

Dylan Back in the House, Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

I know, I know. Several years ago, after a particularly desultory Dylan concert, my 6th, I essentially swore him off, but for a particularly difficult reason: I felt he was not playing enough of his great hits, and was playing ones that anyone else would kill to have written and sung, but that did not fulfill what I have evolved is the “unwritten social contract” between entertainers and their fans. I felt then, and still do, that these giants in their field can pick their songs with any design, as long as they expose us to and share with us a fair range of their repertoire. I wrote about this in May, 2015, and I had as much feedback on these views as I have ever occasioned, ranging from, “If you love them, you should be happy with any choices they make” to “Dylan is *pasado*, and his early work is great, but he is old and cranky, and if you don't like his decisions, stop going to see him,” with all the possible points on the issue. <http://lawofrockandroll.com/cgi-bin/rockandroll/jump.cgi?ID=127;v=PDF;fname=/King%20Bob%20Approximately--Michael%27s%20Rock%20and%20Roll%20Posse.pdf>

But like the old firehouse dog whose ears perk up each time the engine goes by, I heard he was playing more old songs on his “Never Ending Tour,” an aptly-named sojourn that could be his nickname, as it approaches 3000 shows since 1988. So I checked out the setlists, and immediately bought tickets for his Sugar Land show, at the suburban venue, Smart Financial Center, where I saw the Moody Blues earlier this year. Easy access, pretty good parking, great seats and sightlines, at very reasonable prices, and a wonderful evening.

Here is what he and his stripped-down band played, in just under two hours:

1. Things Have Changed
2. It Ain't Me, Babe
3. Highway 61 Revisited
4. Simple Twist of Fate
5. Cry a While
6. When I Paint My Masterpiece
7. Honest With Me
8. Tryin' to Get to Heaven
9. Scarlet Town

10. Make You Feel My Love
11. Pay in Blood
12. Like a Rolling Stone
13. Early Roman Kings
14. Don't Think Twice, It's All Right
15. Love Sick
16. Thunder on the Mountain
17. Soon After Midnight
18. Gotta Serve Somebod

Encores:

19. Blowin' in the Wind
20. Ballad of a Thin Man

There are several things that struck me about Dylan, my own tastes, and how great rock and roll can be even when the world is going to hell. I saw him on the 14th (last Sunday), the night after he had played a casino in Thackerville, Oklahoma, the [Global Event Center at WinStar World Resort, which](#) followed the night before, in a Tulsa casino.

I write this on Saturday October 20, less than a week after the show, and after tonight, he will have performed 6 shows in 7 days, including Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and three in Florida. And all of these are replicated throughout the tour. He averages over 100 gigs a year, for many years. After all, he is 77 years old.

Because I adore the music, but also am interested in the business of this field, look for a moment at his tour website, which shows exactly which songs he is singing overall:

<https://www.setlist.fm/stats/bob-dylan-1bd6adb8.html?tour=3bd6d010> My point is that he IS singing his great hits, and over time, they constitute the bulk of his performances. That night 3 years ago was an aberration, and I should have known he was giving us his best, as no one could fill up that many seats in that many venues without fulfilling his part of the covenant. Bob, I apologize, and I'm not worthy.

Speaking on his greatness, since I last saw him, he went out and won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Of course, being Dylan, he didn't show up in Stockholm to receive the award. (No doubt, he was on tour at some casino.) But he did lay down some tracks on his influences for his acceptance, and I have listened to this broadcast dozens of times, and find it fascinating each time, especially his early roots. Listen for yourself, and then go buy one of his new bootlegs or any one of his albums, and just think about how lucky we are to have such a wonderful artist as he: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TlcPRlau2Q>

Notwithstanding the politics swirling around, on this homefront, life is good. Coming up soon: Stephen Stills and Judy Collins on campus, Damien Rice in Santa Fe, Van in Las Vegas (2 nights, which I have never done), and the Zombies in Houston. I continue to be a lucky boy.

Michael, Houston, October 10, 2018







