

Dylan skips his own party but it was still star-studded

By BRUCE KIRKLAND
Star staff writer

Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue qualified as one of the year's outstanding musical events as it rolled into Maple Leaf Gardens last night for 4½ hours.

It also launched one of the year's most incredible collections of stars as the musicians and their friends arrived at the Harbour Castle Hotel to launch an all-night party.

The hospitality suite swirled as the excited musicians, their guests and delighted hangers-on munched salads, meat, chicken and bubbling pots of chili while liquor and beer was served — at Dylan's expense.

The faces were a nostalgia trip into America's and Canada's musical history — Joan Baez, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Roger McGuinn (remember the Byrds when he was known as Jim McGuinn?), Mick Ronson, Bobby Neuwirth, David Clayton-Thomas, Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins, guru-poet Allen Ginsberg and a host of lesser lights.

GRABBING BITE

One of Dylan's six children, all of them travelling with him on the two-month folk-rock caravan soon to climax in New York, wandered through to grab a bite of food and mix with his father's friends and admirers.

They all waited for Dylan — the mystique surrounds his name even when old friends such as Baez mentions him — but he didn't show. Nobody knew where he was and still they waited.

"He's stand-offish tonight," said Joni Mitchell, her face emotional under its crown of golden hair.

But Baez explained that Dylan "worked harder" for the Toronto concert and the combined efforts of the 112-member entourage "produced perhaps the best concert we've had in the entire tour."

Sure, you've heard that line before. But from Baez, radiantly beautiful in her

black velvet dress with animation in her dark face, it rang true.

Ironically, last night's show before more than 16,000 people, was not sold out. Nor is tonight's repeat performance, a fact that has left the usual ticket scalpers outside the Gardens' doors a little desperate and bewildered.

The regular tickets cost \$3.83 each. One scalper was trying for \$30 for a good pair just before the show started at 8.15 p.m. Yet another scalper sold one for \$3 and regular tickets were still available at the Gardens' office.

Alongside the scalpers were a bustle of other hawkers flogging \$2 Dylan T-shirts and at the door the police searched for bottles.

Inside, the atmosphere was electric with anticipation. There were few unruly people as the audience, including pop singer Elton John and poet Irving Lay-

ton, waited in hushed reverence for the folk messiah of the 1960s and the musical magician of the 1970s — Dylan.

Baez said at the party that it was that hushed feeling that made Dylan do that extra work.

"Dylan really had to work tonight because nobody screamed over him. He came out in that hat and makeup (whiteface with a bright red nose) and they didn't recognize him at first."

"Then he had to reach a new high to ensure the audience did... And it excited us."

She herself felt "spiritually touched."

As the ebb and flow of stars passed through the party, others were less touched than kind of slappy-high.

Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins, the Arkansas-born clown prince of Toronto rock 'n' roll, laughed deep in that guttural release of emotion

he uses when he's really flying.

"That concert? Not bad for a bunch of poets."

He had led some of the groups on the pilgrimage to the hotel on a rented Toronto Transit Commission bus.

Another gang of people arrived in Dylan's bus and trailer.

The lobby was a blaze of lights as Dylan's camera crew shot another pick-up scene for his tour movie (that explains the extreme makeup on stage—a touch of Dylan humor).

Hawkins sauntered into camera range and a mock interviewer with a sickly-sweet voice begged him to tell her he was "a star — somebody famous."

"I'm Bob Dylan." The crowd roared with laughter. Ronce Blakley, one of Dylan's featured singers in the revue, sidled up to Hawkins and she was announced as "Gordon Lightfoot in drag." More laughs.

More movie footage was to be shot today in Toronto and at a ranch where Dylan plans to ride after getting up late.

He also has to fight off the cold he had contracted elsewhere on the tour—as does Joni Mitchell, whose valiant voice last night showed signs of strain.

And he must have other plans, too, because last night he sent a messenger to the hotel cashier to get a \$2,000 cash advance on his Master Charge card for spending money. The messenger went back in the morning—because the hotel didn't have that much money on hand.

• Review of Dylan's show, page F9.

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—Star photo by Colin McConnell
PERFORMERS Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins and Joan Baez were among hundreds of stars who attended an all-night party for Bob Dylan at Harbour Castle Hotel. It followed Dylan's appearance at Maple Leaf Gardens before 16,000 fans.

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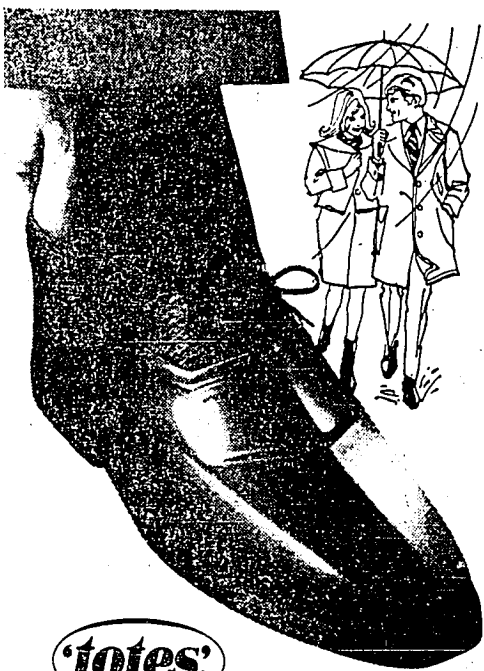
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