

## arts/entertainment

## Dylan, audience 'bored'; fans shout for old songs

By Kim Wilt  
Entertainment Editor

"He is now to be among you at the calling of your hearts, Rest assured this troubadour is acting on his part. . ."

(Paul Stookey)

"Jesus was a troubadour," Bob Dylan told the ambivalent Omaha crowd at the Omaha Orpheum Theater Saturday night. And Dylan the troubadour made way for Dylan the rock-gospel singer, complete with acoustic and electric guitars, and the harmonica solo.

### concert review

The crowd did not seem to be able to decide whether it approved of, disapproved of, or was merely bored by the "new" Dylan.

Cries of "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Positively Fourth Street" were met by silence from the singer, who always has preferred to say what he has to say through his music. Instead, he and his band, which included four female back-up gospel singers, turned out song after song from *Slow Train Coming*, and when that source of inspiration ran dry, he turned to newer religious songs. He sang of being "saved, washed on the blood of the Lamb," and thanked Jesus musically over and over again for his salvation.

The show began a half-hour late, with a bright spotlight on an empty stage. Those who expected Dylan to come strolling out, acoustic guitar in hand, were surprised by the sight of a woman wearing jeans and a sequined red shirt.

#### Shouts interspersed

"I want to tell you a story," she began. But it was not the story the audience wanted to hear. As she continued telling

the tale of an old woman trying to take a train to visit her hospitalized son, she was greeted with shouts of "get off the stage!", "we want Dylan," and a sarcastic "praise the Lord!"

The story, which ended with the old woman being allowed to ride the train because "Jesus has your ticket," was followed by the entrance of three more women.

The four sang gospel songs, eventually drawing applause for their searing singing.

When he finally appeared, opening the show with a rocking version of "You Gotta Serve Somebody," nobody seemed to care much about what he was singing; the legend, live, was enough—at least for the first few songs.

#### "Better leave"

The members of the audience who were waiting for the old songs and voicing their discontent would have done better to have remembered the words of "Desolation Row": "You're in the wrong place, my friend; you'd better leave."

Dylan's conversion to Christianity is obvious, to say the least. Born a Jew in the Iron Range country of northern Minnesota, he is apparently sincere and dedicated in his new faith.

Religious images are not new to his works—"All Along the Watchtower" contains strong references to the Old Testament. And the entire *John Wesley Harding* album, of which "Watchtower" is a part, has been described as a travelogue of religious death and rebirth—13 years before *Slow Train Coming*.

The new songs were sometimes unknown, occasionally stirring—especially inspired versions of "When You Gonna Wake Up" and the album's title song—and always Christian.

Dylan did not interact much with the audience, except for telling them he would like to do an encore, but "we have to be in Cincinnati."

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Bob Dylan

## Dylan leaves scalpers cold

By Casey McCabe

The warnings had been out for some time. If you expected to see the old Bob Dylan, or thought he wasn't taking his "born again" Christianity seriously, don't show up for his concerts—you will be disappointed.

The effects of the "new Dylan" publicity became immediately apparent. Working with a "surprise announcement" style of promotion, Concerts West Productions announced Friday, Jan. 18, that tickets

would go on sale Monday for two Dylan performances the coming Friday and Saturday in Omaha's Orpheum Theater.

The typical clamor and rush for tickets that always precedes Bob Dylan happened again in Omaha. But when the smoke cleared there were still a few hundred tickets available in the ornate 2,500 seat auditorium. More than a year ago, a Dylan show in the 11,000 seat Civic Auditorium produced the fastest sellout in Omaha history.

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## Comedian Walker warms audience with laughter

By Scott Kleager

Jimmy Walker, primarily recognized as J.J. Evans from the television series "Good Times," not only warmed up the night but also made it clear exactly who he is and what he really does for about 300 people Friday in an hour of comedy in the Nebraska Union ballroom.

"It's sort of like being a boxer, you've got to come to every gig and try to blow them out, otherwise you lose credit. Some people, because they're on a TV show, are supposed to have an act. They go out on stage and they're terrible. I've always had an act and I've always been great, but most people don't know that."

Stereotyped reactions seem to haunt him whenever he performs live, and Friday night was no exception. Toward the end of his show, one woman asked the inevitable, "Will you say dyno-mite?"

#### Dyno-mite all night

"My main problem with touring is that people really don't know exactly what it is that I do," Walker said. "It's like: 'what's he going to do, just say dyno-mite all night or what?'"

The woman's request was left for someone else to do.

The audience was receptive, though, and Walker obviously was well-prepared. He said working as a stand-up comedian takes a lot of ego building before any show, which helps tremendously in confidence of delivery.

"This may sound egotistical, but I think (before a show) that I'm very good and if they can speak English I can take them."

Walker hasn't always been a joker. He began, as a college journalist writing for the City College of New York student newspaper.

"I was writing some funny stuff. One

day a guy walks up to me and says, 'gee, this stuff's pretty funny, you look funny, you should get up and do it!'"

He moved shortly thereafter to The Improvisation in New York. The transition from writing to performing was an easy one for him because it's "something I do well".

#### Brenner helps

Eventually, David Brenner, a friend and co-worker went to Jack Paar and said 'I got this guy who I think's pretty funny. You should put him on your show.' And Jack said, 'okay we'll go down and take a look at him.' So they used me for the show.

## Walpurgisnacht '80 like organized disco

By Colleen Tittel

Most orgies are fun, and this year's Walpurgisnacht celebration was no exception.

But while the magic at this 20th century version of a "witch's orgy in the mountains" was certainly that of revelry and close body contact, its scope was confined, not to a mountain, but within the walls of the Nebraska Union.

Most of the building was wall-to-wall celebrants, so setting out to travel to the next spectacle was like entering a conga line. You went where the crowd took you, having fun on the way.

Painted faces and strange hairdos loomed into view with every few steps. Some of the apparitions wore bright costumes and hats.

Yes, like a disco, but a lot more organized.

Early in the evening, a procession of red-robed, cowled specters, some wearing dark glasses, entered the flow of traffic

From there Walker did several "Rowan and Martin" specials and from those performances he landed the part of J.J. in "Good Times". He seemed undecided on whether the series was beneficial to his career.

"What 'Good Times' did was financially put me in a good position. Creatively it put me in a horrible position."

Even though he wrote his own material for the character of J.J., he felt unhappy with the show toward the end. Its eventual canceling was because "our internal strife hurt the show too much."

Walker said he would like to tour more colleges and work as a headliner in Las

Vegas. He is, instead, currently acting in the television show "Bad Cats," even though he says that he despises filming.

"I hate film. Filming is the most boring part. . . it's too long, it's tedious, it's tacky and it's no good. But, let's face it, there's no big clamor to have Jimmy Walker come to people's nightclubs, colleges, Vegas, whatever."

It's because he isn't doing what he likes to do that he says he doesn't know how long he'll continue to be in the entertainment business. He is not pleased with the direction his career is going.

"The respect I get creatively and professionally in this business is at such a low level that, for me, it's not worth it."

and weaved its way across the main lounge. The robed ones stared, unsmiling, unspeaking, at those they met.

#### Somber stare

"Hi, Nancy!" a middle-aged man called to one young member of the procession. She turned silently and fixed him with a somber stare. Those watching chuckled delightedly, and the man tried not to appear flustered.

Down the hall, a young man with his face painted orange and green looked at a program leaflet, his hair bound above his head and combed straight up like a cockatoo's comb.

There was something to see everywhere. If the belly dancer proved too exhausting to watch, downstairs a kilted bagpiper drew large crowds.

In the center ring of the main lounge, early in the evening, folk dancers stomped their way into another time and place. The women, their hair braided as peasants, wore pink, orange or chintz skirts. The

men were dark, dressed in tailored white outfits, and boots.

#### Table tennis

On the other side of the room, away from the dancers, two young men competed at table tennis. The commentator, a puckish, bespectacled man holding a microphone, shifted excitedly from one foot to the other and talked nonstop about the game and the players, occasionally drawing laughter from the applauding crowd.

Upstairs, when applause died down for rope twirler Joan Wells' last performance that evening, she escaped through the crowds into an empty conference room without losing or mangling either her red rodeo hat or her rope case.

Perspiring, she opened her rope case and removed a small blue thermos.

"It's just water," she said. "Sometimes it's not very accessible." She performs for rodeos and wild west shows, she said, and is a Guinness record holder, having completed 187 successive "Texas skips."