

Dylan and Friends Drift Along on Bus Tour

There had been rumors that Bob Dylan would tour in 1975, with guitarist friend Bob Neuwirth, Ronco Blackley, star of the movie "Nashville," and some tour mates of folk times past, Joan Baez and Ramblin' Jack Elliott, the cowboy from Brooklyn. Well, the tour happened, starting in "America's home town," Plymouth, Mass., in a 1,600-seat hall and ending, 22 cities, 30 concerts and five weeks later, in a December benefit concert for imprisoned Rubin "Hurricane" Carter in New York's 20,000-seat Madison Square Garden.

Roger McGuinn, ex-Byrd, appeared as a guest at the first concert and stayed through the whole "Rolling Thunder Revue." Joni Mitchell appeared as a guest about halfway through the tour and stayed for the rest. Such persons as Gordon Lightfoot, Arlo Guthrie, Robbie Robertson, David Blue, Mimi Fari-

na and a Cherokee medicine man named Rolling Thunder dropped in for a time. Poet Allen Ginsberg and gypsy violinist Scarlet Rivera were along. Muhammad Ali, Roberta Flack and Richie Havens took part in the finale.

It had been a year in which the Rolling Stones and the Who had made big tours. Dylan's tour was smaller, traveling in buses, in the Northeast and Canada, about half the time playing small halls. But still it was important. Dylan, along with the Beatles, is known as the most influential voice in pop music of the 1960s and anything he does is noteworthy. This time, he was singing "Hurricane" among his new songs, an outcry against injustice and a return to that concern for Dylan, who lately has been writing in the good-time country vein.

The night before the big benefit, the Rolling Thunder Revue had performed at the

New Jersey prison where former middleweight fighter Carter currently is serving a sentence on conviction of murdering three persons in a Patterson, N.J., bar in 1966. Dylan is convinced of his innocence.

Before the concert, various performers, though not Dylan, spoke about the tour. Dylan's wife, Sara, and son, Jessie, 9, were with him at the prison.

Joan Baez had had a tour of her own scheduled for November and December, but it was "irresistible" to cancel that and go on tour with Dylan. "We're an incredibly happy family," she said. "Everybody put away big egos; we knew we couldn't live that way." Traveling with her was her son, Gabriel.

Joni Mitchell, not into protest, said, "I came along on the tour for the magic and enjoyment and interaction

between writers and musicians. I couldn't think of a more interesting place to be at the time."

Roberta Flack, who performed only at the prison and the benefit, said, "I think this is the greatest chance any of us will have to show our real artistic concern. Bob Dylan and Joan Baez could sell out the Garden but by being here today I'm able to say what I feel myself about the Carter case."

Ginsberg, who read two poems, at the prison, to much applause, on most shows sang along on the finale and played finger cymbals. He said:

"There was a sense that protest was dead, that the artistic community was exhausted and indifferent. This concert is a symbol of 1970s energy and some kind of community. It's the beginning of another attempt to deal with the problems of America, the unresolved evils and hassles and corruption."