

“I was on my way south to Memphis to record there for the first time. I was so excited that on the plane I wrote an entirely new set of lyrics (my second airplane song lyric) to a song I had already written. The story of ‘Brother Love’ demanded its own place in those sessions and was recorded the following day with nary a change in lyric. This recording became a hit and was to make a showman out of me. How could you not let go of your inhibitions when playing such a wonderful character?” – ND

“Brother Love’s Travelling Salvation Show” is a song about a tent preacher named Brother Love. He has a ragged tent set up “where there ain’t no trees.” This is a setting for a ministry that is itinerant and caters to the poor. There is a buzz about Brother Love and he walks in with his “eyes black as coal.” Everyone has their attention on Brother Love. Likely, Neil Diamond had in mind a black gospel scene with pentecostal vibes. The audience has a reaction when Brother Love gets really wound up with his gospel message. Nature itself reverberates and “half the valley shakes.” Brother Love has a travelling show in the revival tradition. People come from miles around just to hear him.

Worshipping Christians gathering in tents to pray or hear an evangelist give a sermon first occurred in the United States sometime between 1857-1860 in Appalachia. In 2017 the Times Record News of Wichita Falls, Kansas, reported a scene resembling that of ‘Brother Love’s Travelling Salvation Show’. Reporter Sarah Johnson describes it in these words, “It’s midnight in the middle of summer. It’s so hot and sticky, people on either side of you are doing their best to dry their sweat-streaked faces with homemade fans. Hundreds of people are packed shoulder to shoulder under a large tent in the middle of a field, while their feet kick up the sawdust on the floor. The travelling evangelist is preaching for five hours now and shows no signs of stopping.” First Baptist Church of Forney, Texas, hosted a revival for four days in May 2017.

BROTHER LOVE’S TRAVELLING SALVATION SHOW NEIL DIAMOND

Hot August night
And the leaves hanging down
And the grass on the ground smelling sweet
Move up the road
To the outside of town
And the sound of that good gospel beat

Sits a ragged tent
Where there ain't no trees
And that gospel group
Telling you and me

It's love, love, Brother Love say
Brother Love's Travelling Salvation Show
Pack up the babies
And grab the old ladies
And everyone goes
'Cause everyone knows
Brother Love's show

Room gets suddenly still
And when you'd almost bet
You could hear yourself sweat, he walks in
Eyes black as coal
And when he lifts his face
Every ear in the place is on him

Starting soft and slow
Like a small earthquake
And then he lets go
Half the valley shakes

It's love, love, Brother Love
Brother Love's Travelling Salvation Show
Pack up the babies
And grab the old ladies
And everyone goes
'Cause everyone knows
Brother Love's show

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Pastor's sermon

NEIL DIAMOND – 1969
Album: Brother Love's Travelling Salvation Show
This Live Version: 2002