



BOB DYLAN

No more alibis



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Dylans's double NYC stint

It's been a hectic year for Bobcats following their maestro on the road for the past few months. After a first US-winter tour in January and February (to be found on Dandelion's brilliant document "The Lonely Graveyard Of My Mind") Bob took a break before heading off to Europe for a series of shows in the southern countries. These great concerts, where Dylan started for the first time in twenty three years with a full acoustic set are presented on Dandelion's "Rolling Through Stormy Weather". Soon after this European tour was over his management announced a double headliner tour with Paul Simon, crossing through the biggest US arenas. The first half of this tour showed some interesting one-offs, mainly as set-openers and a pleasant encore of four songs dueting with Mr Simon. The second leg of this tour started half July and ended two months later.

When Dylan reached New York, fans knew something special would happen. Check out Dandelion's "White Dove": a superb soundboard recording of his superb show at Irving Plaza at the end of 1997 and hear the stunning result. Two years later, Bob returns to the Big Apple for a sold out concert at the Madison Square Garden. Not like in January 1998, when he sold out five nights at the Theatre, this time tickets for the 20.000 plus arena were gone in a matter of a few hours. Only one week before the main show was due, Dylan decided to treat New York the way he always does with an extra show at the Tramps Club at West 21st street. This intimate club may only hold about five hundred persons, so when this extra show was announced a few days before the big one, hardcore fans paid up to 3.000 dollars for a ticket. Now, this Tramps concert beats everything! No sign of Mr Simon, which means his Bobness was not restricted by time and contract limits. Bob arrived on



stage shortly after nine and left the building only minutes before midnight, leaving the exhausted audience with twenty three uppercuts. This club show can not be compared to his last club appearance at the Mercury Lounge in Australia one year ago. There Dylan was testing his new and old stuff for the forthcoming Australian gigs, while now New York was treated with a special homecoming concert. Also, New York was thrilled to hear the new sound of Dylan's latest concerts. Indeed, Bucky Baxter, who joined the band in Australia, March 1992, left a few weeks before to be replaced by Charlie Sexton on guitar. This means that bass player Tony Garnier is the only original band member since 1989. But far more important is the complete new direction of the live-sound. While the last two concert years showed a far more country-ish sound, this latest series of gigs brought the rock back on the roll. Dylan is now accompanied by two great guitar players, where Larry Campbell occasionally switches to pedal steel or fiddle.

Now let's go inside the Tramps and listen to tonight's performances... They are, to say the least, awesome! Dylan opens with a shorter five song acoustic set, where no fan will miss the absence of Tangled Up In Blue Boredom. Instead, Bob treats New York with a superb rendition of Visions Of Johanna. But it is the electric set that sets the house ablaze. With a new, fresh sound, both Seeing The Real You At Last and Ballad Of A Thin Man are superb versions, where the jingle



jangle guitar picks are too numerous to mention. And make a humble bow for the "Before The Flood" version of Most Likely, Dylan teasing the audience with his guitar-playing. Yes, when one listens back to the European shows and the show inside the Tramps, it is like hearing two different artists. Dylan returns for seven encores, paying dues to Jerry Garcia with storming covers of Alabama Getaway and Not Fade Away. The final song, I Shall be Released, sees the welcome return of Elvis Costello, who joined Dylan at London's Brixton Academy during his spring 1995 tour. Since then, Dylan has been a fervent fan of Costello and invites him on stage wherever they meet. As expected, this duet is breathtaking and a perfect grand finale to end the show. The next day Dylan would play the Big One...

And here we are again, frontstage at the Madison Square Garden for Bob's "official" homecoming concert. After Simon's set, Dylan takes the stage for a

five-song acoustic set, where Hard Rain is as bitter as twenty eight years ago, when he performed for the people of Bangladesh with George Harrison. New York explodes in thunder when Bob sings the first notes of Highlands, his second ever live performance. Not as long as in Chula Vista, four weeks before, but with many lyrical variations. All Along The Watchtower gets a new arrangement, with acoustic guitars taking the main rhythm. The highlights of the evening are the encores with Paul Simon. Anyone wondering what Bob might do during The Sound Of Silcene won't believe what he hears. The two voices melt together and history is being written. Going back to their roots they bring a pleasant medley of I Walk The Line and Blue Moon Of Kentucky, climaxing the evening with a wonderfully tender Knockin' On Heaven's Door. Dylan leaves New York in grand style. The recordings on this set are fabulous, and serve as a historical document, with the

extra bonus of the first and complete live-outing of Highlands. It is hard to say, but if Dylan manages to keep up to this level he will enter a new millennium as the most important songwriter and greatest live performer we have ever witnessed. And with setlists of his recent autumn tour with Phil Lesh in mind, a final 1999

set will follow soon! So, sit back, and enjoy Bob's double stint at the Big Apple. Bite the apple and paradise will be regained, until Eve turns up in a new century... (New Year's Eve?)

*The gentlemen's club
of spalding treasurer*

