

CURING THE STADIUM SOUND BLUES

DYLAN, PETTY & THE DEAD

AT RFK STADIUM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

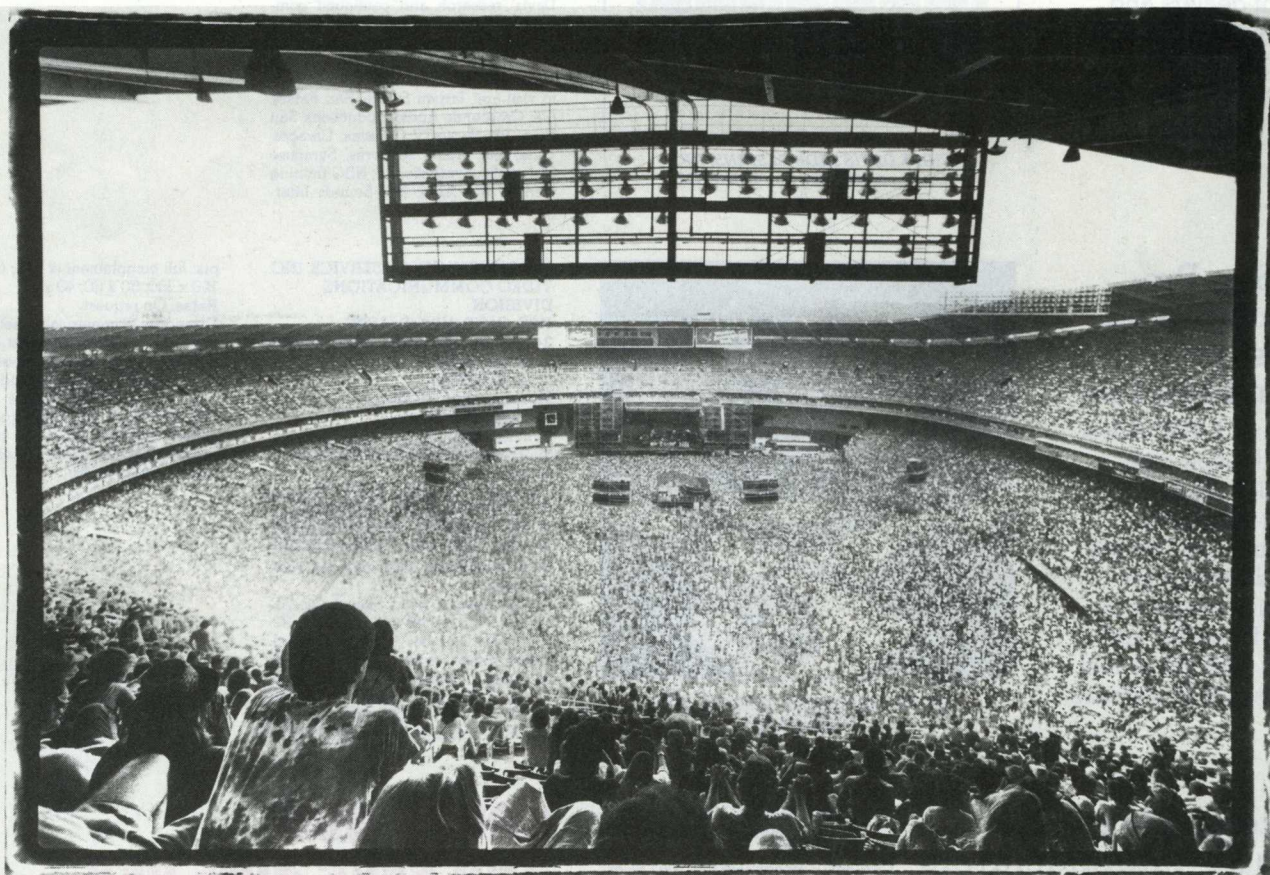


PHOTO: RON DELANY

by Larry Oppenheimer

The sun beat down mercilessly, pushing the mercury over the 100 degree mark inside the stadium. Mounted police cruised the perimeter of the grounds, enforcing the "No Cans, No Glass, No Coolers" provision, as thousands of scantily- but brightly-clad fans milled about consuming a host of liquids and intoxicants of all types. Slowly, the crowd worked its way inside to fill the cavernous area of RFK Memorial Stadium and spend a long, steamy, Washington, D.C. afternoon continuing the activities begun outside (leading hundreds of the more intoxicated and/or less prudent to collapse from heat prostration), roasting its collective flesh to a fiery lobster red, and,

of course, dancing to the sounds of the two supergroups that drew the people out of their air-conditioned comfort in the first place.

The scene described actually took place 13 years ago, when the Allman Brothers Band and the Grateful Dead warmed up for the massive event at Watkins Glen, New York which they staged (along with The Band) later that same summer. (That event drew 600,000, still a record.) However, the description also fits the two shows staged here this past July by Cellar Door Productions which featured Bob Dylan, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, and the Grateful Dead. Despite these similarities, things were not really the same as they were when I so gleefully fried my teenage brain and body all those years ago; and the difference

Overview of RFK from the top deck during Dylan's performance.

was more than the wear and tear that showed on the now middle-aged rock-and-rollers onstage. In the intervening time, the art and science of concert production has advanced by quantum leaps.

Background

Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium was opened in 1961 as D.C. Stadium, and renamed in 1969, a year after Kennedy's assassination. It serves as the home for the Washington Redskins football team, and was used by the Washington Senators baseball franchise until it moved to Texas in 1971. The stadium seats

