

D216.su *SUDDENLY ...*

From [D701.mx1](#) start to [D480.su](#) almost-finish, 1995 was a great Bob year - if not the very best, at least in the shake-up. But for some strange reason he couldn't carry it on and 1996 proved, by his own high standards, a disappointment. The contrast between either of those discs and dreary pro-shot [D006](#) is stark, while execrable nadir [D045.su](#) (never seen it all, never will) is best simply forgotten. And here at Liverpool, first night of two ([D217](#) has some of the second) we find the same truth borne out again. I didn't much like [D216](#) (see review, which also has video details) and though this upgraded audio is assuredly a step up, it still lacks that sharpness, that edge that would lift it above the ordinary - words equally applicable, more's the pity, to D's sporadically engaging but mostly tame verging on torpid performance.



Al Kooper (third DVDyahn screenshot) is in the band, getting ready for the weekend's Prince's Trust extravaganza ([D015](#), [D370](#)). Unlike Kooper, Ronnie Wood appears to have gone on at Hyde Park unrehearsed, which is probably just as well. The added distraction of his charisma / talent-free presence here might just have sunk this sad Scouse soir e altogether.

In at least one observer, Kooper's presence evoked memories of the sixties and the last time (1966) D played Liverpool. Soon after the two '96 gigs, Michael Gray wrote:

The band is one-tenth as good as The Band; Bob Dylan isn't one-tenth as energetic or innovative or communicative or accurate or acute; only the ragged rapture that greets him is greater than it was.

Ironically, now that Dylan has got so much less to say, and cares even less how he says it, he's knee-deep in Lifetime Achievement Awards and disproportionate adoration. This time half the audience comes to both shows, and the Bobcats who descended from all corners of the

land occupy all the front rows; the usual eighteen faces peering up at Bob's (how very dispiriting it must be for him). They spend the whole show on their feet, whooping at every number in the usual ritual way, regardless of how well or badly Dylan sings it.

There is nothing healthy in this ballyhoo of over-reaction; nothing to tell the Bob Dylan of the 1990s what he knew instinctively 30 years ago; that just one new, thoughtful song, with words unfamiliar to the audience - but fresh and invigorating to their creator - and delivered direct from the calm centre of the artist, would be an infinitely greater treasure and thrill than any number of patchy re-visits to the obvious hits of the past.

But, still a year shy of his *TOOM* renaissance, a largely sixties retro show is - take it or leave it - what we get. A leisurely 8:30 stroll down 4th Street is pleasant (exactly what the song's lyric is not) though *She Belongs To Me* in similar vein makes more sense and the unfiled *Masters Of War* also sounds something like. Otherwise you'll scratch around for highlights.

But, hold on, what about *Yesterday*? What do I mean? Well, as *Getaway* folds, we lose picture and wait in the dark while electrics are exchanged for acoustics. Bob, in the home of *The Beatles* and less than a mile from *The Cavern*, remember, then gives two strums on his Gibson and sings into the mike (still no film) one teasing word:

Yesterday ...

After a bit more of a stage-wait, the show then proceeds with *My Back Pages*. This one word (and that's literally all it is) has resulted in *Yesterday*, which D has never otherwise performed live, being included on this night's set-list by both the *DVDylan* database and *Olof Björner* (though, to be fair, *Olof* does describe it as "only a fragment"). For a similar cover that wasn't, see [D167.su](#) bonus. As for a fully realised *Beatles / Harrison* tribute from D in their city, *Liverpudlians* would need to wait another thirteen years* ...

Finally, look out for the leftie playing a white guitar who appears next to *Watson* towards the end of 4th Street and see if you can name him. If not, the rather strange answer is revealed during *She Belongs To Me* when he appears again.

RUNNING TIME Just under 118 minutes, audio complete, eight songs filmed (*Black Coat* and *Tangled* both front-end cut) plus eight more under stills. Note: if you've an interest in this gig but prefer pics that move, you'd be well advised to pass on [D216.su](#) in favour of video-only compilation [D216.su2](#).

THANKS *Throstle*

STARS Less *Cyrille* and *Robbo* than *Luke* and *Pedro*. Three and a half.

* *Liverpool* 1 May 2009: twelfth song of the night's seventeen is *George's Something* (D's second ever performance of the song - see also [D044.su](#)).