

D325 LONDON HAMMERSMITH, 24 NOVEMBER 2003



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](#), [D1036](#))
- (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 London Hammersmith, 24 November 2003:

I know, you've already heard this show. So what? Pull it out again. It's that good.

Will Sony ever release a NET show in the bootleg series? I don't imagine they ever will, and I don't see any of these shows selling well. The question for me is, do I really want Sony to release any of these shows? This secret little world is partly interesting because it remains a secret. Stumbling upon ER's A-Z archive some years ago was like being handed a red pill. And one of the first shows I listened to after hearing some of that incredible gospel stuff was this 2003 London concert. Hammersmith is a weird and wonderful trip down the rabbit hole, an invitation to join a small party in a world in which Floater and Jokerman alternate on an eternal soundtrack. Dylan's wearing a *World Gone Wrong* hat and pouring tea. And from the opening of Drifter's Escape through the encore standards, this becomes a touchstone not just for 2003, but for this vast caravan of a will-powered wagon trail that began way back in the late 1980s.



About four or five of these tracks I'd consider first ballot NET Hall of Fame takes - a deliciously enthusiastic Jokerman, a Million Miles featuring fantastic guitar give-and-take between Koella and Campbell and vocals that remind me of a review I read somewhere about this show - that Dylan is *singing like a starving man at a smorgasbord*. Dear Landlord features a piano that seems darker and deeper than the bright plonks of 2002. And then there is this fantastically twisted and wily Floater. But the entire rest of the show is a freakin' blast. Fractured fairy tale versions of Girl From The North Country and The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll. Cry A While, High Water and Summer Days are showstoppers. Tough Mama, You Aint Goin' Nowhere - it's set list heaven. But even the regular encore (Freddy Koella's nightly playground) is worth hearing here for Dylan's thoroughly engaged vocals - a snarling Cat's In The Well transitions right into a raucous Rolling Stone (rapturously received - the crowd knows it's a special night). Watchtower ends and it's time to hit play again, returning to Drifter's Escape. (Change Places!)

And out of nowhere, halfway through this show, Romance In Durango, last played in 1976, word-perfect (lyrics on the piano somewhere?) that, interestingly, for the first

time ever, circles back in on itself, ending with the line *Hot chili peppers in the blistering sun*. (Change Places!) A brilliant and sorrowful interpretation. And then, of course, on top of everything else, there's Freddy, who totally transformed the sound of this band (but that's for another discussion). Lots of harp, violin - everyone's playing together in spirit.

But it's the vocals - Dylan ravenously chewing and spitting these words out. I remember one night playing the CD of this show in the kitchen while my wife and I washed dishes. Neither a Dylan fan or hater, my wife generally prefers the more hymn-like prayers - Lay Down Your Weary Tune, Every Grain Of Sand, Let Me Die In My Footsteps. But at the end of this concert's Million Miles, she turned to me and exclaimed, "Jesus, he ripped the sh*t outta that!" Needless to say, Mrs. Stetson got some extra attention that night. (Talk about a hungry man at a smorgasbord.)



D325: grainy close-ups ...

THANKS JBS

STARS [D325](#) is not the best way to revisit Hammersmith 24 Nov 2003. Try, rather [D280.sse](#) or [D318.su](#). Three stars.

NOTE Though the catalogue includes four separate films ([D280](#), [D318](#), [D325](#), [D1036](#)) of this special show, none is complete and the only one that is nearly so ([D325](#) - fifteen of seventeen songs) appears not to have been sound-upgraded. As with Wembley, 17 October 1987 ([D567](#) etc), a sound-upgraded reconstruction of this concert from the four source part-films would be a project well worthwhile. Anyone?

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