

Rolling Thunder Revue

'A concert and a half'

By PAUL BETT
KJ staff writer

More than 7,100 Maine people really had something to be thankful for Thursday.

They had a rare treat Wednesday night when the Rolling Thunder Revue roared into the Augusta Civic Center, and it was a once in a lifetime opportunity for most.

The concert, in short, was super.

It featured Bob Dylan, who was making his first Maine appearance since 1965 when he played a show at Orono, Joan Baez, who was on her first visit to the state, and a few surprises.

There was something for just about everybody—a lot of folk, gobs of country and tons of rock in various shapes and sizes.

It started at 8 sharp when the back-up group took the stage. In a way, the revue was an upbeat version of an old-time minstrel. Each performer did a solo. They all took turns strutting their stuff before the audience. They played country, folk, a few trucker songs and rock, both hard and soft.

They seemed to be trying to strike a chord with the audience, trying to find a common ground from which to start as they played amid a huge pile of speakers and banks of colored lights.

The huge audience, the second concert sellout in the three-year history of the Civic Center, seemed subdued during the early going.

It appeared as if they didn't know what to expect. There were a lot of musical appetites to appease. Most of the audience were in their early to mid-twenties. But, there also were a lot of kids and a few who were well into middle age.

The audience got an early surprise. Joni Mitchell, who swore off concert appearances about a year ago, was there. There was thunderous applause. Everyone stood. "Welcome to Maine, Joni," someone hollered.

She performed two songs by herself. It was just her and her guitar. She said she had written one song the day before.

Next came rambling Jack Elliot, wearing a ten-gallon hat and buckskin chaps. He played country, real old country. He yodeled through "Muleskinner Blues and the audience loved it. He also sang an old Woody Guthrie song about the Columbia River's Grand Coulee Dam. It brought the house down.

Dylan's entrance was unobtrusive. There was no announcement, no fanfare.

Suddenly, he was just there, jamming with the other musicians. For a few seconds, the audience was caught unaware.

When they realized who it was up there on the stage, they began clapping, whistling and stamping their feet. Dylan is not what one would expect. He's a slightly

built man. He stood hunched over the microphone, his legs wide apart, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet as he got into the music.

He wore scruffy blue jeans, a white shirt, and a long black vest.

A brown felt hat, which sported a red feather, was pulled nearly down over his eyes.

He played on and off for two solid hours. He began with some of his old and new rock. He jammed with the group and a few times cut loose with long guitar riffs. Every once and awhile, he honked on his harmonica and the audience went wild.

When the revue took a break, a large curtain came down and the house lights went up. When the intermission ended, the house lights went off but the curtain didn't open. For a few seconds, nothing happened. Then from behind the curtain, two people began singing Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind."

The curtain stayed down. It was pure showmanship. The crowd seemed tense. They wanted to see. They wanted to know who it was.

The curtain slowly went up and there they were, Dylan and Baez. The audience was on its feet. The applause drowned out briefly the two voices and then everyone quickly sat down to listen. That's the way it was all night.

There was the hearty ovation and then everyone quickly stopped applauding and hollering and sat down to listen.

Baez and Dylan sang about a half dozen folk songs. Baez went on alone. She did her folk. At one point, everyone left the stage, she put down her guitar and sang without any accompaniment, her voice a mixture of earth and sunshine, as she sang about an all-day woman meeting an all-night man.

She dug the audience and it dug her. Once, she jokingly called them a "bunch of Maineiacs."

The concert lasted until shortly after midnight. The audience stamped for more as the entire troupe closed with, "This Land is Your Land."

But there was no more. The performers were worn out. From behind the curtain, a voice said: "We thank you, that's all for tonight."

The audience, polite throughout the night, stayed that way. They slowly filed out.

"It was unreal," one woman said. "It was a concert and a half."

Everyone was pleased for several different reasons. The audience had been thoroughly entertained. The concert had grossed about \$60,000 and about \$12,000 of that went to the Civic Center.



has more of what you're looking for

Sterns

DOWNTOWN WATERTVILLE

Gift Her Fashionably.



Striped Turtleneck
\$10.00



Clipped By:

c_olo_man_do
Fri, Sep 30, 2022