

D065.su3 BERKELEY, 10 JUNE 1988



In a compelling series of posts headed *You Gotta Hear This Show!*, ER's John B. Stetson recently identified twenty recommended NET concerts, as follows:

- (01) Berkeley, CA, 26 May 1995 ([D418.su](#))
- (02) Ithaca, NY, 15 November 1999 ([D834](#), [D834.2](#))
- (03) San José, CA, 9 May 1992
- (04) Dublin, 27 November 2005
- (05) Dortmund, 15 September 1987 ([D423.su](#))
- (06) George, WA, 18 June 2000
- (07) Brussels, 17 June 1998 ([D364.su](#))
- (08) Warsaw, 19 July 1994
- (09) London, 24 November 2003 ([D280.sse](#), [D318.su](#), [D325](#))
- (10) Fairfax, VA, 22 November 2002
- (11) Philadelphia, 17 November 2001 ([D188.su](#) / [su2](#) / [su3](#))
- (12) Berkeley, CA, 10 June 1988** ([D065.su](#) / [suu](#) / [su3](#))
- (13) NYC Supper Club, 17 November 1993, second show
- (14) Springfield, MA, 28 October 1992
- (15) Poughkeepsie, NY, 4 August 2004
- (16) Berlin, 17 June 1996 ([D776.su](#))
- (17) Madison, WI, 5 November 1991
- (18) Philadelphia, 20 August 1997 ([D521.su](#) / [su2](#))
- (19) West Point, NY, 13 October 1990 ([D543.psu](#))
- (20) Toronto, 20 March 2004

Half, as noted, currently circulate on DVD. Here (used with permission) is what he has to say about Berkeley, 10 June 1988:

It was important for me to come to the bottom of this legend thing, which has no reality at all. What's important isn't the legend, but the art, the work ... If you try to act a legend, it's nothing but hype.

BD to Robert Hilburn, February 1992

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This show stands in stark contrast to what was going on in the fall of 2001. Unlike in the Philadelphia 2001 show above (when Bob had found his voice), in 1988, he is clearly trying very hard. You can hear the effort. It doesn't sound to me as if he trusts the material (that will come in a few years time). Like 1974, there's a lot of shouting and substitution of energy and attack for real connection to the songs. Which doesn't mean it's uninteresting. And actually, I find the strength underneath it all in 1988 (and in 1974) quite moving - I am determined to stand whether God will deliver me or not! It's punk rock in 1988, anti-authoritarian, with God the targeted authority figure (Gates Of Eden and In The Garden being great examples in these early 1988 shows).



Like the 1974 tour, he had spent a handful of years beforehand hiding. Like one of those Old Testament prophets who hid behind a rock afraid of his calling, in the 1980s he concealed himself behind sexy back-up singers, The Heartbreakers, The Grateful Dead and the whole legend thing. And then a conscious choice was made, night after night after night, to stand, stripped of the artifice, to place the focus back first on a more naked self - *how does it feel?* - and then, ultimately, to where it belonged, on the songs, as living, breathing, separate from Bob Dylan, amorphous things.

And let's bring it all back home and start each show off with just about the hardest darn song to sing. (If we're gonna face a fear, let's face it head-on, dammit.) I have tried about a thousand times to sing Subterranean Homesick Blues along with the record

and have never once gotten the words right. And neither does Bob in 1988. He probably hits half of them here in Berkeley, but again, it's moving to listen to the attempt in a context of what's going on here as Dylan wrestles with angels. Joey, here, is god-awful. But heard as a self-portrait in 1988 context it is at least somewhat interesting. Then the show really starts to hit. Absolutely Sweet Marie is a blast-off, all Ramones and The Clash. Watching The River Flow? *Not anymore - I'm back* is the subtext, and it's a joyous romp. Masters Of War works wonderfully, garage-band style, especially in Berkeley, which still vibrates with the energies of the anti-war height-of-Dylan's legend 1960s. The acoustic set is lovely, particularly the gorgeous Lakes Of Pontchartrain, which has received a million plays on my portable unit. The spine of NET 1988 is formed by the traditional songs: Eileen Aroon, Lakes Of Pontchartrain, Trail Of The Buffalo. They ground each concert, are nightly highlights and, interestingly, are delivered with a subtlety, nuance and care lacking from many of Bob's own compositions.

The appropriately selected San Francisco Bay Blues is delightful. The times are, of course, a-changin' once again, and are accompanied by a lovely rendition of that legendary song. But it is In The Garden and Gates Of Eden that knock my socks off, and where the spirit of punk plays out with magnificent force. Gates Of Eden in particular is a must listen (though maybe it's even better a few days later at Park City). Thunderous drums, GE Smith-driven guitar and steroid vocals - it stands defiantly and determinedly, with purpose, clarity, and punk conviction. "Take that, God! I'm gonna play these songs!" Listen to Gates Of Eden at Berkeley in 1988 enough times and it will tell you everything that's happening in 1988.

Maggie's Farm ends these early 1988 shows, declaring independence from the legend that's "nothing but hype" (and, in a way, from the audience, or from his idea of the corner he's allowed himself to be painted into). As a side note, Neil Young plays on the second electric set, but, for the life of me, I can't really tell. Is that him all Gordon Lightfooty in the distance on Gates Of Eden? Anyway, it seems like his presence adds some figurative electricity at least.

Mentioned recently in the bootleg thread, the Denver show is also terrific and is a spectacular soundboard recording. I like the Berkeley show a little better, especially with that crazy Gates Of Eden and sublime Lakes Of Pontchartrain, but listen to them both (Denver has a beautiful Eileen Aroon). For me, I think that, after Denver, the shows sound less interesting for the most part, with a few great ones scattered here and there. The famous Jones Beach soundboard runs too fast (compare it to the audience recordings) and gives a false sense of adrenaline rush, and the vocals are pitched a half step higher. The Radio City soundboard runs too slow, and the vocals sound a half step lower than they were the rest of the year. I'm not positive about this, but it really does sound like that's what's going on with those two recordings. Enjoy Berkeley - it's an excellent 1988 audience recording.

THANKS JBS

STARS Four

(For John B's take on the other shows on his list, see file Reference (3), pages 78-101.)