



# STEVE GOODMAN PORTLAND '74

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Live from The Civic Auditorium, Portland, OR  
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**"I'** in all alone, in this lonesome city" (from George and Ira Gershwin's "Lady, Be Good") is a poignant lyric for Steve Goodman to open a show in a town where he had never before performed.

But, as you can hear, Goodman isn't alone for long. By the time the last notes of "The Dutchman" ring from Steve's guitar on that Portland stage an hour later, the crowd (most of whom came to hear headliner John Prime) have gone from receptive . . . to responsive . . . to wildly enthusiastic as the short, jovial singer quickly latches onto his audience and never let's go.

This early 1974 performance at the 3,000-seat Civic Auditorium comes at a time of professional turbulence in Steve's career. Despite critical acclaim for his first two albums, Buddah Records was refusing to record and release a third LP while wrangling with him legally to prevent him from pursuing a recording contract elsewhere.

Soon, however, Goodman would be cut loose to become a 5-year inmate at David Geffen's trend-setting Asylum Records, where his next album would be joyfully named for his adopted daughter Jesse. Steve also was about to enter a long period of remission from his leukemia and, with his wife Nancy, add two naturally conceived daughters to his household.

In this show, Goodman seems to sense such good things to come. He is looser here than on most other live recordings, no doubt fueled in part by the pairing with best friend Prime. Throughout his set, Steve laughs easily, at times emitting a childlike, giddy cackle.

For this set, Steve draws the best tracks from his Buddah LPs (including a version of "I Ain't Heard You Play No Blues" that is notable for the simple fact that it is nearly twice as long as the 56-second recorded original) and pulls out two others, "Lady Be Good" and "Paul Powell," that, to this day, still haven't appeared on his many official releases. The real treat comes as he generously laces humor, extended introductions and interchanges with the audience between the tunes.

The zenith of that is his explanation of how he came to write "Lincoln Park Pirates," the citizen-rallying tale of Chicago's nefarious Lincoln Towing Company and its owner, Ross Cascio. Goodman explains that the song's prate motif came to him after watching the 1950 Disney film of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island," featuring actor Robert Newton's idiosyncratic portrayal of Long John Silver. Steve then launches into a 10-second, note-perfect distillation of Newton's buccaneer brogue that delights the audience and, apparently, even Goodman himself.

In the introduction to "Paul Powell," Steve delivers a brief history lesson in the peculiar politics of his home state, during which he notes that "in Illinois, greed is a bipartisan proposition." Later, he confesses he was duped into writing one of his most emotional songs, the anti-war "Ballad of Penny Evans." "I'm pretty gullible. I'm a mark," he says with typical self-deprecation. "People sell me encyclopedias. I'll buy anything once."

With Goodman, of course, the show always comes back to the music, and with all of his stories, professed disorganization and charming modesty, that might be easy to miss. Certainly, Goodman doesn't, however. While there are brief lapses (a hurried, clipped guitar solo in "The Auctioneer" and a sporadic and ineffective tapping on his guitar during "Penny Evans"), his musicianship shines throughout. He caps the concert with a most affecting version of Michael Smith's "The Dutchman," and the audience — and we — are left in awe as the spell is gently broken. Goodman has woven his magic once again, and we are privileged to have been cast under its spell.