

Initial magic of Dylan stays sweet in au

By Kim Wilt

It seems very strange to me that I should be writing a piece on my feeling about Bob Dylan, and a comparison of the 1974 and 1978 concert tours, when it was only five years ago this fall that I first heard of the man. . . legend. . . poet. . . what-ever.

Still, I can remember a weekend of

beautiful, crisp October days, lazily spent, filled with the excitement of a new discovery. I had gone to Grand Island to visit a friend who had recently moved there with her family. Barb and I were close—best friends, shocked that we had been separated. If I could have chosen someone to share the experience of hearing Bob Dylan for the first time, I could not have chosen better.

Imagine you're fourteen, a shy sophomore in high school, and not at all sure you liked it. You buy a Bob Dylan album, because you like Joan Baez, and you have some vague notion that the two are connected.

"I was going to buy you this for your birthday," I told Barb. "Well, why don't we buy it now, and see what it's like," she said. If we didn't like it, we thought, we could always return it.

It was *Dylan's Greatest Hits, Vol. II*. We didn't want to start out with an album which had no songs on it that we knew. *Greatest Hits* had few that we knew—or thought we knew. We weren't prepared for what we heard—how could we have been?—and it took a while for the songs to sink in.

That weekend remains clearly in my mind, though. It was beautiful weather outside, and we spent most of our days poking around Grand Island. Come sundown, though, we'd rush home with excitement, that increased each day, to put the album on her brother's record player, and go into that trance-like daze that we relished so much.

Created images

I can remember a fire in the basement fireplace—the only light, flaring up and dying, and *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* asking its questions and answering itself. Barb was on the floor wrapped in a blanket and I was sitting on the brick ledge that the fireplace was built on. I guess you could say we were stunned. We had never before heard a song that created such images in our minds, or stayed with us so long and refused to go away.

I played *All I Really Want To Do* so many times, over and over, trying to write down all the words, that Barb went upstairs in disgust. "Mighty Quinn"—I didn't know he wrote that!, "My Back Pages"—what did he mean by that? "Memphis Blues Again"—"I bet he was on drugs when he wrote that," I told Barb. "He sounds really spaced out."

I went home from Grand Island with a head full of quotes and the beginnings of a new way of looking at the world.

It was not a month later that the 1974 tour was announced—the first one in eight years, the one that put Dylan on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek*, that earned him a request for an interview (denied) with Walter Cronkite and the one that so many people could not get tickets for.

He chants, doesn't he?

I got tickets. I went. I called my mother in the hospital, where she was recuperating from a gall-bladder operation and told her that I was going—told, not asked. Pretty nery for a fourteen-year-old kid, but I think my parents understood more than I gave them credit for, even though my father remarked, while I was listening to "Visions of Johanna", "He doesn't sing, he chants, doesn't he?"

I had a friend who lived 60 miles from Denver, and after some phone calls, and letters, it was agreed that I would travel by bus to her town, and the two of us would go to the Denver concert together. The only problem remaining was that of obtaining tickets. People began telling me that all tickets were sold out, that I was crazy for trying—and why did I want to go anyway? I was in grade school in the 60s,

when Dylan was at his "peak."

Well, we got the tickets, the least expensive ones, but who cared? I left on a Greyhound, rode all night, slept only two hours for fear I would miss the stop, but again, who cared?

Not me, I was still surprised to find myself actually going.

I can remember sitting in the coliseum, eating Arby's sandwiches, and talking nervously. I remember the lights dimming, and dropping my potato cake into the paper sack, and never thinking about it, or any other food, again. I remember his voice—so loud, and raw, and full of energy and the charged-up excitement that was reflected back at him by the crowd.

I took bits of notes during the concert—just to be able to remind myself later. I looked at those notes, recently. They say things like "I feel right at home, like I was in his living room," and "I feel like I'm finally where I belong."

My friend and I wrote down every song he played, with start around the best ones. "Like A Rolling Stone" has stars around it, so does "It Ain't Me Babe."

None measured up

Afterwards, back at home, there was no concert that ever measured up, for me. I turned down the chance to go to concerts, just because I knew I would be disappointed. Since then, I have learned to attend concerts, and accept them for what they are—entertainment—but the hope always remains that Bob Dylan will walk onstage, an unannounced surprise guest.

We danced in the aisles when he played "Like A Rolling Stone." We stood up and cheered when he wailed "It Ain't Me Babe". When he left the stage at the end, we lit up the stadium with stars of lit matches and lighters—knowing that he would come back. I have never been able to tolerate the practice of holding up lit matches at concerts ever since, because I was at the original, the place where it started.

Now, imagine you're nineteen, a college junior, and another close friend of yours has just moved away. By now, you have collected 11 Dylan albums, including a bootleg one, sent to you by an understanding friend. Your parents, your husband, your friends, all know you are tied to Dylan in some invisible way, at least in your own mind.

What do you do when you find out he's actually coming to Omaha, in a few months? When you've been hearing how terrible *Street-Legal* is, even though you like it? When nobody seems terribly excited about it this time? Do you refrain from going, thinking that this time can never measure up to last time, that you're bound to be disappointed?

Maybe if you're a purist, you do. Maybe if you don't want to run the risk of your memories being shattered, you stay home.

Dylan is coming

But for me, it was just that Bob Dylan was coming in concert, and I was going to go see him. Nothing more. It was just like last time, and it was also very different from last time. It was the same—I was shaking so hard, I couldn't hold the binoculars to my eyes. It was different—I hadn't had to travel five hundred miles, and it was less like a pilgrimage. It was the same—his voice sounded the same, he played almost the same songs, I felt at home, at ease and yet terribly nervous. It was different—he had a different band, he was four and a half years older, and probably in a completely different frame of mind.

I could see him better this time. I had the most expensive seats I could buy. Peering through the binoculars, I thought I could see a smile, some kind of enjoy-

