

D299.su2 NYC, 16 OCTOBER 1990

SOUND Five star mean and meaty.

IMAGE You might start to watch this film and think - *déjà vu* - you've seen it somewhere before. That would probably be on [D039.su](#), shot from the same balcony of the same theatre (though a bit further left) the night after this one. Both tapers (possibly the same person?) enjoy a steep but open view down onto the stage - thus good access to Bob and assorted players, though rather less than full face. Though on both nights D wears a hat, this first time (see below) it has no brim and only a modest peak, so doesn't much impede. (Next night's grey fedora - see [D039.su](#) review - is more problematic.) Tonight's camera position is just right of centre stage. Handling, after a few minutes to settle, is consistently fine, heads no problem and picture quality passing good (clean images but muted colours).



RUNNING TIME 74:45, full show

PERFORMANCE Five days into the year's fifth and last tour - 30 US dates through seventeen states in 39 days - and we find Bob playing his second night of five at New York's Beacon Theatre. At the end of this short residency, after more than two years and nearly 250 shows with the band, GE will take his leave, which explains this evening's rotation of guitarists. As well as GE himself, John Staehely and Cesar Diaz (his two immediate replacements, though neither will last very long) both get stage-time to prepare them for what's to come. As for tonight, we open to a band playing Dixie - provocative, you might think, to a house full of Yankees? If so, you'd never know it. We also find a band blasting out some high-octane, adrenaline-fuelled* rock. Staehely in particular seems determined to make his mark (for more of the same, see the distinctly *different* [D026.su](#)) and in the early part of the gig in which he figures, it's all Bob can do to out-sing his swollen sound. Everything, too, is quick-fire and hyper (eighteen numbers in under 75 minutes tells its own story) and most everything - You Go Your Way, Long Black Coat - suffers accordingly. Then, not far into the gig we encounter that rare phenomenon: D actively plugging a new album. With *Under The Red Sky* in the shops just a month, he feeds the crowd three picks from it in succession. But, lest anyone accuse him of - gasp! - *going commercial*, he delivers the first, a no tune, no tale, no point TV Talkin' Song, in Swahili (or was it Urdu?), then, after a passable Red Sky, rams home his message - Stick With The Back-Catalogue, or maybe Gimme A Few More Years - loud if not too clear with Wiggle Wiggle. Yonder bass rumble - the gnashing, perhaps, of Columbia executives' teeth?

We all know that when he straps on his acoustic magic moments may follow, but tonight It's Alright Ma is still too fast - now it's GE driving him on - and it's only with the better Mornings after that a first glimpse of pukka D emerges. He begins this song with some comic business by playing his harmonica while trying to slot it into its rack at the same time. His cussedly bohemian and idiosyncratic ways even after so many years are an endearing marvel to behold. He struggles largely in vain throughout Two Soldiers to get a handle on its tune, then T Man is another hectic dash, less one hand waving free than both legs pumping like Michael Johnson on speed. As Mr Spock might say *It's Bob, Jim, but not as we know it*. Joey has all its mid-part (and so much of its point) gone, but it's at least a neighbourhood song, and immediately followed, in 4th Street, by another. And as we dive back into the sixties for a five song finishing salvo, this hitherto loud but lacklustre gig starts finally to come alive. 4th Street, Watchtower and LARS all withstand the flailing they're given in good shape (AATW, indeed, sounds all the better for it) and after an edgy, less convincing Wind, H61 is a suitably manic way for this rocking, reeling ride of a night to end. While he's on stage, GE dominates, stealing the show, letting everyone know (perhaps Bob most of all) just how hard an act he'll be to follow. The truth of *that* will become apparent soon enough.



COMMENT Amazingly, amidst its maelstrom of snarling guitars, Bob tries to inject into the close of LARS a harmonica break. It doesn't succeed, with his frail peeping notes buried in the electric hail and he soon gives it up. But when was the last time LARS featured a harp break? RAH '66? Certainly it hasn't happened often. And stranger yet, the Hard Rain he'll play tomorrow night will include the only harmonica break I can recall in *that* song *ever*. Seemingly, then, this Beacon run found him in inquisitive, inventive mood, willing to try things whether successful or not.

YASSOU! GS

STARS Four, though if made to choose between this from the 16th or D039.su from the 17th, I'd go with the latter.

* Well, *something*-fuelled, anyway. You know those rock'n'rollers! Whether of significance or not, Baby Blue was introduced next night with this strange dedication: *Anybody here wake up drunk today? Anybody know that feeling? This one's specially for you.*