



May 2008

The Donovan Concert: Live in L.A.

(MVD Visual)

This video opens with David Lynch telling us a little about the “great poet” whose “lyrics and music conjure magical feelings,” and whose songs “take us to very special places.” Exactly what I planned to write. The nerve!. A breathy hello by The Man and we’re off to a few of those special places, beginning with “There Is A Mountain.” A few words into the opening, the audience breaks into applause and you catch the start of a smile on Donovan’s face, as if, “Whew! I still have it.”

Several songs in, some vintage photos begin flashing on the backscreen. Donovan’s harmonica opens “Catch the Wind,” followed by that signature tremolo casting us back to the day, if we weren’t there already. With references to Bohemia and Kerouac and “holy plants,” and several black-and-whites of an impossibly young, denim-capped Donovan, we reach 1964, and BOAC trips to India with “four Beatles, one Beach boy, and Mia Farrow.” A few more songs and you’re back in India, and you hear Donovan imitating George Harrison’s Liverpudlian accent: “I could write a verse for that song (“Hurdy Gurdy Man”), Don,” which leads us to tonight’s premiere of the “long lost verse.” Oh, no! You’re not getting it that easily. Watch the DVD.

Other than this verse, there’s nothing musically new in this video, just Donovan singing the same songs that thrilled, inspired and mystified us in the ’60s. It’s not too late for those expectations to come to pass, even today, some 40 years later. What is new is the welcome, enlightening commentary that is woven into the breaks, and the accompaniment by Donovan’s daughter on a few songs, and Mike Love, the aforementioned Beach Boy, also accompanying Donovan near the end of the film.

– Lou Novacheck