

SOUND Though lacking the clarity and sharpness of the very best, well balanced and enjoyable still.

IMAGE A wholly unobstructed, left-centre, front-of-balcony position and smooth, assured camerawork combine to give a top-notch video. Gaps or glitches in the original have been patched in the exemplary style we've come to associate with Mr Cine Projector - i.e. stills seamlessly inserted to enable a full soundtrack - resulting in a film which, of its kind, deserves the highest praise.



RUNNING TIME 93:40 (all songs audio-complete and video nearly so - see above).

PERFORMANCE By mid-April 1998, D had already completed a 32 date tour of North and South America. Now, after a three week breather, up he Bobs again (sorry), playing a one-night loosener in an intimate 1,000 seat club venue before kicking off the next night, in the 20,000 seat GM Arena just down the road, a 40 date summer tour that would take him through a further thirteen North American and European countries. Never mind that, brief months back, he'd been hospitalised and thinking about going to see Elvis, we catch him tonight about a third of the way into a gruelling 110-date year. George Vancouver, who served twice under Cook before going on to etch his own name on the map, and in more places than one - not bad for a Kings Lynn boy! - died 200 years almost to the day before Bob stepped out at The Rage this mid-May night. But, expeditionary though he might have been, old George would have had to go some to keep up with our *musical* expeditionary (*NDH*) Mr D. As for this evening's venue, not only is it intimate, but its small stage is triangular with the band seeming backed into a corner by the crowd and, if performance is anything to go by, playing for their lives. Actually, that pitches it too high: it's not *that* hot, although Bob *is* well in the mood. Being picky, my only reservation is the somewhat B-list set. There again, if he plays a sixties greatest hits show, he's called out for his conservatism and if, as tonight, he eschews most of the old favourites in favour of something a bit different, he has the likes of me muttering "B-list" - so, of course, he can't win. (Though, with no less than five songs from *TOOM*, he still manages to avoid all that album's big four. And would it not be *very* easy to construct a sixties-free dream set??) Oh, well ...

HIGHLIGHTS Great dynamic opener, yet another gorgeous seven and a half minute Baby Blue in the middle, then Love Sick / RDW for a solid finish.

COMMENT Here's part of a contemporary report* which helps explain the lovely pictures we see at the end of Me Babe:

... after more than a decade of attending live shows, I experienced the most touching event I've ever witnessed at a concert. It came during It Ain't Me, Babe. Bob was onstage ... playing to an adoring Vancouver crowd. Standing three-quarters of the way back, I had the perfect vantage point ... to see Bob and to see his fans react to each song.

A diminutive woman worked her way from the very back of the room, a dozen roses in hand, trying to get past the tightly packed crowd, determined to deliver the flowers to their intended. Halted by a metal barricade only a third of the way up, she stood, looking beaten until two men offered to carry her over her first hurdle. Appreciative but still stumped, the two then picked the woman back up and began crowd-surfing her towards the front of the room. As Bob continued with his song, warmly warbling It ain't me, babe, It ain't me you're lookin' for, the rest of the crowd became aware of the quest and started to cheer. The flowers held high above the forty-something woman's head, her body experiencing the only moshing it's likely ever seen, the crowd positioned her head towards the stage. Arms outstretched, the flowers were the first to arrive where Bob stood. He finished the song, went to the woman and held her, thanking her warmly. There was not a dry eye in the house.

So have those Kleenex ready!



THANKS Fruit Cake

STARS Though five is arguable, I'm going with a strong four.

* From **Emotions High At Dylan Club Show** by Denise Sheppard (*Jam!* 14 May 1998)