



Bonnie Raitt Returns

THE LEGENDARY ARTIST
PERFORMS AT
TANGLEWOOD

There is nobody quite like Bonnie Raitt. The songs that she has performed have touched the lives of so many people—tracks like "Something to Talk About," "I Can't Make You Love Me," "Angel from Montgomery," "Made Up Mind," "Nick of Time," "Just Like That," and many more. She has been described as a voice of an angel and plays the blues like nobody's business. The singer, songwriter, and guitarist whose unique style blends blues with R&B, rock, and pop has earned her 13 Grammys®, but despite the high honors, Raitt is incredibly humble and gracious. In 2023, she walked on stage in disbelief at the Grammy Awards ceremony to receive Best American Roots Song, then Best Americana Performance, and Song of the Year for "Just Like That." "I don't write a lot of songs, but I'm so proud that you appreciate this one," she said. Last December, Raitt was honored at Kennedy Center for 50 years of musical excellence, with Brandi Carlile, Sheryl Crow, Emmylou Harris, Dave Matthews, Keb' Mo', Susan Tedeschi, James Taylor, and Jackson Browne performing songs that she is known for. (See page 36 for a talk with James Taylor.) When we recently spoke, she was in the middle of what she loves most—a string of live performances. She will be making her way back to the Berkshires on Sunday, August 31, to play at Tanglewood.

Anastasia: Bonnie, I was doing a bit of research about your time in the Berkshires. You started playing at Tanglewood in '76, and the last time you were here was a few years ago, in 2022. You also played at the Music Inn earlier than that.

Bonnie: Many, many years ago, the Music Inn was our main gig in Western Massachusetts.

Anastasia: I see that the first time you played was back in 1973 with John Prine. Then in '74 with Mose Allison and with Steve Goodman back in '75, John Lee Hooker in '77, and solo in '78. What a history in the Berkshires! What do you think about when you think about this region?

Bonnie: The fans have always been so incredibly enthusiastic for the kind of music I do and the other artists who were in the Music Inn shows. A high point of our summer touring was to come and play in the Berkshires.

Anastasia: Looking at your setlists from back in '76 at Tanglewood, the songs included "Women Be Wise," "You've Been in Love Too Long," "Love Me Like a Man," "Give It Up or Let Me Go," "I'm Blowin' Away," and "Runaway." Do you still perform those songs?

Bonnie: Oh, yeah. We do a smattering of songs always from the big albums, *Nick of Time* and *Luck of the Draw*, and with 21 albums to draw from, I don't want to forget the fact that those fans came to see me in the early '70s. I always go back and rotate some of songs that are special to them and to me, like "Love Me Like a Man," or "Women Be Wise." "Angel from Montgomery" is one I've played every gig since I met John Prine in '71, so I would never leave that out. But there are way too many albums of songs that people always wished we played, and we just can't get around to all them. We play about 17 songs when we have a strong co-bill, like we're doing with Jimmie Vaughan this time at Tanglewood. He'll come out and do a couple at the end of our

show, which I'm really excited about.

Anastasia: Are you a completely different person now than you were 50 years ago?

Bonnie: I like to look at chapters of my life as everything was part and parcel of how I ended up here at 75. I wouldn't change any of it. So, the core of who I am, in terms of social activism and the music I love, has really stayed the same. And I like to think I'm a wiser and more mature and certainly living a healthier lifestyle than I did in my 20s.

Anastasia: What would you tell your younger self?

Bonnie: Some of the lessons you just have to live, whether they're romantic relationships that you look back and go, "Oh, man, I didn't see that coming." All the relationships I've been in have been wonderful for that time period. And you just out-grow each other, or you move from the East Coast to the West Coast, and you have to break up, like people do when they go away to college. I really wouldn't change too much, including having as much fun as I could after the shows, and traveling with a big band of musicians, and the whole lure of—I don't want to say drugs, sex, and rock and roll—but partying after the show was really fun, just like it is for people who finish the workday and come home at 7 o'clock at night and have dinner with their family and then relax. For us, relaxing is 11 o'clock at night. In my mid-30s, there were lifestyle changes that I needed to make. The things that you got away with or had fun doing in your 20s just don't sit with you as well in your 30s. So, I wouldn't have changed anything sooner as my younger self, but I was glad that I got sober when I was 37. Whatever excuse I had of trying to be a blues mama and keep up that late-night lifestyle and smoke and drink and all that, that sort of went out the window. I was really grateful that I was one of the ones who made it through without killing myself or anybody else.