is argued as being the best night. Dylan, just as chirpy & pleased to be there was more relaxed it seemed. Happier to take things on rather than to let things run mechanically. Mark once again joined the band on stage for the first three songs.

A straight ahead "Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat", A subtle "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" & a fiery "Things Have Changed" (Within which Dylan broke the ice a little & began to smile - a small gesture but contagious.) Once Mark left the stage, things did indeed change, the band seem a little more relaxed as they now know there's nothing between them & the man who commands their moves. They flew in to "Spirit On The Water" with gusto, the further loosening of Dylan's mood as when he sang the line "They think I'm over the hill" the crowd all took their cue to shout a hearty "NO!" which Bob caught & allowed himself a chuckle.

"Forgetful Heart" allowed the audience a break & a change to revel in the darkening mood, once again a liberal application of harp was all the song needed to root itself in.

A fantastic, freewheeling "The Levee's Gonna Break" had Dylan in a robust mood again, sparing with Charlie's guitar as Bob stood at the organ, teasing him with incremental stabs at the keys. At one point Dylan stood playing with one hand, turning to the audience in a 'look at this!' kind of way & reflecting the glow.

With a faster rhythm, "Man In The Black Leather Coat" has Dylan grinning to himself again, little sparks of electricity lit up his face. "Desolation Row" is curtailed, cut by a couple of verses but still given its grand flourishes & Dylanesque theatrics.

"Ballad Of A Thin Man" brings out that diabolist glint to his eye. The thundering percussion thrilling the theatre & aiding Dylan's theatrical nuances. Our summary trio of greatest hits "Ballad Of A Thin Man", "All Across The Watchtower" & "Like A Rolling Stone" are great closing chapters to this tour. One might suggest that these are over played & spent but they are some of Dylan's greatest & despite their further introduction you might feel short changed if they didn't appear.

The end of the show ended on a glorious farewell by having Mr. Knopfler return to the stage for a glorious "Forever Young" during which Mark would make various nods to Bob & would also take his turns in singing some of Bob's lyrics back to him.

Bobby, understandably, looked a little uneasy at this session of trading lines but Mark holds his nerve well & throws in a shining solo to the mix. The night finishes on a grand crescendo, a discreet bow from the band & an appreciative gesture to Mark from Bob.

As mentioned previously, we end up back to front with the initial evening from this set of shows. The opening night had Mark joining in on the opening four songs (Two of which are replicated here) but Dylan was up against the Saturday crowd - An evening synonymous with party-goers & out of hours drinkers who, while they might be here to hear the music, are usually out to let their hair down too (Reports are of a whistling from the audience that shot straight through "Honest With Me" & caused so much concern that Charlie Sexton believed that he heard something from the P.A. & even Bob took it as a sign something was wrong with his mike!) & so we have a few less tracks than we had hoped for.

On the bright side the songs that remain are wonderful. A brilliantly, teased "Don't Think Twice" features Bob & Mark together, center stage trading licks. "Mississippi" is a latter day rarity. We don't get to hear as many versions as "Tell Tale Signs" sure, but as one of his autumn epics there are sure to be many who attend who hope they catch the song being performed.

"The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll", lesser played these days but still as magic to behold, the same can be said for "Ballad of Hollis Brown"

We're also serenaded with the successful "Make You Feel My Love", these days synonymous with another artist but for whom the original lyricist cannot match. "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" sits between two latter day tunes & is greeted with its due accord.

We end on a Dylan favorite from the past few years tours - a brisk "Jolene" that reminds us that even though his lyrics may not be pointedly political nowadays, the wit that bubbles under is as bright as it ever was.

And there we leave you with the fruits of the London sets. We have been given the news that Dylan already has his sights on at least one show Bangladesh next year.

We've still to see if there is an accompaniment on this tour & where Dylan might rest his hat.

A road less travelled, no direction known. Stick with us, we'll be there too.