

# Dylan and Dead are alive and well

By Scott Mervis

**BUFFALO, N.Y.** — The folks in Orchard Park will be talking about this one for a long time. The quiet community outside Buffalo holds Rich Stadium, which Friday was the setting of an historic concert with Bob Dylan, the Grateful Dead and Tom Petty.

Invite them to a party and the Dead take over. On the eve of the concert, Deadheads (the band's reverent following) invaded Orchard Park. The town's six motels were filled, spilling partying, but very mellow campers on the streets and parking lots. There was even a winding line to get inside the corner convenience store. For those few hours, that little town must have held the country's greatest concentration of tied-dyed clothing.

It was a two-day convention, Grateful Dead-style, and what better way to celebrate the Fourth of July than with the Dead's vagabond odes and Dylan's outspoken songs of freedom? It would be easy to write this off as a sojourn into the '60s, but with nearly 80,000 fan(at)ic(s) and some of yesterday's and today's best music, it was too alive to be mere nostalgia. Furthermore, these were people who refuse to let the times define their mood.

The Grateful Dead opened the Buffalo show with two hours of vintage Dead that had the colorful crowd bobbing as one. Joining Dylan and Petty in only four of their 22-cities tour, the Dead winds up with a final concert today in Washington, D.C.

Wearing shorts and T-shirts, the Dead grooved through their slower, churning anthems "Jack Straw" and "Tennessee Jed" as well as Mitch Ryder's "C.C. Rider." The 80,000 cheered at one new song's cry of "We will get by, we will survive."

The Dead came back with a particularly animated second set. "Cold Rain and Snow" found the former falling on the fans. "Fire on the Mountain" was, as usual, the best showcase for Jerry Garcia's sweet guitar licks. After a grinding version of "The Wheel" (a personal favorite) the band tore through "Gimme Some Lovin'," "Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad,"

## In review

"Lovelight," and the flag-waving, yet irreverent "U.S. Blues," Garcia singing "I'm Uncle Sam/ that's who I am/ been hidin' out in a rock 'n' roll band."

Nearly two hours passed before all eyes turned to Dylan who strolled out casually with Petty and the Heartbreakers and an almost unrecognizable version of "Positively Fourth Street." It was interesting to see how Deadheads reacted to music alien to their vibe. The beloved Dylan had no struggle lifting them to the occasion.

He roared out some of his most virulent protest music, like the acoustic "Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" and an electric "Masters of War," both from his seminal second album. His newer material was more pensive, personal music like "I and I," "The Real You At Last" and "When the Night Comes Falling From the Sky," a song of personal victory.

Between Dylan's three stage appearances, Petty took two well-received sets with his Heartbreakers, lending his Dylanesque twang to "Straight Into Darkness," "The Waiting," "Refugee" and others.

Climaxing the concert were Dylan's anthems. At this point Dylan, in black leather pants and vest, began laughing more and joking with the crowd. He and Petty scored with "Rainy Day Women Number 12 and 35," (the crowd enthusiastic about the line "Everybody must get stoned"), "Like a Rolling Stone," a countrified "Blowin' in the Wind" and the finale, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

Although the hits went over best, Dylan would be the first to admit that he is not a stadium rocker. His presence is too elusive and his songs too thoughtful to be played on a football field. Credit Dylan and the fans for not allowing his music to be cheapened by fist-waving and sloganeering.

Following the show, Orchard Park again had its hands full. Fans poured out to the beer-can paved paths as fireworks shot through the parking lots.

Under the rockets' glare stood a Deadhead with a sign, "Need Ride to D.C."



Associated Press

**Tom Petty and Bob Dylan posed together earlier this year to announce their "True Confessions" tour.**