ON TOUR

Theodore Bikel

Three or so weeks before a Theodore Bikel concert, the atmosphere in his home changes from the hectic (rather the norm) to the chaotic. The phone rings on the chimes of the bells of a thousand Santas, malcontents threaten to leave their jobs, and all connected with the forthcoming concert—from fans to managers—are suddenly experts on exactly what Theo should sing and say. Not having been around that many artists, I don't know how they behave before a concert, but Theo is the calm rock of Gibraltar watching the sea of迷-ness surround him with quiet contemplation. One suspects that he even wonders who is actually going to perform, himself or all of those extraordinarily concerned people surrounding him.

Because this particular album was to be recorded at a Town Hall concert, the activity was even more intense. Rehearsals were set up at the house with Bill Lee, the fine bass player whose subtle accompaniment adds much to the success of the musical arrangements; Ray Boguslav, an uncommonly gifted guitarist; Mark Abrahamson, Elektra's own esoteric chief engineer and recording supervisor; myself; Theo's secretary, whose prime function was to keep the coffee flowing and the phone interruptions to a minimum; and the calm Mr. Bikel. Rehearsals are studies in immortality: Shoes are left off, coffee cups are emptied and chilled, and I guess most of all a sense of humor prevails with jokes being told that one wouldn't dare tell at Town Hall—good natured jokes, not lacking in a deep respect for the material that is going to be sung. One rehearsal, two rehearsals, three or maybe even four, ideas come in from all over. Some songs are favorites of Theo's, some are sung as a result of many requests, some are "stolen" from one source or another—but then that is the folk singer's way.

The day of the concert arrives and the entourage treks up to Town Hall with every equipment in hand. There are the really important things that one somehow always forgets: scotch tape, eyebrow pencil, panneko makeup, sponges, two or three dress shirts, two or three plain shirts, two ties, one extra suit, capes, three guitars, briefcase, towels, plastic bags, copies of the program, little pieces of paper with requests for encore, and a red pen. It sounds more like a month's safari than a concert, with only the elephant guns missing.

Backstage, guitars are being tuned, the bass is rolling in almost obscuring diminutive Bill Lee—and everyone is trying very hard not to be terribly excited, discussing everything but the concert. Theo, who usually starts off being a clown—telling stories and anecdotes and sharing at each one of us for our reaction, gets quieter and quieter until once almost thinks he isn't there. Harold Leventhal, the producer of the concert featured in this recording, is a mixture of relaxed joviality and efficient organization. And, of course, there is always Jac Holzman, Elektra's guiding force and Theo's personal manager, who defies description. He is the only one not even trying to be casual. He merely pretends.

Then the house lights dim, the audience clams up, and there is a magic moment when all the diverse talents and past activity are fused into a creative experience. An intense white light focuses on a man and his guitar.

A Theodore Bikel concert has begun.

Alice M. Conklin

production supervisor—Jac Holzman
engineering & editing—Mark Adamson
cover design—William S. Harvey
cover photo—George Fisch
record producer—Ray Boguslav
base—Bill Lee

Complete Text Enclosed

This album was recorded at concerts presented by Harold Leventhal at New York's Town Hall and by Folklore Productions (Manuel A. Greenhill) at Boston's Jordan Hall. Elektra wishes to express its thanks to those gentlemen for their generous cooperation.

Theodore Bikel's Other superb Elektra Recordings

E7580: The Best of Bikel. A distillation of the elements which have made Mr. Bikel one of the most original and moving performers of his generation. Includes the hit singles "Dancing in the Streets," "I Walk the Line," and others. [LP $4.50]


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E7582: Songs of the Soviet Union. A moving presentation of traditional and contemporary Jewish songs, including those from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. [LP $4.50]

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E7585: Songs of the New World. A moving presentation of traditional and contemporary Jewish songs, including those from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. [LP $4.50]

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E7587: Songs of the New World. A moving presentation of traditional and contemporary Jewish songs, including those from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. [LP $4.50]

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