

= The Concert in Central Park =

The Concert in Central Park is the first live album by American folk rock duo Simon & Garfunkel , released in February 1982 on Warner Bros. Records . It was recorded in September 1981 at a free benefit concert in Central Park , New York City , where the pair performed in front of more than 500 @, @ 000 people . Proceeds went toward the redevelopment and maintenance of the run @-@ down green space in the middle of Manhattan . This concert and album marked the start of a short @-@ lived reunion for Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel . The concept of a benefit concert in Central Park had been proposed by Parks Commissioner Gordon Davis and promoter Ron Delsener . Television channel HBO agreed to carry the concert , and worked with Delsener to decide on Simon and Garfunkel as the appropriate act for this event . Besides hit songs from their years as a duo , their set @-@ list included material from their solo careers , and covers . The show consisted of 21 songs , though two were not used in the live album . Among the songs performed were the classics " The Sound of Silence " , " Mrs. Robinson " , and " The Boxer " ; the event concluded with a reprise of Simon 's song , " Late in the Evening " . Ongoing personal tensions between the duo led them to decide against a permanent reunion , despite the success of the concert and a subsequent world tour .

The album and a film were released the year after the concert . Simon and Garfunkel 's performance was praised by music critics and the album was commercially successful ; it peaked at number six on the Billboard 200 album charts and was certified double platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) . The video recordings were initially broadcast on HBO , and were subsequently made available on VHS and DVD .

= = Idea and arrangement = =

= = = A concert for the park = = =

New York City 's Central Park , an oasis that functions as the city 's " green lung " , was in a state of deterioration in the mid @-@ 1970s . Though Central Park had been designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962 , at the start of the 1980s , the city lacked the financial resources to spend an estimated US \$ 3 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 to restore or even to maintain the park . The nonprofit Central Park Conservancy was founded in 1980 , and began a successful campaign to raise renovation funds .

In the early 1980s , Parks Commissioner Gordon Davis , responsible for New York City 's green areas , and Ron Delsener , one of the city 's most influential concert promoters , developed the idea of helping Central Park financially with a free open @-@ air concert , under the legal guidance of Bob Donnelly . The city would use profits from merchandising , television , and video rights to renovate the park . Earlier park performances by Elton John and James Taylor showed that this concept could be a success . Davis authorized the project , and Delsener entered discussions with cable TV channel HBO to decide who would perform .

They decided on Simon & Garfunkel , a group that had formed in New York City in the 1960s , and had been one of the most successful folk rock groups through the late 60s / early 70s . Simon & Garfunkel had broken up at the height of their popularity and shortly after the release of their fifth studio album , Bridge Over Troubled Water , which is deemed to be their artistic peak and which topped the 1970 Billboard charts for ten weeks . They had grown apart artistically and did not get along well with each other . In the following eleven years , both continued musical careers as solo artists , and worked together only sporadically on single projects . Garfunkel made brief guest appearances at Simon 's concerts , which were always successful .

Delsener presented the plan to Paul Simon in the summer of 1981 . Simon was enthusiastic about the idea , but questioned whether it could be financially successful , especially given the poor audience attendance of his last project , the autobiographical movie One @-@ Trick Pony . Simon 's confidence had declined and he had sought treatment for depression . He questioned whether he

and Art Garfunkel could work together , but contacted Garfunkel , who was vacationing in Switzerland . Garfunkel was excited about the idea , and immediately returned to the US .

From the promoter 's viewpoint , Simon and Garfunkel were ideal choices . Not only were they likely to draw a large crowd to the concert , they also had roots in the city - both had grown up and gone to school in Forest Hills , Queens . Music critic Stephen Holden pointed out that , unlike artists who had left in pursuit of lifestyles offered by other locales , the two had always been a part of New York City . Both gained inspiration from the cityscape and the cultural variety of New York , and spoke of these influences in their songs .

= = = Planning and rehearsals = = =

Planning and rehearsals for the concert took about three weeks in a Manhattan theater . The rehearsals were characterized by past tensions that resurfaced between the performers under the intense time pressure . Paul Simon later said : " Well , the rehearsals were just miserable . Artie and I fought all the time . " An early concept was for each singer to give a solo performance , with Simon allotted the greater amount of time , and to conclude with the duo performing their joint works . This idea was rejected because , according to Garfunkel , " It didn 't seem right to either of us that Paul should be the opening act for Simon & Garfunkel , and for him to follow Simon & Garfunkel didn 't make show @-@ business sense " . The two decided to perform most of the show together , with room for each to showcase some solo material . Simon , who had resumed songwriting after a long hiatus , interrupted a series of studio recording sessions for the concert preparations . He used the live show as an opportunity to test one of his new songs in front of an audience . Garfunkel also planned to present a new song , " A Heart in New York " , from his soon @-@ to @-@ be released album Scissors Cut .

The two differed on the presentation of the concert . Garfunkel wanted to recreate the duo 's mid @-@ 1960s live performances , using only their voices backed by Simon 's acoustic guitar . Simon felt that this was impossible , as an injury had rendered him incapable of playing guitar for the full length of a concert , and his newer material was typically arranged for larger ensembles that often included horns and amplified instruments such as electric piano and electric guitar . Garfunkel initially agreed to hire a second guitarist , but later rejected the idea . A group of eleven musicians was assembled for the concert , most of whom were experienced studio musicians and had played on albums involving Simon or Garfunkel . These included David Brown ( guitar ) , Pete Carr ( guitar ) , Anthony Jackson ( bass guitar ) , Rob Mounsey ( synthesizer ) , John Eckert ( trumpet ) , John Gatchell ( trumpet ) , Danny Cahn ( trumpet ) , Dave Tofani ( saxophone ) , Gerry Niewood ( saxophone ) , Grady Tate ( drums , percussion ) , and Richard Tee ( keyboard , piano ) .

The musical arrangements for the concert were written by Paul Simon and David Matthews . Some songs differed significantly from their original versions ; for example , " Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard " featured more prominent Latin elements and included a salsa break , while the folk rock " Kodachrome " was set as a harder rock song and played together with the Chuck Berry classic " Maybellene " as a medley . The military rhythm of " 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover " was replaced with a Latin arrangement that included brass .

Garfunkel had difficulties in the rehearsals . Both men easily recalled their songs from the 1960s , but Garfunkel had to learn the harmonies and arrangements for Simon 's solo songs , as modified for the reunion concert . He was also uncomfortable that Simon had rewritten some of the lyrics for their old songs . Despite the need to adapt to Simon and his style , Garfunkel enjoyed some of the songs , and was glad to perform a duet version of Simon 's " American Tune " .

The fact that the Central Park show would feature the two men performing together on stage was kept secret until an announcement was published in New York newspapers only a week before the concert . These news reports and the Michael Doret @-@ designed posters named the musicians individually and did not bill them as " Simon & Garfunkel " , but the event was nevertheless interpreted as a reunion . The two stated in interviews that further collaboration was not planned .

= = The concert = =

The concert took place on Saturday , September 19 , 1981 , on the Great Lawn , the central open space of Central Park . The first spectators , many carrying chairs or picnic blankets , arrived at daybreak to secure a good spot . The Parks Department originally expected about 300 @, @ 000 attendees . Although rain fell throughout the day and continued until the start of the concert , an estimated 500 @, @ 000 audience members made this the seventh @-@ largest concert attendance in the United States in history .

The stage backdrop depicted an urban rooftop with water tank and air outlet , symbolic of New York 's skyline . At twilight , the backing band went onstage , followed by New York 's mayor , Ed Koch , who announced , " Ladies and gentlemen , Simon and Garfunkel ! " The duo entered through a side stage door , took center stage amid audience applause , looked at each other and shook hands , and began the concert with their 1968 hit " Mrs. Robinson " .

After the second song , " Homeward Bound " , Simon delivered a short speech which began , " Well , it 's great to do a neighborhood concert . " He then thanked the police , the fire department , the park administration and finally Ed Koch . The audience booed at the mention of Koch , who had suggested permanent closure of the park , but they applauded as Simon continued and the irony in his reference became clear .

Simon & Garfunkel played twenty @-@ one songs in total : ten by the duo , eight by Simon , one by Garfunkel , a cover of The Everly Brothers ' " Wake Up Little Susie " , and the medley version of " Maybellene " . Each performer sang three songs alone , including one new song apiece . Garfunkel sang the Simon & Garfunkel classic " Bridge Over Troubled Water " and " April Come She Will " , and " A Heart in New York " , a song written by Gallagher and Lyle that appeared on his album Scissors Cut , which had been released the previous month . Simon 's solo performances were the title song of his 1975 album Still Crazy After All These Years , the number @-@ one single " 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover " , and the unreleased " The Late Great Johnny Ace " , which would appear on his 1983 album Hearts and Bones .

" The Late Great Johnny Ace " was interrupted when an audience member ran to the stage and shouted at Simon : " I need to talk to you ! " The man was carried away by security , and Simon finished the song . The incident provoked associations to the song 's lyrics , in which Simon speaks as a first @-@ person narrator concerning the deaths of Johnny Ace , John F. Kennedy and John Lennon . Lennon 's murder by an obsessed fan had taken place less than a year previously , not far from the concert site . Despite this association , Simon said that he was not afraid of any on @-@ stage incidents . In May 1982 as a guest on Late Night with David Letterman , he explained that while it is not unusual for fans , for example , to jump onto the stage with flowers , this action was new to him , but also felt that the man simply appeared intoxicated . His greater concern was that the song 's premiere was ruined .

Lyrics referring to the New York area produced audience applause , such as Garfunkel 's ode to his home city , " A Heart in New York " , which describes from a New Yorker 's point of view the first glimpse of the city when returning there by air :

New York , lookin ' down on Central Park , where they say you should not wander after dark

Applause broke out during " The Sound of Silence " , when the narrative voice refers to a large crowd of people in the dark :

And in the naked light I saw ten thousand people maybe more

After the 17th song , " The Boxer " , which contained an additional stanza not included in the album version , Simon & Garfunkel thanked the audience and left the stage , but returned to deliver an encore of three songs ? " Old Friends / Bookends Theme " , " The 59th Street Bridge Song ( Feelin ' Groovy ) " and " The Sound of Silence " . Simon then said that their planned use of pyrotechnics had been disallowed , and told the crowd , " Let 's have our own fireworks ! " Many spectators sparked lighters . The duo then introduced the members of the backing band and gave a final encore , a reprise of " Late in the Evening " .

= = = Set list = = =

= = Release = =

A recording of the concert was released five months later , on February 16 , 1982 . The audio tracks were put through album postproduction , but it was noted by Rolling Stone magazine that they were not completely polished , and preserved the roar and the fuzziness of live rock music heard through a loudspeaker . Two songs were removed from the album version : the interrupted " Late Great Johnny Ace " , and the encore reprise of " Late in the Evening " . The album was an international success . It peaked at number six on the Billboard 200 chart , and was certified 2 x Multi @-@ Platinum with sales of over 2 million copies in USA . The album sold more than 1 @,@ 270 @,@ 000 copies in France , where it was certified Diamond . It was also successful in seven other countries , including France and New Zealand . Originally the album was released as a double LP and as a single Compact Cassette . In 1988 it was issued as a single CD . Various reissues in different formats have been released , including , alongside the DVD , a 2 @-@ CD @-@ release also containing the two missing songs from the original album . The Concert was recorded by Roy Halee on the Record Plant NY Black Truck with David Hewitt Director , assisted by Phil Gitomer , Steve Barash and , John Mathias .

= = = Track listing = = =

The song " The Late Great Johnny Ace " and the reprise of " Late in the Evening " were not included in the original release of the live album but are included on the DVD .

= = = Video release = = =

Film of the concert was produced for television broadcast and the home video market . It was produced by James Signorelli , and directed by Michael Lindsay @-@ Hogg , a specialist in music documentaries who had worked on The Beatles ' film Let It Be , and executive produced by Lorne Michaels , who had recently departed the NBC @-@ TV comedy / variety series Saturday Night Live . Simon himself financed the US \$ 750 @,@ 000 cost of the staging and the video recording . It is unknown how much HBO paid for the television and video rights of the recording ; US \$ 1 million according to some sources , over US \$ 3 million according to others . The film includes the two songs that had not appeared on the album , and with an 87 @-@ minute duration , is 12 minutes longer than the album .

HBO televised the film , Simon and Garfunkel : The Concert in Central Park , on February 21 , 1982 , five days after the album was released . The film was later released for sale in VHS , CED Videodisc , Laserdisc , and DVD formats . It sold more than 50 @,@ 000 copies in the US , where it earned Gold certification for a music longform video .

= = Critical reception = =

The concert and recordings were positively received by music critics . Stephen Holden praised the performance in The New York Times the day after the concert ; he subsequently praised the live album in Rolling Stone magazine . He wrote that Simon and Garfunkel were successful in reviving their sound , that the backing band was " one of the finest groups of musicians ever to play together at a New York rock concert " , and the rearrangements of Simon 's solo material were improvements over the originals . Despite the risks in performing so many acoustic ballads in an open @-@ air concert on a cool night , the songs " were beautifully articulated , in near @-@ perfect harmony . "

An October 1981 review in Rolling Stone called the concert " one of the finest performances of [ 1981 ] " , one that " vividly recaptured another time , an era when well @-@ crafted , melodic pop bore meanings that stretched beyond the musical sphere and into the realms of culture and politics . " This reviewer noted that Garfunkel 's voice was noticeably restrained in high passages , though still harmonious , and that the evening 's only weak spot was the " Kodachrome " / " Maybellene "

medley , because neither singer could raise the right level of emotion for the rock songs . A Billboard reviewer wrote in March 1982 , " This 19 song , two record set gloriously recaptures the past with sterling renditions of most of the duo 's classics as well as a few of Simon 's solo compositions filled out by Garfunkel 's harmony . " However , Robert Christgau of The Village Voice dismissed the album as " a corporate boondoggle ? a classy way for Warner Bros. artist Simon to rerecord , rerelease , and resell the catalogue CBS is sitting on . " He felt Simon had been better off without Garfunkel since 1971 and quipped , " live doubles are live doubles , nostalgia is nostalgia , wimps are wimps , and who needs any of ' em ? "

= = Aftermath = =

The duo were disappointed with their performance , particularly Garfunkel , who felt that he sang poorly . Simon said that he did not immediately realize the magnitude of the event : " I didn 't get what had happened ? how big it was ? until I went home , turned on the television and saw it on all the news ... and later that night on the front pages of all the newspapers . Then I got it . "

In May 1982 , Simon & Garfunkel went on a world tour with stops in Japan , Germany , Denmark , Sweden , Switzerland , the Netherlands , Ireland , France , Great Britain , New Zealand , the US and Canada . The European leg of their tour began on May 28 , 1982 , at the Stadion am Bieberer Berg in Offenbach am Main . This was their first performance in Germany , and had an attendance of around 40 @, @ 000 spectators .

After the tour concluded , the duo went into the studio to work on what was to be a reunion album . However , after increasingly acrimonious disagreements , Garfunkel dropped out of the project , which became Simon 's 1983 solo album Hearts and Bones .

Several years would pass before Simon & Garfunkel worked together again . Their next joint public appearance was in 1990 , when they performed for their induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame . When Simon gave another free concert in Central Park on 15 August 1991 , he rejected Garfunkel 's offer to participate . However , they agreed to perform together in 1993 for 21 sold out concerts in New York , with half of the show being Paul Simon solo with a band and the other half Simon and Garfunkel . Later the same year , they did some charity concerts , including the Bridge School Benefit concerts and a benefit for United Way of Canada Children 's Charities at SkyDome in Toronto . Their next performance as a duo was in December 2003 , at New York 's Madison Square Garden . This concert was recorded , and released in December 2004 as the album Old Friends : Live on Stage .

Simon & Garfunkel 's Concert in Central Park raised around \$ 51 @, @ 000 for Central Park . Benefit concerts by other musicians followed , and helped to raise awareness of the park 's state . With donations from the general public and with the help of wealthy benefactors , the park was restored during the 1980s and gained recognition as a major tourist attraction . As of 2011 , donations still make up the majority of its budget . Today concerts and other benefits are regularly held on the Great Lawn .

= = Chart performance and certification = =

= = = Album = = =