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# *More Mind Polluting Words*

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*a supplementary collection of Bob Dylan  
interviews and press conferences up to 2006*

*Edition One - March 2024*

“Asking an artist to talk about his work  
is like asking a plant to discuss horticulture”

Jean Cocteau

“The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery.”

Francis Bacon

“The most seductive thing about art  
is the personality of the artist himself.”

Paul Cézanne

## Introduction

This document represents the second phase of our project to make available information about interviews of Bob Dylan to researchers, fans and those just plain curious. The first phase was the creation of the *Index of Bob Dylan Interviews and Press Conferences* (IBDIP), which is updated periodically and is also available on *The Bridge* website. The *Index* attempts to list all the known interviews, press conferences and phone-ins, whether they are available to collectors or not. This second phase, documents full text versions of relevant printed articles and transcripts of audio/video recordings as far as we are able.

A series of five privately produced booklets by the late John Baldwin (writing as ‘Dr. Filth’) called *The fiddler now upspoke*, were published in 1995-1997. These booklets attempted to collate full-text versions of all the interviews of Dylan up to that date, but they are now difficult to obtain. However, the text of these books, and much else besides, were included in a freely-available online publication called *Every Mind Polluting Word* (EMPW) by the late Artur Jarosinski. EMPW covered the period up to 2006 and, although Artur’s website is now defunct, its contents are to be found on *archive.org* (<https://archive.org/details/every-mind-polluting-word-2nd-edition>). The present document is entitled *More Mind Polluting Words* in tribute to Artur’s sterling efforts.

More recently, on the *Expecting Rain* website, a welcome intention to produce an update of EMPW for the years 2007-2022 was announced by ‘depp91’. We await this development. In the meantime, a large number of interviews dating from the period covered by Artur have since become available from one source or another. So the present document is intended to fill the gap by reproducing as many of these interviews as we can, and make them freely available on *The Bridge* website. Again, the intention is to provide updates periodically, rather than on a day-to-day basis.

Some of these interviews are brief, mundane, you might think pointless. Some items you may not regard as an interview *sensu stricto*. So be it! But in keeping with Artur’s sentiment we attempt to include Every Mind Polluting Word; make of it what you will.

All civilised comments and contributions will be humbly appreciated.

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## Late 1961, Unknown Interviewer (Racine Sunday Bulletin)

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Source: Racine Sunday Bulletin, Wisconsin, US newspaper, 3 December 1961, section 2, page 8.

This quote from Dylan was published in *Racine Sunday Bulletin*, in an article entitled *Some Tips for Parents Buying Christmas Toys*. Whether this was part of a verbal exchange or a written response is not certain but, if it was an interview, it would likely have taken place in eastern USA, in late 1961. The article was syndicated.

### Keep It Simple

Interest in music – or its equivalent, noise! – also characterizes all age groups, but here again parents often try to give kids too much too soon. Stringed instruments, for example, are hard to play, and can be quite frustrating when tried too young.

Even a harmonica is hard for a youngster to master (“**Any parent who thinks it’s easy to get music out of a harmonica ought to try it himself,**” says noted harmonica virtuoso Bob Dylan). Toy pianos usually have poor tone, but electric chord organs have good tone and are among the best simple introductions to the basics of music.



## June 1962, Gil Turner

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Source: *Sing Out!*, US magazine, Volume 12, Number 4, October/November 1962, pages 5-7, 9-10.

The interview took place in New York City, New York.

### Bob Dylan - A New Voice Singing New Songs

“Let me drink from the waters where the mountain streams flood,

“Let the smell of wild flowers flow free through my blood,

“Let me sleep in your meadows with your green grassy leaves,

“Let me walk down the highway with my brothers in peace.”

These are the words of the most prolific young songwriter in America today. Bob Dylan has sung them, along with scores of songs he “**put together**,” in coffee houses, nightclubs, taverns, “strip joints,” living rooms and the stage of Carnegie Recital Hall. At the age of 21 he has won critical acclaim, a Columbia recording contract, and a clear place as a significant figure in American folk music.

In February 1961 Bob Dylan landed on the New York Island at the end of a zig-zaggy thumb ride across the country from S. Dakota. He was wearing a pair of dusty dungarees, holey shoes, a corduroy Huck Finn cap and he had a beat-up Gibson guitar and two squeaky harmonicas. He wanted a try at singing his ‘folky’ songs for the people in the big city and to meet the man whose life and music had had a great influence on his own – Woody Guthrie. He had first seen Woody in Burbank, California, a number of years before but had had only the opportunity to watch and listen from a distance and say a brief hello after the program. The second meeting bridged the gap of several generations and began a friendship based on the love of good songs and a common view towards life.

Born in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1941, Bob Dylan began his ‘rambling’ at the age of a few months. For the next nineteen years he made his home in Gallup, New Mexico; Cheyenne, S.D.; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Phillipsburg, Kansas; Hibbing, Minn.; Fargo, N.D.; and Minneapolis. He dates his interest in music and his own singing “**as far back as I can remember.**” Everywhere he went his ears were wide open for the music around him. He listened to blues singers, cowboy singers, pop singers and others soaking up music and styles with an uncanny memory and facility for assimilation. Gradually, his own preferences developed and became more clear, the strongest areas being Negro blues and country music. Among the musicians and singers who influenced him were Hank Williams, Muddy Waters, Jelly Roll Morton, Leadbelly, Mance Lipscomb and Big Joe Williams.

Dylan’s first appearances in New York were at hootenannies held in the afternoon hours in Greenwich Village coffee houses. It was at one of these that I first heard him, blowing blues harmonica with singer guitarist, Mark Spoelstra. There was apparent in his singing, playing and lyric improvisation an expressive freedom seldom encountered among white blues singers. Bob Dylan in performance, however, is more than a blues singer. His flare for the comic gesture and the spontaneous quip, the ability to relate his thoughts on practically any subject from hitch-hiking to the phoniness of Tin Pan Alley, and make it entertaining, make Bob’s stage personality. It is not a contrived, play-acted personality. One gets the impression that his talk and story-telling on stage are things that just came into his head that he thought you might be interested in.

Part of Dylan’s magnetism lies in the fact that he is not the slightest bit afraid of falling flat on his face. If he gets an idea for a song or a story, he does it on the spot without worrying about whether it will come out exactly polished and right. There’s a sense of “what’s he going to do next?” Whatever comes it is often as much a surprise to the performer as to the audience. Harry Jackson, cowboy singer, painter and sculptor, summed up a Dylan performance rather graphically one night: “He’s so goddamned real, it’s unbelievable!”

Reality and truth are words that Bob Dylan will use often if you get him into a serious discussion about anything. They are his criteria for evaluating the world around him, the people in it (especially other folksingers), songs to sing and songs to write. If the reality is harsh, tragic, funny or meaningless, it should be thought about, looked at and described. Says Dylan, “**I don’t have to be anybody like those guys up on Broadway that’re always writin’ about ‘I’m hot for you and you’re hot for me – ooka dooka dicka dee.’ There’s other things in the world besides love and sex that’re important too. People shouldn’t turn their backs on ’em just because they ain’t pretty to look at. How is the world ever gonna get any better if we’re afraid to look at these things?’**” Some of “these things” are discrimination, capital punishment, lynching, fallout shelters and peace. (“**The best fallout shelter I ever saw is the Grand Canyon. They oughta put a roof on it and let all the generals and bigshot politicians go and live in it. They seem to like these fallout things pretty much so let ’em live in ’em.**”)



Although he can execute some intricate blues runs, do fancy three-finger picking and play in a variety of open tunings, Dylan sticks mostly to simple three-chord patterns and a rhythmic, driving flat-picking style. For him, the words are the important thing and don't need a lot of show-offy instrumental ballast to help them out. **"I could sing 'Porgy and Bess' with two chords, G and D, and still get the story across."**

His vocal style is rough and unpolished, reflecting a conscious effort to recapture the earthy realism of the rural country blues. It is a distinctive, highly personalised style combining many musical influences and innovations.

His first Columbia album, titled simply "Bob Dylan," while capturing some really superb performances, does not show the breadth of his talent. It contains only one humorous selection – a talking blues about some of his New York experiences – and one other song of his own composition, "Song to Woody." With this relatively minor reservation, the record can be wholeheartedly endorsed as an excellent first album and also, incidentally, as a reflection of the growing maturity of the Columbia A & R department. According to advance reports, the second Bob Dylan album will contain a good deal more of his original songs which usually reveal him at his interpretive best.

Dylan's reception from the critics has been mixed and promises to stir up controversy as his audience grows. Robert Shelton of the N. Y. Times finds him to be "bursting at the seams with talent" and is appreciative of his "originality and inspiration," while McCall's magazine regards him as "a young man with the style and voice of an outraged bear." Dylan's reaction to the latter: **"Hah, they don't even know what a bear sounds like. Probably never saw one. Anyway, I don't even know if it's so bad to sound like a bear. When a bear growls, he's really sayin' somethin'."** Newsweek says he "looks and acts like the square's version of a folksinger" (whatever that might be). A prominent critic privately dubs him the "Elvis Presley of folk music." The latter designation is not meant to be derogatory, but merely reflects his wide appeal to young audiences.

His night club appearances at Gerde's Folk City in New York have attracted predominantly youthful and enthusiastic audiences while the elders in the crowd seemed puzzled at his style of singing. Several teenage imitations of Dylan, harmonica, Huck Finn cap and repertoire, have already made their appearance in the Greenwich Village folksong scene. Although he maintains his performance is not consciously tailored for the young, the largest portion of his growing following is made up of persons near his own age.

While Bob is a noteworthy folk performer with a bright future, I believe his most significant and lasting contribution will be in the songs that he writes, three examples of which appear in these pages. Dylan avoids the terms "write" or "compose" in connection with his songs. **"The songs are there. They exist all by themselves just waiting for someone to write them down. I just put them down on paper. If I didn't do it, somebody else would."** His method of writing places the emphasis on the words, the tune almost always being borrowed or adapted from one he has heard somewhere, usually a traditional one. I remember the first night he heard the tune he used for the "Ballad of Donald White." It was in Bonnie Dobson's version of the "Ballad of Peter Amberly." He heard the tune, liked it, made a mental record of it and a few days later "Donald White" was complete. About this song Dylan says: **"I'd seen Donald White's name in a Seattle paper in about 1959. It said he was a killer. The next time I saw him was on a television set. My gal Sue said I'd be interested in him so we went and watched... Donald White was sent home from prisons and institutions 'cause they had no room. He asked to be sent back 'cause he couldn't find no room in life. He murdered someone 'cause he couldn't find no room in life. Now they killed him 'cause he couldn't find no room in life. They killed him and when they did I lost some of my room in life. When are some people gonna wake up and see that sometimes people aren't really their enemies but their victims?"**

One night, two months ago, Bob came flying into Folk City where I was singing. **"Gil, I got a new song I just finished. Wanna hear it?"** The song was "Blowin' in the Wind," one of his best efforts to date in my opinion. I didn't recognize the tune at the time and neither did Bob, but Pete Seeger heard it and pegged the first part of it as an imaginative reworking of "No More Auction Block."

In one of his songs rejecting atomic war as a possible solution for differences among nations he says:

"If I had riches and rubies and crowns  
I'd buy the whole world and I'd change things around,  
I'd throw all the guns and the tanks in the sea,  
For they all are the mistakes of our past history."

His concluding lines for a "Ballad of Emmett Till":

If you can't speak out against this kind of thing  
A crime that's so unjust,  
Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt  
Your mind is filled with dust.  
Your arms and legs must be in shackled and chained

Your blood must cease to flow,  
For you would let this human race  
Fall down so godawful low.

From a lively song celebrating the bold actions of students on the civil rights front:

Red and white and brown and black,  
We're ridin' this train on a one-way track  
We got this far and we ain't turnin' back  
We ain't gonna grieve no more.  
There's a time to plant and a time to plow  
A time to stand and a time to bow,  
There's a time to grieve but that ain't now  
We ain't gonna grieve no more.

Dylan's flare for the comic is usually put to use in the talking blues form. His "Talking Bear Mountain" is based on newspaper stories of counterfeit tickets sold for an excursion and the resulting overcrowding of the boat. "Talkin' New York" satirises some of his early troubles in the big city. "Talkin' Havah Nagilah" was made up especially for members of the audience that shout out requests for songs way out of his line.

Dylan is adamant in his insistence that his songs remain as he has written them without being watered down. There is at least one major record company A & R man bemoaning Dylan's stubbornness in refusing to alter one of his songs. He wanted to use "Gamblin' Willie" for one of his popular recording stars, but wanted a verse changed so that the cause of Willie's gambling became an unfortunate love affair. Dylan refused on the ground that Willie was a real person whom he knew and the change would not conform to the truth as he knew it.

Dylan's plans are simply to keep on singing wherever people want to hear him (but preferably not in night clubs) and putting down songs as fast as they come into his head. The present record is five songs in one night. The latest is a song about blacklisting, inspired by the case of John Henry Faulk. The chorus of it goes:

Go down, go down you gates of hate,  
You gates that keep good men in chains,  
Go down and die the lowest death,  
And never rise again.

## Mid August 1962, Rachel Price

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Source: *FM-Stereo Guide*, US magazine, October 1962, pages [13]-15. The text reproduced here is from *Isis*, UK fanzine, Number 137, March-April 2008, pages 47-49.

### BOB DYLAN

In the winter of '61 a nineteen year old folksinger fresh from the West, wandered into midtown Manhattan with suitcase in hand and a guitar on his back. Minutes later a policeman approached him and in the manner native to New York's finest asked to see his identification. It was shown. "What are you doing here, buddy? If it wasn't so cold, I'd open your cases and check them. You'd better leave the district." The youth deciding to follow such strongly worded advice, made his way downtown to Greenwich Village and hasn't been approached by a policeman since.

Born in Minnesota and arriving in N.Y. straight from six months at the University where he learned that "lots of people go to college," Bob Dylan got his first real opportunity to sing in New York at Gerde's Folk City in the Village. Mr. Dylan is a folksinger of strength, a "putter together" of songs about anything that absorbs his interest, and a musician who accompanies himself on guitar and harmonica with great skill and facility. Although Dylan has had no formal musical training his control of the steel stringed guitar, working in blues and also country patterns, shows a developing style reminiscent of the primitive country singing men whom he points out as his influences. His harmonica playing is laughing and hard - a whooping style which comments aptly on the lyrics. He has been likened to his good friend Woody Guthrie, called a musical Chaplin because of his ragamuffin appearance and manner of delivery; however, there is a definite style in the making and an original intelligence at work. Such songs as *Talking New York* which describes his reception in the city and *Talking Havah Nagilah* which satirizes folk songs and singers are incisive, humorous and biting comments. While his more serious topical songs (*Song to Woody* and *Answers Blown in the Wind*) show sharp insight as well as an unusual lyric gift. "**Some people,**" he says, "**consider me a poet, but I can't think about it. There are too many poets.**" He writes songs about incidents that move him to sing. "**Marilyn Monroe's death is worthy of a song about all of the little people who took advantage of her, and didn't take time to think that she was a person. Just sitting around at Actor's Studio she was more glamorous than a hundred Elizabeth Taylors.**"

Despite his tousled appearance, his distinctive and ever present corduroy cap and a far from soothing singing style, Bob Dylan has recently been made aware that he is a public figure. With one record on the market and a second *Bob Dylan's Blues* scheduled for release soon, he finds himself in a new and, for him, difficult position. "**Everyplace**" according to the singer, "**is a state a mind. When I came to New York, I spent a lot of time visiting Woody Guthrie sick in a New Jersey hospital and I wrote a song to him. But I don't think I would write it today.**" His statement did not seem to come from a change of affection, but from being caught for the first time in a tug between his personal life and assumed responsibilities. He seems to feel unable to move out. He has a contract and responsibilities to critics who befriended him at an earlier period in his career when Village coffee houses rejected him because... "You sound like a hillbilly. We want folksingers here." Dylan participated in a Singout at Carnegie Hall last month and is to give a Town Hall recital on October 5. He has consistently been praised by the critics, but his attitude is not that of a young man on his way up. "**I am,**" he says, "**unable to think about the future. I just returned from a trip to the West and I had forgotten how quiet and pleasant life was there. You don't have to plan things, they just happen. Right now I'm waiting... waiting for my girl to come home from a trip.**" In another mood, he is very excited about his career, about his opportunity to appear on the stage with Pete Seeger, about his life in New York with his girl, Susie.

Bob Dylan doesn't talk as well as he writes songs. His inarticulateness exists only until one hits upon something which touches him personally, and then disappears. It doesn't at all affect his brusque, clear and unsentimental vocal arrangements. "**I sing any song that comes to mind. I talk for awhile until I can think of something to sing.**" He has no difficulty with an audience, and his humorous and sardonic way with topical lyrics belie his conversational hesitancy. He is a gentle mannered and cooperative young man but he is really insistent on doing things in his own way. "**I was happiest the most when John Hammond asked me to record. Not only because of the chance to record, but because I admired the man who asked me. I want to give but on my terms. Nightclubs are not my terms. People go there to see gladiators fight, and I don't want to be a part of the spectacle.**" He also objects to performing for a teenage audience. "**Teenagers have so much stuff shot at them because they buy so much, and are such easy prey. I don't want to be one more bullet in the gun aimed at them.**" He seems concerned about the diluted music that makes up the teenagers listening fare because "**I am not so far removed from those years myself. Elvis Presley was a good singer in the beginning...**"

## Early January 1963, Richard Fariña

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Source: *Mademoiselle*, US magazine, August 1964. The text reproduced here is from *The American Folk Scene: Dimensions of the Folksong Revival*, edited by David A De Turk & A Poulin, 1967, Dell Publishing, New York, pages 250-258.

This interview took place in London, England and must have taken place before 16 January 1963 when Dylan flew back to New York.

### Baez and Dylan: A Generation Singing Out

When Bob Dylan drove across the Berkeley campus with his songs in a hip pocket and a station wagon full of friends, it was as if the undergraduates had been whispering of his imminent arrival for months. They seemed, occasionally, to believe he might not actually come, that some malevolent force or organization would get in the way. From north into Oregon and as far south as Fort Ord, near Monterey, college-age listeners had found time to make the trip, secure tickets, and locate seats in the mammoth Berkeley Community Theatre. They had come with a sense of collective expectancy, some attracted by already implausible legend, some critical of an idiom that seemed too maverick to be substantial, but most with an eye to taking part in a passing event that promised more than usual significance for their generation.

Each of Dylan's concerts this past year had had a way of arousing the same feeling. There was no sensation of his having performed somewhere the previous night or of a schedule that would take him away once the inevitable post-concert party was over. There was, instead, the familiar comparison with James Dean, at times explicit, at times unspoken, an impulsive awareness of his physical perishability. Catch him now, was the idea. Next week he might be mangled on a motorcycle.

The Berkeley performance did little to set anyone at ease. It often looked as if it were calculated to do the opposite, as a result both of its haphazard form and the provocative nature of its content. There were songs about the shooting of Medgar Evers, the Mississippi drowning of Emmet Till, the corporate tactics of munitions executives, even a fiercely cynical review of American war history called "With God on Our Side." Dylan appeared as usual in well-worn clothes, said whatever occurred to him at the time, and sang his songs in no particular order. When he surprised everyone by introducing Joan Baez from the wings, the students were electrified. Their applause was potent, overwhelming, unmitigated. Had a literary audience been confronted by Dylan Thomas and Edna St. Vincent Millay the mood of aesthetic anxiety might have been the same.

To professional observers – and I talked to a good many – this mood threatened to overreach the abilities of the unassisted performers. They spoke of the fragility of the two people on stage, the lack of props and dramatic lighting, the absence of accompanying musicians, the banality of costume. A writer from one of the new folk magazines told me, "They can't be *that* confident, man; sooner or later they're going to play a wrong chord." But he was talking in terms of show-business proficiency, while the performers themselves were concerned with more durable values. They never doubted their capacity to equal the ovation, and, if anything, they felt applause was a dubious reward for their efforts.

They claimed to be there not as virtuosos in the field of concertized folk music but as purveyors of an enjoined social consciousness and responsibility. They believed they were offering contemporaries the new musical expression of a tenuous American legacy, a legacy that threatened to become the most destructive and morally inconsistent in the nation's history. They felt the intolerability of bigoted opposition to civil rights, the absurdity of life under a polluted atmosphere, and they were confident that a majority of their listeners felt the same way. "I don't know how they do it," said a San Francisco columnist, "but they certainly do it." When they left the stage to a whirlwind of enthusiastic cheers, it seemed that the previously unspoken word of protest, like the torch of President Kennedy's inaugural address, had most certainly been passed.

Significantly, when Joan and Dylan are together and away from the crush of admirers and hangers-on, the protest is seldom discussed. They are far more likely putter with the harmonies of a rock 'n' roll tune or run through the vital scenes of a recent movie than consider the tactics of civil disobedience or the abhorrence of biological warfare. Like many another person in his early twenties, they derive a sense of political indignation from the totality of every-day conversations and media that surround them – a process more akin to osmosis than ratiocination. And because of this subjective approach to the problems at hand, metaphor is better suited than directness to their respective dispositions.

"I don't like the word 'bomb' in a song," Joan said one evening, watching a fire in her sister's small Carmel cabin. The flames were the kind that hissed and crackled, causing small coals to pop, and sometimes explode with surprising violence. They seemed to reinforce her feeling that simple, explicit reference to heat and

radiation was too easy to slough off, that this never evoked anything more than superficial interest and sympathy in an insufferable situation. Speaking or singing with regard to megatons, fall-out, strontium 90, nuclear deterrents, overkill ratios, genetic mutation, all in so many facile phrases, might have been necessary for raising the initial indignation of the populace, but it was certainly not sufficient. "People don't listen to words like those," she said. "They hear them, sure, but they don't listen."

Certainly, popular American reaction to these concepts had already proved, on the whole, nothing short of apathetic. A more meaningful vocabulary was needed to loosen fundamental feelings. Students across the country were helplessly aware of this fact whenever their civil or political protests were met by blatantly bureaucratic response from public officials, elders, and even fellow students. Posters scrawled with "Ban the Bomb" or "No More Jim Crow" were invariably treated with a disdain that belied any awareness of the gravity of the causal situation. The students, seeking a more profound language and finding such language in folk music, looked to folk musicians as their spokesmen; and the musicians said and sang what they could. Last year, however, the vivid and topical imagery of a self-styled Midwestern folk-poet finally lent their arguments more vigorous meaning. And even from the point of view of the bureaucrats, this meaning was difficult to evade.

**"It ain't nothin' just to walk around and sing,"** Dylan said: **"you just have to step out a little, right?"** We were strolling in the pre-dawn London fog a year and a half ago, six months before he made the now historic appearance at the Newport Folk Festival. **"Take Joanie, man, she's still singin' about Mary Hamilton. I mean where's that at? She's walked around on picket lines, she's got all kinds of feeling, so why ain't she steppin' out?"**

Joan quite possibly had asked herself the same question. As much as any of the young people who looked at her for guidance, she was, at the time, bewildered and confused by the lack of official response to the protesting college voices. She had very little material to help her. At one point she was enough concerned about the content of her repertoire to consider abandoning public appearances until she had something more substantial to offer. Traditional ballads, ethnic music from one culture or another were not satisfactory for someone whose conception of folk singing extended so far beyond an adequate rendering. Her most emphatic song was "What Have They Done to the Rain?" and she was, one felt, more personally moved by the image of a small boy standing alone in a tainted shower than by the implication of the remaining lyrical content.

By May, 1963, however, she had a firsthand opportunity to hear Dylan perform at the Monterey Folk Festival in California. His strong-willed, untempered, but nonetheless poetic approach to the problem filled the gap and left her awed and impressed. Moreover, by the time she had finished going over the songs he left behind, it seemed his lyrics would finally provide the substance for her continuing role as a soulful representative of the generation, a young woman whose very function seemed defined by an ability to mirror alternatives to the malaise of the times.

Meaningfully enough, the highest personification of these social concerns was not indifferent to Joan's role. Just weeks before the Dallas assassination ended an era of Washington style that was based in part on an implicit acceptance of contemporary arts, Joan received a telegram from Lyndon B. Johnson asking her to perform for the President. Since that time, the invitation was renewed, and on May 26 she sang for President Johnson at a Democratic fund raising show. Yet, it speaks for her place in the company of essentially interpretive artists that she has never strayed very far from the sensibilities of those closest to her age.

By living the life many university students would like to live, were it not for the daily concerns of textbooks and money from home, and by spending most of her public time in and around the nation's campuses, she has had no trouble keeping a half-conscious finger on an eager college pulse. Young people are very much aware that she drives an XKE and that it has been in the repair pits an inordinate number of times. So much so that a recent *Channing* television show used the car as an insipid symbol of the paradox of high speed and homely folk tradition. Some who live nearby are also used to seeing her chug down the Big Sur coast at midnight with four dogs in a red jeep, to watch the moon above the Pacific. To most students it comes as no surprise that she is refusing to pay 60 percent of her income tax, a figure that corresponds to the government's allotment for defense.

Occasionally one gets the feeling that people try too hard to relegate her to a premature immortality, and the subsequent rumours are in kind: She has come down with a mysterious paralysis and will never sing again; she has been arrested at the Mexican border with a Jaguar full of narcotics; she is living with Marlon Brando on a Choctaw Indian reservation. In what many would call the alarming calm of her California surroundings, the exoticism of these stories seems absurd.

It was to her home in Carmel that Dylan came last spring just after the Berkeley concert. He was on his way to Los Angeles in the station wagon, travelling with Paul Clayton, once the most recorded professional in the folk revival; Bobby Neuwirth, one of the half-dozen surviving hipster nomads who shuttle back and forth between Berkeley and Harvard Square; and a lazy-lidded black-booted friend called Victor, who seemed to be his road manager. They arrived bearing gifts of French-fried almonds, glazed walnuts, bleached cashews, dried figs, oranges, and prunes. Here again the legions of image-makers might well have been disappointed by the progress of the evening. How could so volatile a company get itself together without some sort of apocalyptic



scene dominating the action? Instead, Joan's mother, visiting from Paris, cooked a beef stew. We talked about old friends, listened to the Everly Brothers, and finally got Clayton to do a number of songs that few others can sing with such understated composure. The only overt references to Dylan's music came when Joan said she might want to record an entire album of his songs and he told her, "sure thing."

The college student's reaction to Dylan has been somewhat more complex than their acceptance of Joan, however. It was clear from his initial entry on the folk scene that he was neither as musically gifted and delicate, nor as consistent in performance as she. Yet Robert Shelton, now the editor of *Hootenanny* magazine, predicted that these very qualities would contribute to his popularity. "He's a moving target," Shelton said in New York, "and he'll fascinate the people who try to shoot him down." In the beginning, when he was better known for his Huck Finn corduroy cap than his abilities as a composer, he jumped back and forth between Boston and New York, developing a style and manner that brought the manifestation of the pregnant pause to uncanny perfection. Some still found a discomfiting similarity to Jack Elliott, or too much affectation in his droll delivery; but everyone agreed his smirk implied a certain something left unsaid and that whatever it was, if he got around to letting you in on the secret, it would be worthwhile.

It developed that this something was his writing. In no time, Dylan nearly abandoned established material for songs of his own composition. The transition from one to the other was nearly imperceptible since he had the good sense to keep his overall cadence within the framework of familiar traditional music. He begged and borrowed from the established ballad styles of the past (in some cases quite freely), from the prolific works of Woody Guthrie, from the contemporary production of friends like Clayton. But the stories he told in his songs had nothing to do with unrequited Appalachian love affairs or idealized whorehouses in New Orleans. They told about the cane murder of Negro servant Hattie Carroll, the death of boxer Davey Moore, the unbroken chains of injustice waiting for the hammers of a crusading era. They went right to the heart of his decade's most recurring preoccupation: that in a time of totally irreversible technological progress, moral amelioration has pathetically faltered; that no matter how much international attention is focused on macrocosmic affairs, the plight of the individual must be considered, or we are forever lost.

Such a theme has often been associated with the output of folk poets; in fact, since the time John Henry laid down his hammer and died from the completion of the industrial revolution, they have celebrated little else. But even including the dynamic figures of Guthrie and Leadbelly in this century, no creator of the idiom has ever received such a wide cross section of public attention. It is quite possible that already, within the astonishing space of a single year, Dylan has outdistanced the notoriety of still another spiritual forbear, Robert Burns. And like Burns he has the romantic's eye for trading bouts of hard writing with hard living. He often runs the two together, courting all the available kinds and degrees of disaster, sleeping little, partying late, and taking full-time advantage of the musician's scene in New York's Greenwich Village, where he keeps a small apartment. Using a blowtorch on the middle of the candle is less aesthetic than burning it at both ends, but more people see the flame. He can dip in and out of traditional forms at will, shift temperament from cynical humor to objective tragedy, and never lose sight of what people his age want to hear.

This wanting is in no way a passive or camouflaged matter. It is part and parcel of a generation's active desire to confront the very sources of hypocrisy, which in early years deceived them into thinking that God was perforce on their side, the good guys were always United States Marines, that if they didn't watch the skies day and night the Russians, Vietnamese, North Koreans, tribal Africans, and Lord knows who else would swoop down in the darkness and force them all into salt mines. Dylan feels a very critical trust was betrayed in these exaggerations. He feels further, in what amounts to a militant attitude, that it is up to him to speak out for the millions around him who lack the fortitude to talk themselves.

Because he speaks for them, undergraduates in many ways seek to identify with his public image, just as they have with Joan's. They search for the same breed of rough Wellingtons and scuff them up with charcoal before wearing. They spend weekends hitchhiking, not so much to get somewhere as to log hours on the road. I've even come across an otherwise excellent guitarist and harmonica player from Fort Ord who tried a crash diet with Army food in order to achieve the necessary gaunt look. The image, of course, has shifted with Dylan's increasing maturity. Some fans are reluctant to accept his early attempts at playing with his past. Last winter, an article in *Newsweek* went to great pains recalling his middle-class upbringing in Hibbing, Minnesota, and alluding to a prior, less attractive surname, which had been removed by the courts. After the Berkeley concert a nineteen-year-old girl in a shawl told me, "He has a knack for saying what younger people want to hear. It's only too bad he had to change his name and not be able to accept himself." I reminded her that she liked his music, but she went on: "People want an image. They carry it around to make their scene look more important. They're so many guys wanting to be something they're not, that Bobby makes a nice alternative. At least he has integrity."

The seeming paradox between name-changing and integrity is significant. His admirers enjoy possessing a certain amount of private information and using it against him as insidiously as they try to hasten Joan's premature immortality. But he has done something they will never do: stepped so cleanly away from his antecedents and into the exhilarating world of creative action as to make the precise nature of an early history look insignificant. Behind the college students of America today, no matter what their protest against

segregation, injustice, and thermonuclear war, are the realities of their parents, the monthly check, and their hometown. *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, as the title of his second album sets him up, lives in a world that is the realm of their alter-ego.

But in the meantime the word still has to be passed, and both Joan and Dylan go to the campuses to make sure that it gets there. After the evening of the French-fried almonds and beef stew, both of them journeyed into Southern California – Dylan with his friends in the station wagon, Joan in the XKE. There was some anticipatory talk of getting together at one or more of the concerts, but circumstances were not propitious and they went their separate ways. Dylan stayed at the Thunderbird Motel in Hollywood, drifting out to parties and local folk nightclubs between engagements; Joan stayed with friends of the family in Redlands, lying in the sun, going to bed early. She sang at her old high school one afternoon and was moved to tears by the standing ovation. When she did an encore, her mention of Dylan's name brought cheers. That same night, he returned the compliment to a devoted audience in Riverside.

It could be said that during these respective performances, as with each of their concerts before predominately young crowds, their specific relationship to their generation is most unhindered and best understood. They utter a statement of unmistakably mortal grievance against what they stand to inherit as a result of the blunders of their immediate forbears. In the one case this statement is from the source, in the other through interpretation, but in neither is there any distance between expression and experience. To the young men and women who listen, the message is as meaningful as if it were uttered in the intimacy of their own secluded thought.



## Mid to Late January 1963, Alan Lomax

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Source: *Lomax Digital Archive*: <https://archive.culturalequity.org/field-work/bob-dylan-1963/new-york-city-1963/masters-war-commentary-bob-dylan-about-masters-war-john>. The transcript reproduced here is from *The Bridge*, UK fanzine, Number 70, Summer 2021 (published August 2021), pages 98-99.

This interview was conducted in Alan Lomax's apartment, New York City.

### It Was In Putney

When Dylan returned from his visit to the UK in early 1963 he popped over to Alan Lomax's apartment to play him one of his new songs which Lomax sensibly recorded. It has now been made available together with the conversation that followed it in which Dylan discusses how he came to write it and more. Here is what was said:

AL Where did you write that Bobby?

**I wrote that, I think I wrote that one in England. I wrote that in England.**

AL Was it something you read about in the papers?

**Yeah, I think I wrote it about... Well them people over in England don't like Kennedy much you know. When the English papers came out I remember I was in this rehearsal house sort of thing out there in Putney. You know where that is? An' I just kept seein' the papers every day 'bout 'They're putting down MacMillan' 'cos they know Kennedy's gonna screw him on these missiles. An' Kennedy goes down to Nassau or some place to talk an' they got headlines in the paper underneath MacMillan's face goin' "Don't mistreat me, don't mistreat me, how can you treat a poor maiden so?" All because the United States won't give 'em these guns, these bombs, y'know. 'Cos the United States don't want 'em to have 'em an' the United States wants to be this big power or somethin' like that. An' then De Gaulle, he's beautiful, De Gaulle an' he had this big thing out there. He said he's got his bomb an' he's gonna explode it. You don't get this stuff in papers back here. Seems like it's a different statement. An' he's got a bomb an' he's gonna explode it some place around England y'now. An' they're all worried in England an' he says "No, the United States can test their bombs 'cos we're gonna test this one too 'cos France has always been a big power and France can have a bomb." An' Khrushchev, he's the beautifulest guy, well he's a poet, Khrushchev. Oh wow. He's a poet, him man. When he talks... in the paper it has this huge statements by Khrushchev, they say "Who won?" they say in the thing about over Cuba and Khrushchev says "Did you win?" An' everybody in the United States thinks they win an' they think everybody in Russia thinks that they win in Russia 'cos everybody here thinks that we won so we think that everybody in Russia thinks that they win. But Khrushchev says "Hey, no baby." He says "Russia didn't win." He says "United States didn't win." He says "Humanity wins". He's talkin' about this guy, when he was fighting in the Second World War, and he was a commander in the army. He said he gave somebody an order to do something y'know, an' the guy came back an' he didn't do it an' he says to Khrushchev 'I couldn't do it, I couldn't do the order.'" An' Khrushchev was kinda pissed off by this and he says "Why don't you take a gun and shoot yourself?" he says, walkin' away. An' the guy says "Just a minute" an' the guy comes up in front of Khrushchev an' takes a gun an' kills himself right in front of Khrushchev. An' Khrushchev says "He thought that was gonna make him hero." He said "It didn't make him a hero, it stank." He said "That ain't bein' a hero!"**

## Early August 1963, Jack A Smith

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Source: *The National Guardian*, US newspaper, 22 August 1963, page 7. The text reproduced here is from *Broadside* (New York), US magazine, Number 31, September 1963, page 4.

The location of this interview is unknown.

### A world of his own

From Minnesota two years ago decamped a roughneck rebel poet and dreamer named Bob Dylan, then 20, packing his guitar and songs, bound-for-glory to New York where he settled unquietly on the Lower East Side and set about to dismember the Establishment, limb by limb.

**“Slush in my boots all winter long wandering around the Village. Cold winter – snow that high,”** he gestured during an interview, arms describing the biggest snowbank since the blizzard of '88. **“Worked all day in a Greenwich Village coffee house blowing harmonica behind some guy for one or two dollars a day – had to eat.”**

Bob Dylan has come a long way in two years. Known today as the “most prolific young songwriter in America,” his topical protest songs are heard at integration and peace rallies, on records, radio and in concert across the nation. His particular concerns are war, discrimination, capital punishment and exploitation, and his poems and songs reflect implacable anger at warmongers, racists, brutal police and the wealthy – all of whom, he says in a recent song, “ain’t a-gonna run my world.”

Motivated by a strong desire to run his own world, Dylan utilizes the most trenchant weapons at his command – a poetic imagination and contempt for injustice – to denounce those who want to run it for him, whether they hide behind a KKK hood or a stock market ticker.

Clad in worn boots, rough black trousers and a rumpled work shirt, Dylan’s slight frame presents itself as a challenge to all that is comfortable and complacent in American life. His singing is uncontrived and forceful. His language is a combination of working class Minnesota, uncompromised by rules of grammar, and the hip jargon of Harlem and the Village.

**“I don’t think when I write,”** he said. **“I just react and put it down on paper. I’m serious about everything I write. For instance, I get mad when I see friends of mine sitting in Southern jails, getting their heads beat in. What comes out in my music is a call for action.”**

Dylan has often been compared with Woody Guthrie, whom he reveres, and with Bertolt Brecht, his favorite poet. There are elements of both in his songs and even in his general conversation. Describing the misery brought on the workers of his native state by Eastern mining interests – personalizing the latter with the pronoun “he,” Dylan “talked” a song of exploitation and rebellion:

**“You should’a seen what he did to the town I was raised in – seen how he left it. He sucked up my town. It’s too late now for the people – they’re lost. When will it be too late for him?**

**The same guy who sucked up my town wants to bomb Cuba, but he don’t want to do it himself – send the kids. He made all this money, but what does he do to earn it? Take away his money and he’d die. Punch him in the gut enough times and he’d die. He’s a criminal, a crook, a murderer.”**

Dylan’s songs are attempts to punch “him” in the gut. Beyond this he does not profess any social or political philosophy other than the desire for a world in which **“everybody can just walk around without anybody bothering them.”** His rebellion is personal, directed against repressive anti-life forces in general, rather than to specifics such as economics and politics.

Capitalism? – **“Well I object to somebody riding around in a Cadillac when somebody else is lying in the gutter.”**

Socialism? – **“I’d like to visit Russia someday; see what it’s like, maybe meet a Russian girl.”**

United States? – **“Ain’t nobody can say anything honest in the United States. Every place you look is cluttered with phoney and lies.”** Kennedy? – **“He’s all right but he’s phoney, pretending all the time.”**

Politics? – **“No, I’m not gonna vote because there’s nobody to vote for: nobody that looks like me, the way I feel... I’d like to see a government made up of people like Bertrand Russell, Jim Forman (of SNCC), Marlon Brando and people like that.”**

Dylan returned recently from the South where he sang during a Negro voter registration drive. He plans to go back soon. In Mississippi, he says, **“there’s a feeling in the air. More people are willing to say, ‘To hell with my security, I want my rights.’ I want to help them if I can. They really dig my music down there, too.”**

One of Dylan’s most popular songs, “Blowin’ in the Wind,” reflects the “feeling” in Mississippi and, indeed, throughout the nation: “How many roads must a man walk down before he’s called a man/ How many seas must a white dove sail before he sleeps in the sand/ How many times must the cannon balls fly before they’re forever banned?/ The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind...”

## Mid 1963, Leroy F. Aarons

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Source: *The Washington Post*, US newspaper, 18 August 1963, page G1.

The location of this interview is unknown.

### Fresh Voice Rising in Folk Wilderness

#### **“Man, I don’t work my songs out. I burp ’em out.”**

This is the way a skinny, untidy blond youth named Bob Dylan explains the talent that seem destined to make him a show business sensation.

Dylan, 22, has captured the imagination of a large following which is spreading the word about the Greenwich Village rebel who writes and sings songs of anguished protest.

He has been called both a great poet and a phoney. Pete Seeger, the sage of the folk singing set, sees him as heir to the Woodie Guthrie tradition of the 1930s. Others find his sloppiness, Midwestern drawl and flip nonconformity all part of an image designed to win him profitable notoriety.

The answer to the riddle of Dylan probably lies somewhere in between. But anyone who has watched the reaction of a young audience (such as at last month’s Newport Folk Festival) to a Dylan performance, is aware that here is someone to be reckoned with.

Dylan’s origins are obscure, and he seems to prefer it that way. He says he was born in Sioux Falls, S. D., but other reports place his birth in Minnesota and even New York.

As for education, he talks about auditing courses for six months at the University of Minneapolis. It seems he left home quite young, and spent years wandering across the face of the country, finally settling in Greenwich Village.

His songs – there are now more than 200 of them – are topical, bitter and uncompromising. The words are disarmingly simple, yet there is no denying passages of great power.

Dylan delivers them with an intensity born of obsession. One can see the Furies flying about as his nasal voice performs its anguished exorcism – blond head thrown back sharp, intense eyes clenched beneath pained brow, his thin dungareed body arched against the struggle.

The effect on his audience is electric. And it is an audience that is constantly growing. One of his songs, “Blowin In The Wind”, is a hit record as sung by Peter, Paul and Mary. His record albums are bestsellers, and there is talk of a movie contract. If modern press agency does its job (Dylan’s manager is Al Grossman, who guides the fortunes of Peter, Paul and Mary and also Odetta), Dylan could well become this generation’s James Dean.

But, unlike Dean, Dylan is a rebel with a cause. His songs rage against a world dominated by the powerful and the unscrupulous. The people of his songs are victims of a great omnipotent THEY – the bombmakers, the warmongers, the politicians, the segregationists, the rightists.

It is Dylan’s message, combined with an almost animal sensuality, that sparks his audience. (For all his untidiness, he has sex appeal – or is it because of it?) Many older listeners are repelled, but his young following finds in Dylan an expression of their own half-formed protest against the injustices that outrage the innocent.

(His detractors have asked whether audience reaction to his songs is not merely a guilt spasm for their own lack of action.)

One of Dylan’s songs, gaining wide popularity, is “With God on Our Side,” a bitter denunciation of the ways in which man rationalizes the evils of war:

*When the Second World War  
Came to an end  
We forgave the Germans  
And then we were friends  
Though they murdered six million  
In the ovens they fried  
The Germans now too have  
God on their side*

In another pacifist song, “Masters Of War,” Dylan fantasises the destruction of the war conspirators in a final verse:

*I hope that you die and your death will be soon  
I'll follow your casket by the pale afternoon  
And I'll watch while you're lowered down to your death bed  
The I'll stand over your grave 'till I'm sure that you're dead.*

One feels in talking with Dylan that here is an explosive, talented youth who might well have turned to hijacking cars had not the fates led him to a more constructive expression at his inner anguish. This anguish seems to have its roots in some very personal struggle, but it takes outer form in a cosmic way – namely protest against man's inhumanity.

Dylan denies being a “protest” writer, pointing to a number of humorous, untopical songs. He also makes no claim to any special talent, hence the “burp” remark at the beginning of this article.

**“If I didn't write this stuff I'd go nuts,” he says. “I've got all these thoughts inside me, and I gotta say 'em. Most people can't say 'em. They keep it all inside. It's for these people that I write my songs.”**

Press agency? Truth? Who knows? Probably a good deal of both.

## 31 January 1964, Helen McNamara

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Source: *The Toronto Telegram*, Canadian newspaper, 3 February 1964.

This interview took place in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

### Final Quest is 'Loaded'

The last Quest show to be produced by Daryl Duke before he leaves for Hollywood and the Steve Allen Show could be one of the most controversial programs in that newsworthy series.

Slated for March 10 is a show called *The Times Are a'Changin'*, the title of an album made by folk singer Bob Dylan, who has within his short flight to fame, been called a folk poet, singer, composer, and a rebellious spokesman for America's younger generation.

The idol of high school and college students, Dylan was in Toronto to tape the show last week. He was enjoying the experience **"because I can't sing on TV in the United States."**

### SHOCKING

The lean, shaggy haired 23-year-old said with a faint smile: **"They don't want anyone to be offended."**

With only two U.S. TV shows to his credit (both documentaries) Dylan said he had been asked to sing on the Ed Sullivan show.

**"I wanted to sing my song, Talking John Birch, which Ed and the producers dug, but the censor said I would have to sing something else, something like what the Clancy Brothers would sing. I walked out."**

Dylan, who accompanies himself with guitar and harmonica, sings in a style that combines Negro blues and country music on topics that range over segregation, politics, war mongering, love and loneliness.

### AN IDOL

They are so powerfully presented that he is gathering avid young followers who, it is said, idolize him because he says the things they can't express themselves.

**"Well, if the kids say I speak for them, that's beautiful,"** said Dylan wryly, **"but I haven't reached the masses one little bit."**

Dylan squelched the tag of being the new Woody Guthrie, a spokesman of the '30's [*sic*].

Guthrie, he added, came out of the depression years when there were two sides, a time when you knew all your friends and all your enemies. **"Now it's different."**

Since Dylan first ran away from his home town of Duluth, Minn. at 10, he has been obsessed with phoniness. But he has also suffered its effects.

### WAS BORED

**"I used to run away because I was bored with the routine, but I was also writing short stories and poems."**

**"This went on until I was about 12, then I started to be influenced, I was destroyed by phoney forces, by the James Dean fads and the Marlon Brando gimmicks."**

Today he does not seem to be any more certain of what he is (**"I don't consider myself an entertainer. I don't want to be known as a folk singer"**) but he has a goal.

He's writing a novel and a play which he hopes will be an extension of the ideas he has put into songs.

Whatever Dylan's ultimate form of expression, of one thing he is certain. **"I have accepted the fact of my not being understood."**

If the sales of his records and the recording of his songs by other folk singers are any criterion, however, Dylan is far from being misunderstood. Whether he likes it or not, he has a public.

# 1 February 1964, Murray Reiss, Jim McKelvey, Henry Tarvainen and Bill Cameron

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Source: *Gargoyle*, University of Toronto student publication, February 1964, single page [unpaginated].

This interview took place in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

## Gargoyle Interviews Bob Dylan

-- This is your first time on television in North America isn't it?

**No, I've been on television in the States a couple of times. I did this one because of Daryl Duke, it was his last show, and I could do things I can't do anyplace else, certainly not in the States. I've been on some programs in the United States, but they were specific central kinds of programs where what I did went into what the program was all about and so if somebody didn't dig it they could turn it off anyway. But I did walk off the Ed Sullivan Show. I was promised that I could sing "Talking John Birch" on the show. I went to rehearsal and I did it, and then just an hour before the show, the CBS censors said I had to do another song, they said, 'can't you sing something nice, like the Clancy Brothers, we've had the Clancy Brothers on before and they've sung nice songs', and I couldn't do that. This is the only time where I've ever had this complete freedom.**

-- Do you really notice the difference between working here and working in the States?

**Oh yeah. Well, I don't know if this is Daryl or the CBC but whatever it is, it's like the BBC in England and the CBC here, whatever their hangups and drawbacks may be, have much more freedom than in the United States. There's not much freedom there.**

-- Yeah, they've had Seeger here. The CBC doesn't have to worry about the sponsors saying we don't want you to do this. In one of the songs on your first album you talk about meeting Ric von Schmidt at Harvard...

**Harvard?**

-- "I first met Ric while strollin' through the green pastures of Harvard University"?

**Oh that was my first record. Oh man, like I'd forgot that. I made that two and a half years ago, that's an old, old record, I wasn't even me. I was still learning language then, I was writing then, but what I was writing I was still scared to sing, and there was no one else who was writing, and anything I did write I didn't sing, I read it, at poet gatherings and stuff like that. I sung things which came in a certain form on the first record. I wrote a song about Woody Guthrie which was only on there because it came in a certain form and it made a certain amount of sense song-wise. But the rest of the stuff I never did sing until just after that. There was nobody else singing and writing -- everybody was either singing and also writing, but nobody was singing what they were writing. I did both.**

-- Same as Woody Guthrie?

**Well, Woody, the influence he had on me has worn off, it had worn off about a year ago, about a year and a half ago maybe. The influence wore off when he ceased to be an idol to me, I used to visit him in the hospital every day, and just talk to him, and by seeing him, he just sort of busted himself all down, he wasn't an idol. And from there on in, the idols I did have, like in idol stages... You see everybody has idols, even if its for a minute they're still an idol for some time. You have to have an idol, so you have idols, Little Richard, Jack Kerouac, or Marlon Brando, stuff like this, even if they lasted a split second they were still idols for a time. Woody was a big idol to me at one time, but I met him, got to know him -- not know him really, but to talk to him, and I got to pour out myself to him I got to him on that kind of level, and it was the kind of thing where I couldn't feel honest anymore, things all started looking phoney to me, absolutely everything the things I was doing, singing Woody's songs for money, singing folk songs for money, all of a sudden this seemed very phoney to me.**

-- Like Jack Elliott?

**Well Jack Elliott's a good friend of mine, he's one of my best friends. I met him accidently. He happens to be a folksinger, and my friends, the people I am with all the time aren't folksingers, but Jack is...**

-- Well, Jack sings a lot of Woody Guthrie's songs.

**Yeah, Jack is a completely different thing. I know Jack on another level too, and he's very beautiful, and what he's doing is very real.**

-- You said in the paper today you are writing a novel...

**I am...**



-- Is it sort of the things you do on the back of albums, is it that kind of operation?

**I don't know when it's ever going to be done. I'm writing a play which is going to be done sooner than the novel. I've written some plays before but I've never written anything I'd really want to produce, except this one now, I want to see it get done.**

-- You coming up to Canada at all to sing?

**I don't know about singing, you see, because I don't work that much, I don't play concerts that much. I'm in this accidentally. I'm known, well-known, for the only reason because the songs I write -- I know a lot of people, I just know them through wierd (*sic*) circles and they sing what I write. I would never be known if it wasn't for Pete Seeger, or Joan Baez, or even Peter Paul & Mary, Marlene Dietrich, through all kinds of people. I don't know if you know some people in New York City, but they just do things. I used to hang around the Living Theatre, and after midnight there used to be Moon-dog and Hugh Romney -- the Living Theatre is busted now, but all these kind of things, wherever people are doing something, are honestly saying they're hung-up and they're lonely. Everybody's lonely, only because everybody's alone. People don't eat and sleep for you; people don't kiss for you. You have your own hang-ups, it makes you lonely, everybody's lonely, and I can't really recognize anybody unless they admit this. It ceases a lot in the folk music field, of people singing folk songs. not to learn, because I sang folk songs the same way I played the trumpet for about two months, or wore a white tie and a black shirt for about two weeks. It was just a phase, it was a learning thing, and from folksongs I learned the language, I learned a lot about people, by singing them and knowing them and remembering them, I was conciously (*sic*) aware of them. Because folk songs are a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful thing, really like the god-almighty arts, if it's used, things have to be used. It's there for the using, it's not there for the becoming, it's not there to *become* a folk song, you have to use it to learn about you, and whatever you want to do. English ballads, Scottish ballads, I see them in images -- it's too wierd (*sic*) for me, I can't sit down and sing something like "Barbara Allan," because it goes deeper than just myself singing it, it goes into legends and Bibles, it goes into curses and myths, it goes into plagues, it goes into all kinds of wierd (*sic*) things, things that I don't know about, can't pretend to know about. The only guy I know that can really do it is a guy I know named Paul Clayton, he's the only guy I've ever heard or seen who can sing songs like this, because he's a medium, he's not trying to personalize it, he's bringing it to you.**

-- Would you say Joan Baez is the same way?

**No, I wouldn't say Joanie's that way, she's just plain beautiful, whatever she does, it sounds beautiful. Her voice is like a mirror -- she can do anything beautiful, she just has that kind of thing. But Paul, he's a trance.**

-- I've got a couple of friends who are just starting to learn about things like this, they've always been jazz or classics. I played them Peter, Paul & Mary's "Blowin' in the Wind", and they thought fine, just great, and then I played them yours and they thought too much, the first time, like 'turn it off, forget it', but after a few times it grows on them.

**Well, that's a strange thing, "Blowin' in the Wind", that's a song I wrote in twenty minutes and I wrote it two and a half years ago, I wrote it in the Black Pussycat, down on McDougal St., I just wrote it just like that and that song has been around since then. The New World Singers, they were singing that song a year before Peter Paul & Mary were, and when Peter Paul & Mary made it famous it was like 'who's this Bob Dylan? what's he writing?', and it's like nobody can recognize that I was on the street all the way up till then.**

-- Did this bother you?

**No, but it was unrecognizable towards people, all of a sudden Bob Dylan's name came into their life, and they were saying who's Bob Dylan the same way they would be saying that about Bobby Darin. All of a sudden they recognize Bobby Darin, and they say wow! who's this Bobby Darin? and they find out about him, and they read about him, all this publicity, and you accept the idea that Bobby Darin has wanted to be a movie star for a long time and now you see him and you accept what he's been for a long time. But with me, I haven't changed, I was bumming around then, and I'm bumming around now, only because I can't abandon my friends, I can't abandon their feelings and I can't pretend I don't know about real things, I can't pretend I don't know them, I don't think about them. Through all the phony bullshit, -- when it's bullshit there's no such thing as a half bullshit, or a fourth bullshit, it's bullshit. None of my friends, none of the places I hang around, none of the people I stay with are bullshit people, and none of them are jealous people, none of them are after anybody. The same with me -- I'm not after anybody, I'm not jealous of anybody, I can honestly say I'm not jealous of really anybody. I get hurt a lot, by people that are jealous of me, for a split second but then I come out of it all the time, I have so many beautiful things to see, so many beautiful images to use, that it doesn't matter. There is an immediate shock all the time, but it doesn't last very long.**

-- Do you find these kids who think "Bobby Dylan, wow he's god!" do you find these bugging you?

**It bugs me when they say something they're so sure about, and I know if I'm an idol to them, if I'm**

their god -- I might be their god, but they are no disciple of mine, they haven't gotten what I'm saying, though they think they do. Just a little while ago, this cat came up outside, and had the gall, the nerve, to say -- I was talking to a very nice fellow out there and his girlfriend, and here comes this character, and first of all he wants to buy a harmonica from me. That's ridiculous, he can buy a harmonica, I've got a harmonica but it's not going to be any better than anything he can buy. It will just mislead him, falsify him to sell him my harmonica. I know what he's going to do with it, he's going to tell them this is Bob Dylan's harmonica, and he gave it to me because he liked me. I don't care about that, all I have to say is no, I'm not going to sell you my harmonica, please don't even ask to buy it, get your own harmonica, please, I'll pay for it even.

Then he asks me why don't you write a song about commercialism. I mean I've sung six fuckin' songs at the program here, and if it's not evident enough that not the kind of cat goes around writing songs about commercialism if that's what's on my mind, like if the Kingston Trio has bothered me so much that I write a song about it, if it's really going to sway somebody one way or the other, and he's going to get a movement going, it's really going to matter one little bit in human life in years to come, and it's going to make somebody happy or unhappy, that's a whole other thing. But it's utterly plain ridiculous -- here he comes and wants to know if I ever write a song about commercialism. I don't write songs about commercialism in folk music it's never even crossed my mind, I mean why think about it, and he couldn't understand that. And he's a fan of mine, he wants to buy my harmonica, I'm his god. Is this going to satisfy me, knowing that I'm his god, when he doesn't even see me, he doesn't even hear what I say? What good does it do, man? It can make me pissed off, because I don't want it, I don't want to be a god, an idol, I want to be friends.

-- Do you see any path or direction your songs take? You're talking now about bullshit and about friendship and...

No, I used to write bullshit songs, I went through a phase of writing bullshit songs about two and a half years ago. When I made my first record I wrote many more songs than were on that record. I didn't record them only because I couldn't at that time. But then I made the second record, then people wanted me to sing songs I wrote. I used to write songs, like I'd say, 'yeah, what's bad, pick out something bad, like segregation, O.K., here we go' and I'd pick one of the thousand million little points I can pick and explode it, some of them which I didn't know about. I wrote a song about Emmett Till, which in all honesty was a bullshit song, I can say that now, because now I wouldn't write it, but when I wrote it, it wasn't a bullshit song to me. But I realize now that my reasons and motives behind it were phony. I didn't have to write it; I was bothered by many other things that I pretended I wasn't bothered by, in order to write this song about Emmett Till, a person I never even knew.

-- This was thing to write about?

No, it wasn't the thing to write about, at that time it wasn't...

-- No, I mean to you personally.

Yeah, to me personally, because nobody else had ever done it, and it was quick at hand, and knowing that people knew who Emmett Till was. I wrote the song, and I wouldn't sing it, I couldn't imagine anyone really singing it. I haven't written to my mind a phony song ever since -- oh, for two years I've only written one song, to my mind, that I don't believe in, one song that puts me up tight and gets me embarrassed when I hear it. I don't sing it anymore, but some people do. There are just a few lines in it that aren't really true, aren't really where it's at. They are true, but they are too true, and the trueness of them is actually a cliché, and I don't write in clichés. I recognize it as a cliché only know (*sic*) when I look back and see other people singing it, I shudder, because it's not my words anymore.

-- May we ask what it is?

I'm only speaking of one verse in the song, and the song is "If Today Were not a Crooked Highway". It's a beautiful song, the only verse I can't make in it is the last verse that goes: "There's beauty in the silver singing river. There's beauty in the rainbow in the skies/ But, of these nothing else can match/ The beauty I remember in my true love's eyes." It's pillow-soft, it's not me anymore, because I don't think that way, that way has been spoken for a million times, and it's not for me to say. The second verse is my words, and the first verse is my words.

Dylan's manager: "Bob there are five people waiting in a cab."

Yeah, well I have to leave now. I'm sorry I didn't get more of a chance to see everybody, but I just came to do this show, it was really the important (*sic*) thing, because I can't do this anyplace else. I know I will never be able to do another one like it, not in, the States. If I do it will be a miracle.

## 26 April 1964, Dave Gitelson and Dick Doherty

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Source: *The Massachusetts Collegian*, US student newspaper, 1 May 1964. The text here is transcribed from a facsimile published in: *The Bridge*, UK fanzine, Number 68, Winter 2020, page 34.

This interview took place in Curry Hicks Cage, University Of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

### **Bob Dylan: Performance & The Show After The Show**

On Sunday evening more than thirteen hundred students sat on folding chairs and bleachers in the Cage to hear the highlight of the Civil Rights' Week program a concert by Bobby Dylan. To say that he was well received would be something of an understatement; even those who had approached the concert with a negative attitude came away impressed by the talent of this young man who has so often been described as one of the outstanding spokesmen of our generation.

The performance itself consisted exclusively of original compositions, ranging from tender love songs to protests against racial injustices, a nuclear holocaust, etc. What struck us most, as we sat and listened, was the sincerity of his words. They do not come from the mind, but from the heart.

After the concert we were fortunate to be able to briefly speak to Mr. Dylan. We were quite surprised at his congeniality, as he shook hands and signed autographs for as many of his admirers as was possible. Mobbed by a large number of inquisitive people, it was very difficult to get answers to our questions, but we were able to get some of the background on this remarkable artist.

Dylan attributes the start of his professional career to a Fizzie Young, at the Folklore Center in New York City. Without this man's help, he told us, he doubts that he could have achieved the popularity that he has. He is in the process of writing a novel, to which he devotes as much of his time as possible. It should be really something. When we asked him what he thought of the many popular recordings of his music released by other artists, he laughed and described them as **"wonderful – they've captured the real Dylan!"**

As several sidelights to the evening, as soon as he left the campus, Dylan and his troupe of bodyguards went directly to the Drake, where they held a private party. Not a bad life. To try to clear up a widespread rumour, Joan Baez was not at the concert. That girl everyone thought was she turned out to be a waitress at the Club 47 in Boston.

We would like to extend our thanks to those people who were responsible for arranging Bobby Dylan's appearance here on campus, and hope that all of you enjoyed the evening as much as we did.

## 9-11 May 1964, Patrick Doncaster

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Source: *Daily Mirror*, UK newspaper, 12 May 1964, page 23.

This interview was conducted in London. Some of the comments attributed to Dylan appear to come from press statements.

### **ROAMIN' BOB IS WORRYIN' ... about singin' in the afternoon**

Like it's Tuesday and somebody might think I got out of bed two days too soon. But no.

We're on the two-columns-a-week kick now with a Stop Press Top Ten that saves you waiting until Thursday – when you'll get the full Pop Thirty.

And there is no better way to start a Tuesday column than to have an interview with America's Bob Dylan, who is a folk-singing rave over there and is about to take the Royal Festival Hall by storm next Sunday ... and who told me he doesn't give interviews.

Mr. Dylan, who wrote the big hit "Blowin' in the Wind" for that folksie Peter, Paul and Mary, is slight and shaggy with bushy sideboards. He is twenty-two. And he is hailed as a folk genius. He sings, plays guitar and harmonica.

#### Billed

He is billed as "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" and you will notice that at the school he went to they didn't have a G in the alphabet. When he writes his "folk-poems" he puts "climbin" and "blowin".

But what's all this freewheelin' bit?

**"They gotta think of somethin' to sell records,"** he said as if it were a disease. **"It's bull... I don't meet somebody an' say 'I'm the Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.' Just bull..."**

He was brought up in a small mining town called Hibbing, in Minnesota. **"But home,"** he said grimly, **"is a place to leave."**

He should know. He says he **"ran away when I was 10, 12, 13, 15, 15½, 17 an' 18."**

**"I been caught an' brought back all but once."**

He is not terribly concerned about money or ambition. **"Why should I worry about money?"** he said. **"I got friends who would never let me starve."**

**"Ambition? I suppose my ambition is to have no ambitions."**

Mr. Dylan, who went to university, arrived the rough way. Roamin' singin' and playin'.

#### 'Jailed'

On the way, he will tell you, he **"got jailed for suspicion of armed robbery, got held four hours on a murder rap, got busted for lookin' like I do – an' I never done none a them things."**

He has one concern about his concert next Sunday

**"I've never sung in the afternoon,"** he said, **"sometimes I don't get up till that time."**

- CBS issue a new Dylan LP to make him feel more at home – "The Times They Are a-Changin'."

## 12 May 1964, Maureen Cleave

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Source: *Evening Standard*, UK newspaper, 16 May 1964, page 7.

This interview took place in London, England.

### **If Bob can't sing it, it must be a poem or a novel or something...**

Some say that Bob Dylan is a genius; others say he is a very moderate folk singer but not bad at the guitar. I say that he's wonderful, but that you should decide for yourself by listening to his three LPs, *Bob Dylan*, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, all on CBS.

He has a funny, elderly sort of voice and always sings as though he is going to run out of breath any minute. In between verses, he blows into a mouth organ screwed into a wire harness about his neck. This comes out as a terrible, discordant wail. I'm not saying he makes easy listening but I find the way he sings very moving.

### Significant

The Americans are most excited about him and write great feature on him in their magazines. They think he is significant. Even folk singers, a choosy lot, are crazy about him. So are the Beatles. He sings at the Festival Hall tomorrow.

He writes most of his stuff himself and though many of the tunes – like *Blowin' In The Wind* – are lovely, he doesn't pay much attention to them. It's the words that count.

These may be violent and bitter, dealing with civil rights, boxers who get killed in the ring, the world after the atom bomb. Or they may be about love or they may be jokes with Bardot and Anita Ekberg slung in for good measure.

The songs may be conventional length or they may ramble on for a quarter-of-an-hour.

He says: **"If I can sing it, it's a song. If I can't sing it, it's a poem. If it's not a song or a poem, it's a novel."** The last thing he sees himself as is a folk singer.

### Sensitive

He thinks the Beatles and Manfred Mann are more sensitive than a bunch of folk singers.

Mr. Dylan is 23 and a highly romantic figure. He comes from a small, dead mining town in Minnesota from which, as a child, he ran away roughly once a year.

**"I ran away with motorcycle gangs, carnivals, travelling druggists.**

**"Where I come from, it's not so special to run away; you can get out of town easy; you can see both ends of it from the one place.**

**"Everybody in the movies ran away from home, struck out, became cowboys, made a million dollars."**

Most of his time since has been spent on the move. He says he hasn't seen his parents in a bunch of years. He now seems to come from New York though he has nowhere special to live there.

**"I have millions and trillions of friends. They have me to stay, perhaps because they think I'm a waif or because they know I will never invite them to stay with me."** His only worldly possessions are the clothes he wears and a motorcycle. He isn't at all sure where the motorcycle is at this moment.

### Old boots

When I saw him he was wearing enormous old suede boots. **"Funny I should be wearing boots,"** he said, regarding his feet with interest. **"Billy the Kid shot himself in the toe wearing these kind of boots."** His blue jeans had special inserts sewn by a girl friend to accommodate the tops of his boots. He wore a black polo-necked jersey and buttoned up ancient suede jacket. It was a very hot day but he said he hadn't noticed.

“I will tell you a secret,” he said. “I don’t wash many of my clothes. When they get dirty, I just leave them.” He once owned a peaked, corduroy, Huck Finn cap but he gave that away.

When he describes himself as an angelic waif, he is accurate. He has a very young face and curly hair. He drinks quantities of red wine out of several different glasses at the same time and smokes lots of cigarettes. He laughs and giggles a great deal, usually at what he says himself.

He has absolutely no sense of time but says that he works about four months of the year and spends the other eight recuperating. **“I have millions and trillions of hobbies. You are dealing with a walking hobby.”**

Woody Guthrie, the folk singer, used to be his god. He once travelled from New Orleans to New York to visit him in hospital. Mr. Guthrie was not expecting him.

**“He was very sick and he didn’t say much. I wanted to sing his songs and I thought he was the best person to sing them to. He was very surprised but when I’d sung the first one he said ‘Sing another’ ”**

So, with guitar, mouth organ and all, he did: and all the other patients listened too.

Most of his time is spent writing. He is working on three books of poems and photographs and a novel.

**“I’m only human and I can see many sides to the question. I don’t associate myself with any creed. If I said I was a pacifist, I would be a liar. I’m conscious of what’s going to happen when the bomb gets banned.**

### ‘Phoney’

**“But I’m not worried about the bomb. I just dislike the way they surround my life with it.**

**“Politicians are phoney. Sometimes you get to the point where you say, ‘This is insane.’ Like Cuba. Who minds about Castro? Who really cares? I’ve got no interests there. I’ve got no hot dog stands or whore houses or clothes factories. Why should I be upset?**

**“You know there are people in the United States who want to declare war on England because you are selling buses to Cuba?”**

He laughed again, albeit drily. **“I wish,”** he said restlessly, **“somebody in our government had a beard. Just to be a little different.”**



## 19 September 1964, Dick Pike

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Source: *The Michigan Daily*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Volume 75, Number 19, 20 September 1964.

This interview was conducted at Michigan High School, Ann Arbor.

### Carrying the Weight of The World's Problems

That the many-sided personality that is Bob Dylan remains an enigma – perhaps even to himself – was amply demonstrated last night when this uncommonly hung-up kid played guitar and harmonica and sang to an overflow crowd – estimated as being about half high school students at Ann Arbor High. Emphasizing that “**I don’t write songs, y’know... just write verse and set it to music and a tempo I like...**,” Dylan dispensed liberal doses of his acidic and characteristic gripes against mid-twentieth century society to a highly receptive audience.

Nearly as random as some of his more esoteric “verses” was his delivery on this occasion – obvious to those who had heard the angry lad previously – certainly not at the peak of its potential. But somehow, the unabashedly monotonous guitar style – not always in tune, either – the unsophisticated and occasionally sloppy harmonica work, and the pinched nasal voice (that only Bob Dylan could get away with consistently and still remain a popular performer) only served to throw the weighty content of Dylan’s musical polemics into shocking sharp relief.

Granted, most of us take issue with much in the course of recent history and contemporary social and other trends, it is only too clear that Bob Dylan has concerned himself with these problems to the extent that the burden may be about to knock him flat. Committed to his grand sense as deeply as he is at this point, Dylan conveyed the feeling through his material, his arrangements, his “technique,” and his strangely worn and tired appearance that he is “... **tired of blowin’ words at a stone wall...**,” that he is frustrated at the reception of his “message” and that he doesn’t give a damn about that flat G-string, the missed chord, the monotonous chanting of familiar verses.

The “Talking, John Birch Blues,” one of few up-tempo numbers – which Dylan does so well – was delivered with the intonation and timing of the expert satirist: the lyrical, if lengthy, unrecorded “Trambourine [*sic*] Man” was a pleasant and satisfying surprise; in “It’s Alright Ma, It’s Only Life,” Dylan summarized his philosophy and attitudes; “Don’t Think Twice” came out in a wild, even crude, whooping delivery which was so much more in the bittersweet spirit of the song than the usual pablum dished up by the commercial folkum artists; and who will ever forget “All I Want Is To Be Friends With You,” about the message of which this reviewer will only say “... yeah.”



## 19 September 1964, Robert Sheffield

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Source: *The Michigan Daily*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Volume 75, Number 19, 20 September 1964, page 1. The text reproduced here is from *The Bridge*, UK fanzine, Number 72, Spring 2022 (published May 2022), pages 69, 71, 72.

This interview was conducted at Michigan High School, Ann Arbor.

### The Inimitable Dylan

Dylan before an audience is very different from the Bobby back stage. Last night, relaxing on a dressing table, he added a few more lines to the stories that one can never be sure of.

But as he said, **“If you can’t get it from me, where can you get it?”**

He spoke of the evolution of his name. It went from Zimmerman, **“the last name of my first father”**, to Dillon, **“a family name”**, to Dylan.

With only a few personal engagements, he spends his time writing **“a book, a play, a movie, and an opera.”** When pressed for a release date he said that when they come out it will be **“all at once, and I’ll be very tired.”** He has been working on his book for two years.

Every one of his albums has sold more copies than those before it. Dylan says with variable (*sic*) truth that his planned album with Joan Baez will outsell them all. But what about another little known recording on the Broadside label under the name of Blind Boy Grunt? We asked him and with the artistry of a diplomat he affirmed, **“Blind Boy Grunt? I’ve recorded under a lot of names. Hmmm Yes.”**

We offered the suggestion that perhaps he used the name because he was under contract to another company.

**“Well yes. That must have been my Blind Boy Grunt Contract.”**

Answers? One can’t be sure of them. But those of you who were there and marvelled at the autographs from Dylan’s dark-haired female companion signed, ‘Joan Baez,’ perhaps have one answer. Her name was Sally.

## 10 February 1965, Sheryl Evans

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Source: *The Jersey Journal*, Jersey City, 18 February 1965.

Interview at the concert at The State College, Rutgers Gymnasium, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

### Bob Dylan: Authentic Voice of Protest

*Regarded as the “king” of protest music in esoteric circles, Bob Dylan appeared last week before a SRO audience of folk enthusiasts at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, in a one-man concert sponsored by Community Action Projects. Our girl, Sheryl, a Dylan fan and authority was there to cover the event.*

The lobby of the New Brunswick auditorium was mobbed. The majority of the crowd was in uniform: Beards, desert boots, long hair, sweaters, on the boys; straight hair, raincoats, shoulder bags, on the girls. They seemed to be going all out to look like individuals. Instead they looked like characters.

The program was to begin at 8 p.m. At 8:15 the backstage door opened and a scrawny young man clad in dungarees, light blue shirt, and brown jacket walked to the stage. He started singing the moment he reached the microphone despite the thunderous applause still coming from the audience. Within seconds not a sound could be heard except Dylan’s off-beat voice proclaiming that “The Times They Are A’Changin’”.

Dylan is an “in-person-performer”; his voice and mood and meaning come across much clearer in person than on record. His wit seems sharper, his disappointments sadder, his protests stronger.

And protesting strongly is a thing Bob Dylan does often and well. During the 90-minute concert he protested against social injustice, senseless fear, nuclear war, discrimination, and phony morality. He defended freedom, individualism, change, reform, and truth.

To say that Bob Dylan is impressive would be an understatement; overwhelming is a better word. Close-up, he makes quite an appearance. His skin is too white, too pale. His hair is too long. It vaguely resembles the mane of a horse that’s been out in a dust storm. But for all the extremeness in his guise, one still gets the feeling he is sincere, real, honest. (After consorting with that audience of wishful individualists all night, this was refreshing).

Our conversation was short and didn’t amount to very much. I didn’t learn anything about his feelings that I hadn’t already discovered from reading his poetry and listening to his songs.

What I did learn, however, is that Bob Dylan is authentic. What he says, he’s saying because he believes it; he’s thought about it. Or, to put it in his words, **“I wouldn’t waste my time writing about something I didn’t believe in.”**

## 17 or 18 March 1965, Marvin Zelkowitz

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Source: *The Pitt News*, University of Pittsburgh student newspaper, 24 March 1965, page 3.

Interview at the concert at Syria Mosque, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

### Dylan and Baez

The times they are really changin' when a kid with a voice like Bob Dylan's can stand up before 5,000 people and sing through his nose about God and freedom, and get away with it. And that is just what Dylan did at Syria Mosque last Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

If it had not been for Joan Baez's melodic strains that broke the monotony of Dylan's droning, this reviewer would have left after the first song. Dylan was barely tolerable when he sang, but he had to prove that he had other talents besides singing.

So, resembling Howdy Doody's one man band, he played harmonica and guitar at the same time. We asked Dylan why he chose to become a folk singer. He ran his hand through his hair, a mop that makes the Beatles seem conservative. **"It's the only thing I'm good at,"** he said.

He says he started folk singing at the age of 11 and has been singing for the past 13 years. **"I even tried grave digging for a while,"** he explained, **"but I wasn't even good at that, so I decided to keep singing."**

Both Boy [*sic*] Dylan and Joan Baez say they sing to make people think. They both say their singing and writing serves no other purpose. When they sang at the Mosque, they sang to make the people think who were paying anywhere between \$2.50 and \$4.00 to see them.

When Miss Baez sings in the South, she sings for the same reasons. "I never sing in white schools anymore," she said. "The kids there listen to your songs, and they agree outwardly with what you say, but they don't practice what they say they agree with."

For that reason, Miss Baez now sings only in the Negro schools. "They can understand what I'm saying," she said. "I can communicate with them."

Many of the songs that both these people sing have been written by them. This is where Bob Dylan's true talent lies. He has the ability to put into words what is felt by so many popular folk singers. Dylan's songs would come across better if he would let Miss Baez, or a group like the Kingston Trio or Peter, Paul, and Mary sing them.

## 19 March 1965, Bebo White and David Berkowitz

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Source: *Isis*, UK fanzine, Number 196, 2018, pages 40-43, audio recording transcribed by Zac Dadic.

Interview at Reynolds Coliseum, Raleigh, North Carolina of Bob Dylan (BD) and Joan Baez (JB) by Bebo White (BW) and David Berkowitz (DB).

### Raleigh '65 Revisited - a 'lost' interview

BW: You're on.

DB: Hello. Well, ladies and gentleman that was it.

BW: Hah, we've got Bob Dylan's post nasal drugs. Seriously, if you were to classify yourself, socially and politically, how would you do it?

**BD: Well I'd say I was a mathematician more than anything else. A socialistic mathematician, I deal in numbers, actually. Numbers and nasal spray. I don't know, what would you classify yourself as?**

(more nasal spray is applied)

**BD: God! My nose is terrible.**

JB: (in the background) Are you going to share that with anybody else?

**BD: Anything, what kind of thing can I pick from?**

BW: Ok, I'll give ya, I'll cue ya. I know this will be dear to your heart. The thing is a month ago in Carolina we had a drive for free speech... free speech movement and it was a complete flop. (Bob applies nasal spray again.)

BW: Did you hear anything about that?

**BD: No I didn't. Sorry to say...**

BW: I got something along the same line. Are you familiar with the 'Speaker Ban' in North Carolina?

**BD: No. No I'm not.**

BW: No Communists or anybody that's ever been a member of the Communist Party or anybody that's ever plead the 5<sup>th</sup> amendment...

DB: Regarding his political beliefs...

BW: Yeah, can ever speak on a state supported campus.

**BD: You mean nobody can ever hear 'em?**

BW: That's right.

DB: On a state supported campus.

BW: That includes, that includes... such as Pete Seeger.

**BD: Oh, well, too bad.**

BW: You think it's good? (incredulous)

**BD: No, I said it's too bad! (equally incredulous)**

(Joan laughs)

**BD: I don't know, I don't think anybody should be... I think people should be allowed to hear anything, anything that anybody or anything wants to talk. In itself, but you know, a lot of people don't believe that. They have reasons to not let somebody hear something, you know.**

BW: Bobbo, the thing is... anybody can come here except those. I mean, before last Malcolm X came here you know, and George Lincoln Rockwell could come here, but not Pete Seeger. Something like that.

**BD: Well that's more or less, I think maybe a... tradition thing. Maybe they don't like folk music or something?**

BW: Alright, another example. It's about two months ago, this cat was gonna come and speak in the biology ward. Somebody dug out...

**BD: I get, I know what you mean, I know what you mean. It's too bad, that's all I can say. I don't know anything else about it. That's the university's fault. That's the university's problem, you know. I don't know who can take care of that except the people who go to the university there. Somebody else...**

DB: Silly thing is, it's entirely in legislation.

**BD: Oh.**

BW: Virtually everybody at the University's against it. That's what this thing was...

**BD: Yeah.**

DB: I've got two questions. One, what do you think of college in general and two, what do you think of President Johnson? Are you disappointed with him for carrying on the war in Vietnam?

**BD: No, I didn't vote for him. (laughs)**

DB: Did you vote for Goldwater?

**BD: No, I didn't vote for him either. I didn't vote.**

DB: I can't say that I blame ya.

BW: You didn't answer his first question.

**BD: Yeah, what do I think of what?**

BW: College in general.

**BD: Anything to keep the people off the street... (laughter)**

**BD: ...I like, you know.**

BW: It keeps you from being drafted too.

**BD: Well, whatever. If it keeps you off the street and out of trouble then it's good. If it doesn't, you know, then you got to find something else to occupy your interest, I think.**

DB: Are you going to be at the Newport Folk Festival this year?

**BD: I don't really know too much about that. I'm not sure if I'll be in the country. You know. If I'm in the country probably I will be. I like it.**

DB: Joanie, are you going to be at the Newport Folk Festival this summer?

JB: I think so, yeah.

BW: If you're not gonna be there...

DB: ...they shouldn't call it a folk festival. They couldn't change that, it's a tradition. What do you think of college in general.

JB: Oh, for the most part I think it's pretty bad.

DB: What would you suggest as an alternative or an improvement?

JB: Oh, if it were possible for a real school to be in existence I think it would be good, but I don't think there's much to learn in a educational institute sort of as they stand.

DB: Are you familiar with the ethical culture prep school in New York?

JB: Nope.

BW: What do you mean, 'school as it stands'?

JB: Well, college is, you can't learn anything except how to be like everybody else is when they get turned out of college and go stumbling through life. I think it's very rare if you learn, pick up much in college. Unless you really know exactly what you want to do like be a doctor and then you know what you could stand you know, to go through to be it. You know what I mean?

**BD: People usually go to college to pick up experience, right. Now that would be the main teaching. And what type of experience do you really get in college?**

BW: Academic.

**BD: Yeah.**

JB: What do you think of academic experience?

BW: Well you got to have it in this world.

JB: Well, I don't think so. I mean I think that's probably one of the reasons that we're in the state we're in.

**BD: Everybody's smart. Everybody knows a lot. Everybody knows about rules and they know what's wrong and what's right. But you find that the people outside of it all and that couldn't be bothered with**

**it less are the people that you really want to know and who are unconnected with any kind of, any kind of party or thing like that, you know what I mean.**

BW: Do you think you're better off not being in college?

**BD: Oh, I'm not saying anybody should be better off not being in college. I'm saying it's something, everybody ought to find out where they're happiest. If somebody's happy in college, good, I'd suggest stay there.**

JB: For the next 20 years (laughter).

**BD: I'm not trying to fool anybody, you know. I'm not trying to fool... but like you've been through things that you haven't been through or as you know things that you just don't know. You know, there are a lot of things. There are a lot, there are a lot of... everybody can stick up for people's rights but you know, what are people's rights really? How do you look at uh, say how do you look at uh, somebody that murders ten people? You wanna execute 'em? How do you look at uh, homosexuals? How do you look at uh, freaks, midgets, you know. How do you look at those people? They have rights too, similar to anyone else. College doesn't teach you to be a... (indecipherable)**

DB: Uh Joan are you (indecipherable) with President Johnson for carrying on the war in Vietnam or do you think by and large his social legislation has compensated for this?

JB: No, I don't think anything can compensate for what's happening in Vietnam.

DB: Did you vote for President Johnson?

JB: No

BW: Did you vote at all?

JB: No

DB: Would you support the Socialist Party as it stands in New York?

JB: I really don't think I would support any Party as it stands.

DB: Or support their platform as it stood this year?

JB: When you start talking about parties and platforms, the conversation disintegrates to practically nothing because they're just words. I really think so.

DB: What would you, what do you advocate personally?

JB: Oh, life.

DB: Kind of abstract.

JB: No, I don't think it's abstract. Living...

**BD: It's not abstract at all.**

JB: Living, loving, moving, grooving, singing, stroking, loving.

DB: Twice!

BW: Come to Carolina for God sake (laughter). You were there three years ago.

JB: Pardon?

BW: You were in North Carolina.

JB: Yeah, I think so.

DB: Tell me...

BW: You had a three-year influence...

JB: Pardon?

BW: ... and I've been waiting for three years for you to come back again. Three years!

DB: Any plans for you to return to the University of North Carolina?

JB: Oh probably. Not on this trip it won't be but... probably sometime around.

BW: What did you think; you were in the Bible belt last Friday night?

JB: Was I?

BW: At Wake.

JB: Where was I?

BW: At Wake... Wake Forest.

JB: Oh well, I was in a sort of unique...



BW: I know well, still...

JB: ... set up so you can't judge. It was beautifully run, I think.

BW: You got to a picture if you want that Berkowitz.

DB: All right.

**BD: On the stick here? I don't, I don't, I don't photograph without Joan nowadays.**

DB: You don't?

**BD: No, not photograph...**

JB: He does it for the contrast 'cause we were immigration business.

**BD: We sent some pictures off to Japan emigrating United States. Show of brotherhood.**

JB: You're gonna stick that on my (indecipherable)?

**BD: (indecipherable) foot long. We make tape recorders and with mics. Soft like milk (indecipherable).**

JB: (indecipherable) God knows what.

**BD: Isn't that a nice blue light?**

JB: Watch this.

BW: Can we get a (indecipherable)? Take better than that other one.

(Camera noise, then waiting for the Polaroid image to appear.)

JB: Banana one, banana two, banana three...

DB: Sixty seconds.

**BD: What time is it?**

DB: Show him your watch.

BW: 20, 25 to.

**BD: Oh.**

JB: (laughs)

DB: That's the one problem with Polaroids over the regular press cameras. No degree of accuracy. Trial and error.

**BD: Where's this interview gonna run?**

BW: Where's it gonna run? It's not gonna run anywhere.

**BD: Oh, is this for yourself?**

BW: No, not really. See, what I did, what I did...

**BD: Who's gonna read it?**

DB: Everybody in Rocky Mount.

BW: No, the thing was Rocky Mount was just an excuse. I had to get back here. Anyway, to do it, anyway I could.

**BD: Why don't you come right on, say it! (laughs)**

BW: Oh well look. If I want to say anything you'd think I was out mind 'cause everybody in (indecipherable) probably had the same idea. So I, I wrote a friend at home...

JB: Are you gonna ask him not to quote what was going on?

**BD: Yeah, you can't record the concert.**

DB: I know that, I know that.

**BD: There's five guys in here or something, you would not believe it. If they see you with that recorder thing... (Bob whistles to indicate 'you're out' and Joan laughs.)**

BW: But the thing is I just work for the paper at home and it gave me a logical excuse to come in here and this is it.

**BD: Yeah. Don't drag us about it.**

DB: Oh this is better (in regards to the Polaroid that is developing), much better.

**BD: OK. How'd that come out, let's see that.**

DB: Very good. It's wet so don't touch it.

**BD: I won't... I won't look at it too hard. (laughter)**

**BD: Yeah, that's me on the left there.**

BW: Wait, hold, get a picture of me Berkowitz.

DB: I'm gonna just put it down so I can mount it.

JB: Oh good god.

BW: Get a picture, of me.

DB: He's a picture of himself with Lincoln Rockwell. It scared the hell out of me.

BW: No, I can't stand the idea.

DB: I got a problem with that.

BW: I didn't mean it the way it sounded, that was pretty poor.

**BD: You got him in it?**

DB: Uh huh.

JB: Sieg heil, Seig heil.

**BD: Then go. There's your picture man.**

26 April 1965, Don Short

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Source: *Daily Mirror*, UK newspaper, 27 April 1965.

This interview was conducted at London Airport, England.

### **Folk fans mob Bob Dylan**

American folk-singer Bob Dylan was mobbed by fans when he arrived in London last night for his sell-out British tour.

**“It’s never been like this before,”** he said after six policemen – and a police girl – managed to escort him through 150 fans at London airport.

Dylan, 23, was clutching an outsize lamp-bulb. **“I got it from an affectionate friend and brought it with me,”** said the singer, who likes to do odd things.

### **Inspired**

The way-out Dylan, whose first hit was “Blowin’ in the Wind,” is now selling well in Britain with “Subterranean Homesick Blues.”

It was his version of “House of the Rising Sun” that inspired the Animals to make their disc of the number.

Some say Dylan will be as big as the Beatles.

Meanwhile the American get by on about £85,000 a year.

With him this trip is folk-singer Joan Baez, 24.

## 27 April 1965, Charles Greville

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Source: *Daily Mail*, UK newspaper, 28 April 1965.

This interview was conducted at The Savoy Hotel, London, England.

### The folk round Bob Dylan

Outside Room 208 at the Savoy a blue-suited Independent Television man was shaking with frustration. “I’m throwing my film away. He’s not being serious. It’s all those camp followers of his.” Inside, shaking his head, was the man who caused the upset. Bob Dylan, the American folk-singer who has become a cult that nearly rivals the Beatles.

He is thin, hunched, wearing stained jeans, hand-made boots and denim shirt.

His long hair curls upwards. He looks like an undernourished cockatoo.

A four-man American camera and sound team record his every move. They began in New York. All the way from London Airport to the hotel they sat in the car’s front seat filming Dylan in the back.

### Treatment

Don Pennebaker, the boss, has given the same hand-held camera treatment to the Aga Khan and Jane Fonda. “I’ll shoot about six miles of film. It lasts about six hours,” he says. He doesn’t know what he’ll do with it yet. But it’ll sell.

The crowd thins, leaving Dylan with his immediate circle of manager, Press agents, and friends. Like Bob Neuwith [*sic*], a painter in a blue velvet coat (“I’m Taco Pronto, Bob’s barber,” he announces).

The dominating figure is manager Al Grossman, big with a great grey mane of hair, who “was in folk song before it became a business.” He also handles Peter, Paul and Mary, and Odetta. He left the crush to talk in Dylan’s bedroom.

“We’re not here to sell rubber dolls, you know. We’re not here to perform for newsmen. Reporters get annoyed at artists for their own stupidity.

“Pop music has aimed below the waist for so long. It’s time it did something to the mind,” he says. “Bob is one of the most important figures not just in pop, you know, but in American life.”

We rejoin the Dylan group. He suddenly takes a dislike to two bird prints on the wall. **“I can’t stand them,”** he says. **“They burn me right down.”**

Mr. Grossman hesitates, then goes smoothly into action as – whirr – the cameras turn and – zoom – a large sausage-shaped mike is thrust towards him. He speaks into the phone.

**“Something more with the times. Maybe pictures of gorillas,”** says Dylan. **“Or we can paint our own right here on the wall.”**

“There seems to be a jurisdictional problem,” says Mr. Grossman. **“Let’s move out,”** says Dylan. But no one does. Joan Baez, a friend also over for concerts, comes in and sings *Sally, Go Round The Roses* in the background.

### Shielded

In the centre is Bob Dylan himself, shielded by thick green glasses. **“I have weak eyes,”** he says. **“Try them for yourself. See the world as Bob Dylan sees it.”**

Facing hoards of reporters he adopts a defensive attitude of sharp wit and nonsense replies in the surrealistic Beatle manner. Away from them he sits quietly in the crowd, concerned but somehow unattached.

**“I’m alone up here,”** he says, tapping his head. **“I was over here three years back and on the streets. In two years I’ll be gone and you’ll be talking to someone else.”**

**“I don’t want to hurt anyone, you know. I don’t want to put anyone down. I’ve no principles, no morals. I just go along. No one influences me any more. I’m on my own.”**

**“I’m not going anywhere. But I’m changing. I can’t listen to my old songs now.”** Did he feel it was out of character to stay in the Savoy?

**“I can live in a shack. I don’t care if someone owns a bank. Why should they care if I make bread.”**

“If what he says depends on him not staying at the Savoy. If it’s that fragile – let it perish,” says Mr Grossman. The words are carefully recorded.

Someone mentions his British equivalent Donovan. **“Let’s put him on the wall and talk to him,”** says Dylan. A publicity man hustles me out of the room. “You got that?” he asks.

“That was a good bit about Donovan. We’re keeping them apart. He can’t do anything for us.”

Lunch time has come and gone by two hours, but no one has eaten. Dylan can’t go to the Savoy Grill because he won’t wear a tie. **“I eat and sleep when I like. That’s how I live.”**

Press conference time approaches, and he goes to change into someone’s blouse – gaudy puff-sleeved. He models it to cheers. “It’s too much, just snazzy,” says Joan Baez.

Camerasmen hustle him out into the open with cries of “Bob, smile, Bob, this way, Bob.” A lady passes and asks; “Is that Matt Dillon?” Americans film the photographers photographing.

A swinging blond asks for his autograph. **“Hey, you are all right. Can I have yours?”** he asks.

I don’t know what the circus is going to be like. But it was great just watching the parade.

## 27 April 1965, Michael Hellicar

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Source: *Daily Sketch*, UK newspaper, 28 April 1965, page 6.

This interview was conducted at The Savoy Hotel, London, England.

### The Mad, Mad World of Bob Dylan

He has a shock of bushy hair, a pinched-up face like a bird and hands that don't stop moving. When he talks, his lips don't seem to move, which isn't surprising because he speaks in staccato syllables that only the practised ear can interpret.

This is Bob Dylan, the 24-year-old skinny figure, whose "freedom" folk songs like "Blowin' In The Wind" and "The Times They Are A' Changin'" are the rage of America and are tipped to boom here.

Dylan, who is in London for a tour, has the reputation of being controversial, scruffy, couldn't-care-less and forgetful.

So forgetful that sometimes he forgets to turn up for his own concerts.

An hour with Bob Dylan convinced me that he is all these things except authentic and great, which is what his publicity has called him.

On record, Dylan is practically incoherent. On stage or in the flesh he is a jumble of unfinished sentences.

### CIRCUS

Yet the most fascinating thing about him is the travelling circus he has brought with him.

We talked in his suite at London's Savoy Hotel. A conventional setting for a man who likes to be regarded as outrageously unconventional.

Leaping round an admiring circle of managers and agents was a bespectacled youth wearing a light grey tweed monk's habit. Resting on his shoulder was a huge cine camera.

His function, Dylan explained to me, was **"to film the facts. The true facts. He's been down South filming the truth about the Ku Klux Klan."**

### BOOTS

With monk habit's camera focussed on us, we chatted.

**"I want to get some thigh-length boots while I'm here,"** he said. **"No – better than that, waist length. Just like Robin Hood."**

**"I'm a bit fed up with these here boots I've got on. I call them my Damon Runyan boots."**

Dylan is 24, yet sings like a man of 75 who has the troubles of the world on his shoulders. He always sounds cross.

**"Yes, I guess I do get pretty cross about things,"** he said. **"I hate injustice, that's why I sing about racial discrimination and freedom, and I preach for people to be able to do the things they want."**

**"On some of my earlier records, I sounded cross because I was poor. Lived on less than ten cents a day in those times. Now I'm cross because I'm rich."**

How rich? **"I don't know,"** he mumbled. **"I don't talk about money because I don't recognise it."**

I asked the allegedly unconventional Dylan to name the wildest task he had ever performed.

**"Well, see, there was this song I was writing once. I put all the words down in their correct order on the paper, then I tore it in four."**



## JUMBLE

**“Then I rearranged the quarters to see if I got a better song out of the jumble.”**

And did he? **“No, I guess the rhyming didn’t work out right. But it was pretty wild wondering if I was going to get a great song out of it.”**

Controversy pursues Dylan. It will be hard on his tail in this country, where his concerts are a sell-out.

**“Criticism doesn’t bother me,”** said Dylan, his hands working overtime pushing his bushy sideburns into place.

## ACTIONS

**“You gotta understand me. I sing when I feel like it. All my actions are motivated by my conscience. Like, I’ve just written this book that’s being published in September.**

**“I’ve called it ‘Tarantula.’ It’s a series of thoughts as they came to me. You know, not judgement, but comment, I guess.”**

The man in the monk’s habit was joined by a girl wielding a huge microphone. At every Dylan pronouncement they gasped and exchanged gleeful glances.

**“I don’t talk much,”** Dylan apologised. **“I haven’t a lot to say. I just don’t want to upset people.**

**“You know, people set out to do something and they get so worked up about things that they get violent.**

**“Heck, I don’t want to louse anyone up. I’m just me. I’m not spreading disillusionment by singing the truth.**

**“I guess listening to me is like reading a newspaper. I wanna be entertaining as well as truthful.”**

## 27 April 1965, Unknown Interviewer (The Guardian)

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Source: *The Guardian*, UK newspaper, 28 April 1965, page 10. The text reproduced here is from *The Dust of Rumour* edited by Dave Percival, 1985, X-ASITY, page 22.

This interview was conducted at The Savoy Hotel, London, England.

### Overcoming Dylan

Monosyllabic, weary-eyed, the American folk-singer Bob Dylan appeared in London yesterday to start his tour of eight concerts up and down the country. Impatient about questions about his political interests and Civil Rights, he said: **'I just be – I exist. What people think about me doesn't affect me,'** with an Existentialist loftiness. His pale face stiffened at any mention of politics and even the word Negro – **'People talk about Negroes as if they were objects.'**

Happily, he had the dark, beautiful, straight-haired singer Joan Baez with him to straighten the record for the more middle aged and irritated reporters. He was a writer and a genius and put what he wanted to say in his songs, she explained. She, on the other hand, loves talking about the things she wants to change, at her concert at the Royal Albert Hall, she intends to say what she thinks about President Johnson and 'his disgusting policy in Vietnam' and dedicate ironically a Dylan song to him, called 'With God on Our Side.' Both confessed complete innocence about this country – apart from liking the Beatles. Joan Baez thought it might be 100% better in its social attitudes, but Bob Dylan thought everywhere was much the same.

## Early May 1965, Robin Denselow

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Source: *The Cherwell*, Oxford University magazine, 5 May 1965. The text reproduced here is from *The Telegraph*, UK fanzine, Number 54, Spring 1996, pages 79-81, 83.

The interview took place in The Savoy Hotel, London, England.

### **BOB DYLAN Freewheelin' at the Savoy grinds his ash into the carpet and talks to Robin Denselow**

He slouched into the Savoy with a cigarette stuck between his lips. **"Pleased to meet you,"** he said to no-one in particular' and with jerky, nervous movements began to shake hands with the assembled celebrities. Bob Dylan, American folksinger, and beginner of possibly the greatest mass cult since the Beatles, had arrived in Britain.

Two records in the current top twenty and some of the greatest modern folk songs to his credit... it hardly seemed possible that this nervous, almost comic figure could have achieved so much. To look at him, indeed, it seemed remarkable that he could have achieved anything at all.

Dylan is small, wiry, and scruffy. He has long curly black hair and sideboards which all but obscure a strange, sickly white face and hooked nose. He looks like an underfed, drugged cockatoo, and when he talks, it is almost impossible to understand the short staccato monosyllables of his shaky voice.

He dresses casually, and rather badly; conventional knee-length boots, blue jeans and dark blue jacket, worn with a patterned silk shirt that no self-respecting British bohemian would be seen dead in. The effect is neither beat nor hip, but rather that of a barrow boy who has suddenly struck it rich.

Talking to Dylan is a nightmare. He twitches his hands, puts on his dark glasses, takes them off again, and stares blankly ahead of him. He refuses to describe himself as anything, and says that he doesn't understand himself.

**"I'm afraid of losing my sanity sometimes,"** he mumbles, puffing on a cigarette and lighting another from the butt of the one before, **"but then my idea of sanity may be different from that of other people."** He begins to tremble, and a cameraman comes up to ask him how he's feeling.

He looks around and suddenly begins to talk again.

**"You know, I just can't think of myself as a star... man, in two years I'll be back where I was."** He grins sardonically, scowls at the press photographers and puts on and off his dark glasses. **"No, I have no message - my songs are just me talking, that's all, and I don't want to influence people either - it's other people who influence me."**

He is silent and then begins to tap his long curly hair. **"I'm alone up here,"** he says. Suddenly he sees an elderly reporter walking towards us across the room and spins round excitedly. **"Hey, who's that guy there - what's he doing? He's not a cop is he?"** I assure him that it's not, and Dylan turns back again. His hands are trembling and he reaches for a cigarette. He looks terrible.

Partly, of course, it's all a pose. The casual indifference, not knowing where he is going to perform, or what new songs he is going to sing, is part of his vital public image. But behind this there is an almost terrifying bitterness and vagueness that contrasts strikingly with the directness of attack in his songs.

He writes excellent political songs, yet unlike Joan Baez, he refuses to talk politics. He sings about Civil Rights (such as his bitter John Birch Society Blues) but he is not to be found on any Alabama march. He is aware of the contradiction, but can only begin to explain it.

**"Have you ever read a political speech in a newspaper? Well, next time you read one, cut it into little pieces. Yeah, cut it up, and then stick the pieces together in any order. You'll find it says the same thing. That's the way my mind works: you've got to re-piece it in the same way."**

He started to talk about British folk and pop music. Yeah, he bummed around England the first time he was here - played guest appearances in the London clubs. The Troubadour, that was one, and the Singers' Club - that was where who were? Ewan MacColl? Peggy Seeger? He made a face; no, he hadn't heard of them.

"Then what about Donovan?" I asked, and a slick thick chick beside me began to coo "I was his girlfriend until last night."

**"I never heard of Donovan,"** he growled. **"Who is this guy? Let's get him against the wall. But I know the Beatles - yeah, I'm having supper with John Lennon tonight."**

A bewildered BBC official tried to coax Dylan away for an interview, so I went to talk to Joan Baez, who sat brooding in a corner, watching him with an almost motherly concern. Smartly dressed, and with no folksy gimmicks except her raven black hair, she seemed almost absurdly older and more mature in comparison. What did she think of Dylan? She smiled and shrugged. "Well, I'm dumb about folk music - but as a songwriter, he's a genius."

She smiled again, looked up with searching brown eyes, and began to talk quietly and earnestly about everything that Dylan refuses to say: "No, Bobby won't talk about politics. He's strange - he has few material possessions; I don't know what he does with all his money... Joan is intelligent and intense, delightful to talk to and always pleased to talk about her interests, about the pacifist school she is starting, about Civil Rights and Vietnam. "I just want to be called a human being," she says, and the brown eyes once more look across to the twitching, curly-haired figure across the room.

The party was coming to an end. The genius put on his dark glasses, and walked uncertainly towards the door. A cigarette dropped from his twitching fingers. He stopped and stamped it firmly into the Savoy carpet.

## April / May 1965, Chris Lorenz

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Source: *Record Collector*, UK Magazine, Number 272, April 2002, page 30.

Interview conducted by letter.

### I RECEIVED YOUR LETTER YESTERDAY

Dylan's contempt for the interview process, and the banality of most of his encounters with the media, are blatantly displayed in *Don't Look Back*. The *Disc* interview excerpted earlier in this piece reinforces that point. But Cambridge student Chris Lorenz knew none of that when he sent Dylan a questionnaire, hoping that the serious nature of the enquiries might entice Bob to respond.

And so he did – although sadly, having taken the time to scrawl all over Lorenz's letter, he forgot to send it back in the stamped addressed envelope that had thoughtfully been provided. So here, 37 years late, and courtesy of Christie's, is the verbatim interview that should have appeared in the Cambridge student journal *Varsity*.

Q Does it usually take you a long time to write your songs? Are you suddenly seized with inspiration or do you have to sit down for hours and work at them?

**A Songs come in ideas / people good bad indifferent, situations, anything / takes me short time to write it out / usually changes somewhat constantly**

Q You're quoted as saying "I can't listen to my old songs anymore". Why not?

**A Old songs tend to be motivated by private desires**

Q Which is your favourite of all the songs you've written?

**A NONE – ALL of them / I have no favourites, just some of them I like less**

Q You're also quoted as saying, "Nobody influences me anymore". What about Woody Guthrie?

**A Woody's language doesn't appeal to me anymore – his words are group words / his ideas are force (sic) / I have no faith in better world coming / I live now in this world**

Q What do you mean when you say that you don't write about anything?

**A I write inside out & sometimes the dimensions cross. I can't write about the tree I must inside of the tree (sic)**

Q What do you think as the function of your songs? Simply to entertain, or to make people think about what you've got to say?

**A Myself to satisfy**

Q Why don't you like being identified with Civil Rights movement, or with anything in particular?

**A Life is too big for any ONE thing – I would rather give anonymously than to sign my name**

Q Do you sometimes write words for their sound, rather than for what they say?

**A Sometimes Yes / but not just that simple**

Q Now that your records are reaching the hit parade, do you think you might change your way of writing and perhaps write more songs that will definitely have commercial appeal, rather than songs motivated by your conscience?

**A No**

Q Do you like the idea of people coming to your concerts and buying your records because you're fashionable, rather than because they appreciate your poetry?

**A It doesn't matter why**

Q Would you be annoyed if girls screamed at you like they do at the Beatles?

**A I would not play**

Q Did you have any say in having 'Times They Are A-Changin' and 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' released as singles aimed at the hit parade?

**A No say in Times They Are Changing – that was recorded three years ago for an Album / S.H.B. was taken off new album –**

## First half of 1965, Pete Goodman

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Source: *Beat Instrumental*, UK magazine, Number 27, July 1965, page 5.

The location of this interview is unknown.

### Is Dylan Sincere?

For all I know, Bob Dylan may be the most charming, intelligent, talented, inventive man in music. Certainly he is currently one of the most successful – having become (a) a cult, (b) a sell-out success and (c) a permanent resident in the LP, EP and single charts.

But he still baffles me. Talking to him has not eased the bafflement. Reading about him has not cleared away the clouds. And this is why...

Dylan was a highly-touted figure in folk music long before his records sold on a wide scale. He'd started making records in November, 1961... first album was "Village Voice" and raved about in the slightly hysterical way that folk devotees do rave. More albums followed and insiders spoke up for Dylan even more loudly.

At 16, Dylan had written his first song – a tribute to Brigitte Bardot. He became friendly with the ailing Woody Guthrie, who has probably influenced him more than anyone else. After his first professional job, Bob Dylan said: "**I never thought I would shoot lightning through the sky in the entertainment world**".

But, of course, he has done just that.

### DONOVAN v. DYLAN

In Britain, his LPs sold steadily but not well enough to make the charts. Then appeared one Donovan, with a series of TV shots. "Isn't he like Dylan!" said the purists of folk. "In fact he's a downright copy". So Dylan's name was bandied around by the "in" folk folk – in an attempt to win over, or be one up on, the devotees of Donovan.

And suddenly it happened. Several Dylan LPs in the British Top Twenty in one week... "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan", "Another Side Of Bob Dylan", "Bob Dylan". They'd previously been out a long time. CBS brought out his first-ever British single, "Times They Are A'Changin'" from one of the albums... and up it hurtled.

Which is where I started getting baffled. Did all those people who had for so long ignored folk music suddenly get Dylan's "message" loud and clear? And what, exactly, WAS his message? And as Dylan is by way of being a singing mumbler, HOW was the message getting through?

Of course, the Beatles helped. John Lennon, specially, "dug" the Dylan sound. He said: "We were in Paris, back in January '64. Paul knew of Dylan. We cadged an LP of his, 'Freewheelin' – went potty over it. In America, we met him. He was great, once you got to know him. He has a Beatle sense of humour..."

This sort of praise must have helped. The publicity started: "Dylan is a deeply committed young man who conveys his concern for the world round him through unique and poetic imagery that makes explicit the human condition". And a long-hair (in the classical sense) critic said: "Dylan breaks all the rules of song writing, except that of having something to say and saying it stunningly".

First time I met Dylan, I thought he looked like a young Charlie Chaplin. Eventually he admitted: "**Chaplin DID influence me, believe it or not. I watched all of his silent movies, copied some of his movements**". Which was a surprise statement which added to my bafflement.

When he started, Dylan cared nothing for money – he says he just needed to have enough to eat, that's all. His attitude now seems to have changed a lot. His recording manager, Tom Wilson, told me: "When Bob was first in the studio, he'd not have the words even finished. We'd hang around for ages, trying to get him organised. Maybe we'd be there five hours, get nothing. But he's different now. He keeps tabs on every single thing, even down to the sleeve design. He comes in with type-written scripts of the songs, everything tabulated. No time's wasted. He gets right on with the job".

### WEIRDLY OFF-BEAT

It's easier talking about my bafflement with Dylan to those close to him... Dylan himself is so weirdly off-beat that he often just claps up, or speaks wildly irrelevant thoughts. Like telling an inquiring reporter that his next record was going to be: "I Lost My Love In San Francisco But She Appeared Again In Honduras And We Took

A Trip To Hong Kong And Stayed Awhile But I Lost Her Again In Oklahoma”. That was studiously taken down in a notebook. Dylan didn’t seem to be smiling...

Says Tom Wilson: “He is a fine piano player, you know. People don’t know that. And hearing his songs for the first time is like a big emotional experience. You just know it’s something beautiful whatever the subject. He’s a poet.”

And this, I suppose, is it. I’m sure that Dylan has tremendous qualities of poetry in his writing. He protests, yes, but he also smiles wryly at the troubles of the world. Racism, intolerance, politics, anti-war stabs... these come into his songs. But I wonder how much of it really sinks in with the hundreds of thousands of British fans who are living rather remotely from these problems. Dylan has said: **“Oh to be a simple folk singer again”**. But he also agrees he likes being able to travel in comfort, surrounded by managers, hairdressers, admirers and technical advisers. He has an expensive home, a well stacked wardrobe – despite arriving in London in blue denim shirt, blue jeans and black leather boots.

He writes his songs fast – and many other star artists are glad to “cover” them. His song-writing ability is undeniable, though there are lapses from the normal output in things like “Subterranean Homesick Blues”, which isn’t really folk at all.

But is Dylan a good singer? Surely not. He enunciates much more clearly on stage, true, but many of his disc tracks are undecipherable – even to folk-fan Americans.

### PROJECTS ON STAGE

In appearance, Dylan is bird-like, very thin, surprisingly short. His hair is best described as ultra-tousled. Off-stage, he seems to shrink. On-stage, he projects astonishingly well. But his enormous appeal cannot come from his looks, surely. It must be from those songs.

I’ve talked with Dylan, tried hard to understand him. But he is hardly a journalist’s dream. At his first Press conference, knots of highly experienced interviewers stood together muttering: “It’s all a waste of time. He doesn’t say anything.”

Maybe that is another aspect of his success. He sings and writes more about events and trends than about himself. He says he wants people to like him. In “Maggie’s Farm”, his latest single, he says: “I tried my best to be just like I am, but everyone wants you to be just like them”.

Perhaps he is really in an impossible position: a folk man of heart, inevitably caught up in riches. Many feel you can’t ally the two. Dylan himself makes highly commercial gestures – like sending LPs to each of the Beatles, along with tickets for one of his shows. That sounds like a status thing... the concert was actually sold out well in advance.

Now it’s a reedy, bewildered voice. The songs are mostly good. The “in-person” stage presence is unusual, confident, almost cocky.

But WHY did it all happen so fast for him? I have to admit I’m STILL BAFFLED.



## 23 to 24 September 1965, Unknown Interviewer (Texas Ranger)

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Source: *Texas Ranger*, US newspaper, November 1965, pages 14-15, 31-32. The text reproduced here is from *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, pages 12-14.

This interview took place in the Villa Capri Motor Hotel, Austin, Texas.

### Message music and rock'n'roll Bob Dylan on concert tour

I pulled up at the Villa Capri Motor Hotel. I parked my car by the swimming pool and set out in the general direction the grinning desk clerk had pointed. Somewhere in the north forty I looked up on a balcony and spotted a figure standing there, obviously a member of Dylan's group: the long hair, tight pants, elf boots, dark glasses, purple shirt. It was Dylan himself.

Hello, I said, is Bobby N... up there? (this Bobby being a friend of mine who was supposed to be travelling with Dylan's group). **"you mean Bobby N the FOLKSINGER?"** laughed Dylan, and out ran Bobby N, who was serving as a sort of aide-de-camp, and was running around frantically trying to locate, among other things, a set of drums for the band's drummer. You cannot even rent a set of drums in Austin, it seems, not to mention the fact that it being after ten o'clock, you cannot even buy *whiskey*. I apologised. Bobby threw around some introductions and headed back for the telephone. Dylan was engaged in a conversation about folksinging with someone wearing a red beard on the other couch, the red beard doing most of the talking. There were half-a-dozen copies of Dylan's latest Columbia album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, laying beside me on the couch. I picked one up, and inside was a reproduction of someone's arty portrait of Dylan, Suitable for Framing. It was pretty bad.

Dylan was beside me, looking at the picture. **"Man, that's not me. Does that look like me?"** I asked if they had any extra copies of the album, but Bobby N came back from the telephone saying they needed all those for promotion.

After a few minutes I thought of a place to borrow a set of drums and get a bottle of booze, and I headed back for the car. By this time Bobby N was sitting beside the swimming pool with two girls with day-glo blonde hair. Go-go girls they were, fresh from Dallas for the opening of another discotheque in Austin, and they had come to the Villa Capri hunting for Bob Dylan, and they had found Bobby N in HIS tight pants, elf boots, dark glasses, long hair and so on. They were about to bust their bouffants, they wanted to see Bob Dylan so much, and Bobby was teasing them. Bob Dylan the FOLKSINGER? In AUSTIN? No, I didn't know THAT! I'm just a pore cowboy on mah way through Austin on a trail drive! In their desperation they turned to me. You're with Bob Dylan aren't you? said one. I wasn't, I said. Are you sure this gentleman isn't Bob Dylan? (indicating Bobby N). They turned on Bobby again. ARE YOU BOB DYLAN?

The bass player and I got in the car and set off in search of drums and booze.

And so, back to the Villa, and the booze began to flow. A local beatnik showed up with three dollar-a-litre bottles of Mexican rum, room service managed to come up with some ice and some tumblers of the sort that they serve water in at the drug stores. Bobby came grinning in the door with the go-go girls. They were stricken. Bob Dylan actually *was there*. One of them tiptoes across the room and – Lord help me this is the truth – asked Bob Dylan if she could just *touch* him; this was alright, so she reached out and *touched* him with the tip of her finger, on the knee, I believe it was. She and her friend then fell into reverent silence.

I felt it was my duty, though I really couldn't think of many topics of Lasting Significance at the moment, to ask Bob Dylan a few questions so that I might have something to write about – after all, *The Ranger* had bought me two tickets to his concert, at no inconsiderable expense considering the financial status of *The Ranger*. But Dylan wasn't offering any philosophy that night – at least not in my direction. With half the bottle of bourbon in me, I was doing most of the talking by that time. We ended up talking about rock'n'roll music, which was getting back to my level. Another go-go girl came in and sat beside Dylan on the couch, saying her name was Maggie. She was the chief go-go girl. The bourbon was gone, and I had no stomach left to start in on the Mexican Bacardi. I got the addresses of the go-go girls, glommed one of the promotional albums, and left. Bobby N caught me out on the balcony and said there would be two free tickets waiting for me at the box office tomorrow night. I now had four tickets.

Friday night came a few hours later, and I caught a ride across the river to the Auditorium, went inside, and sprawled across my two seats (I had succeeded in giving only two of my tickets away, despite the fact that the concert was a near sell-out) and I looked at the people as they came.

And so I was disappointed when Austin offered up its audience to Bob Dylan. It wasn't weird at all. It was mostly high-school couples all dressed up for *church*, almost, and they applauded politely at the end of each of Dylan's numbers, and in the middle of some of them, at the appropriate places, of course, but there was no yelling, whistling nor, needless to say, dancing in the aisles, as I fondly remembered watching at my *last* rock and roll concert, in Houston, in 1957 or so. Dylan came on stage in a grey suit, white shirt and no tie, and without a preliminary word launched into his program of songs, and then the rock and roll band came out, and they played some really GOOD SOUNDS, and there this Austin audience sat like a bunch of toads, watching Bob Dylan roar back and shout, jump across the stage, sometimes walking right up to the soloist in the middle of their solos and grinning in their faces, waving around the Fender Jazzmaster electric guitar (one of a set of free instruments donated to the group by the Fender instrument company in exchange for a publicity photo of the group playing those instruments) and when the concert was over, the toads filed quietly out without so much as a riot. I might have described their attitude toward Dylan as *religious* if I didn't know that people in Austin still reserve much of their religious feeling for *religion*.

And after the concert, it was off to the Travis Rivers' Bohemian Union Party, the closest thing to a social gathering I could think of myself being welcomed to. And there was the Bohemian Union – hundreds of them – packed into six or eight rooms, listening to Bob Dylan records, waiting for Bob Dylan to show up after the concert, as they had expected him to. All the old beatnik crew was there (beatnik in the respectful sense) and the art students, and the motorcycle people, and whoever else you might expect at a gathering called the Bohemian Union, including the Austin vice squad, just a friendly social call to look for new faces. Everybody was there but Bob Dylan and friends, because they were back on the plane for tomorrow night's concert in Dallas, their lucre in their pockets.

## 25 September 1965, Don Safran

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Source: *Dallas Times Herald*, US newspaper. The text reproduced here is from *The Bridge*, UK fanzine, Number 69, Spring 2021 (published April 2021), page 76.

This interview took place in Dallas, Texas.

### Bob Dylan Not Against a Boo

One of my favourite quotes of the year has to come from Bob Dylan, the controversial folk singer and composer, who performed here this weekend. Dylan, who has been antagonising folk purists by using a rock 'n' roll combo, was booed for it at the recent Newport Jazz Festival. I asked him about it. **“Boos can’t be all bad,”** replied the mystical young man. **“There’s a little bit of boo in all of us.”**

Incidentally, his adoption by the preteen set and his climb up the pop record charts is no planned thing. **“I don’t really play to an audience,”** he said. **“My stuff is the words— I think lyrics. I started using the electric guitars because I thought it would help the lyrics. I assume the audience understands my lyrics. At least, their reaction is very good.”**

And mothers will be mothers, even in the case of the rebel folk-singer. Dylan’s mother, Mrs. Abe Zimmerman, called Sunday from Minnesota to talk to a Dallas friend of hers, Jeanne Rovenger. She wanted to know if Bobby looked like he was taking care of himself. Then, Mr. Z. got on the phone. He wanted to know if the promoters, Angus Wynne III and Jack Calmes, came out well in the venture. Incidentally, Bobby’s kid brother, David Zimmerman, will be coming here next fall. David, a prodigy as an arranger and composer, plans on entering NTSU as a music major.

## Before 10 October 1965, Unknown Interviewer (National Blast)

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Source: *National Blast*, US magazine, Volume 1, Number 4, 10 October 1965, page 2.

This interview was conducted in Greenwich Village, New York City. The cover date could have been the “take it off display” date rather than the date of publication.

### A Word From Jay Levy, Blast Publisher

It's our aim here at the Blast to present things as they are... or as we say... tell it like it is! It's with this in mind that I start the column this time.

You know, it's very disappointing to like and believe in something, and then find out that what you have been digging isn't really for real. Well, that very thing happened around here the other night.

A Blast reporter-photographer team went down to a special private party at a Greenwich Village bistro. It was called to spotlight a brand new recording group. Alert always to a good story, our people looked around to see who else was there.

Sure enough, over there in a corner of the room, our people spotted Bob Dylan, sitting by himself near a group of other people. The Blast newsteam, sitting at a nearby table, decided to have a little chat with Dylan.

The reporter, a gal, made her way over to Dylan. She made several polite efforts to speak to Dylan, but he stared at her with a blank expression flashing over his face. A pair of sun glasses hid his eyes. Again, she tried to speak to Dylan. She got nowhere. In fact, Dylan denied being Dylan!

Our photographer bounced into action. He began shooting pictures of the scene. Dylan asked our photographer to stop and he did.

It was getting late now... and the party was about to break up. Our gal reporter tried again to speak with Dylan.

On his feet now, Dylan was more open. He barked: **“I don't want to be interviewed. I'm not a rock 'n roll star.”** (The other comments were unprintable.)

As he poured out these words, Dylan's eyes appeared to be glassy and his complexion pasty. He was unsteady on his feet.

Why you may ask did I go into such detail on this incident. Well, the answer is simple.

I have long been an ardent fan of Dylan. I thing (sic) his talent for writing about social problems is nothing short of genius. His effort at singing is pretty good too. All in all he's a great artist.

But off stage, Dylan is something else. In my opinion, he has no regard for understanding and compassion which he so eloquently writes about. Dylan is a Jeckle and Hyde personality.

I like rebels. But I don't like misfits. Dylan has to set an example. Not one of vicious disregard, but one of courteous and understanding behaviour.

For my money, Dylan can keep his double life. I won't support either one...

## 7 November 1965, Larry Patterson

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Source: *University of Cincinnati News Record*, US student newspaper, 11 November 1965, page 16.

The interview took place in Music Hall, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio

### Dylan Discusses “New-Style Sound”

This past Sunday night was a very special one that had been eagerly awaited by many here at UC. Bob Dylan was appearing at Music Hall, in concert. We overcame seemingly unsurmountable obstacles in order to gain a few minutes of conversation with Dylan, in an attempt to gain a bit of insight into what makes this unusual young man the hottest item in the music industry today.

While talking with Dylan, it is easy to get the feeling that you are surrounded by every form of outcast musician known to man. The fellows that accompany him on the road protect Dylan as though he were a tiny child, with the intensity of people who realize that their entire livelihood depends upon his every movement.

In trying to cast some light upon the new-style sound that is the top seller across the nation today, I asked him if he felt that this form of music was going to be accepted with as much enthusiasm by his followers as the old solo style was. He said, **"What we are doing now is what I was searching for in my second and fourth albums, but I never could really get. We don't sing anything really bad. I don't write songs for commercial reasons, I couldn't do that; they just sort of seemed to work out that way."**

When I asked him what his response had been to the reception he received at the show he did in Forest Hills, New York, this summer, his reaction was interesting. **"The regular band that accompanies me wasn't with me that day, and it just wasn't coming off right. I don't know why they acted that way; maybe it was something that they weren't used to that will take awhile to catch on. But I don't let the booing and that bother me. As long as they paid their money, they're entitled to their own thinking. I know I wouldn't pay to hear something I wasn't going to like, though, and I would not pay money just to boo."**

What would you call this new style then, I asked. **"It isn't rock n'roll or the hard driving rock that's coming across a lot now. It isn't even folk, or what they're calling folk-rock. I don't know if you can put a name on it, we just play it."** Would you say that it is a style all your own, then, and do you think it will last longer than the usual trends? **"You could say that we originated the style. It's us and it's what we're here for. I try to tell it like they'll understand it, in the way that I think they want it. It's how I feel; you know. Now I can't say whether they'll like it enough to keep it around long, but I think it's what they're wanting. I'll play it until the majority don't want to hear me. But what is happening now is we're giving them a whole new way of looking at things – making them think – and a new reason for being here."**

Getting this interview was a major task in itself, and the sight and thoughts of this interesting young man were experiences never before encountered that will not soon be forgotten. The audience, somewhat disappointed, to say the least, by a faulty sound system, was often noticeably disappointed by the second half of the show in which Dylan sang with a band. But seeing the unique and sometimes obviously exhibitionist types in individuals that attended was a treat in itself. However this must be recorded as one of Dylan's worst appearances vocally, and the capacity audience indicated openly their disappointment with their idol in his new capacity.

## 1 December 1965, Jules Siegel

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Source: Unknown. The text reproduced here is from *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, page 14.

This interview took place in Seattle, Washington State.

Here is Bob Dylan talking about his fans in a motel outside of Seattle while waiting to leave for a concert which ten thousand persons have paid to hear. Dylan is half way through his tour. Hawaii and Australia lie ahead. He has been taking a lot of speed to keep going. He looks terrible, exhausted, wired. Sometimes he makes no sense at all, but at the moment, crossed leg chugging up and down, he is painfully lucid:

**“They want me to be their friend. They want to take me home with them. They can’t so they buy my records instead. Where’s that at, a piece of plastic? They sit around like lamps, waiting for me to turn them on.”**

## 5 February 1966, El Kritzler

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Source: *Westchester Reporter-Dispatch*, US newspaper, 7 February 1966. The text reproduced here is from *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, pages 16-17.

This is a (very) brief quote from Dylan during the interval of a concert at Westchester County Center, White Plains, New York. Perhaps 'El Kritzler' is a *nom de plume*.

### Dylan charms big audience

The young audience wanted to scream when he came on. This was a Bob Dylan concert and you cool it with applause. It was 8.45 Saturday night. County Center was packed and Dylan walked from the wings. He is short, thin and pale. His brown hair sprouts from his head like turnip stalks. He was dressed in a brown and black checkered suit – the checks were four-inch squares.

He stood straight in his black suede boots, two inches taller because of the heels. Around his neck hung a harmonica holder. This was Bob Dylan. He looked more like the Mad Hatter from *Alice In Wonderland*.

After strumming a few chords on his guitar, he sang. Introductory words would have been extraneous. Dylan to today's youth is a guitar-wielding buddha, a James Joyce of a song, a Holden Caulfield of the 60s. One girl said: 'He seems to know the few essentials worth knowing and he goofs so beautifully on the rest.'

When the 24-year-old Dylan first came East in 1961, he was compared, by those who knew, with folk hall-of-famers – Leadbelly, Guthrie, Seeger. Apparently he wasn't listening. 'Times are a-changing,' he sang and he changed with them. His audience grew. Comparisons are made only on the way up; Bob Dylan is on top.

How does it feel? "**Open, very open,**" he said with deliberation, during intermission. No longer does he stand straight and give voice to the emotional causes of our time. His words are more personal. He sings of alienation, absurdity and unselfrighteous honesty.

You mob The Beatles; you sling the works at the Rolling Stones. When Dylan sings you listen silently and inwardly. Saturday night's audience was no different. One long-haired youth in tight jeans, boots and brown suede vest sat sucking his thumb. Another lay his head back, his eyes closed. Some rolled softly with the beat. All listened.

It has been said that the real Dylan fan never attends his concerts. Dylan's words are his essence. They can better be absorbed in the solitude of your room. His fans include primarily intellectual rebels of the late 50s and early 60s, young village hippies in their polo shirts and pea jackets and British mods who are into everything British.



## 11 February 1966, Norman Rowe

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Source: *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, US newspaper, 12 February 1966.

The interview took place in Richmond, Virginia.

### Folk Music

Bob Dylan, an angry young man with a guitar and a variety of messages in his many folk songs, left some 3,000 Richmonders and Virginians delightfully happy with his collection of sad ballads at his one-night stand at the Mosque last night.

For the record, the local audience was 98 per cent of upper bracket teen-agers; Dylan is an idol in that area. In fact, one pretty young blonde was so elated with Dylan's performance that she staged quite a performance herself: Taking off from Row A, she cleared the orchestra pit in a one-stop leap (on a covered piano) and landed within three feet of her idol.

### Not Too Surprised

Balladeer Dylan didn't appear too surprised. The occasion marked his first on-stage smile as he declared:

**"I don't know this girl... but I'm sure she's a very nice girl."**

A back-stage worker quickly hustled the very nice girl off through the curtain wings, and Bob Dylan went on with his concert.

He was on "Desolation Row" and he was very sad. He was also very sad with "All Over Now Baby Blue" and "My Love She Speaks Like Silence."

He was a little hapiper [*sic*] when he closed the first half of his concert with "Mr. Tambourine Man." That particular tune, I'm told, has been his biggest money-maker over and above "Blowin' in the Wind."

### Alone in First Half

Through the first half of his show, Bob Dylan was on stage alone, providing his own musical support with a non-amplified guitar and a harmonica (which he changed several times), held near his lips by a shiny, stiff-wire contraption.

He was dressed in a tightly cut coat and trousers of English design, in a baby-blue turtle-necked sweater, plus boots of a sort. His hair was a mass of ringlets, making a complete view of his face somewhat difficult.

He sings with what appears to be a built-in hoarseness which sort of spotlights the sadness of many of his songs.

### Then Company

After intermission, Bob Dylan had company on stage. His support was from two more guitars (amplified), a swinging set of drums, a resounding piano and a swinging electric organ. Dylan himself made a change in instrumentation. His guitar was the plug-in electrical variety. The second half of the show was in the best rock 'n' roll tradition.

And Dylan turned on more lung power. At one time he was shouting a song with a title, like "I See You've Got Your Brand New Leopard Skin Pill Box Hat." And his faithful fans were loud in their admiration.

Backstage, I had a few words with Bob Dylan (say it like Gunsmoke's Marshal Dillan). His real name is Robert Zimmerman but in 1962, the 24-year-old singer officially changed it to Bob Dylan, in honor of the late poet Dylan Thomas, whom he admired.

### Understood in South

He's particular happy with the reception he gets in the South. **"They (the Southern youngsters) seem to know more about what I'm trying to do... they understand me."**

He denied the tag of a "social protest poet."

**"The word 'poet' is often used wrong... I just have thoughts in my head and I write them. I'm not trying to lead any causes for anyone... I don't have any respect for the word poet."**

He also announced, **"my success is accidental."** He didn't make that one quite clear. He's also working on an autobiographical book about which he's rather excited.

Dylan has written about 200 songs, and **“Peter, Paul and Mary are about the only folk-singing group that do my songs real good.”** (The trio had a big hit in “Blowin’ in the Wind” in ’63.)

Did Woody Guthrie’s music influence Dylan?

**“He was my inspiration only for a short while... that grew out of the James Dean thing.”**

Most of Bob Dylan’s fans know he’s a motorcycle enthusiast but I doubt if many know when he likes to ride.

**“Late at night, before I go to bed.”**

And last night, he left for a Norfolk show tonight. Thus, his bedtime appears to be uncertain and highly irregular.

## Early 1966, Sam Castan

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Source: *Look*, US magazine, Volume 30, Number 5, 8 March 1966, pages 76, 78-79, 81-82.

The location of this interview is unknown. Daniel Kramer is sometimes cited as co-interviewer but, in the article, he was only credited as the photographer. Photo-captions are shown indented in the following text.

### Folk Rock's Tambourine Man

Young America's newest sound is "folk rock," a clamor of topical folk music gushing through electric instruments, spread about mostly by a 24-year-old poet-songwriter named Bob Dylan. Before his *Mr. Tambourine Man*, *Subterranean Homesick Blues* and *Like a Rolling Stone* had hit the top of the lists, Dylan was already the center of a growing cult. Now that folk rock is in, and despite all his imitators, Dylan is unchallenged as the teen-and-college crowd's Absolute Hipster, their own "hung up" idol, the singing annalist of a jingle-jangle reality that makes more sense to them than any square, whitewashed American Dream.

His guitar crashes, his words tingle, and the gifted young man at left is being hailed as the most important pop-music personality of the sixties.

His new style shook up the purists, and started a new movement

Last year, Bob Dylan showed up for a folk concert backed by drums and amplified electronic accompaniment, and the audience stirred in bewilderment. When a writhing mass of electrical cable was hauled onstage, some of his earliest fans hooted. Most no longer hoot or are no longer heard. The fact is, Dylan has changed his style many times, bringing an increasingly larger segment of pop- and folk-music fans along with him each time. **"It's all music,"** he says. **"No more, no less. I couldn't go on singing *With God on Our Side* forever."** Such is the growth process of almost any artist; yet, as he now barely manages to carry his stinging lyrics over the din, many older fans bemoan the passing of early Dylan. They recall his sad, rock-earth ballads in a Woody Guthrie vein, accompanied only by his own country guitar and the sweetly-mournful wail of his mouth organ. That was the Dylan who wrote and sang *Girl of the North Country*, a song with the Elizabethan air of the Appalachian mountain country. And the Dylan singing of the struggles of a young folk singer in New York, when the Greenwich Village coffeehouse owner tells him to get away from that stage because he sings like a hillbilly, and it's folk singers who are wanted up there. That was the younger, purer, poorer, gone Dylan.

Even those who didn't take him seriously during his early stages now turn out to hear the Dylan sound. Here, an all-star audience at Forest Hills Stadium (including Sybil Burton Christopher, at extreme left) swings with Dylan singing *Positively 4th Street*, an acid outpouring of fake friendship.

A rub-a-dub-dub, and two hands in the scrub are balm in Gilead for the Hibbing, Minn., hotshot during a work stoppage.

**"You learn a lot about a town just by hanging around the pool hall,"** says Dylan, to prove that most of his songs come out of the knockabout life he took up in admiration of Guthrie, Leadbelly, Pete Seeger and other folk greats.

The Top Twenty reads like a Dylan Anthology

Inevitably, Bob Dylan's striking success has spawned imitators. Pop artists like the Byrds, the Turtles, Sonny and Cher, Donovan, even the Beatles (*Hey! You've got to hide your love A-way*), have all hit high on the money lists by forcing strong Dylanesque qualities into their numbers. A typical week on the pop parade shows the Top Twenty heavily weighted with Dylan material, and smart theatrical agents in this country and abroad are telling their singers to "get with the Dylan sound, sweetheart." Music appreciators a shade older than the current pop audience may recognise this sound as remarkably similar to that of Bill Haley and His Comets, of a decade ago. Others, before and since, have combined Negro blues and hillbilly twangs, but Dylan's own lyrics turn the blended form into something else again. His words run deep, are scary in their currency. Most of all, they resonate with the things young people feel today, as in his warning to parents that, "Your old road is / Rapidly agin' / Please get out of the new one / if you can't lend your hand / For the times they are a-changin'."

Like his fans, he was too young for hard times, so he made his "own depression"

Don't put down Bob Dylan's appearance or the hip manner of speech he uses. They overlie a clever, perceptive young man, and are, in any case, calculated ploys in the game that has made him a millionaire at 24. To young fans, the scruffy hair, wrinkled shirt and faded jeans means that he is one of their own. He's SUFFERED, man. He's hip to SHADES, BIKES, CIVIL RIGHTS, man, and Vietnam and squares who guard their fallout shelters with shotguns. Dig his great put down while improvising during a studio recording session.

He allowed he was a liberal, but not to the extent that “I’ll let Barry Goldwater move in next door and marry my daughter.”

Dylan says little about his early life. He admits to having grown up in Hibbing, Minn., but for reasons of his own will not admit that his real name was Bobby Zimmerman until he changed it legally to Dylan in 1962. Of his childhood, he wrote in *My Life in a Stolen Minute*, “I ran away when I was 10, 12, 13, 15, 15½, 17 an’ 18. I been caught an’ brought back all but once.” Dylan spent one semester at the University of Minnesota and flunked out of science for “refusin’ to watch a rabbit die.” Beyond that, all he wants known is that he spent his late teens bumming around the country. “I made my own depression,” he says. “Rode freight trains for kicks, got beat up for laughs, cut grass for quarters, met a waitress who picked me up and dropped me off in Washington.” It’s a good story the way he tells it.

Thumbing his way East, Dylan visited the hospital where his musical idol, Woody Guthrie, lay incurably ill. He began playing the songs he had written on the road in Greenwich Village joints and finally got a spot at Gerde’s Folk City. He was good. A write-up in the New York *Times* led to a contract with Columbia Records. His first album started the cult.

Dylan works infrequently now, partly to keep his income in the lowest tax bracket possible, and partly to allow himself time for writing. “He really is a poet, you know, not a folk singer,” says Alan Lomax, the folklorist. “I think that if he’s given time, he’ll go down as a great poet of his time, . . . unless he kills himself first.”

Friends who have seen him tear around on a motorcycle worry about that. Meanwhile, Dylan is a show-business personality riding on top and enjoying it. He’s occasionally to be seen in Greenwich Village, spends as much time at his New York office as strikes his fancy, cuts records at Columbia when the mood hits him and retires frequently to the upstate New York home of his manager, where he writes, shoots home movies or throws rocks at a can.

As a poet and musician, Dylan has only one principle: **“I define nothing. Not beauty, not patriotism. I take each thing as it is, without prior rules about what it should be.”** That, finally, may be why today’s kids dig him.

Recording a Bob Dylan Dream, he cracks up at one of his own lines. The *Dream* songs are Dylan at his lyric best, combining surrealistic images with the modern insanities we all have to live with.

## 12 April 1966, Sydney Hotel Press Conference

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Source: reported in *The Australian*, Australian newspaper, 13 April 1966, facsimile in: *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, page 31.

This press conference was conducted at the Town House Hotel, King's Cross, Sydney, Australia.

### **Bob Dylan's many hates come to town**

Bob Dylan, the American protest folk-singer, arrived in Sydney yesterday with a protest about Australia.

**"It's not a very nice place,"** he said, at his King's Cross hotel.

**"It's about the same size as America, but there are only 11 million people.**

**"There must be something wrong... the Negroes, the Orientals."**

Dylan, pictured above on his arrival, gave two Press conferences.

**"How do you describe me?"** he said at his second Press conference. **"Write what you like. I am a tree surgeon."**

Dylan was emphatic that he was not a popular hero: he was not a protest singer: he was not against war: his songs were not against war, and he was not a poet.

He denied he was a supporter of Negro equality.

**"I'm not pro-Negro. I'm not anti-Negro."**

Dylan said American pressmen thought of him as beautiful, loving, charming and clean. **"I'm only obscene when I get mad,"** he said.

And a final word why he did not like Australia: **"You don't play baseball."**

## 12-14 Apr 1966, Dale Plummer

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Source: *The Sun-Herald*, Australian newspaper (Sydney), 17 April 1966, page 93. Facsimile in *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, page 31.

The interview took place in Sydney, Australia.

### Dylan: not here to win hearts

Those close to him are sure Bob Dylan is intelligent, sensitive, concerned and well read.

He didn't look like that when I met him.

With one half of his mind on the questions being asked him and the other half on the children's shows on TV, Dylan conversed in a series of grunts, huhs, slurred sentences and long silences.

Only occasionally did he emerge from his boredom and show some animation.

One of these occasions was when he felt someone was **"getting at him."**

**"If you're trying to make me look silly, you're not being honest,"** he snapped.

But Dylan wasn't out to win any hearts. He came here to do two Stadium shows and that was it.

He's been touring since September and when he slows down he has no special place to go. His mother is in Minnesota, where Dylan was born 25 years ago. His father is in Texas.

He spent most of his first 18 years in the small Minnesota mining town of Hibbing. His name then was Robert Zimmerman.

By the age of 15 Dylan had taught himself to play the guitar, autoharp, piano and harmonica and had become "hooked" on singing folksongs.

After graduating from high school he struck out on a hitch-hiking career as an itinerant folksinger and made his New York debut in early 1961.

He had tremendous success, bowling over people like Pete Seeger and Joan Baez.

His first album, recorded about the same time, enjoyed tremendous sales and after the success of "Blowin' in the Wind" in 1962 Dylan was well and truly in.

As he's known for his "protest" songs, perhaps he takes part in civil rights marches?

This idea was dismissed very rapidly. **"It's very fashionable to participate in the civil rights movement,"** he said, accenting the word "fashionable."

Then: **"I don't want to hear no more about Negroes."**

He enjoys the adulation he receives as the cult hero of the "folkies" but **"I'm not my own hero,"** he explained. **"I'm just like anybody else."**

Unlike anybody else he shows no visible signs of his affluence. It's estimated he must be a near-millionaire and he employs people just to look after his money.

He claims he doesn't know anything about the hows, whys and wherefors of his finances. The money certainly doesn't go into palatial mansions, flashy cars, exotic holidays or expensive women.

It does allow him freedom of movement and it's for this one reason that Dylan could grow rather fond of it.

Unfortunately, it doesn't allow him freedom from the Press, a collection of people he doesn't like because **"they misquote me."**

He might have been thinking of us when he wrote a savage number called "Positively 4th Street." –

*I wish that for just one time  
You could stand inside my shoes  
And just for that one moment  
I could be you.  
Yes I wish that for just one time  
You could stand inside my shoes  
You'd know what a drag it is  
To see you.*

## 15 April 1966, Brisbane Press Conference

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Source: reported in an article by Erica Parker in: *Brisbane Telegraph*, 15 April 1966. The text reproduced here is from *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, pages 51-52.

This press conference was conducted at Brisbane Airport, Australia.

### **No fanfare to greet folk singer**

If you fancy the ultimate in beat garb, fingernails like talons and a curly girlie hairdo on a grown man, then Mr. Bob Dylan should be your idea of The Most.

American-born, 24, and around 5ft 2in, he arrived at Brisbane Airport today wearing ankle-swathing fawn kid boots, grey chalk-striped skinny pants, a black-and-white striped pullover and a black corduroy velvet jacket.

On the way across the tarmac with other members of the party, he ducked his golliwog-like frizz of 10-inch hair in a mock effort to dodge the camera.

He pushed others ahead of him into the airport lounge – but he need not have bothered. There was no fanfare, no autograph-hunting fans.

In the VIP lounge which had been reserved for him to meet press, TV and radio interviewers, the skinny young man who has described himself as the Voice of the True Lost Generation answered questions in a soft, husky voice.

He described himself as a folk-message singer. His songs, he said, had a message but he couldn't say what that message was – people might be offended. He dressed as he did because an artist must have a gimmick and, anyway, he liked looking like that.

Australia? It was fine. Australians? They were fine.

And Bob Dylan went off into a gale of giggling behind a hand graced by a flashing turquoise and gold ring...



## 23 April 1966, Rosemary Gerette

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Source: *The Canberra Times*, Australian newspaper, 7 May 1966. The text reproduced here is from *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, pages 82-83.

The interview took place in Riverside Lodge Hotel, Perth, Australia.

### Dylan – Man in a Mask

I sat for six hours while Dylan played me his music, a pile of unreleased acetate cuttings, which he carries around with him. **“Like, I’ve been living music for ever.”** But the words seemed to mean more to him than the music because he made me ask at once if I missed a word or its meaning. And although I can forget what somebody said to me yesterday, he knew every word through something like 40 songs.

He loved those songs. And to me it was six hours of throbbing poetry.

Critics here accused him of an unprofessional manner. On stage he didn’t seem to be trying. Yet he asked me eagerly what I thought of his concert, did it go well? An afterthought then: **“Like, I don’t usually ask people that.”**

He cared.

\* \* \*

I sat up with the group until dawn. After four days in Perth [sic] they were leaving for Stockholm for concerts. They were trying to get tired so they could sleep through the 27 hour flight and I was able to listen to a composing session. Countless cups of tea; none of the group drinks. Thing happened, and six new songs were born.

The poetry seemed already to have been written. Dylan says **“picture one of these cats with a horn, coming over the hill at daybreak. Very Elizabethan, you dig? Wearing garters.”** And out of the imagery, he and the lead guitarist work on a tune and Dylan’s leg beats time with the rhythm, continuously, even when the rhythm is in his own mind.

Six a.m. and he asks am I tired?

Later he plays a melody to us, a very special one. **“I’ll never have it published, recorded. I wrote it for this way-out moon chick. We just sat on the floor on these mattresses... and like for two hours I spoke to her with my guitar. And she understood. She’d just say yes, or no, or yes. And I never spoke a word, you dig? Only of course, this isn’t quite like I played it, because it meant something to me at the time, but now it doesn’t.”** It was beautiful, I thought.

Later he spoke of obscurity, of the going down, when the good times will be over.

**“People don’t value their obscurity. They don’t know what it’s like to have it taken away. Not to be able to walk down the street or sit in the park or dare to go out of your hotel room. The money I’ve made means only that when I’m off this kick I’ll be able to protect myself, because I know cats who’ll want to tear me to pieces and I’ll have to kill myself. And I don’t want to do this.”**

Dylan on materialism: how he spent a weekend at John Lennon’s 21-room house in London; how he went back to the States and bought himself a 21-room house just to see how it felt.

Last year he gave away \$4,000 to a friend who was down. Yet he says he never has given a present, just a little present, to anybody, and that nobody has given him one either.

Dylan on Paul McCartney: **“Like, man, he’s a great actor, interested in everything. He writes most of the Beatles’ songs.”**

On fans: **“It’s an insult to call anyone a fan.”**

At 7am he reads us pieces from the book he is writing. It was unintelligible, avant-garde, like the backs of his record covers. The boys all thought it was really groovy. I couldn’t see why. Then there was talk about the film he is going to make – about himself. Dylan the egotist – yet everyone is silent when he speaks. Early in the piece he said to me: **“I could tell you about Allen Ginsberg, Jean Genet, but I don’t know what sort of a reporter you are, and they’re my friends. Anyway, Genet wrote all his stuff thirty years ago, and now all he does is make a few bad movies... and man, anyone can do that.”** Unexplainable contradiction.

Books were strewn around the room. The poetry of Baudelaire, Durrell, Australian Poetry 1965, Mackaness’ *The Wide Brown Land*, a couple of newer-type Australian ‘magazines’, the inevitable *Newsweek* (Dylan story

inside, of course). He keeps a very close eye on publicity about himself. He told me a story printed during his visit was three years old.

A phone call comes from Melbourne and he gives instructions to a Sydney journalist whom he wants to get to America because he likes him.

A telegram arrived from someone who says: "Dylan, be free always". Free? No. It seems the pressure of his own mind is a force which has harnessed his so-called freedom completely, and that it must paradoxically bring about his destruction.

He asks me to describe him in one word. I cannot. "**That's groovy,**" he tells me.

## 28 to 29 April 1966, Carsten Grolin

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Source: *Ekstrabladet*, Danish newspaper, 30 April 1966. The text reproduced here is from *The Ghost of Electricity*, edited by John Bauldie, 1988, privately published, pages 98-99.

The interview took place in Hotel Flamingo, Solna, Stockholm, Sweden.

We sit down at the edge of the table. It's dancing night at the Flamingo Hotel and in the bar, hidden in a corner, sits Bob Dylan and his friends – some of the musicians, sound engineers, groupies, his personal manager. **“Let's go upstairs,”** he says. His suite is on the top floor: a living room, a bedroom, a small kitchen. In an armchair, a pile of records in paper sleeves. He plays them one by one. We listen to Bob Dylan singing for an hour, for two hours. When he has played the last one, he turns off the record player.

When he was told that it can sometimes be very difficult to hear or understand what he's singing on the records, he looked very thoughtful and worried. **“I don't really understand it, but a lot of people say that. Maybe they're right, but I can't do anything about it. I don't mix these records you know.”**

The room, filled with teacups, sugarbowls, ashtrays, rolls of film, fruitbaskets, people, girls, managers. Dylan talks. Short punchlines keep him going. Chunks of words flow out of his mouth. A stream of consciousness verbalised. We sit there listening to these drunken messages on film, people, New York – mostly film. Messages: a way of testing his creative imagination, a sort of writing. At the same time a way of meeting his need to express himself. The fascination of the free association of ideas.

He won't discuss the subject of protest songs and message songs, and the question of whether he feels he's sold out to commercialism just makes him shrug. **“It's as simple as this: either people understand what I do or they don't.”** He doesn't feel any responsibility to his fans. **“I don't see myself as an actor. It's simple enough: I'd still be doing what I'm doing whether people were taking notice of it or not. I'm happier now than in the old days, even though those times were healthier, cleaner times.”**

Everyone in the inner circle has long since got used to not contradicting Dylan, or coming up with comments which are out of line. Way past midnight we're still sitting in the room in the Flamingo Hotel, listening to Dylan voicing his thoughts and feelings. The sky's turning grey. It will soon be light.

**“Burning a draft card won't stop the war, won't even save a single life, but if it makes someone feel as if he's acting more honestly, it's OK. If he does it simply to feel more self-important, then it's irrelevant. Then again I shouldn't say too much – I once burned my birth certificate in public.”**

The camera crew, filming Dylan for ABC TV, come in with their equipment. It's 3.30 in the morning. They shoot a scene in the bathroom. The water is turned on. We can hear it running as we head towards the elevator. Around 7am Dylan is finally alone. The last person to leave his hotel room sees him take out his typewriter.

## 6 May 1966, Unknown Interviewer (CityWeek)

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Source: *CityWeek*, Northern Ireland newspaper, 12 May 1966. A facsimile was printed in *Isis Revisited*, UK fanzine, Nos 16/17, 1987, page 53.

The interview took place in the ABC Theatre, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

### Talking to a 'Modern Myth'

The door of the drab dressing room was ajar. A fuzzy golliwog in a tight diamond pattern suit stood staring at me with wild wide open eyes. **'What dya want?'** asked Bob Dylan. His lips hadn't moved. The sound seemed to emit from somewhere in the inner regions of the thick dark curls.

Dylan was on the second day of his second European tour. So far he had spoken to nobody except his sound recordist, his road-managers and Victor – his cowboy general factotum. When *CityWeek* asked for an interview the request was refused. Dylan hates reporters. He won't accept the fact that fame like his makes him a public spectacle.

Eventually he invited me inside. This wasn't an interview he emphasised. **'We're jest gonna have a lil' talkie!'**

And lil' talkie we had. Bob Dylan – the modern myth of the Tame West – sat staring at me vacantly. His legs were crossed and his zipped suede boots swung neurotically over the cigarette strewn floor.

Name singers who do ABC concerts usually talk about sex, drink, parties and the girls they've known. Dylan talked guitars and homesickness. He claimed to have no feelings about the tour. All he wanted to do was go home.

He told me of the lousy reception he'd been given in Dublin. The southern Press had slayed him because of his non co-operation. Everybody was criticising his fresh disc 'Rainy Day Numbers 12 and 35,' and the Gresham Hotel mistook his entourage for a band of gipsies!

He strummed his guitar, chewed a mouthful of harmonica and sang one word 'Belfast.'

'That sounds like the start of one of your memorable quotes,' I stuttered.

The genius leaned back and laughed. He hadn't ever smiled up to now.

**'God!'** choked the poet. **'We're straight out of Charles Dickens. You and me both!'**

He talked more freely now. He asked about the border. About Irish folk music and about Belfast in general. Bob poured a cup of black tea and shovelled in a few spoonfuls of honey. He lit a kingsize cigarette. **'Do you ever do any real writing?'** he asked. I replied quickly.

The question was rhetorical. He wanted to let me know that he was writing a lot. 'Prose?' I interrogated (*sic*). **'Yeah!'** he grunted with a wry smile. **'Don't we all?'**

The tour manager came in again. 'Come on!' he urged Dylan. 'Come on!'

Bob Dylan's hand was very limp as he shook goodbye. His eyes were looking at the blank wall.

## June 1966, Earl Leaf

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Source: *Teen*, US magazine, July 1966, page 30. The text reproduced here is from *The Bridge*, UK fanzine, Number 65, Winter 2019, pages 89, 91-92.

This interview was conducted at an unknown location.

### My Fair and Frantic Hollywood

The Byrds were really shot down when Gene Clark split. The maracas-tambourine-song man had no personal beef with his mates, but he couldn't hack the pace or fly as high as they do. I tooled my 'Stang out to the Strip to hear their opening night at The Trip. Without Gene on the scene, the Byrdies came on neither grotty nor groovy – ah, heck – I'll be frank: they were rank. They dragged through the act like four zombies until even the most dedicated Byrds bird wondered where the action went... (they) slunk away for some dressing room soul searching... Table hopping among the celebrities, I fired off (*sic*) a couple of camera flashes at Bob Dylan, sitting at a far dark booth with cronies. He jumped three feet out of his skin, snatched off his dark shades and cried out: **"Hey, man, whydja take my picture?"**

I told him he's a fascinatin' character to my *Teen* people.

**"Hey, I'm no different than any other cats in the joint,"** he declared. **"We're all the same."**

"That's pretty freaky," I argued. "No two people are the same. You're nothing like me."

**"How do you know how I am?"** he persisted, **"Can you read my mind? Do you know me so well? Maybe we're more alike than you think?"**

It was the same old Dylan put on. He made room for me next to him, and we argued what personality is and ain't. Then the Grass Roots began blasting salvos of herd rock into the hot smoky air from king-sized amps on the unguarded flanks of the stage. To carry on our dialogue, Dylan had to put his mouth to my face foliage and yell into my earhole, and I hollered into his.

Bob Dylan writes lyrical prose and poetry but speaks a hippy lingo. He sipped coffee from a tall frosted glass and often lifted his lid to scratch his scalp or run fingers through his tangled poodle-hair. Dylan has more nervous mannerisms than a hound has fleas. He also smiles easily and beams from ear to ear at a compliment. He claims to be indifferent to what people write or say about him, but he listened all ears when I repeated some of the Dylan stories and opinions I'd written in these columns.

He took it as praise when I said he had a distorted, deceptive and devious mind that races along on a slippery track. His sense of humor is so far-out an astronaut couldn't catch up. At his December press conference, I reminded him, he mocked or duped his interviewers with wry fabrications and fantasy put-ons, absurd statements which he delivered with a straight face, not even an eye twinkle, making people believe him while he laughed up his sleeve.

**"Yeah, man, that's right! Some of their campy and very personal questions blew my mind,"** he allowed. **"Say, if I laid nine put-ons and one truth on you, could you tell which is which?"**

"Sure, man," I boasted. "I've been alerted to your wavelength."

We hollered into each other's ears about music, poetry, people, freedom, loneliness, faith, honor, ethics and philosophy.

**"Philosophy's only a crock. It's just a belief or theory that some cats are hung up on,"** he declared. **"That intellectual garbage grabbed me when I was 13, but now it shuts me down."**

I would have switched dials, but Bob kept returning to deep-think brain talk like a dawg that can't leave a bone alone.

**"Are you going to write something more about me?"** he suddenly asked. I said sure. **"Well,"** he added, **"The magazines will soon begin to write a lot of rot about me and I have one favour to ask: will you defend me?"**

That was Dylan's final put-on, for at that moment, the Trip broke into a thunderous roar of glad cries, whistles and foot stomps. Bob flipped on his shades to see the distant stage (this made me think his tinted glasses are prescription lensed), and I rushed down front to learn what caused the throng to din. The Byrds had returned for their second set when Gene Clark suddenly emerged from the smoky gloom, jumped on stage, seized the maracas and vibrated his tonsils into the mike... A dramatic moment! We all hope that it meant the return of the prodigal but, alas, it didn't. He played the 45-minute set and vanished back into the gloom whence he came.

## Late February 1969, Jann Wenner

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Source: *Rolling Stone*, US magazine, Number 29, 15 March 1969, page [1].

This interview was conducted by telephone with Dylan in Woodstock, New York.

### **'I Can't Remember Where They Come From'**

Bob Dylan has completed his next album and joined Johnny Cash for a duet or two. The recordings were done in the middle of February at the Columbia studios in Nashville, Tennessee, produced by Bob Johnston and using several of the same musicians who played on John Wesley Harding.

**"They are the songs I've been writing over the past year,"** Dylan said in a telephone conversation from his home in upstate New York. **"Some are songs that I've sung and never written down and just sort of turn up again."**

**"I can't remember where they come from. I was just sitting down trying to write some notes on where the songs came from and I couldn't figure it out myself."**

The Dylan record – containing ten or eleven new songs – was done in three mid-February sessions at the Columbia Studios in the Country Music Capitol of the World. In the last nights of Dylan's stay in Nashville (February 17-18), Johnny Cash joined him and together they did about fifteen songs, one or two for possible use on the new album and the rest for a possible joint Cash-Dylan LP. Bob Johnston, who produced *Blonde on Blonde* and John Wesley Harding is also Cash's producer (did the *Folsom Prison LP*, among many of Cash's recent recordings) and helped bring the two performers together. It was also a natural outgrowth of the long-time friendship between the two singers.

"You don't produce Dylan or Cash," Johnston said, "they produce themselves." Johnston hopes to record about fifteen more Cash-Dylan duets and take the best of them for an album. In February, they did songs like "Walk The Line," "Big River," "Careless Love," "One Too Many Mornings," and "Understand Your Man," among others.

Cash and Dylan simply went into the studio and jammed for a while, sang some of Bob's old songs, some of John's old songs, a song they wrote together, did some rehearsed material and now have about three hours of tape if they want to release it as an album.

The new Dylan LP will probably be released before April 1, depending on how smoothly mixing, covers, liner notes and so on go. A Nashville photographer was used to take some shots and those are currently being considered for the cover. **"I've done my part,"** Dylan said, **"and I don't know any more about it."**

Session men on the date included Kenny Buttrey on drums, Charlie McCoy on bass and Pete Drake on steel guitar, all of whom played on John Wesley Harding. Joining them were Norman Blake, a guitar teacher from Chattanooga on rhythm guitar (and dobro on the "Understand Your Man" duet); Charlic Daniels, who played dobro, Fender electric guitar and acoustic gut-string guitar (**"a fine song writer, you'll be hearing a lot about him"**); and Bob Wilson, Wilson, from Detroit and currently a Nashville session-man, on piano (**"you'll be hearing a lot about him too"**).

Some of the song titles are "I Threw It All Away," "One More Night," "Country Pie" ("Anything like 'Honey Pie'?" **"No, wish it was"**) and "Tell Me That It Isn't True."

**"I can't remember too much about how I wrote the new songs. It depends on where I am, what the weather is like and who is around at the time. The music is a little of everything. You'll know what it is when you hear it. I can't remember that much about it. The new songs are easy to sing and there aren't too many words to remember."**

## 1-2 May 1969, Patrick Thomas

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Source: *Rolling Stone*, US magazine, Number 34, 31 May 1969, pages 1, 6.

This interview took place near Ryman Auditorium and, later, at a hotel Nashville, Tennessee.

### Cash and Dylan Tape TV Number in Nashville

Nashville – As the crowd settled in, T. Thomas Catrer, the master of ceremonies, explained how the show would run and what the applause sign meant and the rest. This was the Johnny Cash Show, they were taping the first segment now, and the part with Bob Dylan would come first. But first for a little warm-up humor, Nashville style.

“If anything strikes you as funny, just laugh,” said Tommy Catrer. “We’d appreciate it. Miss Fanny Flagg’s here. I think you’ll enjoy her.”

About that time, Dylan’s wife Sarah and their son Jesse took their seats with the wife of Bob Johnston, the Columbia producer who has worked with Cash, Dylan and the Statler Brothers. Johnston is said to be the man who interested Flatt & Scruggs into recording Dylan songs before the team broke up.

Cash came out before the taping began to sing a few numbers for the folks, and he seemed a happy man. He introduced a new number by Vince Matthews he’s about to record called “Wrinkled Crinkled Wadded Dollar Bill.” The Tennessee Three backs him with Carl Perkins on guitar. His wife June Carter joined him and they did “Jackson.” June is a woman who absolutely means to entertain or know the reason why. She’s got that hash-house flash and she really drives.

When Cash left, Dylan’s band got into the jungle of instruments behind the cameras and warmed up. They are the same group that backed him on Nashville Skyline: Kenny Buttrey, Charley McCoy, Pete Drake, Norman Blake, Charlie Daniels and Bob Wilson.

The show with Dylan as featured guest will be shown June 7 on ABC. The taping took place May 1st at the Grand Ole Opry.

Cash seems determined to bring entertainment to television, a most remarkable innovation in this medium. Besides Dylan, Cash and his wife June Carter, and the Carter Family, the session included Joni Mitchell, the Statler Brothers and a remarkable Cajun fiddler named Doug Kershaw.

But the highlight, of course, was the performance by Dylan. Back in March, Dylan was featured in an NET special on Cash. The segment showed them recording a duet version of Dylan’s “One Too Many Mornings,” one of his older songs. Apart from this, Dylan has been seen publicly only once since his motorcycle accident in the summer of 1966. He appeared at the Woodie Guthrie benefit in New York over a year ago.

For the Cash Show, Dylan did “I Threw It All Away” from the new album, Nashville Skyline. He also did a new song, “Living the Blues,” which will be released as a single on June 8th. Then he and Cash did “Girl From the North Country,” also featured on the new album.

The Dylan appearance was no secret in Nashville, fortunately. It goes without saying that Cash fans are as baffled by Dylan’s emergence here as Dylan freaks were startled at the news of this new axis. But they all lined up outside the Opry: businessmen and their wives, country boys, bald heads, acid heads, bee-hive bouffant blondes, drawling teenyboppers and other assorted traveling wonderers. There is no doubt that a good part of the audience was there just to see Cash and didn’t know what all the fuss was about. But the seats and aisles of the Opry were full, and Dylan did not lack a fine representation of people familiar with his work.

Dylan appeared to a great ovation, tieless, short-haired with his five-day beard, dressed in a stove-pipe suit, looking a little like Charlie Chaplin. His manner was somewhat strained.

He opened with “I Threw It All Away.” A shock went through the auditorium because all the amplification was off on the studio speakers and you could barely hear Dylan over Kenny Buttrey’s drums. From what we could hear, the takes on all the numbers were up to recording standards. (Reportedly, Dylan did only one or two takes for each cut on Nashville Skyline.)

The second number, “Living the Blues,” will be released as a single the day after the Cash show is aired. It’s almost an Everly Brothers swing song, and could have easily followed “Peggy Day” on the new album.



Dylan joined Cash in a living room set, where they did “Girl From the North Country.” It sounded virtually indistinguishable from the album cut. There was a fine friendliness between the two and if you watch closely, you’ll see Dylan slyly driving Cash on the refrain (“... true love of mine...”).

When the set was over, Cash said, “It’s really fine to have a great man like Bob Dylan on the show.” Then he announced that the first take had been fine and that Dylan enjoyed the audience so much that he wanted to do the numbers again for them with amplification.

While they were setting up to run it through again, T. Tommy Catrer came out to say that Dylan “just really doesn’t believe who he is.” It’s true: Dylan was incredibly reserved. He only flashed an occasional smile during the entire performance. But it was a strange audience, though not at all unenthusiastic. As a matter of fact, it was outrightly reverent. Not one word was heard from the crowd despite the fact there was no explanation about the lack of amplification on the first run through. Everybody just leaned forward. Those who knew were glad to have him back.

The amplified set was low-keyed, perhaps a bit cautious, but when Dylan ran through “Girl From the North Country” again with Cash, he seemed considerably looser, if the occasional flash grins he gave are any indication. He ran through the new single a third time after this set and left to hot applause.

(Earlier, Dylan had whispered something in Cash’s ear, who then turned to the crowd upstairs and said, “Bob says you’re a great audience.”)

Cash did his portion of the show next and he played some of his best numbers. He was exuberant about the affair, and it was a very fine performance. He did a medley of “Folsom Prison,” “Don’t Take Your Guns to Town,” “Egg-Sucking Dog,” and “It Ain’t Me, Babe” as a duet with June Carter. He also did “Orange Blossom Special” in his three-harmonica version.

Later, Cash, Dylan and June Carter went down to the Black Poodle down in Printers’ Alley to see Doug Kershaw, the Cajun fiddler who also played on the Cash show. To what must have been Dylan’s delight, the attention was primarily on Cash. Joni Mitchell and Graham Nash were there, too. Kershaw really ripped loose on the first set and passed the mike around at the table when he did “Orange Blossom Special.”

A little later, Cash and his wife took to the stage with Kershaw backing them on his fiddle. I have never heard happier music. Dylan sat quiet and smiling through the set. The people who happened to be in the club when this began were stunned.

The Nashville Banner ran an “interview” by Red O’Donnell on its front page. It was casual to say the least, but it showed sympathy for Dylan’s move to Nashville. The Tennessean ran a feature way back inside with a shot of all the longhairs sitting on the sidewalk outside the Opry House. Its caption ran “Subjects Wait to See Their King.” The headline for the story said: Now Monarch At Opry Tabernacle. The writer quoted “one mustached young man from Cincinnati” on his reaction to the show:

“Hey, he walks like an ordinary person. I came 300 miles to see an ordinary person!” And he laughed.”

Another “reaction” was: “He just sounds like a not-so-good hillbilly to me. What’s he got?”

The fact is that the current sound he plays is more country & Dylan than country & Western, and Dylan is wise in not attempting to kick his way into the Grand Ole Opry. The one thing that was a constant source of conversation here, probably to too great a degree, was the shyness that he showed among his company.

After the concert, a photographer said to him: “You seemed to be a little nervous tonight, Bob.”

“**I was scared to death,**” he said with a smile.

Certainly he seemed a bit strained – not an unusual situation for a man who had given only one public performance in three years. But in my encounters with him, he seemed more reserved than afraid, and it was obvious that this reserve is getting him a good deal of respect in Nashville. They were there first and they know it. So does he.

The day after the concert Dylan came back to his hotel from a recording session with his producer, Bob Johnston. Word had it that he was planning to record an Everly Brothers tune, and sure enough, he had a copy of one of their singles in hand and the sheet music for a song called “Take a Message to Mary.” He said that one of the Nashville papers was going to “**get a list of ten things I like.**”

“You mean ten songs?”

“**No. Ten things.**”

## Before 24 August 1969, Tony Palmer

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Source: *The Observer*, UK newspaper, 24 August 1969. The text reproduced here is from *The Dust of Rumour* edited by Dave Percival, 1985, X-ASITY, page 39.

Probably not interview but the article contains a direct quote from Dylan that has not been seen elsewhere.

### The Dylan Invention

There really is no such person as Bob Dylan. He was invented because he was needed by the white youth of America who had been searching with increasing desperation for something, or someone positive with whom to identify. The nationwide campaign in the United States against racial injustice, which became the rallying point for protests of all kinds, found a voice at the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival. The resident poet was Bob Dylan.

One student commentator wrote: "We don't give a damn about Norman Mailer's private fantasies. We're concerned with the blight of dishonesty, conformism and hypocrisy in the U.S.A., especially in Washington. And Bob Dylan is the only American writer dealing with these subjects in a language that makes sense to us."

Dylan has now come to Britain for the first time in nearly three years to appear at the Isle of Wight festival next weekend. British Rail are running special trains to make sure that the expected 150,000 audience gets there. It's his first big-time stage-show since he was booed from the stage, crying, at another Newport Festival two years and eight million records after the first. He had committed the crime of advancing his music beyond the comparatively simple demands of folk, embracing rock 'n' roll, country and western music and rhythm 'n' blues en route.

Rejected by his early followers, Dylan was suddenly 'discovered' by the mass-circulation news-magazines. They needed a comfortable explanation for the anti-Johnson mood among the new youth, so they picked on Dylan. "He is Shakespeare to my generation," wrote Richard Goldstein in the *New York Times*; "The Rebel King of Rock 'n' Roll" trumpeted the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The fact that he was neither rebellious nor to do with rock 'n' roll didn't seem to matter. "Because of Dylan"... began a piece in *Time*.

But, because of Dylan, Dylan had become a liar. He denies that his protest songs ever existed, although 'A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall' was clearly about the 1962 Cuban crisis; 'Oxford Town' was about the ordeal of James Meredith; the 'Ballad of Hollis Brown' commemorated a particular bloody killing of a Dakota dirt-farmer. Some people thought his well publicised motor-cycle accident in 1966 conveniently removed him from the recording scene during a fall-off in his creative energies. Interviewing him was impossible. Could we assume he was married? We could assume we liked. He was born married 45 years ago. How did he feel? His toenails didn't fit.

All that remained were his songs and it must have seemed that they alone could not be invented. In spite of their apparent differences, they are totally consistent in their imagery and in their flinty, savage melancholy. He was psychedelic before the term was invented, piling dream upon dream in a kaleidoscope of terror. The music is lean and pinched like his voice. Recently it has mellowed a little but his optimism is still desperate. His subject-matter is still intolerance and the love of liberty, both expressed in almost incoherently drawling lyrics. **"I'm trying to be a singer without a dictionary and a poet not bound with shelves of books,"** he says.

His songs depict a frozen world to which he and he alone has access because they have no truth other than that which he cares to give them. The ache they pitifully express is probably as alien to everyone else as the 'ramblings' of Norman Mailer were to that student commentator. Private sorrow has again been used as public grief. The Dylan, the person whose sorrow we thought it was, we invented.

## 31 August 1969, Unknown Interviewer (Daily Express)

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Source: *The Daily Express*, UK newspaper, 1 September 1969.. The text reproduced here is from *The Dust of Rumour* edited by Dave Percival, 1985, X-ASITY, page 58.

The interview took place at Woodside Bay, Isle of Wight, England.

### **Just 65 minutes of Dylan (at £538 a minute)**

Folk singer Bob Dylan disappointed 200,000 pilgrims of pop last night after they had roared a message of welcome and adoration, by appearing for just 65 minutes instead of the expected two hours. Promoter Ron Foulk said as Dylan was driven off: "I'm surprised. I expected more."

Dylan, asked about the brevity of his appearance as he was hustled to the car, said: "**I don't mind, I've enjoyed it.**" And so had the 200,000 screaming, semi-hysterical fans who forgave him for the three years of silence, and for the three hours he was late last night.

Some of the faithful had waited for days. Yesterday the organisers thoughtfully laid down a quarter-acre of foam for them to frolic in at the weird happening, and Dylan was earning more than £538 a minute.

## Late August 1969, Chris White

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Source: *Melody Maker*, UK magazine, 6 September 1969, page 16.

The interview took place at Forlands Farm, Isle of Wight, England.

### Dylan charms the labourers

Bob Dylan has been an elusive person during his visit to the Isle of Wight.

Apart from his one press conference on Wednesday he has been spending most of his time at the 16th century stone farm house, Forlands Farm, near Bembridge, rehearsing with the Band.

The farm house is set in picturesque sunken gardens and has its own private swimming pool.

Beside the farm house is a converted barn where Dylan and the Band have been practising.

At the entrance to the farm house is a pair of boarded-up, wrought iron gates, where one or two civilian guards keep a constant watch from a parked car. They earn a reported £15 a day for this duty.

Outside the cottage, labourers working on the road have been gathering near the barn rehearsal room to listen to Dylan and the Band run through such numbers as “Lay Lady Lay” and “Nashville Skyline.”

But one reporter has managed to penetrate the security lines, he is Daily Sketch writer Chris White.

Chris went to Forlands Farm and eventually met Bob Dylan, after speaking to Al Aronowitz a journalist friend and unofficial press agent for Dylan.

“Dylan walked out of the barn into the garden,” said White. “He was wearing a brown leather coat and green-lensed sunglasses. I asked him if I could have a word with him and Dylan replied **‘sure, what do you want to know.’** I asked what was the attraction about the I.O.W. and he explained that it was a place where Alfred Lord Tennyson had lived and that it was a place he had always wanted to come to.”

Dylan is believed to have rented the house for at least three weeks.

White asked Dylan if he had any thoughts about taking any other engagements. **“Not at the moment,”** replied Bob, **“but we will consider any offers we get. Basically we are just having a holiday.”**

**“It’s nice to be working with the Band again. We’re just getting a bit of practice in. They are a great bunch.”**

Bob also said that he was aware of the large number of fans he had in England. **“They write to me a lot. They are the most loyal fans I have and that was one of the reasons that I wanted to come to England to make my comeback. It’s not the money I’m interested in, I just want to play music.”**

“I found Dylan easy and pleasant to talk to,” said White. “He was a complete contrast to what the publicity makes him out as and a contrast to his lack of communication at the press conference.

“He was a completely different person to what I had expected. It was an insight into the person and not the public image. Something you caught very little of with all the paraphernalia of a press conference. I think he is a person who is quite willing to talk to you on his own. Basically he is a shy person.

“I spoke to the Band’s Robbie Robertson who told me, ‘We’ve been rehearsing with Bob since we got here, working out what we are going to play. He’s a bit vague about it, and we’ve been trying to get the feel of the place.

‘But he just likes to play all the time. We’ve had to say ‘give it a rest’. We could hardly finish our first album because he wanted to play all the time.’ ”

# 1 September 1969, David Wilsworth

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Source: *The Times*, UK newspaper, 2 September 1969, page 2.

The interview was held in Ryde, Isle of Wight, England.

## Dylan Cuts Short His Stay on Island

Ryde, I.o.W., Sept. 1

Bob Dylan cut short his stay short on the Isle of Wight and left today for a holiday tour of Britain. The American singer had been here for less than a week and had been expected to stay for up to three weeks.

This morning, as he boarded a chartered Hovercraft bound for Portsmouth, he said: **“We are going to stay here in England and we may go to Ireland, Scotland and Wales too.”**

Mr. Dylan, who was reported to have been paid £35,000 for his appearance, was accompanied by his wife and two children and by George Harrison, of the Beatles, and his wife.

Tens of thousands of Dylan enthusiasts who came to see his concert at Woodside Bay, near Ryde, last night also made their way home today, with the same lack of fuss that has characterised this whole weekend.

Early this morning there was a rush to board ferries because of an overnight build-up of passengers and one crew turned hoses on youngsters who were trying to board across railings instead of on the gangway.

The Dylan concert ended with almost jarring abruptness shortly after midnight. Dylan appeared just after 11 p.m., more than two hours later than advertised. His group, The Band, had played for an hour before that.

There were some boos and jeers when Mr. Dylan did not prolong his performance. This morning he said: **“I wanted to do more but it was late and I did not want to keep anybody up late.”** He had been ready to play from 5.30 and did not know what had caused the delay.

Mr. Ron Foulk, one of the promoters, said: “I did expect Dylan to sing for a bit longer but he fulfilled his contract and I believe the whole concert was a great success.” Mr. Foulk denied reports that the concert might show a loss.

Police at Newport said 22 people had been arrested on drug charges. All but one had been bailed to appear in court in mid-September.

# 1 September 1969, Philip Finn

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Source: *The Daily Express*, UK newspaper, 2 September 1969.

The interview was held in Ryde, Isle of Wight, England.

The party's over. They've burst their giant balloons and taken the foam away.

And as 150,000 Bob Dylan fans make their way home from the pop festival on the Isle of Wight the cost is being counted in the musical citadels on both sides of the Atlantic.

The fans hoping to be back at work in offices and factories all over Britain today are the ordinary material of society.

But the star people involved have more to lose – and more to gain.

Dylan himself, the high priest of pop, more than anybody. He left the island last night vowing: **“I'll be back...”**

But this £583-a-minute singer was upset by reports that he had sold his fans short by not singing for long enough.

Brilliant

**“I was shattered by stories that the kids were angry because I was three hours late,”** he said. **“I was there at 5.30 as promised. I don't know why we were so long before going on. Ask the producers.**

**“It was the biggest audience I have ever faced. I couldn't see anybody out there. It was frightening, but I soon warmed up and got the feeling. The fans were terrific.”**

Dylan's friend, Beatle George Harrison, also defended his performance: “The concert was marvellous. Bob did not walk off the stage halfway through his act. He gave a brilliant performance.”

From this astonishing performance one man has clearly emerged as the new Prince of Pop – fair-haired Ron Foulk, managing director of Fiery Creations, a zip-along enterprise just 12 months old.

He pulled off a fantastic show business scoop by agreeing to pay £38,000 to Dylan. He also paid top money to more than 30 leading artists and laid on the three-day spectacular.

Optimistic

Foulk, with rings of tiredness around his 24-year-old blue eyes, discounted reports that he will pocket £100,000 from the spectacular.

He said: “I am optimistic about a nice big cut but although there were 150,000 at the concert nowhere that number paid to get in.

“Thousands and thousands got in by con tricks or simply leaping over the fence.

“We estimate that 70,000 tickets were sold. It will be days before our computer reckonings are finished. Dylan and the other artists cost us £50,000. Publicity cost us another £20,000.

“We laid on some terrific sideshows, including the Great Foam Frolic area which cost more than £5,000.

“On top of this we had to lay out about £10,000 to get the place in shape with special walls.”

Ron Foulk hardly knew the first thing about the Top 20 a year ago. Then he left his business, a small printing firm, with the thought that all the young fans represented a fantastic market.

Expenses

This weekend's success has convinced him that he was right.

He got Dylan to emerge from his three-year retreat by a bombardment of letters and telephone calls.

“All told, my phone bills this year must be around £5,000, plus other additional expenses in getting Bob to this country,” he said.

Ron Foulk is one man sure of the reputation, if not yet the money, involved in this festival.

“My real achievement,” he said “was giving pleasure to those 150,000 fans.

“Next year I hope we can put on something bigger and better. This means a fantastic amount of really hard work and worry.

“But that is my life.”

## Jan to Oct 1971, Anthony Scaduto (New York Times)

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Source: *The New York Times Magazine*, US newspaper, 28 November 1971, Section 6, pages 34-38, 40, 43, 45-46, 48, 50, 52.

From interviews that were conducted in New York City, New York.

### **‘Won’t You Listen to the Lambs, Bob Dylan?’**

The setting is Madison Square Garden, Aug. 1, 1971: George Harrison, former Beatle, leads a group of fellow superstars in a Sunday benefit performance to aid citizens of East Pakistan. Twenty thousand fans are at each of two performances and thousands of others in the street hope to crash inside, for this promises to be one of those Events that later become part of larger myth.

“Bob Dylan’s gonna be here.” Through the lobby, up in the galleries, down on the sports floor where music industry executives have paid \$100 each for the privilege of settling their \$400 suits into hard wooden folding chairs, spreads the rumor: Bob Dylan, whose own myth surpasses the hyped-up *mystique* of the entire rock culture, might possibly make one of his rare public appearances.

For a while the concert almost makes the audience forget Mr. Dylan. Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan, two giants of raga, play the folk music of their suffering land. And then Harrison and his gang of friends, including Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, Leon Russell and Billy Preston, prance through a dozen numbers, bringing the house roaring down after each song.

Near the end of the concert, Harrison, deliberately low key, announces: “Here’s a friend, Bob Dylan.”

The words jolt, as if 20,000 people of all ages and life-styles are playing Ben Franklin, kites in the storm clouds, getting an electric charge. One young man, about 19, cries without embarrassment; a young woman, in a long purple velvet gown from the nineteen-twenties that barely covers her scruffy second-hand Army boots, leaps up and cries: “I can’t believe it. I’m really seeing *Dylan*. I just can’t believe it.” Even a hardened rock writer turns to his lady and says: “Are we really seeing this?”

It is indeed Dylan, looking as young as on the cover of some of his earliest albums, carrying his acoustic guitar and singing those songs that had so much power in the days of protest and radicalism, among them, “Blowin in the Wind,” “Mr. Tambourine Man” and “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall.” The concert is no longer simply an event. This is Dylan, singing songs many thought he would never do again, and his audience hangs on every word and note.

“He’s coming back to protest,” says one older record company executive, who will probably rush into his office the next morning and tell his stable to “write it like the old Dylan, baby.”

Two months later, before an overflow audience at Carnegie Hall, Joan Baez, the woman with the most stunningly pure voice in pop music, introduces a new song.

“This is a song I’ve written for Bobby Dylan,” she says (and does one simply imagine that her voice grows husky?). “I haven’t seen him in four years. I’d be ashamed to sing it to him, but I’ll sing it for you.” And she sings:

*I’ll put flowers at your feet  
And I will sing to you so sweet  
And hope my words will carry home to your heart  
You left us marching on the road  
And said how heavy was the load  
The years were young, the struggle barely at its start.  
Won’t you listen to the lambs, Bobby?  
They’re crying for you.  
Won’t you listen to the lambs, Bobby?  
They’re dying...  
No one could say it like you said it  
We’d only try and just forget it  
You stood alone upon the mountain till it was sinking*



*In a frenzy we tried to reach you,  
With looks and letters we would beseech you  
Never knowing what, where or how you were thinking.<sup>1</sup>*

Miss Baez asked that the rest of the lyrics not be quoted because she is still polishing the song, but she sang that Dylan had cast off his “cursed crown” and that the people who are still marching on the streets have reserved a place for him in the struggle. Please come back, Bobby, sang from every line.

“To Bobby” received the longest ovation at the concert. For the audience knew that years before he had provided Miss Baez with the “fingerpointing songs” (as Dylan called them) that enabled her to raise her voice in protest. They knew she and others have accused Dylan of turning his back on social commitment; many in the audience felt that of Dylan. Some critics have charged him with caring more about the steady growth of his investment portfolio than the problems of the world; of being a “capitalistic pig,” to use the shrill rhetoric of the radical movement.

Those accusations clearly have stung Dylan. He denied during several conversations that he was being affected by the anger directed against him. **“It’s all petty,”** he said. Yet a week later, at the beginning of November, Dylan went into the recording studio to cut a new single called “George Jackson” – a “protest song” about the shooting of the Black Panther in San Quentin, a song that could have been written by the young Bob Dylan who wrote “Blowin’ in the Wind” in 1962.

The reaction of the audiences at Madison Square Garden and Carnegie Hall reflects the conflict that envelops Dylan’s fans and former fans. Controversy has swirled around this small, thin, 30-year-old man with blue eyes, pale skin and a haunted look, since he first achieved notice as a folk singer in Greenwich Village 10 years ago. The controversy may possibly grow even more intense now that he appears to have returned to so-called message songs.

After writing “Blowin’ in the Wind,” Dylan went on to be worshiped by many as a “prophet” of the youth revolution. The deification has made him wealthy. Nine of his albums have been gold records, those selling more than \$1-million at wholesale prices. His recording royalties alone have come to more than a million. He has undoubtedly received much more than that from royalties on sheet music, from radio air plays and from recordings of his songs by other artists.

Dylan’s songs are among the most recorded today, but record sales and income cannot measure his effect. It is difficult to write of him without making it all sound an exaggeration. He touched the young, deeply. He sang “in a voice that came from you and me,” as folk singer Don McLean puts it in his recent hit, “American Pie,” a song lamenting the rock era’s lost promise. For millions of the young, Dylan has been a poet of the streets, crying out in pain against society’s indifference and stupidity; his voice, his word, his visions gave substance to their radicalization.

But in the last couple of years some who deified him as a leader of the radical movement have expressed fears that he is no longer lashing out against a System into which he refused to fit. He has burned himself out, they charge with much passion, has grown old, physically soft and mentally mushy, with a wife and children and a great deal of wealth to protect. Among his harshest critics are other singers, not only Miss Baez, who have written of Dylan’s apparent loss of commitment and who are, in effect, throwing down a challenge to him. McLean, in “American Pie,” writes of Dylan as “the jester... in a coat he borrowed from James Dean,” who stole the king’s “thorny crown” and then became “the jester on the sidelines in a cast.”

Those who depended on him and believed he was a prophet cannot understand how the man who had written such lines as “the ghost of electricity howls in the bones of her face” (in “Visions of Johanna,” a song from his most tormented period in 1965) could begin to write “Oh me, oh my, love that country pie” (from the “Nashville Skyline” album recorded in late 1967, when Dylan was writing down-home country songs).

It seems to many that Dylan is deliberately telling them he has backed away from whatever power he once had to affect their lives, telling them he has to be left alone, that all he wants from life is to write and sing pretty country tunes or Cole Porter-style lyrics. Even his voice has changed enormously. Back in the early years he sounded honest and full of pain, appearing at times to lack control, as he bent notes that had never been bent and stressed words that had never been stressed by any other folk – or rock – singer. He had a nasal quality that made him sound like a man from a chain gang whose nose had been broken by a guard’s rifle butt.

Most recently, in his records and occasional concerts, Dylan has been singing in his richer, natural voice – the voice that only close friends were permitted to hear in the privacy of their living rooms, when he would sing “This Land Is Your Land” and other Woody Guthrie songs. It is a voice that some critics insist proves he wants to be another Johnny Cash, or even Kate Smith, playing the big prime-time TV shows.

Bob’s reaction to the attacks on him is, basically, that they are attempts to dictate to him, and he is not about to permit anyone to dictate his life, or his art. In one of our conversations for an unauthorized biography I was

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<sup>1</sup> “To Bobby.” Words and music by Joan Baez. ©1971, Chandos Music. Used by permission.

writing about him, Bob said of those attacks:

**“It’s fantasy, created by cowardly men who turn wheels.”**

“What kind of wheels?” he was asked.

**“Media wheels. I said ‘not to follow leaders, to watch parking meters.’ It was that simple. I wasn’t going to fall for that, for being any kind of leader. The media made up that crap – that Dylan, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles were leaders. We didn’t know anything about it, and what’s more didn’t want any part of it...”**

**“Nobody should look to anybody else for their answers. But the times are tough. Everybody wants a leader. In fact, everybody wants to be a leader...”**

In all our conversations over the past several months, Bob has stressed that he is simply trying to be as good a musician and songwriter as he can and that everything else is extraneous, and even destructive. More than six weeks after his Madison Square Garden appearance, still up high with excitement over the performance, full of that enthusiasm that has always been so infectious, he asked:

**“Did you see that concert, man? Wasn’t it the most incredible show ever? The audience has changed. They’re into the music now. They’ve grown up, and it’s the music that’s most important. They heard it and dug it. Just incredible.”**

What he has been trying to do over the past couple of years is simplify his life, so he can focus completely on the music he is writing and recording.

He had worked in a converted store near his Greenwich Village home almost every day that he was in town over the last year or so, but even that studio hideout began to make too many demands on his time and his head. The phone number had a way of getting around, and friends who wouldn’t dream of knocking at his door at home would knock on his studio door. **“I don’t have a studio anymore,”** he said.

He no longer has a manager either. His contract with portly Albert Grossman, the former Chicago folk-club owner who became Dylan’s manager in 1961, ran out a couple of years ago. Dylan refused to renew it. **“I haven’t seen him in years,”** Dylan says. His only aides now are his secretary and her assistant, who spend much of their time protecting him from hucksters who want him to endorse guitars, sweat shirts or soapsuds, as well as from writers and fans who want to pick his brain, and mendicants who want him to perform at benefit concerts.

**“I’m just doing what I used to do in the old days,”** Bob says. **“My music. Trying to keep my life simple. I’m making a new album and I’m trying to devote all my energies to that. I’m helping other people out, making records with them, helping one friend edit a film.”**

**“I’m studying agriculture,”** he joked in a phone conversation with me. **“Doing what you’re doing, man, just standing in a phone booth. Hang out in the garment center a lot.”**

**“Just trying to keep things nice and simple.”**

He had originally blown into town, into that Greenwich Village folk-club world that meant so much to his musical development, one terribly cold day in January, 1961. He was a manic, Chaplinesque figure then, a strange little 19-year-old kid, very nearsighted, skinny, with a baby face that reminded some of a beatific choir boy. He was totally immersed in Woody Guthrie, imitating Guthrie’s songs, speech, dress and mannerisms.

He had been born Robert Zimmerman, the son of a Jewish merchant in Duluth, Minn., on May 24, 1941, and raised in Hibbing, a mining town near the Canadian border. His father, Abraham, who died in 1968, operated a hardware, appliance and furniture store. His mother, Beatty (pronounced Betty), encouraged his youthful interest in poetry and music. Bob refused to take formal music lessons as a child, but before his teens he was pounding out rock ‘n’ roll songs on the piano his parents bought for him and his younger brother, David.

Old friends describe the Zimmermans as “a typical Midwest family.” But Bob resented the whole Midwestern straitjacket and began to picture himself as a James Dean-style rebel. Almost as soon as he entered the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, he began to deny the existence of a family. He told everyone that his name was Dylan, that he was an orphan from the Southwest, part Indian, and had spent most of his childhood running away from orphanages and foster homes. He wrapped himself in tales of hard-travelin’ and in myth, refusing to permit anyone to know him. All the while, he was being supported by his father.

“Bob was afraid of people, actually,” recalls a friend from the early folk days. “He’s still incredibly shy.”

**“I was just a lad from the Midwest wanting to make it,”** Bob said during one conversation with me.

He dropped out of college after the first six months to pursue his dream of “making it” and hitchhiked to New York. Within the astonishing space of a year he had become a folk hero, creating folk protest songs – “stories” he called them – of the American Dream grown nightmarish, songs describing the chains still binding mankind. “Blowin’ in the Wind” was certainly his finest song from that period, but it was only one of many: “Masters of War,” “With God on Our Side,” “Only a Pawn in Their Game,” and dozens more, songs that even amazed other

artists. Pete Seeger was running around the Village at the time proclaiming Dylan a genius, and many others agreed.

But Dylan soon lost his enthusiasm for protest song, which he considered a dead end in terms of his career and his music. He wanted to be a pop star (“Another Elvis,” as he once said), and he also wanted to try in song what had been accomplished in poetry by writers who were beginning to affect him – Rimbaud, Brecht, Villiers and others. By 1964 he was writing more personal songs, introspective lyrics describing the artificiality of human relationships, of love gone wrong. Not standard love songs (although some are among the finest love ballads in pop music), but cries of anguish that plucked a chord in his young audiences. To a woman raised on the Hollywood tinsel dream of love-for-evermore-and-happiness-ever-after he wrote:

*You say you're looking for someone  
Who'll pick you up each time you fall  
To gather flowers constantly  
An' to come each time you call  
A lover for your life an' nothing more  
But it ain't me, babe,  
No, no, it ain't me, babe,  
It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe.\**

The following year he turned to an electric guitar, put a band behind him and became a rock 'n' roll star, idolized as a living James Dean. Folk purists – who had condemned his unorthodox style in the beginning and later were forced to accept him as a true folk artist – charged that he had “sold out.” But to the young he became even more of a spokesman and a leader, for the amplified band behind him created an enormous tension between performer and audience and added a cutting edge to his song-poems, which were harsh condemnations of men and women caught in societal trap, one-dimensional men imprisoned by a culturally induced lifelessness:

*Well, I try my best  
To be just like I am  
But everybody wants you  
To be just like them  
They sing while you slave and I just get bored  
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.\*\**

His own anguish, sparked mostly by demands that he behave as a superstar and a demigod, his realization that fame was enslaving him as fully as all those mindless men he had criticized in song, almost destroyed him.

**“The pressures were unbelievable,” Bob says. “They were just something you could never understand because they did such weird things to my head.”**

In the summer of 1966 he was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident near his home in Woodstock, N.Y., to which he had retreated when fame enveloped him. He cut himself off from almost everyone, using the months of recuperation to work through the chaos his life had become, remaining in seclusion in upstate New York for a couple of years.

He began to feel isolated in Woodstock, though, began to miss the city streets which had been the source of his most powerful song images. In the fall of 1969 he bought a house in Greenwich Village only blocks from the Gaslight, Folk City, the Bitter End and other clubs in which he had hung out and developed into a renowned urban folk-song figure.

“Bob came over to visit me at the end of 1969, right after he got back to the Village,” says Terri Thal, who managed him briefly in the early folk days. “He wanted to see some of his things that I still have, like his old corduroy cap. And he told me:

“ ‘I’m completely uptight. Got all this money and don’t know what to do with myself. Got a great wife, great kids, but don’t know what to do. Can’t perform any more. I hate performing in front of big audiences. But I guess I’ll have to, ’cause I don’t have anything else to do. Ain’t done any writing in a while. Can’t seem to write.’ ”

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\* “It Ain’t Me, Babe.” Words and music by Bob Dylan. ©1964, M. Witmark and Sons. Used by permission.

\*\* “Maggie’s Farm.” Words and music by Bob Dylan. ©1965, M. Witmark and Sons. Used by permission.

Miss Thal adds: “He was looking for a piece of his past. He wanted to find out what he had missed in the music world that he had been out of for a while. Plus actually looking to catch up with his past.”

Last January, after living in the Village for more than a year, Bob told her:

“I’ve been finding it just by being around. All I really needed was to sort of get back into the beautiful world.”

Now that he is living in the Village again Bob is almost as anonymous as in the days when he was unknown and a “street cat” able to wander along Bleecker Street and into bars and folk clubs without being besieged by fans. He takes long walks along Village streets, sometimes drops in at some of the clubs to see musicians who interest him (like singer Dave Bromberg), and is seldom recognized. Dylan spotters report a phantom appearance this month on New York’s educational television station, Channel 13, with a group of poet Allen Ginsberg’s friends, on “Free Time.” Those who caught the show say Dylan chanted Ginsberg’s poems and played his electric guitar as just another of the musicians and poets present: though the camera panned to him frequently, he was never introduced.

A great number of young men are affecting a Bob Dylan look, which permits Bob to be almost invisible. Even when he is recognized, he is seldom accosted. Walking down MacDougal Street late one afternoon with an interviewer, Bob seemed to tense slightly when a young man who passed him flashed a look of recognition and turned to pass Bob again. It seemed likely he would ask for an autograph, or demand an explanation of the songs Bob was writing, as so many had done in the “Blowin’ in the Wind” days. But he simply checked Bob out, satisfied himself that he had actually seen Bob Dylan, and walked away.

He fits every possible definition of the term “superstar,” but he refuses, for the most part, to play the role. He has no personal press agent, no fan club. He refuses to make the TV talk-show circuit. He has appeared at only one official Dylan concert in more than five years (at the Isle of Wight in the summer of 1969, when he performed before more than 200,000 people). He seldom grants interviews, and then usually only to those whom he can trust or whom he is trying to keep from writing something he might not like.

But Dylan is a complex man, and his words and actions are often a series of contradictions. He carefully gauges the span between interviews and periodically sits down for one of those inane question-and-answer periods he honestly loathes because, as he put it in discussing one such interview, “**I felt it was time to have something out about Bob Dylan.**” He is also concerned to a degree about the way his fans perceive him. In one conversation he said:

**“Did you see the John Lennon interview in Rolling Stone? Whew! Lennon was completely out of control. He’s leaving no place for himself. Me, I gotta keep a place for me. I like Lennon though. I dig him a lot; he’s given me a lot of insight. Don’t ask me how. It’s just good that he’s around.”**

In wanting to “keep a place for me,” Dylan clearly recognizes that a major part of star’s mystique is to be unobtainable, that the mystique may vanish if the star is foolish enough to reveal everything; Dylan is not about to let it happen to him.

He is perhaps the most completely private man ever to become a public figure. “He was paranoid, he never wanted anyone to know anything about him,” recalls Hibbing High School classmate. That paranoia-privacy is the root of all the Dylan myths; on occasion he deliberately created an aura of mystery, but mostly he felt he needed to hide his inner self in order to protect his soul. As he has written in one song:

*The man in me will hide sometimes,  
To keep from bein’ seen  
But that’s just because he doesn’t want  
To turn into some machine.\**

His demand for privacy for himself extends to those closest to him: his wife and children. He married Sarah Lowndes on Nov. 22, 1965, in a judge’s chambers in Mineola, Long Island. She is a former Model, almost as tall as Bob, dark-haired and very attractive, described by a friend as “never into that phony New York model scene, just a Zen-peaceful woman who helped Bobby survive.” They have three boys and two girls, ranging in age from 1½ to 7.

In all our discussions about what I was going to reveal of his private life in my book, Bob’s greatest concern (“**Like any man’s,**” he insists) was over his wife and children. “**You can leave them out of it, right?**” he asked. Told it was impossible to write of Dylan without writing of his family, he said, simply: “**Bull—.**” I asked him whether he would leave his wife and children out of his autobiography. Bob replied: “**Sure, I’ll write about them, of course. But in my style, not yours.**”

Years ago, anger would make Dylan appear to be a spoiled child, about to throw a tantrum. Now he has much greater control over his anger, the fury smoldering and ready to explode but held in check by a great discipline, like Marlon Brando in “On the Waterfront.” Except when he feels Sarah and the children are threatened.

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\* “The Man in Me.” Words and music by Bob Dylan. ©1970, Big Sky Music. Used by permission.



Last year, A. J. Weberman, the self-styled “Dylanologist” who has made a career of interpreting Dylan’s lyrics and going through his garbage to learn all he can of the man he evidently both idolizes and hates (and mostly, to make himself as famous as Dylan), formed the “Dylan Liberation Front.” An assorted group of radicals, freaks, Village musicians and lost souls, the D.L.F. engaged in street theater in front of Dylan’s home, demonstrating against his apostasy. Weberman has also written of Dylan’s “sellout” in the radical press and has made radio, TV and campus appearances “because I want to harass Dylan and make him come back to his people.”

In early October, Weberman was sifting through the Dylan trash once again for the first time in months when Sarah came out the front door. She became understandably enraged at the sight of the scavenger on her doorstep. “Get out of here,” she shouted. “Get out of that garbage, you leech.” Weberman muttered something about the garbage being “public property” and Sarah turned to chase a magazine photographer who was with him down the street. A TV cameraman shooting a feature on Weberman packed up his equipment and left, with Weberman sheepishly following him.

Several hours later Bob went over to Weberman’s tenement home at Bleecker Street and the Bowery, attacked him on the street and bounced his head on the sidewalk. Weberman says he fought Dylan to a draw (he has at least 30 pounds and a couple of inches on Dylan).

Bob has put on a little weight in the last few years, but he is still very thin. He is several inches under 6 feet and probably weighs no more than 135 pounds. He has seethrough blue eyes. His face is less drawn, is fleshing out somewhat, but the skin is still taut and almost translucent. When he speaks, the cowboy sound he had affected in the early years slips through only occasionally. Today, there are traces of his Midwest background in his voice, with phrasing from the city, Oklahoma and upstate New York thrown in. He recently shaved off the mustache and wispy beard he had worn around his jawbone for the last couple of years, and his brown hair once more rises from his head in a profusion of curls.

He now looks somewhat like the photos on his 1965 album, “Bringing It All Back Home,” his first album to use electric instruments, which contained some of his most effective “radical” songs. The change in appearance is another of the “clues” that make some of his fans believe he will once more write songs of commitment, for Dylan’s outer appearance has always changed with every change in his style and mood, from folk, to protest, to radical rock-superstar, to country and Western singer.

Ever since his motorcycle accident he has gone through what some have called a metamorphosis. In working through the problems created by fame, he has returned to Judaism, a heritage he had always denied. He has studied Hebrew, has made several trips to Israel (he visited the Wailing Wall on his 30th birthday) and has celebrated his renewed belief in God in several songs since the accident, most recently in “Father of Night,” on the “New Morning” album:

*Father of night, Father of day,  
Father Who taketh the darkness away  
Father Who teacheth the bird to fly,  
Builder of rainbows up in the sky...  
Father of minutes, Father of days,  
Father of Whom we most solemnly praise.\**

Dylan’s interest in Israel and Judaism led him, over a year ago, into an unexpected relationship with Rabbi Meir Kahane and the Jewish Defense League. He has reportedly attended several meetings of the J.D.L. and is rumored to have donated money to the organization; Rabbi Kahane will say only that Dylan has “come around a couple of times to see what we’re all about.” Dylan’s enthusiasm for the militant Jewish organization has brought down the wrath of some in the radical movement. To many young radicals, including Jewish kids, Israel is simply another one of those fascist states propped up by a fascist American Government, and Dylan’s fervent support of Israel and his overpublicized contacts with the J.D.L. are to them a further indication that he has sold out to the political right he condemned.

Bob appears uncommitted about the J.D.L. “**My enthusiasm has altered,**” he says. “**In this day and age one can’t put one’s faith in organizations and groups just like that. There has to be a certain amount of comradeship, root beginnings and moral justifications to allow one to put his mind and body on the line.**” As he talked, carefully phrasing his reply so that it could also apply to the commitment that Baez and others are asking of him, one thing became dear about Dylan: He has always been so vague and so elusive because, as a man forced to wear a crown, he has become trapped in the myth and must choose his every word with great deliberation. “**What a life to have to lead,**” he said at one point. But he added: “**I can’t complain, actually.**”

Among a certain element of the radical movement that is distressed by Dylan’s “sellout,” a story is making the

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\* “Father of Night.” Words and music by Bob Dylan. ©1970, Big Sky Music. Used by permission.

rounds concerning a meeting between Dylan and Black Panthers Huey Newton and David Hilliard. About a year ago attorney Gerald Lefcourt wrote a letter to Dylan at Hilliard's request, asking him to do a benefit or in some way to help raise funds for Panther trials. Eventually, Dylan met with Newton and Hilliard, the story goes, and as soon as they sat down Dylan began to lecture them on their anti-Zionist pronouncements. Within minutes Hillard leaped up, angry, and headed for the door shouting: "Let's get out of here! We can't talk to this Zionist pig!" Newton asked him to "cool it" and Hilliard returned. The conversation reportedly continued for another hour or more but was a standoff. "I can't help you as long as the Panthers are against Israel," Dylan is said to have told them.

Asked about the story recently, Bob said: "**What meeting? Why don't you talk to Huey about it?**" Newton was in China at that time, Hilliard in prison, and the story could not be confirmed by Panthers who are supposed to have been there. Dylan won't concede it took place. Those radicals who tell the story insist they heard it from Newton.

If his political commitment seems to have faded, Dylan has not lost the enormous capacity for work which his friends from the early Village days remember. He's up and working by 10 A.M. or so, and often goes late into the night. Among his projects over the past year has been his autobiography. "**I never thought of the past,**" he told me. "**Now I sometimes do. I think back sometimes to all those people I once did know. It's an incredible story, putting together the pieces. It's like a puzzle, as far as stories go. I meditate on it sometimes, all that craziness... I really like to work on it.**"

He spends much of his days, and many nights, in the recording studio, laying down tracks of his new material, working with other artists (including George Harrison), and he continues to write new songs. He is also beginning to work out a format for a one-hour TV special which he planned to tape before Christmas. "**A TV show with just songs,**" he said. "**One hour of songs. There'll be a lot of new stuff, from my new album.**"

That new album will contain totally fresh material, and friends who have heard some of the songs believe it will be another reversal of field that will startle Dylan fans much as "Nashville Skyline" did in 1963 (*sic*). At that time most rock groups were getting heavily into electronic tricks, and "Nashville Skyline," filled with easy-listening country songs, pulled the plug from the wall; most musicians promptly joined Dylan in the country sound.

Dylan insists his friends are hearing things in his new songs that are not there. "**Nobody's going to be startled,**" he maintains. He refuses to discuss the album further, except to say he is producing it himself. He is so secretive about his new work that few people at his record company, Columbia, have heard the tapes. Reportedly, they are locked in a vault and only Columbia president Clive Davis is permitted to touch them.

But this month Bob released a two-record set called "Greatest Hits No. 2," the title of which is not quite accurate. While it contains primarily songs from previous Dylan albums and singles, there is some fresh material on it. One cut is "Tomorrow Is a Long Time," recorded live at Carnegie Hall in 1963, a strangely moving love song he's never before released. Another is "When I Paint My Masterpiece," a song Bob wrote about a year ago that was recently recorded by The Band. Three other cuts are newly recorded versions of old Dylan songs, "I Shall Be Released," "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" (with Happy Traum singing harmony on both) and "Down in the Flood."

Bob had come over to my apartment one afternoon in October and he put the disc on the turntable. He then wandered over to stand under the speakers suspended near the ceiling, listening intently, quite serious. The song he seemed most excited about was "When I Paint My Masterpiece." I remarked that his version has created a completely different song from The Band's, that The Band sort of ran through it nice and easy while Dylan has built a suspense and tension that approaches some of the more stunningly angry songs he was doing back in 1965. "**Yeah, maybe so,**" he said. "**Glad you like it.**"

"Masterpiece" begins with Leon Russell on the piano for a couple of bars, joined by an electric guitar riff, the whomp of a drum, and Dylan suddenly coming in: "Oh, the streets of Rome..." Immediately, the sensation is a flashback: This sounds almost like Dylan from six years ago, the days of "Like a Rolling Stone," which is probably still the most moving song he's ever recorded. Bob's voice on "Masterpiece" reinforces the *déjà vu* mood. The rich country sound is less noticeable than at any time in the last couple of years; his voice is harsh and grating once more, not quite filled with the youthful anger that had struck so deep, but approaching it.

Is it possible, as some Dylan confidants suggest, that these songs and the material he has written for the album signal the return to commitment that has been demanded of him? You won't get the answer from Dylan:

Q. Bob, one guy who apparently is pretty close to you tells me, "Dylan's still the same cat who wrote "Blowin' in the Wind." When he's moved by something he jumps into it, and it's possible the East Pakistan benefit means he's taking a stand again on what's going down in the world. I think his next album will put him right in the center of the action again." That statement, and some other clues that Dylan freaks say they're sniffing in the breeze, seem to make people feel you're coming back.

A. **I don't understand your question.**

Q. Okay. Are you returning to some form of political commitment?

A. **I was talking to [Village radical] Louis Abolafia last night, the guy who ran for President. Told him he should run for President again. He was ahead of his time and should run again. [Pause.] Maybe I should run. [Grin.] Maybe you should run.**

Q. That's no answer. You're being vague.

A. **That's because I'm vague kind of a guy.**

Q. You haven't answered the question.

A. **Just use the quote. Let the quote stand.**

Even as he was saying this, Dylan had written and was preparing to record "George Jackson." In the song, Dylan writes that he woke up crying when he learned George Jackson, a man "I really loved," had been shot to death. Jackson was killed, Dylan thinks, because he was "too real," and because the "authorities" were "scared of his love." There is little doubt the song is Dylan's response to the challenge thrown down by Joan Baez, McLean and other artists, and by critics and radicals. During my conversations with him, Dylan demonstrated much concern about his public image. **"You can quote radicals who are up on me, right?"** he asked when told him I would be writing about radicals who are down on him. **"You are not gonna paint me on only one side of the radical thing, are you?"**

Weberman appears to be one of those who have affected Bob. After hearing "George Jackson" for the first time, the Dylanologist was both ecstatic and dubious.

"I feel great," he said. "When I started harassing Dylan through the media, I didn't think my chances of affecting his head were too good. But the objective of the D.L.F. has been reached. I don't think Bob would have changed without the D.L.F.'s pressures."

Weberman adds, however:

"I hope Bob puts his money where his mouth is. If he just sings these songs, it's no more than empty rhetoric. I hope he goes beyond that, gets involved with the real problems."

Within days after the song was first played on the radio, others raised questions about Dylan's motivations. Said one young singer who was radicalized by the Bob Dylan of the mid-sixties: "I just don't believe he means those words. I don't believe he loves George Jackson, or relates to any of it anymore. It all smacks of calculation, of Dylan being afraid he's losing his audience. People believed it when he sang about Emmett Till and Hattie Carroll and all the others who were destroyed by the system. I believed it back then. I don't believe it about 'George Jackson.'"

Dylan continues to provide the stuff of fantasy for fans who seek to entwine their lives with his, to satisfy their own needs. But it is clear he has been afraid that if he speaks out again in protest he will once more be burdened with that prophet's cloak that weighed so heavily on him. As he has written of that burden:

*Storm clouds are raging all around my door,  
I think to myself I might not take it more.\**

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\* "The Man is Me." Words and music by Bob Dylan. ©1970, Big Sky Music. Used by permission.



## Jan to Oct 1971, Anthony Scaduto (Let It Rock)

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Source: *Dylan's views on Bootlegging*, in: *Let It Rock*, UK magazine, December 1972, pages 24-25.

From interviews that were conducted in New York City, New York. A different article to that published in *The New York Times Magazine*, containing different quotes from the same series of interviews.

### Dylan's views on Bootlegging

I've interviewed Bob Dylan about a dozen times (yes, *dozen*) between January, 1971 and the end of October of that year, and so I approached Tony White's article on Dylan bootlegs (*Let It Rock* November) from a special vantage point: with Dylan's voice still fresh in my head. Since I'm one of the few guys Dylan has talked to for publication in the last few years, I'd like to add my thoughts – and Dylan's – to the growing literature on the bootlegs.

White's suggestion that Dylan deliberately sent the demos to Witmark so that they would be bootlegged, and that he withheld 'Tarantula' from publication for the same reason, makes Dylan appear to be an infallible master propagandist, a Big Brother orchestrating events and pulling the puppet strings with which he's hooked us, getting us to dance to his tune. It just didn't work that way at all. What follows are the facts, and my interpretation of them, based on the pretty good insights I've developed into Dylan's persona after more than two years of studying the man to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Dylan is a songwriter. He said that to me again and again: **'I'm just a songwriter, man. Not a culture hero or any crap like that. Just a songwriter.'** to quote him in one context. He is a songwriter who happens to believe very strongly that his songs are the best around today, and in most cases is absolutely correct. He wants other artists to record those songs. To put it on a crass commercial basis, which people do more often than is wise, Bob's income from his recordings is rather small, compared to other pop artists who can sell three million dollars worth of each album produced. Bob's income is dependant to a great extent on royalties from recordings of his songs by other artists. Some of his biggest song hits were not recorded by Dylan, but by Peter, Paul and Mary, the Byrds, Manfred Mann, and so on. In most cases, the songs were recorded because the various artists involved were knocked out by Dylan's demos.

But the commercial part of it is only a very small factor; Bob's desire to get his songs into circulation goes beyond the loot he takes to the bank. No artist writes for his private scrapbook, Dylan least of all. If you're writing a book, you want it published. If you're writing songs, you want them recorded and played as widely as possible. If you're Bob Dylan and you know damn well you have something important to say, then you feel even more strongly about getting your material to the public. Especially if you know, as Dylan does so well, that to release three or four albums a year is to destroy your mystique by over-exposure. Bob told me his conception of the artist's mystique during one of my first interviews with him.

**"Did you see the Lennon Interview in Rolling Stone?"** he asked. **"Wheew! John is making a mistake, revealing so much of himself. If he keeps it up, he's not gonna have anything left for his fans. I can't ever be out front like that. I have to keep something in reserve."**

Those are the basic reasons Bob has made demos of his songs, not only the Witmark material available here in London but demos Bob has made for his own music publishing companies, Dwarf Music and Big Sky Music, much of which is in the hands of collectors in America.

Bob's attitude towards the bootlegs makes it clear to me that he feels precisely the reverse of the machinations Tony White ascribes to him. In October, 1971, months after my biography of Dylan was completed and sent off to my publisher, the *New York Times Magazine* asked me to do a portrait of Dylan. At first Bob refused to cooperate, but eventually he decided to give me an interview. He came bouncing around to my flat at the opposite end of Greenwich Village from his home, on three separate occasions. The first time he visited I very deliberately put 'Great White Wonder' (number c-iii in White's discography) on the turntable, hoping to provoke a reaction from Bob. The cut being played when he walked into my flat was 'I Shall be Released' and Bob promptly said: **"Oh, the basement tape. You should hear the originals. They're fantastic. The crap they're putting out doesn't even sound like me. And they're sure not in the order I'd put on an album."** (An aside: the tape that Dylan cut with the Band in the basement of their home outside Woodstock on April 12, 1967 is called 'the basement tape' by everyone in the states, including Dylan himself. That tape was laid down as song demos for Dwarf Music. The version circulating in the states is more complete than White's list. It includes two other versions of 'Tears of Rage', one alternative of 'Mighty Quinn', two alternatives of 'Open the Door, Homer' – a song that Bob usually calls 'Open the Door, Richard' – and two versions of 'Apple Suckling Tree.')

Back to Dylan, in my flat, reacting to the bootleg. We got to discussing all the bootlegs and Bob made it

plain that he objected to them on a number of levels: because he was being ripped off; because the quality of most of the stuff in circulation is absolutely rotten and sometimes doesn't even sound like Dylan: and because Bob has no artistic control over the order in which the songs appeared on the bootleg albums and tapes.

That last – the sequence of the songs – is the most important to Bob, from all the things he told me. Bob demonstrated that the next time he came around to my place, a few days later. He brought with him the acetate of 'More Greatest Hits', which wasn't scheduled to be released for another month. Bob laid the side containing the freshly recorded material down on my turntable, placing the needle down at the end of 'Baby Blue'. And he said: **"Listen to this. Running right into the next song from 'Baby Blue', I didn't think it worked. But now I do. They go together,"** And the next song came on, almost on cue: 'Tomorrow is a Long Time', the song he wrote of his woman in 1962, after she had left him to go to art school in Italy, and Bob repeatedly emphasized to me that he had structured that album the way a writer structures a novel or a book of poetry. **"I produced every bit of it,"** Bob told me. **"Everything fits together on it. not like that stuff they're bootlegging. That stuff ain't really me at all."**

Those discussions with Bob lead me to the only possible conclusion: That the idea Dylan deliberately permitted his material to be bootlegged is absurd. Dylan is quite angry at all the bootlegs. Mostly because he has always planned his albums and his concerts with great care, knowing that the sequence of his songs created the proper amount of tension and response in his audience. With the exception of *complete* bootlegs of his concerts, none of the material in circulation does Dylan any justice.

As for *Tarantula*, Dylan began to hate that book, as I explained in my biography – toward the end, he was writing it simply because he had a contract to fulfil. When it was completed, Bob held it back for a number of reasons, among them the fact that Allen Ginsberg had warned him that the literary Mafia in the states was lying in wait to shoot Bob down because his fans had been calling him a poet and no-one is a Poet in America unless the intellectual elite puts its brand on your brain. A couple of months before *Tarantula* was finally released in the states, Dylan told me why he was permitting it to be published: **"I'm letting it out now because I dig it now. It's a good book. I didn't dig it back then, but I dig it now."** Another reason for permitting its publication, Bob admitted, was that it was being bootlegged and he was once again being ripped off. Which is just the reverse of the theory that Dylan held it back so that the bootleggers would peddle it and add that much more to Dylan's mystique.

And that brings us to the assertion that Dylan began 'to look back' because the bootlegs forced him to look back. The truth is that Bob had begun the slow process of searching back into his past – and into some of the rather unpleasant things he saw in his soul which I describe in the biography – immediately after recovering from the motorcycle accident. That was long before the bootlegs began circulating. Hell, 'John Wesley Harding' was written in late 1967 and it is the ultimate looking back: It describes the ego bubble and false values that had enveloped Dylan in those insane, first years of super-stardom, when Bob almost came to believe that he was the savior of the jukeboxes that the more fanatic Dylan freaks were fantasizing him to be; and it describes his escape from that kind of mind-trap. Dylan said as much to me in discussing his looking-back meaning in that album. But, most important of all, because he went through chaos in the years before the accident and was almost destroyed by that chaos, both physically and psychically, Dylan began digging into his Judaic roots after the accident, into the Bible, seeking the road to his *personal* salvation. You can't look further back than that. And you don't need bootleggers to drive you back, not when you're as fragile as Dylan and find it impossible to cope with fans who want you to be either Christ or Lenin. Sometimes both.

The statement that Dylan hasn't given a single interview since the one in 1969 with Jann Wenner of Rolling Stone is simply not accurate. Wenner's was the last *published* interview in question and answer form. At least three men have succeeded in getting Dylan to sit still for interviews since Wenner's. As I've already pointed out, I've had at least a dozen interviews with Bob in two basic time periods in 1971 – one batch at the beginning of the year for my book, and the second in the Autumn for the magazine article. Each set of interviews were made up of a series of conversations spread over several weeks at a time, both face-to-face and over the telephone. Combined, those interviews come to a total of at least 30 hours. Those interviews have never been published in question and answer form because they would not fit that way into my book and in the magazine article. Also, some time in early 1971 Dylan did a long interview with Tony Glover, a friend from back in the Minneapolis days, later of Koerner, Glover and Ray, still an incredible harp blower and now a journalist. That interview was offered to a major American magazine whose editors jumped at the chance to get Dylan in print. But Bob later withdrew permission to publish it. Finally, somewhere between my two separate sets of interviews with him, Bob gave Robert Shelton – whose own book on Dylan may be published in a couple of years – an interview of a couple of hours; at least, that's what Shelton claimed the last time I talked to him.

One last point. In one sense, as White points out, Dylan did indeed spend years trying to escape from 'Blowin' in the Wind' because he was the kind of man who lived only for the present, a man who had to deny everything he had done in the past in order to raise to greater level whatever he happened to be into during any later period. In 'My Back Pages' Bob very specifically waves goodbye to the 'Blowin' in the Wind' days: "Fearing not I'd become my enemy/In the instant that I preached... Ah, but I was so much older then/I'm younger than that now." But now that he has matured, and has somehow survived that frenzied period when he was moving so

fast that he could barely keep up with himself, Bob has mellowed a great deal about those protest days. He once commented to me on 'Blowin' in the Wind' **"It means a whole lot to me, that song. A whole lot."** When you get to understand Dylan's elliptical way of speaking, you learn to interpret his words by paying close attention to the feeling behind the words, and I know that what Bob was saying was: 'Blowin' in the Wind' is the most important song I ever wrote. And that's why he sang it at the Bangla Desh concert.

I don't mean to put down Tony White for his article. Within understandable limitations, it is a very fine job. But I know, from personal experience, that it is difficult to fathom Dylan unless you've been lucky enough to sit and talk with him, to pick his brains and let him pick yours.

## Early 1972, Unknown Interviewer (Esquire)

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Source: *Esquire*, US magazine, May 1972, page 109.

The interview was conducted by telephone.

### The Metaphor at the End of the Funnel

But is it art?...

Milton! Thou shouldst be living at this hour! But thou ain't, Milton; instead, we have Bob Dylan (Doctor of Music, Princeton University), whom Jack Newfield called "the Walt Whitman of the jukebox, the Brecht of the electric guitar." Of course we also have Norman Mailer, who said, "If Dylan's a poet, I'm a basketball player." Well, we believe that Mailer *is* a basketball player, Jack Newfield is the Dizzy Dean of the catachresis, and Bob Dylan is right on and groovy; and anybody who doubts that view of Dylan must confront the general and constant opinion of mankind for lo these five or six years at least. We, of course, are but one voice; other voices are those of Frank Kermode, one of the foremost English language critics; Stephen Spender, poet and former editor of *Encounter*; and photographer Art Kane. Professor Kermode, indeed, takes Dylan seriously enough to have planned a book on him (defeated by copyright technicalities); Mr. Spender; as you shall see, doesn't take him seriously at all; Mr. Kane responded to the images in six Dylan songs with the pictures on the following seven pages. Finally, we called up Dylan, after months of fruitless trying, and asked the Wordsworth of the microgroove himself.

**"Well how do *you* see me?"** he responded.

"Well, as a kind of human metaphor at the end of a corporate funnel," we answered.

**"Well, that ain't bad,"** he said, and hung up.

## 20 January 1973, Chet Flippo

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Source: *Rolling Stone*, US magazine, Issue 130, 15 March 1973, pages 36-37.

The interview took place in the CBS Disco Studio, Mexico City, Mexico. Other reportage refers to conversation during filming in Durango, Mexico.

### **Dylan Meets the Durango Kid: Kristofferson and Dylan in Mexico**

The camera loves Bob, and Bob might just love it back.

Durango, Mexico – Fifteen nervous chickens that were buried up to their necks in dirt blinked in the bright Mexican sun and looked as unhappy as it is possible for chickens to look. They were arranged in a line in the parade ground of a crumbling adobe fort at the foot of the dark Sierra Madre near Durango. Chickens aren't given much credit for intelligence, but these chickens knew that something was about to happen. They caught a glimpse of a dapper young gunfighter – Billy the Kid – and his scruffy bandits lounging 60 feet away around a stone fountain.

The outlaws interrupted their whiskey-guzzling to taunt Billy to try his trigger finger on the hapless fowl. He slowly raised his Colt .44 and squeezed off three shots:

Crack! The head of the center chicken suddenly separated from its body in a whirl of blood and feathers. Crack! The head of the next chicken exploded straight upward, spraying technicolor blood across the parched ground. Crack! Another chicken head took off in a slow, lazy arc against the Kodachrome sky before coming to rest 15 feet away. The outlaws laughed and Billy smiled. He was still Top Gun.

But before Billy and his boys could get back to their whiskey, three rifle shots shattered the silence and three more chickens became headless. Feathers were still drifting down as Billy whirled to confront Pat Garrett lowering a Winchester. "Hello, Billy," he rumbled.

"Cut!" snapped the short, gray man in a director's chair inscribed Sam Peckinpah. This was Sam Peckinpah's latest film, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. It marks the first time he's dealt with the Old West since *The Wild Bunch*, and he had James Coburn as Garrett, Kris Kristofferson as Billy and Bob Dylan – making his feature film debut – as Billy's mysterious sidekick "Alias."

Peckinpah had added the chickens scene to the script, branding the opening sequence as clearly one of his own. Rudy Wurlitzer, the novelist (*Quake*, *Flats*, *Nog* and the script for *Two Lane Blacktop*) who wrote the Billy screenplay, sidled up to a visiting writer after the chicken scene and muttered, "That's Sam for you. I only had one chicken head in my script."

There could be no mistaking this set for John Wayne's *Batjac* location a few dusty miles back down Mex 45 toward Durango. For one thing, the Mexican government posted a nark here who, disguised as a swarthy caballero, wandered through the fort peering nearsightedly at everyone's cigarettes. For another, there was a discernible tension in the air, a sense that something terrible might happen any minute. Peckinpah was pushing and driving his cast and crew, and the strain was evident. The picture was said to be at least two weeks behind schedule and \$1 million over budget.

Wurlitzer edged close and spoke sotto voce through his beard, "Hey, something heavy may happen." He turned to see if anyone overheard, and the sun rays sparkled on his gold earring. "The word's come down from the Cobra that if Sam doesn't get a full day of shooting today, he's fired. And he's behind, man. The Cobra – Jim Aubrey himself – is after him. If Sam goes, the cast walks and there goes the movie. Heavy?"

He gave a knowing glance and moved away as Gordon Carroll, the film's producer, walked up. Carroll, who could be perfectly cast as a Hollywood executive (tall, blond, tanned, slightly harried), watched preparations for closeups of another scene. The producer smiled a tight-lipped smile as Peckinpah exploded at a bumbling extra who strayed into camera range. "Goddammit! Get outta there!"

Rita Coolidge, who played a minor role (even more minor after she refused to do a nude scene), walked by and bumped her head on an earthen jug hanging from a tree. Carroll whispered, "The French critics will write that only Peckinpah could make her look stunned and cross-eyed at the first sight of Billy."

Carroll exited and Wurlitzer appeared from somewhere in his place. He continued his role as the Greek chorus of the set: "This scene is the most important. It's got to grab the audience. Sam wants it to be flashy so the audience will be into the picture without realizing how banal it is. Sam's really an old-fashioned director that way. That's Westerns, though, all banality. This scene here, man, wasn't in my script. There's no script left."

Then it's not a Wurlitzer? "It's a Peckinpah."

The writer, who had found Wurlitzer's original script tight and fast-paced and evocative of the legend (if not the fact) of Billy, had noticed lines and scenes being filmed daily that weren't in the script and inquired about those changes.

"Well," Wurlitzer turned his gaze inward. "Sam does the changes, mostly."

\* \* \*

Dylan did his only scene of the day almost before anyone realized he was there. Scene 483, Take 4, found him seated on a stone wall, watching Kristofferson blasting away at cans and bottles. Dylan, responding to Peckinpah's cue, applauded by beating on a can with a stick.

The cast broke for lunch in a nearby tree-shaded courtyard of the fort, built for the Mexican army in the last century.

Dylan had taken a few bites of his steak when two young American hitchhikers, who had talked their way onto the set in hopes of getting work, sat down a table away and tried to cadge food from the cast. They began talking loudly: "What's happenin' with this movie, man? Is Dylan gonna sing or what, man? What's the story? Where is he, man?" Dylan bolted up and hurried to his camper. The two youths were banned from the set and publicist Larry Kaplan said it wasn't the first time such an incident had occurred.

"It's a complex situation," he said. "At first, you say 'Bob Dylan, the fucking legend.' And it takes a couple of weeks to get past that to the man underneath. He's really shy and withdrawn, and it's genuine. Reporters here have really spooked him. They follow him around and of course he won't talk to them, so they end up interviewing everyone else about him. It gets bad when you have reporters asking Mexican extras about Bob's kids."

After lunch, Kristofferson invited the writer to sit and sip cognac with actors Emelio Fernandez and Jorge Russek.

Kris, who had pleasantly surprised the cast with his portrayal of Billy, looked very close to what the script called for: youthful, but hard, highly charged with "erotic energy," with "very blue eyes" and "sensual lips." Russek offered him a slug of cognac, "for your throat, man."

"Thanks, you silver-tongued devil." Smacking his lips, Kristofferson turned to the writer. "Dylan was interested," he said, "interested in making movies and in Sam's stuff. I called him up and he said, um, there's a lot of heavies down there. I said, shit, you can get paid for learnin'. So he went and saw a couple of Sam's films and got really enthusiastic and decided to come down here, and he brought Sarah and the kids. He had already written the title song but he was still a little reluctant about acting. I said, hell, the only reason I got in was to learn about acting. He said, but then they got you on film. I said, shit, they got you on record anyway. Come on, we'll have a ball. I still feel guilty about sayin' that."

He laughed, shifted his weight in his canvas chair, and flipped a cigarette butt at a mud-encrusted pig that was rooting underfoot. "The first day we shot was also Bob's first day on camera. We had to be ridin' horses after these turkeys and he ropes 'em. Well, Bob hadn't ridden much and it was hairy riding, down in gullies and off through a river.

"And then we had to rope these damn turkeys. I couldn't do it but Bob did it all. I couldn't believe it. I've seen prints and he's got a presence on him like Charlie Chaplin. He's like a wild card that none of 'em knew they had. I think they just hired him for the name and all of a sudden you see him on screen and all eyes are on him. There's something about him that's magnetic. He doesn't even have to move. He's a natural."

What about his role as Alias?

Kristofferson lowered his voice as Peckinpah called for silence for rehearsal. "Well, me and Rudy just got through writing a new scene for Bob. The sense is supposed to be that times are changin' and there's a push for me to get goin'. The way the scene was, the lines were embarrassin', like 'Hey, dude, hand me that apple,' but I was past complainin'. Rudy, who had to write it, hated it, and Dylan, man, it just blew his funk. So we changed it and now we gotta show it to Sam.

"The trouble is, man, Dylan ain't had a chance to talk. His speakin' lines have been a buncha stutterin' that really pissed me off. He's called Alias, and in every fuckin' scene the sonuvabitch is put in different wardrobe and he looks entirely different and that could be why he's called Alias. And that damn stutter thing – that could be as big a defense as his change of clothing. Who knows? I thought it was supposed to be like the fool in Lear. He sees it all, he knows the whole legend and can see where it's all going. But we never relate as characters. We're always chasin' turkeys or some damn thing and don't even look at each other. But – the fucker's fantastic on film."

Assistant director Newt Arnold bellowed Kris' name for rehearsal and he stomped off, two-inch silver spurs jingling.



Peckinpah tried to get an interior scene in a bar going later in the day but it went badly. The hundred extras who lounged out of camera range kept chattering and he finally burst out of the bar, shouting and waving his arms: “Who are these fucking people? Get out, get them out! Everybody out! Move, goddammit!” The voice, like a bolt of thunder, did its job. People panicked and scattered in all directions, leaping fences, trampling each other, kicking pigs and dogs out of the way.

By late afternoon, things were worse, and it was time to ferry the press corps back to Durango. Wurlitzer, too, was preparing to leave.

“It’s happening, man,” Wurlitzer said. “Sam knows he’s losing to Dylan. He’s giving a screening of *The Getaway* in town tonight, but everybody wants to go to Mexico City with Dylan for his recording session because that’s heavier. Sam’ll be counting heads at that screening, and he also just called a 6:30 rehearsal for Monday morning because he knows we won’t be back till after 8. But I don’t care, man. I’ve got to get away from here for a while. See you at the airport.”

Durango Airport at 6:30 Saturday evening was a bleak study in gray stone and gray faces. The only plane on the only strip, a dented Aero Mexico 727, was warming up its engines for takeoff and there was a handful of worried Americans in the lobby. Coburn voiced the concern as he paced, brandy in hand, before the front windows: “Is the Big D coming?”

Wurlitzer the Pessimistic wrung his hands: “Christ. If Bob decides not to come, this session’ll never happen.”

“Well,” Coburn said, “the session is secondary to me. I just want to get out.”

At the last possible moment, a car sped up and deposited a black-clad figure. Wurlitzer heaved a sigh of relief, but his smile flickered out as he found a new worry: “That plane, man. It don’t look too good. What if it went down? Holly, Valens, the Big Bopper... think about it.”

Dylan wasn’t worried and got on the plane and went to sleep. A jello-faced tourist reached over him, nudging him aside, to get Coburn’s autograph.

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CBS Discos studios, a gray fortress out on the outskirts of Mexico City, had been alerted. A night crew was standing by for the American invasion. Dylan, Coburn and Kristofferson – followed by Rita Coolidge, Kris’ band, Gordon Carroll, the film’s editor and sound man and a visiting writer – swept by the security guards into an anteroom where a table sagged under the weight of food and drink.

“Sessions in Nashville ain’t like this,” said Kris between bites of turkey and cheese and a swig of whiskey. Dylan sat in a corner with a sandwich and a cup of vodka, while Coburn reached into the depths of his long coat and, grinning, withdrew a fat bomb of a Mexican joint. He took a puff that consumed a third of the bomb and leaned back, eyes closed, a contented man. “Adios, Bob,” he waved as Dylan left for the studio.

The studio was a cavernous, floodlighted, red barn. There were two Mexican trumpet players in one corner, playing off key. “**Ask them,**” Dylan said, a half-grin playing on his lips, “**if they know ‘Help Me Make It Through the Night.’**”

Kristofferson: “Now goddamn it, Bobby...”

“**Well,**” Dylan said, “**I want to use these guys on a song.**”

The trumpeters were not impressive, and Kris was impatient. “It ain’t gonna work. Those cats don’t know what he wants. If he’d let me tell ’em... fuck it, I ain’t gonna run this thing.”

Dylan had written two vocal tracks – the title song, “Billy,” and “Holly,” a lament for a man gunned down by Garrett – and several instrumentals and had recorded them earlier on a cassette unit at Peckinpah’s house. After two months in Durango, he was obviously ready to record them properly, and he shed his straw hat and overcoat and strode briskly about the studio in white peasant shirt, Levis, boots, and metal-rim shades, moving mikes and setting up the board.

Coburn eased into the studio with another joint and a glass of red wine. He had a permanent Panavision smile. “Bob’s so glad to be free,” he grinned, “that he’s running in here. He’s been cooped up too long.”

Dylan was ready shortly after 11 PM and started with “Billy.” He gave it a long, languorous strumming introduction, overlaid with a lazy harmonic roll:

“There’s guns across the river, tryin’ to ground you/Lawman on your trail, like to surround you/Bounty hunters are dancin’ all around you/Billy, they don’t like you to be so free.”

Except for the Tex-Mex riffs, the effect – especially the vocal – was pre-electric Dylan, recalling the *Another Side* era. He was singing hard and intensely, punching out the lines, as he ran through nine four-line verses, with an extended harmonica break after the sixth.

Kristofferson and Wurlitzer both reacted as if they’d been slapped in the face. Kris, gulping whiskey, snapped, “Ask him to do it in G!” Apparently this was not the same version Dylan had recorded at Peckinpah’s. Wurlitzer



was beside himself with wonder: “Hey man, do you dig what he’s doing? He’s changed the song. He’s bein’ perverse, man. See, he got fucked and now he’s gonna do it his way.”

Dylan called the writer aside: **“Should I cut that? It seems long. Maybe I should cut a verse. I think I just might. Let’s have a playback.”** He listened briefly, then called to the control room, **“Let’s do it again.”**

The second take was astounding. Dylan again did nine verses, but he changed two of them almost completely and dropped one of the original verses, replacing it with one that was improvised.

He bore down on the last line – “Billy, you’re so far away from home” – and repeated it twice and then addressed the control room: **“Keep that take and add this wild track to it: Corn. Beans. Succotash. Coffee. End of take.”** (Dylan, in one scene of the film, is required to stand against a wall and read the labels of canned goods.)

“See, man, what he’s doin’,” said Wurlitzer, “he’s gettin’ back at Sam. Sure. I don’t know, man, if he’s sayin’ he’s gonna quit the film or what.”

Dylan was extremely animated by then, sipping vodka straight and rushing to record. He threaded his way into “Will the Circle Be Unbroken” and was joined a third of the way through by Kris’ band: Mike Utlely laying gospel organ over Sammy Creason on drums, Stephen Bruton on electric guitar, and Terry Paul on bass. They started on instrumental tracks, Dylan leading the way with a galloping rhythm, paced by Bruton’s electric lead that broke into what could only be called a turkey trot.

Dylan blended lyrics from the title song into it: “Don’t it make you feel so low down, to be hunted by the man who was your friend.” Then he slowed it to a halt: “Okay, that’s called ‘Turkey No. 2.’ ”

Next, he loped into a chunky, accelerating rhythm, trading off licks with Utlely. Both were laughing and weaving and daring and challenging each other. Dylan and Terry Paul started a hypnotic “la la” lyric that grew more manic as they stood head to head and urged each other on. They jammed for four minutes and then lurched to a stuttering finish. **“Okayyy,”** Dylan laughed and raised his cup, **“we’ll call this one... uhm, ‘Billy Surrenders’ or ‘Speedball.’ They’re the same one. Hey, we need Sam here, to say what to do.”**

Wurlitzer gloomily appeared: “Sam is here, man. I feel him.” He looked over his shoulder.

Coburn took his wine and joined the circle in the studio that now included Kris and Rita on backup vocals. He sat before a mike to speak one of his lines, huskily: “Yeah, but I’m alive.” Creason hit his drums a rifle shot, Bruton looped his staccato notes around Coburn’s repeated line and Dylan and Paul angled in on one mike, like streetcorner drunks, to harmonize on another “lalaaaa” line.

Dylan was pleased with it: **“What do we call that one, ‘Turkey in the Straw’? Right. I got to put a lyric to that thing. Forget about the movie. Hey, Jim, this’s just right for Billy coming out of Lincoln.”**

Coburn made a swooping motion. “Right! I can see it now, riding down through there and this music. Yeeeeaaaahhh!”

Dylan unstrapped his guitar and came over to fetch a drink from a waiter, who had appeared at about 3 o’clock. Weren’t there, Dylan was asked, some Doug Sahm riffs in that song?

**“Oh yeah,”** Dylan replied. **“We’ve learned a lot from each other. You should’ve been at those sessions with Doug in New York, the craziest things I’ve ever been in. They were the sessions to end all sessions. Oh – sometime you oughta ask the band about the times we had in Europe. Those are stories – I can’t even get ’em out anymore.”**

Another drink and he rushed back to the microphone: **“Here’s another song, let’s just call this ‘Holly’s Song.’ ”** It was slow and gospelish, with simple lines: “Goodbye Holly, Holly goodbye. Your wife’s gonna miss you, your baby’s gonna cry.”

Dylan, very much in command of the studio, called for his two Mexican trumpeters and showed them what he wanted for “Pecos Blues.” He and Terry Paul sang “ah-ah-ahhh” lines over the tinny trumpets and a looping bass. The resulting sound suggested a Mexican whorehouse or a knock-down, pee-smelly dirt-floor bar. It was good, and Dylan nodded and smiled at the two beaming Mexicans, who had waited all night to play for two minutes.

Dylan went into the control room to hear the playback, and Coburn greeted him: “Fantastic, this is fucking fantastic. When it’s matched with the film, it’ll be beautiful. I hope they realize what they’re getting here.”

**“Yeah?”** Dylan looked at him.

Coburn gave him the full wide-screen Coburn treatment: “Yeah.”

Dylan laughed: **“Yeeeahh.”**

Producer Carroll approached the Big D gingerly. About that song, he wondered, it seemed that it was different than it was on Sam’s tape and he just wondered what key Dylan did it in.

**“Same key,”** was the reply. Well, Carroll just thought that Sam’s tape sounded richer and he wondered if Dylan would consider cutting it another way.

Dylan was edgy: **“No, I can’t even hear the song anymore. I guess it’s what Sam wants. It’s his movie. It’s for the film.”**

Carroll persisted: “I don’t understand the sense. What part of the film?” All of it, Dylan replied, all of it or none of it. He grew impatient: “You have two takes, you can have either of them.”

Carroll backed down, “Want to hear them played back?”

Dylan, flatly, **“I want to hear everything played back.”**

As Carroll turned, Dylan uttered one word: **“Hollywood.”**

It was four in the morning, and he ordered another bourbon and sat, impassive behind his shades, as he listened to the tapes. Just after Kristofferson, Coburn and Wurlitzer left to get some sleep before watching the Super Bowl, Dylan called for a new tape to be put on. **“Let’s,”** he said, **“do ‘Billy’ again.”**

For the third take, he deleted his harmonica and added bass and drums and had Paul sing harmony. He cut it back to eight verses and the sound was bouncier and flashier.

But he didn’t like the take and cut it again, in G, just he and Paul singing over the guitar. He slowed it down and this version was eerie and mournful, almost dirge-like. Where earlier he had toyed with Billy, now he was pleading with him: “Billy, you’re so far away from home.”

He liked the take and turned to Carroll, **“Right after this Garrett rides into town. Right?”**

“Right,” the producer said. “Right. That really is... unbelievable. Um. What do you think?”

**“No,”** Dylan said. **“I don’t think. Usually. I don’t think, I hold it all in and then... act!”** He laughed. **“I’m glad you were on the case, because I forgot all about that original.”**

Seven AM. The Mexican technicians were rubbing their eyes sleepily and stepping around empty glasses and cigarette butts. As the others headed for the hotel, Dylan was wide awake and ready to return to Durango.

**“I’m thinking about doing a show there,”** he said. **“I’d like to. It’s just a funky little hall. Real nice audience, though. They make a lot of noise. I’m kind of anxious to do it. I mean a real audience. I’m used to those audiences in the States, and they just come and gawk at you.”**

He found a last drink and last cigarette before leaving. **“That song,”** he told the writer, **“Rudy needed a song for the script. I wasn’t doing anything. Rudy sent the script, and I read it and liked it and we got together and he needed a title song. And then I saw The Wild Bunch and Straw Dogs and Cable Hogue and liked them. The best one is Ride the High Country. Sam’s really, like he’s the last of a dying breed. They don’t hire people like that to make movies anymore. So I wrote that song real quick and played it for Sam and he really liked it and asked me to be in the movie. I want now, to make movies. I’ve never been this close to movies before. I’ll make a hell of a movie after this.”**

## Late 1972 / Early 1973, Unknown Interviewer (Beat Instrumental)

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Source: *Beat Instrumental*, UK magazine, Number 119, April 1973, pages 48-49.

The interview took place in Durango, Mexico.

### The Ballad of Billy The Kid

DURANGO, Mex.

With a large cowboy hat pulled tightly over his brow but not enough to block his vision, Bob Dylan stared at the floor and occasionally stole a sideward glance.

He picked nervously at his fingers and, with his back turned to the camera, he grimaced from time to time doing an unconscious imitation of Humphrey Bogart's famous twitch. Dylan, the man who has scrupulously guarded his privacy and diligently avoided any confrontation with the Press, was making his first movie – not as the star, but in a relatively minor role.

It was his friend, Kris Kristofferson, the star of the picture, 'Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid', who talked him into making the movie and who urged him to stay with it when Dylan later wanted to back out.

Dylan wants to direct and has long admired Sam Peckinpah's work. So when Kristofferson said: 'How about coming down to Durango and making "Billy" with me? It will be a lot of laughs,' Dylan agreed.

Is he enjoying making the movie?

**'I don't know,'** Dylan said. **'It's different. I haven't decided yet.'**

### SHY

Would the shy performer, who steadfastly refuses to be photographed, want a career that would thrust him conspicuously in front of the camera?

**'No,'** Dylan confided. **'I want to direct.'** In that capacity, he would be behind the camera.

Will he make any more films after this one?

**'I don't know if I will. I haven't decided that either. This film is different. It's different from other films,'** he said, raising his eyes from the ground, and then skittered away like a frightened animal eluding the hunter.

Had it been the laughs that Kristofferson had promised?

Kristofferson answered that question as he described Dylan's reaction to acting.

'Bob walked up to me one day on the set and asked me to laugh,' Kris related. 'I asked him why, and he said "I want to see what it looks like."'

### ROPED

'Bobby didn't know how to rope or ride before he did this movie. He learned down here. One day a girl came on the set and started to take a picture of him. He roped her.

'Another time Sam (Peckinpah) was showing him how to throw a knife and Dylan said; "Like this, you mean". And he threw it and the knife hit the centre of the target. He's really amazing.'

Kris went on extolling Dylan's talents.

'We had a party at Sam's one Sunday and Bobby played a Spanish guitar. He played some flamenco and he imitated the sound of the mariachi players. They perform on the streets here and Bobby loves them. We all thought he was great and his wife said that she had never heard him do it before.'

Dylan was, in fact, so impressed with the mariachi bands that he incorporated their music in a record he cut while making the movie.

He and Kris have each written songs for the film. Dylan's is tentatively titled, 'Ballad of Billy the Kid', and Kris wrote 'Pat Garrett'. They recorded them with Kris's band and the Durango Street players in Mexico City, during a weekend break in production. Whether the songs will be part of the film score or released independently are details yet to be worked out.

### SONGS

Those who have heard both songs say they are great. Dylan's song follows the screen play so closely that Peckinpah played it for MGM executives and others who were interested in the film's story line.

'I introduced him to Sam and Sam told him the story. Then he wrote the song, which is really great.'

Whether Dylan had a lot of laughs it's hard to say. He doesn't talk much to anyone and doesn't reserve his shyness for the Press.

He befriended Kris's pianist, Donnie Fritts, as well as Kris, and there is an obvious mutual respect between him and Peckinpah. But he talks little, even to them. Kris went so far as to say that 'Dylan's span of attention is limited. You're talking one minute and the next minute he seems to be away somewhere.'

During lunch breaks the stars and director retire to mobile dressing rooms, where their lunch is served to them. Dylan was not originally assigned a star's dressing room and at Kris's insistence moved into his. But at lunch-time Dylan stands on line with the crew, the electricians and extras, and carries his own tray to a picnic-type table. He usually sits alone, and even if someone sits beside him he makes no effort to look up. When he's finished he gets up and walks out alone without looking to find a friendly face.

Even Fritts was at a loss to explain why Dylan chose to talk with him – when he felt like talking.

### BLUES

'Maybe it's because I'm a songwriter, too, and my first love is the blues. Dylan likes the blues, too, he told me. And, then again, Otis Redding is my hero and I came here with that thought in mind. Maybe I conveyed that to him. You know what I mean,' Fritts said in an accent that reflected his childhood in Florence, Ala.

Dylan and his wife and five children are living in a rented house in the more luxurious Los Angeles section of the city. It is next door to Peckinpah's and down the street from a much more grandiose villa assigned to Kris.

### AMUSEMENT

There are three restaurants where the American film colony usually eats and two movie houses which show English-language films with Spanish subtitles. Otherwise there is little to do for amusement and the actors find it wearing after months of isolation. Dylan seemed to be enjoying this aspect of it.

He did not explain to Kris why he wanted to back out before the picture was finished.

'He just dropped into the trailer and asked me if I cared if he didn't finish the film. I said it didn't matter if I didn't, and it was up to him. The he asked me if it mattered to me if he finished it, and I said that I'd appreciate it if he did and he said in that case he would. And then he walked out of the trailer.'

15 January 1974, Tom Zito

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Source: *The Washington Post*, 17 January 1974, pages B1, B10.

The interview took place at the Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston, Massachusetts.

### The Man: A Generation's Guarded Voice

Bob Dylan slouches down into the resilient sofa of his suite. The place is perfectly antiseptic, a room at the Boston Sheraton done in contemporary styling; everything done in white and brown. He's dressed in a purple T-shirt, a black corduroy jacket and bluejeans, half looking out from and half hiding behind his silvered aviator glasses. He seems bigger than he does on stage, lost in the giant halls he's playing on this six-week, 21-city tour that brought him to Washington for two concerts, last night and tonight, grossing \$260,000 here.

He plops his brown-booted feet onto a white coffee table and announces tersely. **"The tour is going good."** It comes out Midwestern and nasal – the kind of tones you'd expect from a person whose early singing sounded rough and raspy.

Then there's silence – the kind of conversational void that plummets a 16-year-old who realizes this blind date just won't work.

Here is Bob Dylan, voice of a generation, the guy who wrote "Blowin' In The Wind," "The Times They Are A-Changin'," "With God On Our Side," songs that sounded the charge of the emerging social consciousness of the early '60s and became the labor songs of America's youthful cultural revolution.

So the obvious questions come to mind: What's it like up there? How does it feel to be forced – at least expected – to be a leader? What's changed since your eight years away from the road – since LSD, psychedelic music, the Chicago convention and Watergate?#

**"Back then it was the scene,"** he says guardedly, choosing every phrase as if to make sure he isn't giving away too much of himself. **"Greenwich Village, Gerdi's** (a saloon/club where Dylan got his start in New York). **There wasn't any audience and performer. It was all one. I wasn't a hero. I wasn't giving those young people anything to focus on back then. It was just something I was articulating that a whole bunch of us felt."**

Now?

"It's different. I look out from that stage and I can't really see who's out there. I feel that a lot of those old people are out there. I get a kick from that. It reassures my own faith that there was something to it then.

"But now there's a lot of ambiguity out there in the audience. The rest of the crowd, the younger kids, I'm just not sure why they're there. Maybe they're just curious, you know, like I'm a curiosity to them. Maybe it's just, you know, 'I got some tickets for a show. Let's go.' You ask what do I think they expect of me? I don't know. What do they expect of Led Zeppelin?"

What changed it?

**"The lid came off with drugs. I mean, when LSD got 'legalized' and everybody started smoking, everybody was getting into everybody else's head. Before that, people used to try to find out what they were all about. Drugs nipped a lot of that in the bud. It made people very passive.**

**"Now a lot of people just accept things the way they are. I've been noticing all these tall buildings in the cities we're touring. They'll just grind you down into the ground. They're monsters."**

Dylan's last major one-shot public appearance was at former Beatle George Harrison's Concert For Bangladesh in summer, 1972.

**"That was a good feeling, being on stage there. It never occurred to me whether the kids who were there were thinking about the reason behind the concert. For me it was just a show. Sure, George believed very much in the importance of doing a benefit, but I didn't really think of it in political terms.**

**"Would I have done a benefit for a politician? Well, there's a real difference, you know. I mean, there were millions of people starving in Bangladesh. George McGovern wasn't starving. He just wanted to be President."**

And in an article in last Sunday's New York Times, "An Open Letter To Bob Dylan," suggesting that he do a free concert, he responds with laughing incredulity:

**“I couldn’t believe that article. The New York Times printing an open letter to Bob Dylan. It’d be one thing if somebody I knew was writing me a letter. Anyway, who deserves a free concert? Wadaya mean ‘free concert?’ Free for who? If I’m over at somebody’s house, I’ll play. Maybe that’s a free concert.”**

Slowly Dylan, now 32, starts to reveal a certain amount of ennui. He displays a distance from things that’s either real or is being used to hide his real thoughts.

What’s he listening to and reading? **“I can’t remember reading any books or hearing any records recently.”** (He does admit his oldest daughter listens to Led Zeppelin, a heavy British blues-based band.)

Does he like life in California, where he’s been living for the past year? **“California is okay. It’s easy life. I’m just passing through.”** (He’s originally from Hibbing, Minn.)

Thoughts on contemporary politics. **“Politics are a lot less clearly defined today. You’ve got a lot of mush.”**

Any truth that he, born Robert Zimmerman, is doing the tour to raise money for Israel? **“That’s like asking me if doing this tour to raise enough money to go to the moon in 1983.”**

Thoughts on Watergate? **“Nah, didn’t surprise me a bit.”** Did it outrage him? **“No.”** Can he think of anything that would outrage him politically? He leans back, muses and shakes his head.

**“I guess I just don’t really believe in the Democrat/Republican system,”** he quips. **“I like monarchies. I go in more for kings and queens.”**

Perhaps Dylan’s underlying reason for this attitude is a basic noncomprehension of why anyone would want to interview him.

**“Why do people care about what other people do?”** he asks. **“Who cares what I eat for breakfast (he’s a vegetarian) or how many children I have (five, one from his wife, Sara’s, previous marriage)? Who wants to hear about somebody else’s life. I’d rather go fishing. I resent people who come knocking on my door to ask me some dumb question.”**

But apparently enough people were interested in Dylan to generate 6 million ticket requests for the 660,000 seats available on his tour.

**“Six million, a hundred million, it’s all an illusion,”** he says. **“It doesn’t mean that much to me, really. I mean, who else is there around to go see?”**

The phone rings.

**“There’s a cousin here I have to see. You’re gonna have to leave pretty soon,”** he says.

Finally, perhaps, one true glimpse of the man.

**“You think you could scratch out that stuff I said about George McGovern?”** he asks. **“I don’t think I should go around criticising him. I wouldn’t want him to read anything like that in the paper. I think the guy’s sentiments were in the right place.”**



## 22 July 1974, Ben Fong-Torres

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Source: *Rolling Stone*, US magazine, Issue 168, 29 August 1974, Page 34 (full article pages 34-36, 38, 40).

The interview took place at the Civic Centre, St. Paul, Minnesota. This is an excerpt from a long article on Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

### The Ego meets the Dove: The reunion of Crosby Stills Nash & Young

At the St. Paul, Minnesota, Civic Center, the lights are doused, 19,000 voices rise out of the darkness and all you see are the blue fluorescent lights playing onto the Indian rug; it looks like a snowdrift onstage as Crosby, Stills, Nash and bassist Tim Drummond face off to establish the rhythm. Neil Young, in a Buick service department jacket and patched cords, is behind the organ. The power builds – it's "Love the One You're With" – and a floorful of people are suddenly shake-hopping in place. On "Wooden Ships," springing up from central casting, there's your clenched fist, front center, just as the chorus begins.

In the middle of the acoustic set, Young introduces "For The Turnstiles" by saying: "Here's a song I wrote a long time ago. There's a couple of really good songwriters here tonight; I hope they don't listen too closely."

Minutes later it's Stills, and he, too, pays tribute to a songwriter in the crowd:

"This one's for Bob," he says, "because I know I've been that mad before." Head bowed and hands flailing, he flies into "Word Game":

Would you knock a man down if you don't like the cut of his clothes

Could you put a man away if you don't want to hear what he knows

Well, it's happening right here...

Through most of this set, Bob Dylan, in cowboy shirt, jeans and shades, has been standing in the midst of a small group on the floor off to the side, behind backstage barriers. He stands, unnoticed by the audience, next to a woman in a drug help jacket.

Dylan is in his home state for a visit with family and friends. He's with Louie Kemp, his buddy from their childhood days in Hibbing, just north of here, and the word has spread quickly that he has taken an apartment in town, is moving back and buying some property just outside Minneapolis. In short, Dylan is coming back home to stay.

As the acoustic set makes its transition back into electric, Dylan wanders off by himself. He is willing to have a few words. Over Young's rock-star recall, "Don't Be Denied," Dylan shouts that he's in town to attend a funeral.

What about the talk that he's looking for some property here?

He flashes the half-smile: "**I'm always looking.**"

I say I enjoyed hearing the album of the tour, which it sounds better than most of the nine shows I covered.

**"Wait 'til you hear my next album!"**

"How far along is it?"

**"I haven't started yet!"**

Dylan has been at the St. Paul Hilton that afternoon. Crosby broke away from an interview to have a visit with him. I ask Dylan how he's liked the CSNY show so far and he responds with questions about Frank Sinatra's problems in Australia and about the weather in San Francisco. A moment later, after he's absorbed some more music, he turns and shouts: "**I like to play *small rooms!***"

"Your next record should be a comedy record," I yell.

**"All my records are comedy records!"**

Later that night – in fact, early the next morning – Dylan pops up again, into a 15th-floor suite of beautiful Midwestern women and weary rock & roll tourists. He talks briefly to Stills, eyes three guitars on the floor, picks up one and herds Stills into an adjacent room for a session of new Bob Dylan songs. The only other member of the audience, through the two-hour show, is bassist Tim Drummond.

"Aw, fuck!" Drummond laughs the next afternoon. He is staying behind while the tour moves immediately into Denver to allow Crosby, Stills and Nash to catch the Eric Clapton show.



“Dylan’s got an album,” says Drummond. “It’s great and it’s completely different from *Planet Waves*. It’s gutsy, bluesy, so authentic. I heard eight or nine songs and it’s the first time I’ve sat in a room and liked everything I’ve heard.”

## October 1975, Larry Sloman

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Source: *Rolling Stone*, US magazine, Number 201, 4 December 1975, pages 9, 18, 20.

The interviews took place at various locations just before and at the start of the first Rolling Thunder Revue.

### Bob Dylan and Friends on the Bus: Like a Rolling Thunder

New York – It was four o'clock on a brandy-soaked October Thursday morning in Greenwich Village as about 20 friends and assorted hangers-on gathered in the shuttered-to-the-public Other End to hear Bob Dylan and his friends pick a few tunes. They'd been going strong since 2:30 a.m. when David Blue finished his regular set, and by now the bulk of the audience had surrounded Dylan at the piano onstage.

An obviously well-fueled Roger McGuinn kept goading Dylan to sing his new "Joey Gallo" song by breaking into the "Jooeey" chorus acapella every chance he got. Allen Ginsberg hunched over the piano, staring intensely, hanging on to his every word. Ronee Blakley, the *Nashville* neurotic, sidled close to Dylan, sharing his piano stool, playing the high keys and adding vibrant harmonies. Ramblin' Jack Elliott was rambling around in the back looking for some "tee-keela," while Bobby Neuwirth acted as ringmaster, directing this folkie circus. Everyone seemed caught up in some kind of high-energy harmonic hysteria and the drinks flowed faster and faster. Everyone was caught up, that is, but Lou Kemp, Dylan's Minnesota boyhood buddy and all-around factotum, who viewed the proceedings from a stageside seat with a wary eye. "I can't believe this," he told no one in particular. "We've been in town just four days, haven't been to sleep before sunrise, I'm totally wasted and we haven't even started this goddamn tour yet."

This "goddamn tour" is, of course, the "Rolling Thunder Revue," Bob Dylan's traveling band of gypsies, hobos, lonesome guitar stranglers and spiritual green berets. In just four days the tour buses would roll out from the Gramercy Park Hotel, where the "revue" had been holed up, and head up to Plymouth, Massachusetts, for the first stop of a whirlwind blitz of the Northeast, running from four to six weeks.

The tour was conceived at the Other End back in the summer, when Dylan was vibing out the Village street scene and cowriting with Jacques Levy positively New York songs. Like the hymn for "Joey Gallo" and the story of the "Hurricane," a plea for Rubin Carter, the onetime number one contender for the middleweight boxing crown who now languishes in Trenton State Prison, convicted of murder.

The idea behind the tour, Dylan said, was to "**play for the people,**" the people who never get the choice seats at a Dylan concert because they're occupied by flacks and celebrities.

"Bob decided he wanted to do it," said Lou Kemp, "but he didn't have anyone to coordinate it. I came back from Alaska where I have a salmon processing plant, and he asked me to help with the tour. So I hired Barry Imhoff, who'd already left Bill Graham, to be in charge of the technical aspects of the tour." Imhoff, while with Graham, helped coordinate Dylan's 21-city, 39-concert tour early last year. Kemp also accompanied Dylan on numerous stops during that tour.

Both Imhoff and Kemp declined to answer questions about the financial aspects of this tour. While Dylan had mentioned wanting to play mostly "clubs," the initial stops were at halls ranging from 1800 to 3000 in capacity – with ticket prices at a uniform \$7.50 – and, in the tour's second week, there were dates at two 12,000-seat auditoriums, in Providence, Rhode Island, and in Springfield, Massachusetts. "**We gotta pay the rent, the expenses,**" Dylan explained. But he said there would be only "**one or two**" such concerts during the tour.

The Rolling Thunder Revue had also been planned as a spiritual reunion of the early Sixties Kettle of Fish folk crowd, the Dylan/Blue/Neuwirth/Elliott/Ochs axis.

"Bob's just an ordinary fucking guy," David Blue said, "a great songwriter who got swept up in this whole fame thing and was smart enough to know how to control it, who rode with it and was shrewd, damn shrewd. And now he's just paying everyone back with this tour. It's like a family scene."

But the cast mushroomed, especially since Dylan becomes effusive when he's bar hopping and winds up inviting every bouncer, bartender, juggler or otherwise kindred spirit he meets to come along. Joan Baez was the first addition to the basic Dylan/Elliott/Neuwirth show, followed by Ronee Blakley, on the basis of her strong showing at the Other End jam. Allen Ginsberg came next, with his fog, his natural adrenalin and his harmonium. Roger McGuinn, who was concentrating on a bottle so hard that he didn't hear Dylan the first two times he was invited along, has dropped a few bookings, hopping aboard with his 12-string and banjo. In fact, the only picker who met up with the Thunder crew and didn't get swept up into it was Lou Reed.

Baez's story is typical of the tour additions: "Bob called up and asked what I was doing for the month of November. I had a tour lined up. Usually I'm not working with a dollar sign in front of my face, but this time I was, so I had to give it considerable thought. But I'm bright enough to know what this tour will mean. I didn't trust a lot of it. I said, look, what if Ramblin' Jack decides he wants to live in a freight train for the month of November instead. I've known these guys for a long time and I love them dearly but everybody is slightly unstable. But it's delightful working with Bobby again. He's relatively impossible to follow and that's a challenge, but I need that."

In Dylan's words, the revue is playing in places other than large auditoriums because **"the atmosphere in small halls is more conducive to what we do."** Still, it seemed natural that the proceedings should be filmed for later distribution, so Dylan called up his old friend Howard Alk, of *Eat the Document* fame. **"That film was a project we did to rescue a bunch of garbage footage that ABC shot on our 1966 tour,"** Dylan explained. **"It was never released because the film didn't have much to do with anybody. The whole thing fell through, but Howard and I, we got together and decided if we ever got the chance again to shoot good footage before we get to the editing room – some things that we can make into a fantastic movie on the screen – we'd do it. There's so much we got here already. We'll probably end up making four or five movies, and the public can definitely be into this one."**

So it came as no shock to show up at a surprise birthday party for Mike Porco, the owner of Gerde's Folk City who gave Dylan his first paid gig in 1960, and be greeted by a four-man film crew who explained their presence to Porco with a cover story of "filming for NET." Word was out on the streets that Dylan just might show up, and before midnight the normally sparse weekday crowd was elbow-to-elbow. Phil Ochs had a head start on everyone and wandered around, drink in hand, lecturing about "the Jewish Mafia" and the strange case of Sonny Liston. Patti Smith shyly slunk into one corner, while Commander Cody showed up with two limos full of shitkickers. Roger McGuinn sat outside in his Sunshine limo, never one to arrive too early. Then, just past 1:00 a.m., a red Cadillac Eldorado pulled up and Dylan strode briskly in, followed closely by Kemp and Neuwirth. They greeted Mrs. Porco, hugged Mike and retreated to a far corner of the club. Then with the inevitable tableside introduction, "Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest star of all, Bobby Dylan," Dylan found his way up to the stage, grabbing Baez on the way for a duet of "Happy Birthday" and "One Too Many Mornings" – but the music stopped abruptly when bassist Rob Stoner's bridge snapped right out of its mooring.

Jack Elliott joined in onstage and Dylan seized the opportunity to shout, **"Let's turn the stage over to Ramblin' Jack Elliott,"** and headed back to the semisolitude of his table. Jack did a hauntingly beautiful ballad, "South Coast Blues"; Bette Midler fell onstage to duet with Buzzy Linhart; Allen Ginsberg sang some poem/songs backed by female guitarist Denise Mercedes. Then Eric Andersen and Patti Smith harmonized a bit. Finally, Neuwirth, looking like some turn-of-the-century Cuban porno star in a black eye-mask and cowboy hat, grabbed the stage and sang a touching "Mercedes Benz" for "someone who couldn't be here with us tonight."

It seemed over but then Phil Ochs, who's been battling some of his own private phantoms recently, performed a moving medley of folk and country, stuff like "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy," "There You Go," "Too Many Parties" and "The Blue and the Gray." Everyone at Dylan's table was standing, gaping at this poignant moment.

Ochs spotted Dylan heading for the bar. "Hey Bobby, come up with me," he shouted. **"I'm only going to the bar, Phil,"** Dylan replied reassuringly. "Well, here's a song of yours that I've always wanted to do," Ochs answered, breaking into a dirge-like "Lay Down Your Weary Tune." But things lightened up when Ochs stumbled off the stage into the waiting arms of David Blue, who, with Kemp and Neuwirth, were part of an ambush designed to retrieve the cowboy hat from Ochs that Dylan had worn in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*.

By the next day, Friday, things were really rolling. A session was planned to re-record "Hurricane" to be released as the tour begins. The idea was born at the Kettle of Fish when Dylan was talking animatedly about Rubin Carter and the need for publicity about his case. He had written "Hurricane" in the summer, recorded it and performed it at the retirement tribute to Columbia Records' John Hammond, taped for the *Soundstage* PBS-TV show. But that show won't be seen until December. **"We gotta get the song out, we gotta get it right out,"** Dylan had said, slamming his fist on the table.

So Tuesday, Dylan, Kemp and his camera crew, after a filmed scuffle with security guards at the CBS building, barged into the offices of CBS Records president Irwin Segelstein and CBS Records Group president Walter Yetnikoff and demanded rush release of the "Hurricane" single. Late that night Dylan entered Studio E, pre-empting a Janis Ian listening session, with his band – bassist Rob Stoner, drummer Howie Wyeth, violinist Scarlet Rivera, percussionist Luther and backup singers Steve Soles and Ronee Blakley. Four hours later, producer Don DeVito was left with the task of mixing, mastering and getting the story of the "Hurricane" out on the streets, in Dylan's words, **"as soon as possible."**

The reason for the recutting of "Hurricane" was the subject of some speculation, most of it centering on an allegedly libelous line about a person involved in Carter's arrest. Ken Ehrlich, producer of *Soundstage*, said he talked with Dylan's attorney about snipping parts of Dylan's taped performance "to avoid libel." The attorney,

David Braun, has refused comment. At Columbia Records, Segelstein said only that “it’s a very conventional name confusion, he had to correct a lyric. I do not know the details.” And DeVito, a Columbia executive who produced the session, said Dylan made changes “just like last year with *Blood on the Tracks*. He’s just totally unpredictable.”

After the re-recording session, Dylan reflected on Rubin Carter. **“The first time I saw Rubin, I left knowing one thing, that this man’s philosophy and my philosophy were running on the same road, and you don’t meet too many people like that, that you just kinda know are on the same path as you are, mentally. I never doubted him for a moment. He’s just not a killer, not that kind of a man. You’re talking about a different type of person. I mean, he’s not gonna walk into a bar and start shooting. He’s not the guy. I don’t know how anybody in their right mind is gonna think he was guilty of something like that.”**

“Hurricane” is an eight-minute rocker, a scorching defense of Carter and an attack on a system that allows an allegedly innocent man to rot in a cell for nine years. Carter’s is the kind of situation that spurred some of Dylan’s greatest protest songs years ago. **“There’s an injustice that’s been done and you know that Rubin’s gonna get out,”** Dylan said. **“There’s no doubt about that, but the fact is that it can happen to anybody. We have to be confronted with that; people from the top to the bottom, they should be aware that it can happen to anybody, at any time.”**

Rubin Carter, for his part, is thrilled with the song. “I listened to it at first and thought, eh, it was just another song to me,” Carter said in his cell at Trenton State Prison in Trenton, New Jersey. “I ain’t got no time for music in here. This is not a place to be soothed. But the more I sat there and listened to it and really understood what he was saying, I said, ‘Wow, man.’ I mean, he took this case, this nine years of whatever, and put it together, wop, like that, and covered every level, every facet of it. I said, ‘Man, this cat’s a genius. He’s giving the people the truth.’ And it was inspiring to me. I told myself, ‘Rubin, you got to keep pushing, ’cause you must be doing something right, you got all these good people coming to try and help you.’”

More rehearsals followed and on Monday, October 27th, three chartered buses pulled out for Cape Cod. There, the troupe settled into the Seacrest Hotel and ran through three additional days of rehearsal in the hotel’s indoor tennis court.

The tour opened October 30th on a cold, damp New England night in Plymouth, advertised only by handbills that included a photo of Dylan and by random radio mentions in Boston. The 1800-seat Plymouth Memorial Auditorium sold out but it took almost 24 hours to do so. But it was evident in the opening moments of the show that this crazy-quilt tour and its music – “the new sound is Plymouth rock,” was an often heard comment – was working. It seemed that the pre-tour tensions between Neuwirth’s gin-soaked, good-timey camaraderie and musical director Rob Stoner’s slick professionalism had been resolved into a balanced mixture of sound.

“Welcome to your living room,” Neuwirth announced onstage, and it was true. There was none of the forced ambiance of the last Dylan tour with its sofas and Tiffany lamps onstage. All the tour participants – Elliott, Blakley, McGuinn, Neuwirth, Baez, Dylan – got their moment in the spotlight, in front of the basic band of Mick Ronson, T-Bone Burnette, Stoner and Soles. After Elliott’s four-song set, Neuwirth introduced “another old friend” and Dylan ambled onstage in a black leather jacket, jeans and the *Pat Garrett* hat. The audience gave him a warm welcome, but there was little surprise in the air. Dylan and Neuwirth opened with a slow version of “When I Paint My Masterpiece,” Dylan singing harmony and Neuwirth taking the lead.

They harmonized on “It Ain’t Me, Babe” and “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall,” and then Neuwirth left and Dylan brought out violinist Scarlet Rivera to lead the band through “Durango.” Then it was Dylan alone to sing “Isis” – no guitar, no accompaniment, just Dylan at the mike gesturing dramatically as he told the story of the goddess. **“See you in a few minutes,”** he said, and went off to a standing ovation.

After a short intermission, the curtain crawled slowly up to the strains of Dylan and Joan Baez singing “The Times They Are a-Changin’.” After “Never Let Me Go” (an old Johnny Ace tune) and “I Shall Be Released,” Dylan left, patting Baez on the head and leaving her to do a seven-song set. Roger McGuinn took her place for “Chestnut Mare” and then gave the stage back to Dylan for “Mr. Tambourine Man” and, from the next album, “Oh, Sister.”

**“This is,”** said Dylan, **“a song about Rubin Carter,”** and behind him a screen slowly whirred to the floor and the band went into “Hurricane,” the single that would be released the next day – October 31st. A huge picture of Carter in boxing gear was projected onto the screen and that was the extent of Dylan’s comment on the song. “One More Cup of Coffee” was next and then Dylan broke into “Sara,” a bittersweet song to his wife:

I’d taken the cure  
And had just gotten through  
Staying up for days  
In the Chelsea Hotel,  
Writing ‘Sad-Eyed Lady

of the Lowlands' for you  
Sara oh Sara  
Wherever we travel  
We're never a part  
Sara oh Sara  
Beautiful lady  
So dear to my heart\*

He wound it up with "Just Like a Woman" and then the entire cast gathered for "This Land Is Your Land," with even Allen Ginsberg joining in. The three-hour show was over, the audience responded with a ten-minute standing ovation. The second Plymouth show, again a sellout, drew a quieter crowd, one almost polite toward its elders onstage. The show was virtually the same except for the substitution of "I Don't Believe You" for "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "Mama, You've Been on My Mind" instead of "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll."

From Plymouth, the buses and campers rolled on to North Dartmouth, Massachusetts, to Southeastern Massachusetts University. The crowd of 3000 had been prepped. A week before, an advance party, accompanied by the ever present camera crew, descended on the dorms at 10 p.m. to pass out Rolling Thunder handbills.

The night before the buses rolled, Dylan had been sitting in the bar of the Gramercy Park Hotel, sipping Remy Martin. He was asked by someone on the tour why it was called Rolling Thunder. Dylan thought for a minute. **"I was just sitting outside my house one day,"** he finally replied, **"thinking about a name for this tour, when all of a sudden, I look up into the sky and I hear a boom. Then, boom, boom, boom, boom, rolling from west to east"** – Dylan punched at the air, like a prizefighter – **"then I figured that should be the name."**

Dylan got another drink and the questioner asked him: "You know what Rolling Thunder means to the Indians?" **"No. What?"**

"Speaking truth."

A pause. Dylan shifted his hat and rocked back. **"Well, I'm glad to hear that. I'm real glad to hear that, man."**

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\* © 1975 Ram's Horn Music

## Late 1975, Nat Hentoff

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Source: *Rolling Stone*, US magazine, Number 204, 15 January 1976, pages 34-38.

Comments made at various points along the route of the 1975 Rolling Thunder Tour. Not strictly a Dylan interview but contains some Dylan quotes that may have come from interview situations.

### The pilgrims have landed on Kerouac's grave

Backstage at the Rolling Thunder Revue, Allen Ginsberg (who has just dedicated his book of *First Blues* to "Minstrel Guruji Bob Dylan") asks the convener of these revels, these winds of the old days, "Are you getting any pleasure out of this, Bob?"

The convener, who can use words as if they were fun-house mirrors when he's pressed, fingers his gray cowboy hat and looks at the poet. The first he had ever heard of Allen Ginsberg and the kind of people he hung out with was in *Time* around 1958 while he was still a kid in Minnesota. ("I'm Allen Ginsberg and I'm crazy." "My name is Peter Orlovsky and I'm crazy as a daisy." "My name is Gregory Corso and I'm not crazy at all." That had broken up the kid in Minnesota.)

Now, here on the road with this hooting, rocking carnival of time present and time past, both perhaps present in time future, is Allen, who has survived serene and curious, in a business suit.

**"Pleasure?"** Dylan finds the word without taste, without succulence. **"Pleasure? I never seek pleasure. There was a time years ago when I sought a lot of pleasure because I'd had a lot of pain. But I found there was a subtle relationship between pleasure and pain. I mean, they were on the same plane. So now I do what I have to do without looking for pleasure from it."**

"He is putting you on," said a friend to whom Ginsberg, later in the tour, had described Dylan's exorcism of the pursuit of pleasure.

"No," Ginsberg said firmly. "Bob's attitude is very similar to the Buddhist view of nonattachment. The belief that seeking pleasure, clinging to pleasure, evokes pain. It stunned me when Bob said that. It meant that he's reached a philosophical level very few come close to. And it's a long-range, practical, workable, philosophical level. Bob has grown an awful lot. He's alchemized a lot of the hangups of his past. Like his insecurity, which has now become," Ginsberg laughs, "an acceptance of and an ability to work with continuous change."

On the other hand, a musician in Minstrel Guruji's band tells of an epiphany early in the tour:

"Joan and Bob are doing a duet. I forget the name of it, it's one of his old tunes. She's really moving. I mean dancing. She starts doing the Charleston and the audience is digging it and we're digging it. Dylan though, he's plunking his guitar, moving his eyes around quick, like he does, looking at Joanie, looking at us, looking at the audience. Like, 'What the hell is she doing that's going over so damn big?' It's over, and Joan walks offstage, grinning, sees a friend in the wings, and says to him, 'You won't be hearing *that* number again from this little old duo on this tour.' And laughs because neither the friends nor the others standing there can figure out what she's talking about. But she's right. Bob's never called for that tune since. He couldn't stand the competition. Big as he is, in some ways he's still a kid scrabbling for his turf."

"Not true," says Joan Baez of the kid characterization. "Or, not as true as it used to be." She had once described Dylan as "a huge ego bubble, frantic and lost, so wrapped up in ego, he couldn't have seen more than four feet in front of him." But now, "Bob has learned how to share," Joan told me one night after a three-and-a-half-hour show in Waterbury, Connecticut, at an old rococo movie theater that reminded me of Depression nights as a boy when we would go to just such a place to feel good anyhow and come home with some dishes besides. No dishes this time, but the most mellow feelings I've had from a concert since the Duke Ellington band on an exceptionally good night. The kicks were from the genuine mutual grooving of the music makers; but it was Dylan, as shaper of the thunder, who was responsible for lifting the audience and keeping it gliding.



A bounteous dispenser of thunder was Dylan this time around. At least three and a half hours *every* night, sometimes longer. (The first concert in Toronto, one of the tour's more exalted evenings, ran close to five hours.) And yet always, or nearly always, the pacing, though relaxed, didn't go slack.

The right mix of a backup band, driving strong but sinuously so it never sounded like an assault. If you could keep T-Bone Burnett, Steve Soles, Howie Wyeth, Mick Ronson, Luther Rix and David Mansfield together – I was thinking as a once and former A&R man – you could have one hell of a house insurance band. Especially



with Mansfield, 19 and the kind of natural whom conservatory students prone to neurasthenia should never be allowed to hear or see. Mandolin, pedal steel, dobro, violin – Mansfield makes them all sing, for God’s sake, as if he were the sorcerer, not the apprentice he looks like.

Up front Rob Stoner, who doesn’t get in the way, and the authentically raffish Bob Neuwirth who may, he says, be in the movies soon. Finally a Rhett Butler for our time. Put another way, I think you have to see Neuwirth to remember his singing.

Then the substars. Ronee Blakley, who earnestly needs direction, as her albums and her musical aimlessness on this tour rather painfully indicate. Roger McGuinn, who has become a large, jolly, historic rocker, almost right for a Christmas mime show. And surprisingly, most impressive of all in the second line some nights, Jack Elliott. With his rambling white cowboy hat and folk collector’s glasses, Jack is real serious, however idiosyncratic, and on this tour quite moving in his seriousness. Watching and feeling what “Pretty Boy Floyd,” let’s say, still means to him, I started thinking of Cisco Houston. Not that they sang alike, Cisco being more of an original, but they trained a lot of memories. And Jack is still spreading seeds.

All the way up front, Joan Baez and, as she calls him, The Kid. Her voice has lowered and so the bodiless sound of medieval caroling in a cathedral is also gone. But now there is more warmth and flesh and survivor’s humor (“Love is a pain in the ass”); and still that surging vibrato which is so strong that when Joan sings a cappella, the vibrato becomes her rolling rhythm section.

In her duets with Dylan, Joan, most of the time, is a secondary strand. She could overpower him because her timbre penetrates deeper and because she is more resourceful with her voice than he is, but Joan is content to orchestrate Dylan. And Dylan – less coiled, even dancing from time to time – cannot ever be called relaxed but now is so in charge that even he believes he’s in charge. His singing, therefore, is more authoritative than ever before. That is, the anxiety in his delivery has to do with the story he’s telling rather than with the way he’s telling it.

It feels good to him, this tour. The itch was there last summer. One liquid night, if you believe Bob Neuwirth: “Me and Bob and Ramblin’ Jack decided we were going to go out and tour in a station wagon, go out and play Poughkeepsie. That didn’t turn out to be possible. So we did this instead. And this ain’t no Elton John show, you know. This ain’t no fucking one-fourth of the Beatles show or nothing like that. This show, we got it all, man. Between us we got it all. And it just gets better and better and better.”



“The feeling is good,” Joan handed me her glass of wine, “because everybody has some room onstage. Bob made sure of that. He didn’t have to and I argued against it. I thought it would slow things up. But Bob insisted. He said the guys in the band have to work day and night, and so each of them ought to get some attention. Not that, as you saw, Bob has sworn off attention for himself.”

He no longer seeks pleasure, he says. But what of the pleasure of attention? Why, that comes, it just comes. *Blood on the Tracks* has been released and Allen Ginsberg, listening close, is moved to write the poet about a rhyme in “Idiot Wind”: “idiot wind blowing like a circle around my skull from the Grand Coulee dam to the Capitol.”

It’s an amazing rhyme, Ginsberg writes, an amazing image, a national image, like in Hart Crane’s unfinished epic of America, *The Bridge*.

The other poet is delighted to get the letter. No one else, Dylan writes Ginsberg, had noticed that rhyme, a rhyme which is very dear to Dylan.

Ginsberg’s tribute to that rhyme is one of the reasons he is here with Bob and Joan and the rest of the merry motley. It was, says Allen, “one of the little sparks of intelligence that passed between Bob and me and that led him to invite me on the tour.”



Joan, in faded jeans and multicolored, boldly striped cotton shirt, is talking with amused affection about Dylan, about the tour, about herself. The Ghost of Johanna still marvels at the sparks that never cease coming from this “savage gift on a wayward bus.” Throughout the tour, although Lord knows she knew his numbers well, Joan would slip into the audience to hear Dylan’s sets or, if she were weary, she’d sit down backstage to listen.

“Bob has so powerful an effect on so many lives,” Joan says. She has been saying this for some 13 years; and at the beginning, before his pop beatification, she pushed mightily to press that savage gift on those who had come to pay homage only to her. Dylan was the “mystery guest” unveiled at her concerts, lurching onstage to break the spell of high-born doom across the seas in someone else’s history as he rasped about freak shows right outside.

“I’m still deeply affected by his songs,” Joan says. And by him? “Well, of course, there’s that *presence* of his. I’ve seen nothing like it except in Muhammad Ali, Marlon Brando and Stevie Wonder. Bob walks into a room



and every eye in the place is on him. There are eyes on Bob even when he's hiding. All that has probably not been easy for him." She says this entirely without her usual irony.



**"Sometimes,"** Dylan says to me on the phone in 1966, **"I have the feeling that other people want my soul. If I say to them, 'I don't have a soul,' they say, 'I know that. You don't have to tell me that. Not me. How dumb do you think I am? I'm your friend.'" What can I say except that I'm sorry and feel bad? I guess maybe feeling bad and paranoia are the same thing."**



Onstage, all during the Rolling Thunder Revue, Joan had put her arm around Dylan's shoulders, wiped the sweat off his forehead, kissed his cheek, and looked into his eyes, giving rise to a frisson of voyeurism among those in the audience who yearn for *Diamonds & Rust* to have a sequel, several sequels, for where else these days can you find that old-time mysterious rhapsody in the romances of the famous? "It's on again," a woman behind me whispers eagerly as Dylan and Baez intertwine in close harmony onstage. "It's on again."

Later I ask the question and Joan laughs. "This is a *musical* tour for me. Actually, I don't see much of Bob at all. He spends most of his time on that movie he's making. The movie needs a director. The sense I get of it so far is that that movie is a giant mess of a home movie."

Joan, sitting back on the couch, as spontaneously straightforward as Dylan is cabalistically convoluted. And as he figures in who knows how many sexual fantasies of how many genders, so she is erotic, still freshly erotic, but probably stars in somewhat straighter fantasies. But who knows?

And she is funny, especially in self-defense. As on the day she showed up for her first rehearsal for the Rolling Thunder Revue.

**"I'd like to hear that song off your new album,"** Dylan asks the once and former girl on the half-shell. **"You know, 'Diamonds & Rust.'"**

"You want me to do *that* on the show?" Joanie looks at him in solemn question.

**"Yeah."** There is a distinct collector's gleam in Dylan's eyes. **"Yeah, I do."**

"You mean," the ex-madonna grabs Dylan by the chin and looks him in the eye, "that song I wrote about my ex-husband."

Dylan has been aced. "I have to keep him spinning," Joan says of the rout, "in order to keep my balance."

"Those duets," Joan says of what she's sometimes been thinking while also wiping Dylan's brow and looking into his eyes, "are a hazard. It's hard singing with him because he's so devilish. There are times when I don't know what song he's plucking on that guitar until he starts singing. And he can be tricky. On one song, we'd been doing two choruses all along the tour but one night, just as I'm about to belt the second chorus, the song was all over. Done! Thanks a lot. Bob had worked out the new short ending with the band and hadn't told me. Oh, he's a lot of fun onstage."



Curtain! The second half of the nonpareil Rolling Thunder What-Might-Have-Been-and-What-Has-Been-Point-to-One-End-Which-Is-Always-Present Revue is about to start!

Under the cowboy hat, the *klezmer*, the Jewish hobo musician with roots – roots by the centuries – turns to the sad-eyed lady from Chavez country. That lady who, he used to say, **"proved t' me that boys still grow."** Dylan looks up at Baez and says, **"Don't upstage me."**

She smiles her luminous smile and says, "I'm going to use everything I have to do just that."



"I'm back from goose hunting in Maryland," [said President Ford.] He was disappointed at only bagging one goose in six hours. Shifting to the subject of country music, "Joan Baez really grabs me," Ford admitted. Party host Senator William Brock (R-Tenn.) agreed. "I wish I could get her to campaign for me... at least in some areas," said the senator.

– *Women's Wear Daily*, November 19th, 1975.



The campaigner is still very fond of the *klezmer*. "I used to be too hard on him. I used to be too hard on a lot of people." Baez grins, sipping wine. "Well, I'm not as stiff as I used to be. I've lightened up on people. I don't expect Bob to champion my causes anymore. I've learned he's not an activist, which does not mean he doesn't care about people. If that were so, he wouldn't have written 'Hurricane.'"

Having shrived Dylan of her moral burden ("Singer or savior it was his to choose/Which of us know what was his to lose"), what does she want for him now?

“I’d like to see him keep making music, keep creating. Why, I would like him to be happy.”

It all depends, of course. Or, as Jane Ace once said to Goodman Ace, “If it makes him happy to be happy, then let him be happy.”

And what does she want for herself?

Joan Baez speaks to the wall. “There must be something I can do with my life that will be worthwhile.”

You talk, I say, as if you’ve been a sybarite or a government official up to now.

“Oh, I’ve already done a fair amount of things; but in terms of what has to be done, how do you measure what you still ought to be doing? And maybe what I did wasn’t done as efficiently as it could have been. Screaming at people may not be the most efficient way. I’m going to stay back a little from now on. I’m learning how to listen to people instead of preaching at them so much. And learning to listen to myself again. I’m 30,000 words into a book, an extension of *Daybreak*. And the songs. I’m going to write more personal songs. If they come. I go through some very long dry periods. But it’s fun when it happens.”



She likes to laugh, always has, though in the past, as she knows, she has sometimes come on like Carry Nation, wielding her ax, with, as they used to say, an “achingly pure soprano.”

At the start of rehearsals for a television show in 1960, she announces what songs she will not sing; with whom else she will appear in her section of the program (no one); the amount of time she will need; the kinds of sets behind her she will not permit. She is not negotiating. She is stating irreducible demands and looking toward the door.

The producer, Robert Herridge, a prideful maverick and wildly ecumenical intellectual who is too honest to last long at CBS, is morose, frustrated. He turns to me, who has brought him this burning bush, and snaps, “The bitch is only 19 years old and she thinks she’s Thomas Mann.”

She also thought that singing wasn’t enough, wasn’t nearly enough, and as the Sixties went on, she went on the stump for tax resistance and draft resistance, went to jail twice for helping block induction centers, marched for civil rights North and South, arguing with Martin Luther King much of the way. (King was proud that black bands were coming out of the “revolution,” pointing out to Joan that “the black keys and the white keys on the piano are out of tune. We have to get them in tune, and this is one way.” And Joan, the still burning bush, pointed a long, graceful finger at him and said, “But the whole fucking orchestra is shot, so what good are black bands going to do?”) And she worked with Cesar Chavez before all the articles and books made it modish to switch table wines and peer at the crates the iceberg lettuce came in.

No other performer came anywhere close to Joan in terms of being continually on the line in those already blurred years. And as the most deeply knowledgeable popular circuit rider for active nonviolence, it was Joan who became a pariah among certain “revolutionaries” pushing holy violence because she insisted early in that self-indulgent game that Tolstoy had been right: “The difference between establishment violence and revolutionary violence is the difference between dog shit and chicken shit.”

As she kept getting braver and as her radical pacifist thinking grew more rigorous, Joan was also growing into a woman who loved falling in love, just as in the old songs, and who kept learning how to move on, just as in the new songs. Nearly 35, the mother of a six-year-old son, she’s still moving on, in a number of directions.

“There are four of me, right?” Joan says. “A mother, a woman, a musician and a politician. For a long time, I always put politics first. When Gabe was born, being a mother and being political took on coequal importance. Music, like before, kept being shoved into the background. And the me that is a woman kept coming and going, depending on whether there was something going on in that part of my life.

“Then,” she goes on, “I went broke, so broke I couldn’t even fly East for a demonstration. I had done a series of political albums which hadn’t sold and so I had to put music up front, I had to stop being part of everybody’s political campaign and I had to go out there and entertain. That was last summer’s concert tour. I was frightened. What would they think, the people who came to hear the political Joan Baez? At first, I was so apprehensive, I’d announce during a concert that I was on vacation. But you know what they thought? They thought I was human. And I liked it too. I found myself *dancing* during the concerts and I love to dance. I’d never been so spontaneous onstage. The audiences were having fun and so was I.”

So, in the middle of the journey, the newsreel footage of the Sixties having been locked up somewhere, which of the four Baezes is going to be in the forefront now?

“It’s still getting sorted out,” says Joan. “I’m always going to be involved in nonviolence, I still feel very close to Chavez and the farmworkers, and I expect I’ll be working again with Amnesty International. But on the other hand, I want to be with my kid. This is a very important year for him, a kind of transition year to when he starts moving away from as much need as he has now for his mother. I don’t want to mess this year up. And then there’s music. I can see myself getting more involved with the fun of the music, with allowing myself to be a musician for the sake of the music itself.”

And the woman part of Baez?

She grins. “That comes and goes, depending on what happens. No way of knowing what’s going to happen.”

One part of Baez, interlaced with all the others, remains stubbornly intact. “I am,” she says, “your basic camp counselor, I really am.”

All campers are to be treated equally, with justice and fairness for all. Or else.

By the 12th stop on the Rolling Thunder Revue celebration of musical egalitarianism, the camp counselor is furious. She is preparing a pronouncement and a graphic drawing for the tour’s internal newspaper. She is protesting rank injustice in the heart of all this here cultural freedom.

“They make the security people, the bus drivers and the crew,” the burning bush speaks, “eat at separate places and at separate hours from the rest of us. *That is segregation.*”

Who is “they” – Lou Kemp?

“I don’t know who it is. But this is going to stop. The drawing I’m putting in shows a pool of blood, and it’s going to say that without these guys who are being segregated, one of us principals might be stranded, to say the least, in the wake of the Rolling Thunder Revue.”

What if your protest is ignored?

“Then a lot of us,” says Joan, “will go eat with the security people, the bus drivers and the crew. There are a lot of possible approaches to this kind of problem.”

Is Bob aware of this segregation?

Joan, customarily spontaneous, customarily candid, weighs her answer. “I don’t know,” she says.



Allen Ginsberg also speaks of protest, but as in a vision. Where once was a time to howl, now is the time to begin the harvest and to give thanks to the harbingers, then and now.

In Springfield, Massachusetts, Arlo Guthrie moves onstage to play and sing with his father’s other son, the hard-wishing, hard-traveling, earnestly self-adopted Jack Elliott. Backstage, the midwestern *klezmer* (to whom Woody was his “last idol”) watches and listens.

“That’s a strong lineage, Woody’s,” says Allen Ginsberg, “and Woody, of course, was part of an older lineage, that old good-time Wobbly idealism. That’s all still going strong right in this show. Joan sings ‘Joe Hill.’ And ‘Hurricane’ is part of that too, an old classic social protest song.”

Sound the news of injustice and the people will awake. How else can we begin?

“And look how we end,” says Walt Whitman’s friend.

The end, a reasonably jubilant “This Land Is Your Land,” everybody onstage, even Ginsberg-the-keeper-of-the-vision making silvery his finger cymbals, as Joan soars and swoops from the mountains to the prairies and Dylan, smiling, stands his ground, and all the rest move to the hearty beat of the American *Upanishad*.

“There was a kind of vision of community in the Sixties,” Ginsberg says after the show, “and many people thought that once they’d had the vision, everything was solved. But as Jack Kerouac once said, ‘Walking on water wasn’t built in a day.’ Another thing going on in the Sixties was just people digging each other, digging each other’s texture and character, hanging out. You can’t do that fast either. You know, there was a lot of hanging out in the Fifties too, in Kerouac.”

Dylan had been braced and shaped, in part, way back then, by Kerouac. *Doctor Sax, On the Road, Mexico City Blues*. The day after the Rolling Thunder Revue came to Lowell, Dylan, Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky visited Kerouac’s grave. Ginsberg had brought a copy of *Mexico City Blues* and Dylan read a poem from it. The three then sat on the grave, Dylan picking up Ginsberg’s harmonium and making up a tune. When Dylan pulled out his guitar, Ginsberg began to improvise a long, slow, 12-bar blues about Kerouac sitting up in the clouds looking down on these kindly wanderers putting music to his grave. Dylan is much moved, much involved, a state of introspection closely captured by the camera crew that has also come along.



Before Lowell, before Boston, before Plymouth, the day the Dharma Carnival was to leave New York, Allen Ginsberg meets Muriel Rukeyser on the street. This soft-voiced, slow-speaking, hugely honest poet, who of late has been in South Korea trying to stop the terminal silencing of an antideath poet there, is glad to see Ginsberg. She admires people with visions. She asks where he’s going.

“I’m going on the bus,” Ginsberg says cheerily. “It’s a minstrel show!”

“But it’s more than a minstrel show, isn’t it?” she asks me the next day.

“It is a signal to the country,” Ginsberg tells me on the road. “What happened in the San Francisco renaissance in the mid-Fifties was one of those signals that characterize the rise of a generation’s poetic consciousness and

its sense of social rebellion. And that happened in the very midst of McCarthyism. Then, in the mid-Sixties, the peace marches and the rise of rock – the Beatles and things like that – were among the signals for a further rising of consciousness, a wider sense of community. Now, the Rolling Thunder Revue will be one of the signal gestures characterizing the working cultural community that will make the Seventies.”

I would like to truly believe, I tell the poet, but where, except in wish, is the basis for such joyous tidings in a time of torpor?

“Have you read Dave Dellinger’s book, *More Power than We Knew?*” The poet must resort to prose. “Dellinger shows that many of the demands that the youth generation or the left or the movement made in the Sixties have actually been met. Congress *did* cut off funds for the Vietnam war and who would have thought that possible in the mid-Sixties? Then there were all the protests about the police state, and a police state paranoia to go with them. Now a great deal of that has been confirmed and exposed in public investigations. Not that everything has been all cleaned up but the work of the Sixties *did* bear some fruit. It never was in vain.

“So now, it’s time for America to get its shit together,” the poet says idiomatically. “It’s time to get back to work or keep on working, depending on who you are, because the work that went before *has* been good, even though people got discouraged. It’s been as good as you can expect, considering what it takes to walk on water or reverse the machine age or deal with overpopulation or capitalism. Rolling Thunder, with its sense of community, is saying we should all get our act together. And do it properly and well.” The poet, bouncing his vision, laughs. “Once you have a view of the right path, then you have to travel that path.”

That means Dylan’s getting his act together too?

“Having gone through his changes in the Sixties and Seventies, just like everybody else,” Ginsberg says, “Bob now has his powers together. On the show, he has all the different kinds of art he has practiced – protest, improvisation, surrealist invention, electric rock & roll, solitary acoustic guitars strumming, duet work with Joan and with other people. All these different practices have now ripened and are usable in one single show, just as there is also room for Mick Ronson and his very English kind of space-music rock, Joan and her sort of refined balladry and Roger McGuinn with his West Coast-style rock. All of these different styles turn out to be usable *now*.”



“Do you know what Dylan is talking about doing?” a principal of the tour says to me. “Don’t use my name, but he might start a *newspaper!* That blows my mind. It’ll be like a community newspaper, but for a community all over the country.”

I wonder who is going to be the music critic and, in particular, who is going to write about Dylan’s records. Blind Boy Grunt?



“I am not able to tell you any details,” says Allen Ginsberg, “but this tour may not end as all other tours have. There is some desire among us to have a kind of permanent community and Dylan is stepping very, very slowly to find out if that can work. Recordings would be one way and there may be other ways. One must proceed slowly and soberly – unlike the Beatles when they tried to expand their sense of community. Remember John Lennon trying to put together that whole Apple enterprise as a sort of umbrella organization for all kinds of collective work? But he didn’t have the right personnel and so it wasn’t done soberly and practically enough. This would be. Keep watching. The thing is to keep the Rolling Thunder spirit alive.”

Joan Baez’s denunciation of class segregation aboard the Rolling Thunder Revue has appeared in the troupe’s internal newspaper. Her sketch of some nameless star, lying on the ground with blood pouring out of his head, was not printed and has disappeared. But the accusatory text reads:

“We strongly suggest that the security people, the bus drivers and the crew be treated more like human beings and less like bastard children because without them one of the principals might be left dead in the wake of the Rolling Thunder Revue.

“[Signed], Joan Baez and a large supporting cast.”

Did it work? I ask.

“Well,” says the ceaseless strategist of nonviolent direct action, “things kind of came together a bit after that. A lot of people, each in his or her own way, began committing small acts of civil disobedience – like taking the bus driver to their table. So the tone has changed and the segregation has lessened.” Some people, I am buoyed to see, are still overcoming.



The tour is old enough for retrospection.

“When you got that call from Bob,” an old acquaintance visiting Joan backstage says, “I suppose you got on the plane without even knowing what you were going to get paid.”



Joan looks at the questioner as if the latter has just asked if the tooth fairy has gotten over its cold. “When I got that call,” Joan says, “I had already planned my fall tour. So I told the people dealing with the money that although it seemed like fun, they’d have to make it worth my while to change my plans. Well, after my lawyers got involved and we worked out a contract, a very detailed contract, they made it worth my while. Sure, I’m glad I came. This tour has integrity. And that’s because of Bob.”

“Tell me,” the acquaintance asks, “what are his children like?”

Joan hoots. “I’ve *never* seen any of them. They’re like mythology. It does gather around him, mythology. And he certainly helps it gather. Mythology and confusion. Like some of the songs. *I* know who ‘Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands’ is, no matter who *he* says it is.”

“But at least we all know who ‘Sara’ is,” the visitor observes.

“Dylan says,” Ginsberg has overheard, “that song is about Sarah in the Bible.” And Ginsberg laughs.

Mythology has become palpable. Sara Lowndes Dylan has joined the Rolling Thunder Revue, and with her are several Dylan children and a nanny. Allen Ginsberg is impressed. “Sara is very intelligent, very funny and I would say queenly. She’s sort of aristocratic looking, like an old-time New York young Jewish lady who’s been around a lot in the theater, which she has been. Sara and Joan,” Ginsberg chuckles, “have had time to compare notes on Dylan.”

“No, I had *never* known her before,” Joan says of Sara, “and yes, we have been comparing notes, and that is all I’m going to tell you about that. But I will say that for me, Sara is the most interesting female on this tour. Why? Because she’s not a bore. That’s the best thing I can say about anybody.”

Sara Lowndes Dylan has become part of the Rolling Thunder Revue Acting Company, adding her skills and fantasies to what Allen Ginsberg estimates to be more than 100 hours of film already in the can for the giant kaleidoscope being shot by Lombard Street Films, which is being financed – I am told for nonattribution by those close to Zeus – by Dylan himself. At least five or so complete concerts have been preserved and some special numbers, such as “Isis,” have been filmed more times than that. And there have been scores of scenes enacted by diversely mixed members of the troupe. Sara Dylan, for instance, has now portrayed a madam in a bordello in which one of the nubile employees is enacted by Joan Baez in a brazen French accent.

Joan, at first rather standoffish about what she had earlier regarded as a huge mess of a home movie, has now become more involved. In another scene, for instance, she and Dylan are in a bar and the bartender is Arlo Guthrie. “My God, she has a lot of energy,” says cinéaste Allen Ginsberg. “And what a marvelous mime.”

Also intermittently involved are members of the band, virtuosic David Mansfield among them. As an educational insert in the bordello sequence, Allen Ginsberg is seen in his business suit, taking Mansfield (playing a chaste 14-year-old) to lose his cherry, as Ginsberg puts it in the old-time vernacular. This being, in part, a musical, Mansfield of course has his violin along.

Like many of the scenes in this gargantuan movie – which will purportedly be cut and edited in the spring by Dylan and Howard Alk, who worked with Dylan on *Eat the Document* – the bordello section started as quite something else. Ginsberg had suggested a scene involving a number of women in the troupe, in part because he is much taken with the notion that the dominant theme in the Rolling Thunder Revue is respect for the “mother goddess, eternal woman, earth woman principle.” He points to the songs in the show, such as “Isis” and “Sara,” and notes as well that Sara Dylan has diligently researched this theme in such works as Robert Graves’s *The White Goddess*.

The women having assembled, there was much discussion as to the roles they would play – perhaps the graces or the goddesses of the nine muses. Somehow, however, as Sara Lowndes Dylan said, “After all that talk about goddesses, we wound up being whores.”

“Nonetheless,” says Allen, “Sara, as the madam, did talk about Flaubert.”



Dylan is consumed by this film. He conceives a good many of the situations, advises on the transmutation of others, does some of the directing, peers into the camera and works, picking up technique, with the film crew.

One day after much shooting, Ginsberg, wondering how Dylan keeps track of the direction of all this footage, asks him. Dylan wishes he hadn’t.

“**I’ve lost the thread,**” Dylan, with some bewilderment, admits to Ginsberg.

A couple of days later, Ginsberg asks Dylan if the thread has been relocated. The singing filmmaker nods affirmatively.

“So what *is* the thread of the film?” the poet asks.

“**Truth and beauty,**” says his ever-precise friend.

Along with the Dylan children and their nanny, Joan Baez's six-year-old son, Gabriel, is now on hand, together with Joan's mother and a nursemaid for Gabriel. What would Kerouac have made of this way of doing the road?

Also suddenly, triumphantly materialized – a climactic reaffirmation of the eternal-woman principle – is Bob Dylan's mother, Beatty Zimmerman.

"A regular chicken soup Jewish mother," Allen Ginsberg says approvingly. "With a lot of spirit."



Toronto. A cornucopian concert with Gordon Lightfoot and Joni Mitchell added to the Astartean cast. And also added in the fertile finale, "This Land Is Your Land" – Bob Dylan's mother.

Seated at the back of the stage, Beatty Zimmerman is pulled up and onto stage center and begins to dance and wave to the audience, none of whom, she is sure, knows who she is.

It is getting near the start of the second chorus and Joan Baez, chronically gracious, pulls Mrs. Zimmerman toward the lead mike, the principals' mike. "All of a sudden," Joan says, "Dylan kicks me in the ass. Gently. It was his way of saying, 'I think I'd rather sing this chorus than have my mother do it.' So I had to gracefully Charleston Mrs. Zimmerman back a few steps and then leap to the mike and sing with Bob."

And there, back a few steps, is Mrs. Zimmerman, arms flailing, dancing to Woody's song and the music of Woody's children and the music of her own child, of all things. The first time she's ever been onstage with that child.



"Sara, Joan, his children, his mother," Allen Ginsberg meditates, "he's getting all his mysteries unraveled."

Not quite. Not yet. Earlier in the tour, listening to him as he chants what I took – wrongly, it turns out – to be kaddish for "Sara," there is that mysterious, demonic force, in and beyond the words, that will last a long while beyond the tour. That cracking, shaking energy which reminds me of another *klezmer* on the roof, another Tateh in ragtime, Lenny Bruce. But Lenny, who certainly had his act together, never learned how to get his defenses together. Dylan, on the other hand, has developed a vocation for self-protection. If he has a mania, it is for survival. ("I'm still gonna be around when everybody gets their heads straight.") And part of the way of survival is keeping some of his mysteries damn well raveled.



One morning, as the caravan is about to break camp, a rock musician says, "You know what makes him different. He sees the end of things. The rest of us, we're into something, it's as if it's going to last forever. Dylan, he's in just as deep, but he *knows* it's not going to last."



I am mumbling about a stiff singer who phrases, however authoritatively, like a seal and plays nothing guitar on the side. Why, then, do I once again (unlike the '74 tour) find him powerful? "It doesn't matter whether he's musical at all," I am instructed by Margot Hentoff, a writer on these matters. "He has in his voice that sense of the fragility of all things, that sense of mortality which everybody tries to avoid acknowledging but is drawn toward when they hear it. He's got it and nobody else has."

It was my wife (quoted in a *New York Times* epitaph I had written of the '74 tour) who had greatly annoyed Dylan, a friend of his told me. "He's not 'The Kid' anymore," she had said in print, "so what can he be now?"

A year later, having come upon the Rolling Thunder Revue, she has an answer: "a grown-up. Maybe a suspicious, secretive, irritating grown-up. But no longer a kid. He's lost that. And now, as he grows older, he'll get still more powerful because he'll reach the further knowledge that there is no way out of loss, and so he'll have a new truth to talk about."



Late one night, at the Other End, before the trail boss was quite ready to get the wagon train going, Dylan and Bob Neuwirth and the rest of the gang are elevating their discourse.

"Hey, poet, sing me a poem!" one of them yells to Dylan.

"**Okay, poet,**" says the Minstrel Guruji.

Delighted, Allen Ginsberg is saying, "It's like in a Dostoevsky novel, the way they've taken to calling each other 'poet.' It's no more 'Okay, cowboy.' It's 'Okay, poet.' They're using 'poet' as an honorific, practical thing, and that means they've grown old enough to see that poetry is tough, that it's a lasting practice bearing fruit over decades.

"Dylan has become much more conscious of himself as a poet," Ginsberg adds. "I've watched him grow in that direction. Back in 1968, he was talking poetics with me, telling me how he was writing shorter lines, with every line meaning something. He wasn't just making up a line to go with a rhyme anymore; each line had to

advance the story, bring the song forward. And from that time came some of the stuff he did with the Band – like ‘I Shall Be Released,’ and some of his strong laconic ballads like ‘The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest.’ There was to be no wasted language, no wasted breath. All the imagery was to be functional rather than ornamental. And he’s kept growing from there.

“Like he’s been reading Joseph Conrad recently. *Victory* in particular. I found out when we were talking about the narrative quality of some of the newer songs – ‘Hurricane’ and ‘Joey’ and ‘Isis.’ Bob related the way those songs developed to what he’d been learning about narrative and about characterization from Conrad. The way characterization and mood shape narrative. Now he’s asking about H. P. Lovecraft. I wonder what that’s going to lead to?”



It is near the end. In Toronto, Joan Baez is backstage. Onstage, Dylan is beginning his acoustic set. A member of Gordon Lightfoot’s band begins to move some equipment. Baez glares at him and he stops.

“The jerk didn’t know any better,” she says later, “but I didn’t want to miss a note. I didn’t want to miss a word. Even after all these shows, the genius of The Kid was still holding it all together. I’d heard it all, every night, and here I’m sitting again as close to him as I can get. And not only me. You look around and you see every member of the band and the guys in the crew listening too.”

What is it? What is it he has? I ask.

“It’s the power,” Joan says. “It’s the power.”



“*Oh, I’m hurtin’.*” It is the next morning. Bob Neuwirth groans and coughs in a most alarming manner. “This is a rolling writers’ show,” Neuwirth manages to say. “Nobody on this tour who isn’t a writer. *Oh, I’m really hurtin’.* Even the equipment guys, the bus drivers, they’re all jotting things down. It’s a goddamn rolling writers’ convention. *Oh my God, I can’t even cough.* It’s going to be such a drag when this tour is over.”

Joan Baez, mildly sympathetic when she’s not laughing, says to the audibly aching Neuwirth, “Do let me describe what happened to you last night. Everybody has his own way of dealing with anxieties,” she explains to me, “and his way was to get himself black and blue. He got very, very drunk and ornery and for an hour and a half four very large security guards were wrestling him in the hall because they didn’t want him to leave the hotel and go wreck Gordon Lightfoot’s house where we were having a party. Well, he got there anyhow and he did wreck the house just a little. But everybody had a grand time, and now Neuwirth feels fine too, except he can’t walk very well.

“You see, it’s going to be rough for all of us when this is over. And Neuwirth’s way of handling that was to have an early blowout. God, it’s depressing at the end.”



At the beginning, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Elliott Adnopoz (long since transubstantiated into his vision, Ramblin’ Jack Elliott) sees an old friend, the replica of the *Mayflower*, on whose rigging he, an expert sailor, had actually worked years before. Climbing to the top of the mizzenmast, Elliott explodes with a long, joyous, “Ahoy!” and waves to the Minnesota poet in the cowboy hat below as Allen Ginsberg proclaims, “We have, once again, embarked on a voyage to reclaim America.”

At least it is steady work, especially for a minstrel.



## Before 25 April 1977, Unknown Interviewer (Time magazine)

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Source: *Time*, US magazine, 25 April 1977, pages [47]-48.

Possibly a quote from elsewhere, but in any case taken from an interview at an unknown location.

### Hanging Out with the L.A. Rockers

**Schmoozing Distance.** Malibu's colony is an exclusive enclave, but it is also a casual community of equals. Neil Diamond's beach house, Linda Ronstadt's \$325,000 clapboard and the sprawling nine-bedroom house Guitarist Robbie Robertson took over from Carole King are all within schmoozing distance, as are the leased beach mansions of Mick Jagger and Ron Wood.

The exercise of unlimited wealth can be startling when it comes to life-styles. Los Angeles Architect David Tobin became aware of that form of exuberance two years ago when he undertook a \$50,000 remodelling job for Bob Dylan. Says he: "I quickly realised that this guy had so much money that he didn't need to conform to any of the rules binding me." During his two years with Dylan, the \$50,000 remodelling grew into a £2.25 million mansion. "I had to keep a straight face when Dylan said he wanted a living room he could ride a horse through," recalls Tobin. "It would have helped a lot to have been a shrink."

Dylan is almost indifferent to what his neighbours call his Taj Mahal. Says he: "**One hundred years from now I won't be judged for the house.**" He is probably correct. One local geologist believes that the mansion is already slipping into the ocean.

24 January 1978, John Austin

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Source: *The Sun*, Australian newspaper, 27 January 1978, page 21. The text reproduced here is from *Isis*, UK fanzine, Number 197, 2018, page 33.

The interview took place at Rundown Studios, Santa Monica, California.

**'My movie's my Aussie tour'**

**The film is just like my Australian tour – there are a lot of things I will sing about during those two-hour concerts.**

**Some people will find the film incomprehensible. But that doesn't bother me. The film has to be felt. Like the weather, it's there. But I cannot, and will not, be subservient to what people are thinking. This is why I made the film and financed it myself.**

**The money would come into the box office at night (during the Rolling Thunder tour) and I'd take it out to do the film the next day. Renaldo and Clara is my first film and I had to finance it this way because I couldn't secure private financing. For some reason, all the financiers wanted something more definite than an improvisational film with just an outline and based on death and rebirth. This (death and rebirth) is the main subject of the film as well as my new album which will be released later this year.**

**I made the film for a specific bunch of people and myself, that's all. I did not, incidentally, make the film to receive critical acclaim. I don't want to be considered a great film maker and have that monkey on my back along with everything else. I just want people to see it. If the film is still showing somewhere in the world 10 or 12 years from now, I will consider that it has done well.**

Austin asked Bob why he had, "joined the ranks of capitalism to try to make money out of financing his own film?" The response, **"Well, this is America, everything changes."** Austin's article ended by claiming that Bob, **"climbed into his 10-metre long yellow limousine for the ride back to his Malibu mansion."**

## 12 June 1978, James Johnson

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Source: *Evening Standard*, UK newspaper, 12 June 1978, page 1.

This interview took place at Heathrow Airport, London, England.

### **Dylan brings it all back home...**

Bob Dylan arrives at Heathrow today without his traditional air of secrecy and mystique – and blaming the weather for his nine-year absence.

**“It’s great to be back again... I feel like I’m coming home,”** he said at the airport where, to the surprise of record company officials, he joked with other travellers, signed autographs and shook hands with passers-by.

Dylan, who has not visited Britain since the 1969 Isle of Wight Festival, said: **“Sure it’s been a long time since I’ve been here. It’s the weather, nothing else.”**

When Dylan first emerged from his Los Angeles flight with an entourage of 44 people, scuffles broke out between Press photographers and hysterical record company executives while Dylan smiled and nudged a pretty girl.

After he cleared customs he said: **“Hey man, that was good. It’s like a circus here.”**

As he signed autographs he added: **“I’m surprised these people recognise me with all these heavies gathered around me. I reckon it is going to be great if everyone at Earls Court is half as friendly.”**

Dylan and his band are expected to spend the next two days rehearsing before they play the first of six concerts on Thursday.

After touring in Europe he will return for an open-air concert at Blackbushe Airport on July 15.

## 12 June 1978, Unknown Interviewer (Daily Mail)

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Source: *The Daily Mail*, UK newspaper, 13 June 1978.

The interview took place at Heathrow Airport, London, England.

### **Welcome back Robert Allan who..?**

In dark glasses and leather jerkin, Robert Allan Zimmerman arrived in Britain yesterday, nine years after he vowed never to return.

**'I'm surprised anyone recognised me,'** said Zimmerman at Heathrow amid a crush of photographers, record company people and his own entourage of 44.

He said that the English weather had kept him away since his appearance at the Isle of Wight in 1969. But a matter or not less than £600,000 apparently managed to sway him.

### **Protest**

That is what he is reported to be receiving for six concerts at Earls Court starting on Thursday. Tickets are said to be changing hands on the black market at up to £150 a seat.

He will also play his songs of trouble and protest for 100,000 people at Blackbush airport in Surrey on July 15.

He will appear, of course, under his adopted name,

Bob Dylan.

## 12 June 1978, Unknown Interviewer (Unknown Newspaper)

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Source: Unknown UK Newspaper, published 13 June 1978. The text reproduced here is from *The Dust Of Rumour* edited by Dave Percival, 1985, X-ASITY, page 115.

The interview took place at Heathrow Airport, London, England.

### **Dylan Returns - For A Fortune**

The itinerant American poet, who changed his name from Robert Allan Zimmerman to Bob Dylan and became a messiah to a generation, arrived in Britain yesterday nine years after vowing he would never return. The rock seer in dark glasses and black leather is here for a series of concerts where he will perform for 94,000 people over six nights.

Tickets are currently said to be changing hands on the black market for up to £150 a seat, and the enigmatic Mr. D is reportedly receiving not less than £600,000 for his labours in the UK. Little wonder there was a broad smile for everyone when his jet from Los Angeles arrived at Heathrow. Dylan joked that it was the English weather that had kept him away since 1969.

After clearing customs the singer cooed: **“Hey man, it’s like a circus here. I’m surprised anyone recognised me with all these heavies around.”**

## 12 June 1978, Unknown Interviewer (The Guardian)

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Source: *The Guardian*, UK newspaper, 13 June 1978, page 3.. The text reproduced here is from *The Dust Of Rumour* edited by Dave Percival, 1985, X-ASITY, pages 115-116.

The interview took place at Heathrow Airport, London, England.

### Executive Antics Amuse Dylan

Folk singer Bob Dylan arrived in Britain yesterday, and immediately upset his record company by poking fun at his reception committee. He emerged smiling from a scrum of photographers and hysterical record company executives saying: **“Hey, it’s like a circus here.”** His chatty casual approach to fans seemed to be not quite what they had planned.

Dylan, who arrived from Los Angeles with a 44-strong entourage, has not been in Britain for nine years. He said: **“It’s great to be back. I feel like I’m coming home.”**

Asked if another British tour was planned, he said: **“I don’t know, I might do. So far all I’ve done is thoroughly enjoy myself. I just sort of stand around and watch everyone else get upset.”** With that he sauntered outside to where a coach was waiting to whisk him and his party off to a secret destination in London.

## 12 June 1978, Unknown Interviewer (The Journal)

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Source: *The Journal*, UK newspaper, 13 June 1978, page 2.

The interview took place at Heathrow Airport, London, England.

### **Scuffles – but Dylan keeps his cool...**

Bob Dylan arrived in London yesterday laughing and joking after a nine year absence – and blamed the English weather as the reason he hasn't been here since the Isle of Wight festival.

He shrugged aside a scuffle between Press photographers and record company executives at Heathrow Airport and said: **“Sure, it's been a long time since I've been here. It's the weather, nothing else. But it's great to be back.”**

While the photographers and record men jostled each other in the airport lobby, the folksinger, in Britain for a series of concerts, smiled on and nudged a pretty girl.

Dylan, who flew from Los Angeles with a 44-strong entourage, is to play six concerts at Earls Court, London, before leaving for Europe to appear at open air festivals in Rotterdam and Nuremburg.

He returns to London for an open air show at Blackbushe Airport on July 15.



## 12 June 1978, Mandy Bruce

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Source: *Evening News*, UK newspaper, 15 June 1978.

This interview took place in London, England.

### **Do I need the money? We all do, says Dylan**

Bob Dylan today denied that he is playing his London concerts because he needs the money.

The 37-year-old American folk singer, who is being paid a reported £350,000, said: **“There’s lots of other reasons for playing concerts, apart from money.”**

When asked if he needed the money Dylan appeared flustered.

### Savaged

**“If I talk about this I’m going to get myself into trouble,”** he said as his bodyguard interrupted: “Everyone needs money.”

Dylan said: **“You tell me what other reasons there are.”**

Maybe because he enjoyed playing his music?

**“Yeah,”** he said, **“that seems logical, don’t you think?”**

Dylan, wearing dark glasses, shirt, trousers and a leather jerkin, has rarely been seen on stage in recent years. He began a world tour earlier this year.

He is now divorced from his wife of 12 years, Sara, the mother of his four children. The divorce settlement was said to be five million pounds.

The star who wrote songs like *The Times They Are A-Changing* and *Like A Rolling Stone*, explained why he has not appeared before his British fans since 1969.

**“I’ve been out of it for some time. My film *Renaldo And Clara* took me a long time to make.”**

The film, starring his ex-wife Sara and former girlfriend Joan Baez, was savaged by American critics.

Dylan, who is staying with his 44-man entourage in one of London’s less luxurious hotels was escorted to his Roll-Royce.

He was taken to a private party given by his record company, CBS, at Covent Garden’s latest nightclub, *The Club Next Door* at 17 Russell Street.

Tonight Dylan plays the first of his six sell-out concerts at Earl’s Court. Tickets were being sold on the black market for up to £150.

## 11 July 1978, Unknown Interviewer (TV1, Sweden)

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Source: *Aktuellt* on: TV1, Swedish television, 11 July 1978.

This interview took place at Landvetter Airport, Göteborg, Sweden. Dylan is at his most taciturn (and that's saying something). No Dylan content really, but it's worth watching the video – quite funny.

A major part of your audience belong to your own generation, I think. I don't think it would be entirely wrong to assume that they are driven to your concerts by a certain element of nostalgia. But when you sing your old songs, you sing them in new versions. Is that just an effort on your part to avoid being called by the nostalgia?

**“Uhuh.”**

It is? Do you want to avoid over interpretation by singing your old songs in new versions?

**“Yes.”**

Yes, that's all you've got to say about that?

## 27 March 1983, Mart Perry and Alan Ramey

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Source: Comments on John Hammond in a video feature film *John Hammond: From Bessie Smith to Bruce Springsteen*, American Masters film, 20 August 1990.

The interview took place in Columbia (Studio) Offices, New York City, New York, with John Hammond present.

### **John Hammond: From Bessie Smith to Bruce Springsteen**

**The fact that John had offered me the contract and an opportunity to record, that was just, uh, you know, a phenomenal thing back then.**

## 1985, Unknown Interviewer (MTV Spotlight)

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Source: A video feature on MTV, American pay television channel, of unknown broadcast date.

The location of this interview is unknown. Dylan is speaking about Dave Stewart.

### **MTV Spotlight Dave Stewart**

**I liked 'Sweet Dreams' and the last video he did. But you know, it's important if you're gonna work with somebody... It's important to work with somebody who's got an authority... some type of authority on the scene. And I just figured that he had that.**

## 8 September 1987, Kurt Loder

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Source: *Unknown*, presumably Israeli newspaper. The text reproduced here is from *Isis Revisited*, UK fanzine, Nos 16/17, 1987, page 34.

The interview took place in Jerusalem, Israel.

### Dylan stirs controversy in Israel

It was three in the morning, and Bob Dylan was sitting on the great stone balcony of his hotel suite, sipping a screwdriver and picking out ragtime riffs on a guitar. Spread out before him was the panorama of Jerusalem, with the nearby Jaffa Gate and the ancient walls of the Old City glowing under a luminous full moon. Dylan put down his guitar to savor the silence.

**“This is hip,”** he said. **“I don’t know what else is going on in the world right now. They may be fighting up the coast; I heard they are. But right here, this is pretty hip. This is heavy. Holy, almost Yeah - the Holy City.”**

Dylan was in high spirits. A few hours earlier he had completed the second concert of his first-ever Israeli tour - a ninety-minute set at the Sulatan’s Pool, inside the Old City walls, backed by opening act Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers - and had brought cheers from the 9000-strong crowd at the sold-out show. Even the press had been moderately pleased.

So Dylan was happy - but not for long: the singer’s Israeli sojourn, which had opened to universal press pans in Tel Aviv two nights earlier, would collapse in a welter of diplomatic recriminations, as he flew out of the country the following day to begin a fifteen-city European tour.

Dylan’s initial problems in Israel could probably be attributed, at least partially, to jet lag. He flew from Los Angeles to Egypt to hook up with Petty and his band and then made the trip to Tel Aviv by bus. So by the night of his opening show, in that balmy Mediterranean city, on September 5th, he was still feeling fairly travel ravaged.

The set that night was rather perfunctory - the rhythms flat and the song selection puzzling to many fans who’d come to hear nothing but hits. Dylan and the band kicked off with “Maggie’s Farm” and later connected with such classics as “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door” and “Blowin’ in the Wind.” But a number of the set’s seventeen songs were more obscure, and some observers were puzzled by the concluding tune, the folk staple “Go Down Moses.” None of this sat too well with Israeli critics. Hanoch Guthmann, writing in the *Jerusalem Post*, said that many fans had been “disappointed” and that “a large number of spectators were seen leaving during his set.”

The Jerusalem show two nights later seemed to more than make up for that opening catastrophe, but then politics entered the picture. Back in the States, newspapers were filled with reports from Israel that Dylan had offended his hosts by showing up in the country one day later than he’d been expected. He was accused of, among other offenses, canceling an audience with the Israeli foreign minister, Shimon Peres, as well as an official visit to the Wailing Wall. He was charged with failing to appear at a Sabbath dinner in his honor and on a national TV talk show for which he’d been scheduled. Since Dylan has never been much of a hobnobber, these accusations sounded faintly dubious - and as it turned out, they were. From Zurich, a Dylan press rep explained that the singer had “never agreed to any of these appearances.”

**“I don’t do these kind of things anyway - meeting dignitaries and stuff,”** said Bob himself. **“Television’s not my thing, so I wouldn’t do that, either. I can’t see why everybody gets so mad over something that never would have happened.”**

## October 1990, Edna Gundersen

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Source: *USA Today*, US newspaper, 7 November 1990. The text reproduced here is from *Isis*, UK fanzine, Number 34, December 1990, page 39.

The venue for Dylan's participation is unknown.

### On 'Vol. 3,' the Traveling Wilburys enjoy the ride

The Traveling Wilburys, four graying rock heroes who founded a slap-happy garage band, defy all logic. Their second album bears the headscratching title Vol. 3. Rather than splash their considerably familiar names across billboards and Billboard, they lay low under mysterious aliases.

Two years ago, when Vol. 1 was embraced by fans and critics, they called themselves Lucky, Otis, Charlie T. Jr., Nelson and Lefty. Now George Harrison is Spike, Bob Dylan is Boo, Tom Petty is Muddy and Jeff Lynne is Clayton. The late Roy Orbison, to whom Vol. 3 is dedicated, was Lefty.

"People already think they've got us in a bag, so we decided to change our names," Harrison explains. Then he changes his story, suggesting that the first batch of Wilburys "are probably trying to do Vol. 2, but we may have to go help them. There's nine of us now."

This brotherhood is serious about its lunacy. Like last time, the Wilbies have concocted a loose, spontaneous rock 'n' roll record in record time. They wrote, recorded and mixed 15 songs (11 are on the LP) in six weeks. Speedy by industry standards, but a glacial pace compared to that of their Grammy-winning debut, wrapped up in 10 days.

**"Last time, it was a pretty rushed affair,"** Dylan says. **"A lot of stuff was just scraped up from jam tapes. This time, there was a whole lot left over. The songs are more developed. If people liked the first one, they'll love this one."**

Dylan, the most sceptical member originally, was the impetus behind Vol. 3. Harrison recounts this phone exchange:

Dylan: "When are we doing another Wilburys record?"

Harrison: "Why? Do you want to?"

Dylan: "Yeah, don't you?"

Harrison: "Yeah, I do."

Says Harrison, "I think everyone, particularly Bob, was more willing to do it this time. Never having been in a band before, Bob wasn't quite sure what the result would be on the first one. This time, we knew what to expect Bob was keen to do this one."

Because Dylan's demanding tour schedule limited his participation the first time, he was heavily utilized during last spring's sessions at Harrison's studio. Consequently, he handles most lead vocals.

"We said we'll get him to put a vocal on everything and decide later where the rest of us should fit in," Harrison says. "But once Bob's vocal is there, it's hard to wipe off, he's got such an exceptional voice."

Another volume may gel in a year or two. Lynne says the group "could go on for a long time. It's a lovely thing, because it's almost like a sideline. All of us on our own would be much more picky and careful about making records."

As Wilburys, they feel none of the spotlight pressure they face in solo outings. "With four people who are all so able, you don't get as hung up on every little decision," Harrison says. "We share the responsibility and hide behind each other." How do four rhythm guitarists make music together?

"We sit around in a circle and just start strumming," Lynne says, laughing. "It is ridiculous. Somebody hits one good chord change and we're singing a little tune over it. It's that simple and quick. One day we did five tunes. Word-wise, Bob is a great person to have in the group because he comes up with lyrics in amazing speed."

Typically a lone writer, Dylan was comfortable collaborating with the Wilburys. **"There's very few people you can write with, so when you find those people, you have to have a gracious attitude."**

Every Wilbury contributed to each song on Vol. 3, a more integrated whole than the debut's revolving solo turns. "Now you can hear what Wilbury music is," Harrison says. "We definitely have a sound."

Some tracks were taped live with drummer Jim Keltner. "It made the album a bit more rocking," Harrison says. "It created such a good feeling, making a record the way it was done in the late '50s."

Orbison's death in 1988 robbed the Wilburys of its finest Voice, but the group never considered replacing him. "You can't replace Roy," Harrison says.

**"There's no telling what kind of record we could have made with Roy,"** Dylan says. **"Everyone missed him, but it wasn't like anyone sat around and talked about it."**

Says Lynne, "Roy's voice was the best ever. We were all a little intimidated. He'd sing a part and we'd all go, 'Oooh, I hope I don't have to come in after him.'"

Despite their warm camaraderie, the Wilburys probably won't tour. Road warriors Petty and Dylan are game, but Lynne is a studio animal, and Harrison is a homebody. "Touring takes a hell of a lot of energy, and you have to put the rest of your life on hold," Harrison says. "I don't see it at the moment, but I'm not against doing a few live shows."

Dylan, though, hints that the group indeed might take the stage. **"The Wilburys would be pretty good live,"** he says.



## 1992, Unknown Interviewer (Times-Sentinel)

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Source: *The Times-Sentinel*, US newspaper, 1992. The text reproduced here is from *Bob Dylan in Concert*, 2005 tour programme, pages 12-13, 15-16.

The location of this interview is unknown.

Q: What about the movie *Hearts of Fire*?

A: **What about it?**

Q: How did you get involved in that? Did you ever see it?

A **No. I don't think it was ever released here.**

Q: How did you come to be in it? It wasn't a very good film.

A: **No, I don't think so. I don't see how it could have been. The way the script came to me was through Joan Hyler from the William Morris Agency. She said to look at the role of Billy Parker, that the director had me in mind to play that part.**

Q: The director?

A: **Yeah – the director Richard Marquand.**

Q: So you read the script?

A: **Yeah.**

Q: So what did you think after you read it?

A: **I thought it was a terrible script, a pointless story. There was nothing about it that rang true at all.**

Q: So why did you do it, then?

A: **I did it for the money. I mean, why else would I do it? They probably paid me as much as they paid DeNiro or Pacino to play a role. I mean, how could I not?**

Q: Did you take any acting lessons before they started shooting?

A: **No. I probably should have, but it wouldn't have done any good. The story made no sense.**

Q: Had you ever heard of Fiona before the movie?

A: **No but she and Marquand came to see me to talk me into doing the role.**

Q: And you said yes?

A: **Yeah, I said I was interested.**

Q: What did you think of Fiona?

A: **Well nothing, really. She was just a clear-eyed young girl. I assumed she must be a helluva singer because they were making this big movie around her. I assumed she could act, too. You know, like some undiscovered star or something. Just because I hadn't heard of her didn't mean anything.**

Q: How did Marquand define your role?

A: **Well, it was all in the script. There wasn't much to define. You took it at face value. It talked about a washed up rock and roller, or a retired one, or someone who was jaded by the business and stuff like that. There wasn't any back story to the guy or anything.**

Q: Did you feel excitement about doing it?

A: **Excitement, not really. I couldn't identify with any of the characters in the movie at all. Definitely not the guy they wanted me to play. Marquand said that he could easily guide me through the role but that didn't mean much one way or another. I did meet them though and had gone through the motions of listening but it just seemed so unreal. I wasn't anticipating anything but then Joan got a hold of me later and said that they desperately wanted me to play the part and that the money was ridiculous.**

Q: Were there rehearsals?

A **Oh yeah, in London where it was filmed there were some. The only guy that had any acting experience was Rupert (Everett). He was the only real actor on the set.**

Q: Did he help you at all?

A: **Are you kidding? We stayed drunk most of the time.**

Q: Really? It was that bad?

A: **Yeah, well it was a terrible script and we had no control over it. They were going to shoot it word for word.**

Q: Did you try to change it at all – like any of the dialogue?

A: **Oh yeah, we had tried that earlier, months before filming began. Me and Elliot Roberts, who was representing me at the time, had gotten Marquand and Joe Eszterhas, the screenwriter, to come and see us out on the road. I was playing a tour with Tom Petty at the time. We wanted to change some of my lines and Elliot and I had tried on our own... but we realized if we changed some of my lines the lines of the other characters would have to be changed. All we were trying to do was make the movie more understandable. It was fun trying to do it, but it was too complicated for either of us to actually pull off. We were just making a comedy out of it. We were hoping that Eszterhas could see our point and maybe rip the script apart... add a murder scene, some sex scenes or even a car chase. Anything to make the script come alive.**

Q: What was the response?

A: **Oh, I don't know. I can't really remember. But I think it was a couple of blank looks. Marquand was a Welshman, very proper. When he spoke, he sounded like Richard Burton. He was an elegant guy. Eszterhas couldn't have been more different. They called him the Mad Hungarian. He had written "Basic Instinct," "Flashdance" and some other stuff, hit movies. Eszterhas didn't look like anything you'd think a screenwriter would look like. He looked like a Hell's Angel. Like he just roared through the hallway of the hotel on a Harley. It was hard to imagine these guys even being in the same room together. I don't know what they thought of our little suggestions. But they didn't change anything.**

Q: What would you have wanted them to change? Do you remember?

A: **Oh, not really. Elliot and I had kicked it around a little bit and thought that maybe some character adjustments might be in order. Like the character that Rupert played.**

Q: James Colt?

A: **Yeah, James Colt. That was his name? God, you know this movie better than me. Yeah, Elliot and I thought that this character was based on a David Bowie type – a seventies Bowie type, so we thought why not make him overtly gay? You know, like put his cards on the table. It would have made his character mush deeper. And other would have related to him in a different way.**

Q: What about the character Fiona played?

A: **Yeah, who did she play?**

Q: Molly?

A: **Yeah, that's right, Molly. We dreamed up a few things for that character, too. We thought maybe if we gave her a back story like she'd been sexually molested as a child by a family member, it would have added a little bit more to her character, made her innocence not seem so innocent when she played scenes with either Rupert or me.**

Q: You mean Billy Parker.

A: **Yeah. Billy Parker. We dealt with him in a more primitive way. Like maybe his back story could have been something like when he was a big star, whenever that was, he married his 13 year old cousin and had fallen from grace, out of favor with both the record industry and the record buying public.**

Q: You're joking, right?

A: **No, I'm not joking. That would have given him a genuine reason to be so pissed off and jaded or whatever they expected him to be.**

Q: Your ideas fell flat...

A: **Yeah I don't think they heard. They just looked right through us. Basically I don't think they had any notion to change anything. They liked their movie as it was. They just came out to see us out of courtesy, really.**

Q: But you went ahead and did it anyway.

A: **Yeah. I mean, well, why not? It was the only way I was going to get to hear Fiona sing, you know what I'm saying?**

Q: I see. Do you think the studio had high hopes for this movie?

A: **No, no. It was some kind of death wish for somebody. The director himself, he died right around the opening night premier of the film in London. That always seemed strange to me.**

## 23 June 1993, Gino Castaldo and Paolo Zaccagnini

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Source: *La Repubblica*, Italian newspaper, 24 June 1993 (Castaldo) and *Il Messaggero*, Italian newspaper, June 1993 (Zaccagnini). The text reproduced here is from *The Telegraph*, UK fanzine, Number 46, Summer 1993, pages 142-144.

The interviews were conducted by telephone with Dylan in Athens, Greece. The article published in *La Repubblica* is reproduced in *Every Mind Polluting Word*. Both articles were originally published in Italian.

### Parliamo Italiano

Dylan gave interviews to three Italian journalists back in June. Here's a summary of the published questions and answers, taken primarily from the pieces by Paolo Zaccagnini in *Il Messaggero* and by Gino Castaldo in *La Repubblica*. Hopefully, fuller versions of the conversations will emerge in due course; and bear in mind that these are translations of translations – hence the slightly weird tone:

Q Why did you choose to do a record like *Good As I Been To You*, all acoustic and all cover versions?

A **It was just by accident. I taped those songs very quickly because they didn't need much arranging. All those songs are important for me – they've been following me around for years. I didn't treat them like covers, just like songs.**

Q What's your favourite of your own records?

A **My next one.**

Q Is it true that they've asked you to do an *Unplugged*?

A **Yes, we talked about that, but right now I don't know when I'll get the time to do it. It's still possible, and it could happen in the future sometime.**

Q For the first time recently you appeared in support of a politician, Bill Clinton.

A **Well, when that happened he'd already been elected. I didn't take part in the campaign. Maybe it was the first time, may be not, but it was the first time anybody invited me to the White House.**

Q Considering your dealings with religion, do you think that religion is used as a weapon sometimes?

A **There's a lot of politics in religion. It's not possible to separate the two. Politics is everywhere.**

Q You know about what's happening in Italy at the moment?

A **Yes, I know. Politics is overflowing.**

Q Do you think that music can help here?

A **It depends what music. But for sure some music can transcend all barriers.**

Q As a musician, what does this *Never-Ending Tour* that you're doing now mean to you?

A **That's a mistake. I did the *Never-Ending Tour* in 1980 and 1981. Now I'm just touring. I don't think there's anything unusual in playing a lot of shows.**

Q What music do you listen to?

A **At the moment, most of the music I listen to is classical music. Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms. I'm thinking of doing something classical too.**

Q What do you mean? Arrangements of old songs with an orchestra?

A **No. I'm working on brand new music for a Philharmonic Orchestra. I don't know what will happen with that.**

Q Who's been the biggest influence on your writing?

A **Well, some folk singers influenced me, but I must say that I decided to start singing the first time I heard Elvis Presley. Woody Guthrie influenced me a lot in the folk tradition, but Elvis made it clear for me how important rock music was as a universal message. When I first picked up a guitar, I did it because of Elvis.**

Q What about literature - any influences there?

A **The *Prince* by Nicolo Machiavelli is my all-time favourite book, even if it has nothing in common with the stuff I used to write as a songwriter.**

Q Why Machiavelli?

A **Because he's very clear, very lucid, very prophetic. Other influences I could name: Edgar Allen Poe's The Raven, and the Beat poets - Gregory Corso - Gasoline, Lawrence Ferlinghetti - Coney Island Of My Mind. But I don't think they influenced me consciously.**

Q Are you nostalgic?

A **Who isn't nostalgic? I would be stupid if I wasn't nostalgic. But I have no regrets.**

Q Are you aware of the impact that your music and lyrics has had on American society?

A **Yes, there has been an impact, but I think all that stuff is exaggerated.**

Q Do you still have ambitions to fulfil?

A **I don't think so. In life, I've done what I wanted to do, which is make music.**

## 4 February 1994, Akihiko Yamamoto

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Source: *Crossbeat*, Japanese magazine, Volume 7, Number 1, April 1994, pages 44, 47, 49 (in Japanese). The text reproduced here is from *Isis*, UK fanzine, Number 55, June-July 1994, pages 24-27.

The interview took place in Hotel Okura, Tokyo. Originally published in Japanese, the text was translated by John and Midori Potter.

### BOB DYLAN INTERVIEW

Q: At your 30th anniversary concert there were many famous musicians who came to pay tribute to your work. This is quite unusual. What did you think about that concert?

**A: My idea is... well, that show was held because of the songs. It was nothing to do with what I did. I wrote all of the songs but the power of the songs themselves was the main thing. The songs were the heroes.**

Q: I suppose that was a very impressive experience for you?

**A: I suppose so. I felt like I became a bit old because it was the 30th anniversary. I wish it was done for the 20th anniversary (laughs).**

Q: How long will you continue the never-ending tour. I read some interview in which you said it's like asking a coal miner why he digs coal?

**A: Going on tour is an artist's job. I go anywhere.**

Q: The last two albums you were back to basics. Singing with acoustic guitar. What was the reason for it?

**A: There were no particular reason. The songs I choose, they're all very important for me. They are my basis of music. Nowadays modern songs are made with some reason but there was a time when it wasn't like that. A time when you didn't have to think about whether the songs had a meaning or not. I went back to basics and sang songs from that time because I wanted to escape from a lot of things surrounding music on the surface. I wanted to grab reality which music itself has before music became a massive business. And also, at the same time, I wanted to show what songs should be like. I don't need to write music. Some songs which have something to say already exist. This is the same as people who keep playing Shakespeare.**

Q: People's voices change as they get older. In your case, do you change the music and lyrics because your voice is different?

**A. Leave it to your voice.**

Q: Do you have any worries about singing your songs – which have a very important meaning – in front of Japanese audiences?

**A: My songs are poetic. Also, at the same time, very musical. They have different levels. It doesn't matter if the audience can't understand English, we can get together musically. But a lot of people who call themselves Bob Dylan experts they have an opinion that only my lyric has an important meaning. My lyric couldn't exist without a musical background.**

Q: You wrote a lot of songs and you still sing them at concerts. What meaning do those protest songs have in modern society?

**A: Everything keeps changing like the seasons going around. Can you accept these changes? Only the people know this. Because these changes always happen. It doesn't matter if the people want them or not. There is nothing which is always the same in this world.**

Q: Your way of singing with words and rhythm can be said to be origins of rap, perhaps. What do you think about the popularity of rap music recently?

**A: When you listen to the 1920s. 30s. 40s music, this is the origin of rap which people never heard. The origin of rap existed a long time before me. I like rap music but I don't listen to it much.**

Q: You joined important charity concerts like Live Aid, Farm Aid. I wonder if you think that joining this sort of concert is a musician's duty?

**A: I can make people more aware about certain problems, but that's it. If you want to support certain groups people have to see those problems are their problems. If not, a charity concert becomes just another concert.**

Q: What was your impression of Japan?

**A: It is difficult to form an image of one place when you are working. Tokyo is a mysterious place, like Buenos Aires. I was very impressed about Kyoto. In my second visit to Japan I went to see Kabuki and Takarazuka. They were very impressive. I bought records and videos too.**

Q: When you came to Japan for the first time in 1978, I heard that you said “Tokyo is the sort of town where you can write songs”.

**A: Too many cars now. The only interesting place in Japan now is countryside.**

Q: In the 1960s you said don't trust the over 30s. I was very impressed because you were the leader of the youth. Now you are 53, what do you think about what you said?

**A: I want to say now don't trust the over 30s. (laughs)**

Q: OK. You are supported by a lot of young musicians and listeners, aren't you?

**A: I'm still influenced by the first generation of Rock 'n' Roll, I was the second generation. So, I understand that younger generation people listen to music as I listened to an older generation of music.**

Q: You have been singing for a long time where does the energy come from?

**A: Everybody gets energy from their forerunners. We are at the end of the line. I don't know what it's all about but our forerunners give us energy.**

Q: I saw an interview in which you said I cannot forget a about a concert just before Buddy Holly died. Are you impressed by your own concerts as much as you were by Buddy Holly at that time?

**A: I'm always impressed. Otherwise I couldn't carry on doing concerts. I'm glad if the audience get the same feeling. But that feeling can only come in a concert. You don't need to take it home. Of course, I don't want to do a bad show but strange I always remember bad shows. At every concert there is a moment when I think I could have done better.**

Q: In your new, album. 'World Gone Wrong' there are no sleeve lyrics. I wonder if you went back to folk roots so you don't need to write anything down?

**A: If you put lyrics on the sleeve of an album you lose the pleasure of listening. If you are reading the words at the same time as you are listening you cut off the pressure. Also. the words I chose for this album. are already released on these songs by other people in America, so you can get them. To put the words on a record... no-one puts the words, like Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly. Those people didn't put the words on their records, did they? What are words? Words are equally as important as music. People don't print the music on a sleeve so why do people say it's necessary to print the words.**

Q: But there are some Japanese people whose life has changed because of your words?

**A: You don't need to listen to every single word. Music is a big painting. It's not important for someone to translate my words to try and make them understand.**

Q: In your interview in Rolling Stone magazine you said “my songs are all protest songs”. What do you really think about it?

**A: My aim was not to protest. There were protest songs in the Woodstock generation. To me protest is not just to protest. People who listen to my music, they always talk about protest? So, my reputation as a protest singer is exaggerated. But I don't care what anybody says.**

Q: This year is the 25th anniversary of Woodstock. I think you are a forerunner of the Woodstock generation. What do you think about the 1960s which was about love and peace?

**A: The Woodstock generation is dead. All ideology is dead. The so-called 1960s was over by 1965. The people who appeared after that, they thought about how to make money, how to buy clothes and drugs, only those things. In the 1960s I was already working. I was no longer a teenager so I was not that naive.**

Q: But I think you still have the spirit of Rock 'n' Roll?

**A: Yes, that's right. The basis of rock will never die. The roots of rock are very deep. When someone plays rock they always come back to the roots. The rock in the 1970s and 80s was like flowers falling off a tree. The roots of rock is still going deep underneath the earth.**

Q: What is the reason why you are still carrying on and at the same time you are giving an enormous influence to the music scene?

**A: Because I have a heart. If music doesn't have a heart nobody would want to see me play. I was moved towards music at an important time in my life. Music told me a lot. I am still very impressed by music. Time have changed. people have changed, life has changed, but music never changes.**



Q: There is a famous quote from you that songs are floating around you, "I just catch them". Do you still write songs like that?

**A: All my great songs are like that. The process of writing music is inspiration, receiving. An important thing is the environment and songs quietly come to me. If anything disturbs that situation the songs don't come to me they go somewhere else. Then the songs die. The most important thing is you don't try hard to write songs, you should have an open heart.**

Q: When Kennedy became President, you went to New York. Now a young man who admired Kennedy has become President. The times have changed. What do you think about President Clinton?

**A: Politics is a nightmare. None of the American citizens are interested in politics.**

Q: That doesn't sound like you, who gave a lot of impetus to a lot of movements in the 1960s?

**A: I have absolutely nothing to say to people who are influenced politically because of my songs.**

Q: You are always making different arrangements for your live performances. I think it seems as if you make a song and then break it up. What do you think about that?

**A: That is the wrong idea. The tune of the song, the rhythm, never changes. If anything ever changes it's only the mood. I think in the early 1970s and in the 1980s the bands elaborated the songs. That's why the songs seemed different. In 1978, the Japan tour, I came with a band which had twelve people. So, I changed the arrangements for that. So, some people maybe thought it sounded different I don't listen to my own records because I don't want to be influenced by myself. Musicians who listen to their own records, that is parody of themselves. I don't want to be like them. When I'm making a record, I'm listening to my music but when the album is released I never listen. My concerts in the last ten years – I only need four band members.**

## 20 July 1996, Unknown Interviewer (Aftenposten)

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Source: *Aftenposten*, Norwegian newspaper, 21 July 1996. The text reproduced here is from *Isis*, UK fanzine, Number 70, December 1996, page 45.

This interview took place in Molde, Norway. A short interview, even by Dylan's standards.

### **Bob Dylan om Molde; "A snappy little town"**

"Bob Dylan om Molde; "A snappy little town" " ("Bob Dylan on Molde: "A snappy little town" ") Upon his departure from Molde, Dylan is asked what he thought of the place. His reply – as you may have gathered – was all of four words; **"A snappy little town"**.

## Early July 2001, Edna Gundersen (1)

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Source: *USA Today*, US newspaper, 15 July 2001.

The venue of this interview is unknown.

### **Dylan's melodies always are a-changin'**

While the globe marked his 60th birthday with rapturous tributes usually reserved for retirement parties and obituaries, Bob Dylan was busy being reborn. *Love and Theft*, due Sept. 11 on Columbia, renders all those eulogies incomplete and premature. Recorded with his touring band, Texas keyboardist Auggie Myers and assorted extras, Dylan's 43rd album exudes the breezy confidence of a veteran and the adventurous energy of a budding prodigy. It defies expectations posed by both 1997's atmospheric *Time Out of Mind*, a meditation on mortality that netted three Grammys, including best album, and 2000's *Things Have Changed*, the sly *Wonderboys* theme that won an Oscar and Golden Globe.

Things have changed again. *Love and Theft* finds pop's inscrutable iconoclast breaking new ground while simultaneously mining gloried traditions in American song, from Delta blues to Appalachian strains to lovesick croons. The result is contemporary yet rootsy, and an unexpected left turn from the million-selling time. Dylan could be assessing that risk in the lounge-gear'd *Bye and Bye*: "I'm walking on briars; I'm not even acquainted with my old desires."

Dylan tells USA TODAY exclusively that the album is not tangled up in blueprints of earlier landmarks.

**"The songs don't have any genetic history,"** Dylan says. **"Is it like *Time Out of Mind* or *Oh Mercy* or *Blood on the Tracks* or whatever? Probably not. I think of it more as a greatest-hits album, volume one or volume two. Without the hits – not yet, anyway."**

The 12 originals **"are variations on the 12-bar theme and blues-based melodies,"** he adds. **"The music here is an electronic grid, the lyrics being the substructure that holds it all together."**

Dylan roams from the rockabilly-fueled Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum and upbeat Western swing of *Summer Days* to the hymnlike *Sugar Baby*, twangy *Floater* and hard-rocking *Honest with Me*. He tests his upper register on *Moonlight*, evokes Ralph Stanley in the moody *Highwater* (For Charlie Patton) and experiments with shifting tempos in *Cry Awhile*. In *Lonesome Day Blues*, he strains to decipher the wind's whispers. In the earthy *Po' Boy*, a soulful standout, he's feeding swine and washing dishes. All tunes were composed recently except for his rerecorded *Mississippi*, cut from *Time* and later covered by Sheryl Crow.

"*Love and Theft* is an album for the masses, not just the core Bob Dylan fans," says Columbia president Don Ienner. "A lot of people aren't being served by much of the music that they hear today, and this is the kind of record that people are hungry for."

## Early July 2001, Edna Gundersen (2)

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Source: *USA Today*, US newspaper, 16 July 2001, page D1.

The venue of this interview is unknown.

### **'Love' Takes Dylan in different direction**

The veteran is back with new album, new energy.

While the globe marked his 60th birthday with rapturous tributes usually reserved for retirement parties and obituaries, Bob Dylan was busy being reborn. *Love and Theft*, due Sept. 11 on Columbia, renders all those eulogies incomplete and premature. Recorded with his touring band, Texas keyboardist Augie Meyers and assorted extras, Dylan's 43rd album exudes the breezy confidence of a veteran and the adventurous energy of a budding prodigy.

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Dylan is quick to note that the album is not tangled up in blueprints of earlier landmarks.

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**"*Love and Theft* is an album for the masses, not just the core Bob Dylan fans,"** says Columbia president Don Ienner. **"A lot of people aren't being served by much of the music that they hear today, and this is the kind of record that people are hungry for."**

## August to November 2006, Jann Wenner

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Source: *Rolling Stone: The Fortieth Anniversary*, US magazine, Issue 1025/1026, 3-17 May 2007, pages 48, 50, 52, 54.

The interview took place at an unknown location.

### Bob Dylan

You've been on the road pretty steadily for forty years.

**I like the originality of being on the road. It's real life, in real time.**

What is it that is so enjoyable?

**The groupies and the drinking and the parties backstage... [Laughs] Why would anybody? Performers are performers. Why do you still edit your magazine?**

It's something I do well, and one gets pleasure out of something one does well.

**Exactly. It's the one thing in life you find you can do well.**

You said that going out on the road makes you write more.

**Yeah. That would be true, to a certain degree. But if you don't have to write songs, why write them? Especially if you've got so many you could never play – there wouldn't be enough time to play them all, anyway. I've got enough where I don't really feel the urge to write anything additional.**

You just released this amazing new record. The title, *Modern Times*, seems to be a very deliberate statement.

**Well, I don't know. Can you think of a better title?**

Highway 61 Revisited. How did you decide on that title?

**Titles are something that come after you've done whatever it is you've done. I don't set out with a title. It was something that probably just passed through my mind. Why, does it have some impact?**

It seems that you set out to assess America right now. Is there a general theme to the record?

**You would have to ask every individual person who hears it what it would mean. It would probably mean many things on many levels to many different kinds of people.**

To me, it seems that it's about war and corruption.

**Well, all my records are, to a certain degree. That's the nature of them.**

Your records are about power, knowledge, salvation.

**That would be not so easy for me to relate to, what a record is about. It is a statement, it's its own statement, its own entity, rather than being about something else. If I was a painter... I don't paint the chair, I would paint feelings about the chair.**

You're a student of history. If you were to take the current moment and put it in a historical context, where do you think we are?

**That would be hard to do, unless you put yourself ten years into the future. It's not the nature of a song to imply what's going on under any current philosophy any more than... how can I explain it? Like all the music that came out of the First and Second World Wars. Did you ever notice how lighthearted it was? If you listen to the songs from that period, you would think that there's nothing gloomy on the horizon.**

Do you think it's gloomy on the horizon?

**In what sense do you mean?**

Bob, come on.

**No, you come on. In what sense do you mean that? If you're talking about in a political sense...**

In a general political, spiritual, historical sense. You're talking about the end of times on this record, you've got a very gloomy vision of the world, you're saying, "I'm facing the end of my life and looking at all this..."

**Aren't we all always doing that?**

No, some people are trying to avoid it. But I'm trying to interview you and you're not being very helpful with this.

**Jann, have I ever been helpful?**

You have been in the past. You gave some really great interviews in the last several years.

**Yeah, but I wasn't on tour when I was doing them; I could be fully present. But now, I'm thinking about amps going out and...**

You don't have people taking care of those for you?

**You would hope.**

You can't find a good road manager, is that the problem here?

**Yeah** [laughs].

What can I do to get you to take this seriously?

**I'm taking it seriously.**

You're not.

**Of course I am. You're the one who's here to be celebrated. Forty years... forty years with a magazine that obviously now has intellectual recognition. Did you ever think that would happen when you started?**

I was taking it seriously.

**Look how far you've come. You're the one to be interviewed. I want to know just as much from you as you want to know from me. I would love to have you on our radio show and interview you for an hour.**

I'm going to do that as soon as we're done with this. We'll just turn it around and flip it and do that.

**You've seen more music changes than me.**

Oh, please,

**No, no please. You please. You've seen it all from the top. I've seen it maybe from... also near the top.**

From the bottom up, what's the view today? Modern Times is not lighthearted. And it seems like you are worried about the times we're in and what we may or may not have learned as a country. It seems not distant from Highway 61 or earlier records where you describe a pretty difficult situation in the country, but nothing in this record indicates anything has gotten better – indeed, it's gotten worse.

**Well, America's a different place than it was when those other records were made. It was more like Europe used to be, where every territory was different – every county was different, every state was different. A different culture, different architecture, different food. You could go a hundred miles in the States, and it would be like going from Stalingrad to Paris or something. It's just not that way anymore. It's all homogenized. People wear the same clothes, eat the same food, think the same things.**

**This style of music, which punctuates my music, comes from an older period of time, a period of time that I lived through. So it's very accessible to me. Someone who was not around at that period of time, it wouldn't be accessible to them. For them, it would be more of a revivalist thing or a historical thing. You're from that time, too. I'm sure you know all these same things. The first time I ever went to London, which was in the early Sixties, '61, they still had the rubble and the damaged buildings from Hitler's bombs. That was how close the complete destruction of Europe was to the period of time when I was coming up.**

**Robert Johnson had just died, three years before I was born. All the great original artists were still there to be heard, felt and seen. Once that gets into your blood, you can't get rid of it that easily.**

What gets in your blood?

**That whole culture, that period of time, that old America.**

You mean the 1920s and 1930s?

**It wouldn't have made sense to talk to somebody who was, say, in their fifties [back then], to ask him, "What was it like in the late 1800s or 1900s?" It wouldn't have interested anybody. But for some reason, the 1950s and 1960s interest people now. A part of the reason, if not the whole reason, is the atom bomb. The atom bomb fueled the entire world that came after it. It showed that indiscriminate killing and indiscriminate homicide on a mass level was possible... whereas if you look at warfare up until that point, you had to see somebody to shoot them or maim them, you had to look at them. You don't have to do that anymore.**

With the atom bomb, man – suddenly, and for the first time – had the power to utterly destroy mankind.

**I think so. I'm sure that fueled all aspects of society. I know it gave rise to the music we were playing. If you look at all these early performers, they were atom-bomb-fueled. Jerry Lee, Carl Perkins, Buddy Holly, Elvis, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran...**

How were they atom-bomb-fueled?

**They were fast and furious, their songs were all on the edge. Music was never like that before, Lyrically, you had the blues singers, but Ma Rainey wasn't singing about the stuff that Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee were singing about, nobody was singing with that type of fire and destruction. They paid a heavy price for that, because obviously the older generation took notice and kind of got rid of them as quickly as they could recognize them. Jerry Lee got ostracized, Chuck Berry went to jail, Elvis, of course, we know what happened to him. Buddy Holly in a plane crash, Little Richard, all that stuff...**

Then, in this new record, you're still dealing with the cultural effects of the bomb?

**I think so.**

But doing it in the musical styles of earlier generations? I don't hear much rock in there.

**You don't hear any rock in there, because I'm not familiar with rock music. It's not something that I feel assimilated into. It's too spacey, there's too much space in it. It doesn't get to the point quick enough, if there is a point. It's what's taken over, but the rock & roll element's been kind of taken out... I don't know how to put it. It either reaches you or it doesn't reach you. I just like the older music better.**

What do you think of the historical moment we're in today? We seem to be hell-bent on destruction. Do you worry about global warming?

**Where's the global warming? It's freezing here.**

It seems a pretty frightening outlook.

**I think what you're driving at, though, is we expect politicians to solve all our problems. I don't expect politicians to solve anybody's problems.**

Who is going to solve them?

**Our own selves. We've got to take the world by the horns and solve our own problems. The world owes us nothing, each and every one of us, the world owes us not one single thing. Politicians or whoever.**

Do you think America is a force for good in the world today?

**Theoretically.**

But in practical fact...

**The practical fact is always different than theory.**

What do you think the practical fact is right now?

**With what's going on? Human nature hasn't really changed in 3,000 years. Maybe the obstacles and actualities and daily customs change, but human nature really hasn't changed. It cannot change. It's not made to change.**

Do you find yourself being a more religious person these days?

**A religious person? Religion is supposedly a force for positive good. Where can you look in the world and see that religion has been a force for positive good? Where can you look at humanity and say, "Humanity has been uplifted by a connection to a godly power"?**

Meaning organized religion?

**Corporations are religions. It depends what you talk about with a religion... Anything is a religion.**

At one point, you took on Christianity in a very serious way, and then Judaism. Where are you now with all that?

**Religion is something that is mostly outward appearance. Faith is a different thing. How many religions are there in the world? Quite a few, actually.**

What is your faith these days?

**Faith doesn't have a name. It doesn't have a category. It's oblique. So it's unspeakable. We degrade faith by talking about religion.**

When you write songs where you say you walk in "the mystical garden," there's a lot of religious imagery.

**In the mystic garden. That kind of imagery is just as natural to me as breathing, because the world of folk songs has enveloped me for so long. My terminology all comes from folk music. It doesn't come from the radio or TV or computers or any of that stuff. It's embedded in the folk music of the English language.**

Much of which comes from the Bible.

**Yeah, a lot of it is biblical, a lot of it is just troubadour stuff, a lot of it is stuff that Uncle Dave Macon would sing off the top of his head.**

What do you take faith in?



**Nature. Just elemental nature. I'm still tramping my way through the forest, really, on daily excursions. Nature doesn't change. And if there is any war going on on a big level today, it's against nature.**

On Modern Times, it seems like you're dealing with the forces of reckoning.

**Reckoning? You mean every day is a judgment? That's all instilled in me. I wouldn't know how to get rid of it.**

How is it instilled in you?

**It's instilled in me by the way I grew up, where I come from, early feelings...**

Is it something you see as coming or something that's happening right now?

**We really don't know much about the great Judgment Day that's coming, because we've got nobody to come back and tell us about it. We can only assume certain things because of what we've been taught.**

What do you assume is happening in the world around us when you walk in the mystical garden?

**Mystic garden.**

You see things closing in, you see the darkness coming.

**I could have come up with that line thirty years ago. This is all the same thing from different angles.**

It's like the landscape of "Desolation Row," only you've changed from outrage to acceptance.

**I think as we get older, we all come to that feeling, one way or another. We've seen enough happening to know that things are a certain way, and even if they're changed, they're still going to be that certain way.**

Therefore, we have to accept it?

**I've always accepted that. I don't think I've thought about things any differently in the whole time I've been around, really.**

You've resisted talking about your past for years. In *Chronicles* and *No Direction Home*, you're writing about your legacy. Why are you doing it now?

**Well, it probably was because enough things have resolved themselves, and I had an editor who was a good ally. I could have probably done it earlier, but I just didn't have the encouragement.**

Did you enjoy it?

**When I did it, I did, yeah. What I didn't like about it was the constant rereading and revising, because I'm not used to that. A song is nothing compared to some kind of literary thing. A song, you can keep it with you, you can hum it, you can kind of go over things when you're out and around, you can keep it in your mind. It's all small. But you can't do that with a book. If you want to check it, you have to reread what you've done. It's very time-consuming, and I didn't like that part of it.**

**If I wasn't inspired to do it, I wouldn't do it. So great flashes would come to me. These waves would come, and I would have to either mark things down or have to go back to where I could write things and keep typewriters here and there and do that. But it was enjoyable in that I only did it when I was inspired to do it and never touched it when I wasn't. I never tried to manufacture the inspiration.**

I was struck by your account of coming to New York when you were young, going to the public library, and by the very deliberate and methodical fashion in which you went about learning your craft and building your knowledge.

**But I was learning everything I needed to learn from real live people who were really there at the time, so I was in it firsthand. I think that's where my feelings came from, in terms of all of them early songs. Even songs at later dates, it's "What is human nature really like?" Not "What am I like, what do I like, what don't I like, what am I all about?" Not that kind of thing, but "What are all these invisible spirits all about?" I think that's where songs like "Blowin' in the Wind" come from. It's a more ancient struggle than what might currently be seen as the fulcrum of where the lyrics are coming out of.**

Are you surprised that you made a record today that's as vital and as important and as creative as any you've made in the past?

**No. No, I knew I was going to make it. I'm surprised that it sold as many records as it did, so a lot of people must feel a similar way.**

Why do you think people reacted so strongly to you in the 1960s? What did you reach in people that resonated so deeply?

**Because I had – and perhaps still do have – that originality that others don't have. Because I come from a time when you had to be original, and you had to have some kind of God-given talent just to begin with. You couldn't manufacture that. Just about everybody and anybody who was around in the**

**Fifties and Sixties had a degree of originality. That was the only way you could get in the door. That was just a necessary part of your makeup, which needed to be there.**

**My thing was never heard or seen before, but it didn't come out of a vacuum. There's a direct correlation between something like Highway 61 Revisited and "Blue Yodel No. 9," by Jimmie Rodgers. It just doesn't spring out of the earth without rhyme or reason.**

Nobody had heard stuff said that way or spoken that way.

**But nobody had heard the stuff that we heard. You came up in the Fifties. There was more freethinking then, there wasn't such mass conformity as there is today. Today, a freethinking person gets ridiculed. Back then, they were just sort of ostracized and maybe avoided. The popular consensus at the time, in this time we're speaking about, was a very mild form of entertainment; it was boring and uninteresting. Beneath that surface, though, there was an entirely different world.**

And you tapped into that world?

**We all did. Some of us decided we could live in this world. Others decided, well, they could visit it once in a while, but it wasn't necessarily their thing.**

So you lived in it.

**I did.**

And everybody else was just visiting?

**Yeah, like tourists. Like at the sock hop.**

So people entered your world and were awed by it, but couldn't live in it?

**No, I don't think you could, any more than... did you ever see Little Richard perform? You could be awed by it, but you were not a part of it. Unless, of course, you wanted to be a part of it, then it was open to you.**

Last night, you chose to close with "All Along the Watchtower," which has now become an anthem of yours.

**Who knew?**

Did you rediscover that song because of Hendrix?

**Probably.**

Had you heard that before, in your mind, what he did with it?

**No, that record's kind of a mystery to me, anyway. When he made it, it caused me to sit up and pay attention. Like, "Oh, there might be more to that than I had dreamed."**

What did you do from Highway 61 Revisited last night, "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues"? How did you choose that one? I love the rearrangement.

**You know, it's not rearranged. There's a different dynamic. The dynamic on all of those songs can change from night to night, because of the style of music that I've grown accustomed to playing, which I always could play. But you can't do everything. You can't just display everything at the same time.**

You change them to make it more fun for yourself?

**Well, it's more contrived than that.**

Why is it more contrived?

**It's because I have so many different types of songs, speaking musically: fast ballads, slow ballads, minor-key twelve-bar things, major-key twelve-bar things, twelve-bar pieces that differ greatly in the dynamics of the rhythm, which causes the lyrics, the way you deliver them, to change from night to night. It's based on an infinite system where you don't necessarily have to feel good to play it, but if you just follow the rules, you can do different things every night.**

Take "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue," for instance, which you did last night. Don't people come to the show and want to hear that original, mournful version?

**I don't know who would, unless it's somebody who bought that record in 1960-what. But it's the same song, and I'm the same person, and it's always been there. Those early songs I made with just an acoustic guitar. In a way, those are like demos, because that's what people do when they demo a song, they just go in and play it with their acoustic guitar, and that's what it is. Then they develop the song later.**

Do you think your performance of it in this way gives it a different meaning? Originally it was lost and sad; now it's assertive.

**Yeah. Astrologically, you're dealing with a different day every day of the week. Every day is a different color, a different planet rules it. You could say the same thing, you could feel the same way, you could**

**write the same thing, but if it's on a Tuesday, it's going to be different than if it comes out on Friday. That's just a fact. You can ask any astrologer.**

When you see Bono do his Africa relief work or Bruce Springsteen go out and do the Vote for Change Tour, do you think that rock music can be a voice for change?

**Maybe to some people it can. A person feels good when they do charity work. What Bono does is a good thing. Bruce has got a certain degree of power. He can use that power any way he sees fit. You have to applaud him for it. He's not playing around, and he means what he says.**

But do you think rock music is a voice for change?

**It's a change in lifestyle. I don't know. I've never been affected by it that way, so I can't really say.**

When you heard music as a young kid, there was a calling of your talent, but wasn't there also a calling of "My life can be different"?

**Yeah, but that was a calling. People who have a calling to play it are different than people who just play it for frivolity, people who have... whose motives aren't sincere. You talk about musicians – maybe one in a thousand are worth listening to. In terms of what they have to say, in terms of what they're putting forth, in terms of the world they're involved in, in terms of moving you from here to there. There's not many musicians capable of that.**

A few of your friends and contemporaries: What do you think of Neil Young?

**Neil is very sincere, if nothing else. He's sincere, and he's got a God-given talent, with that voice of his, and the melodic strain that runs through absolutely everything he does. He could be at his most thrashy, but it's still going to be elevated by some melody. Neil's the only one who does that. There's nobody in his category.**

Tell me about George Harrison.

**George got stuck with being the Beatle that had to fight to get songs on records because of Lennon and McCartney. Well, who wouldn't get stuck? If George had had his own group and was writing his own songs back then, he'd have been probably just as big as anybody. George had an uncanny ability to just play chords that didn't seem to be connected in any kind of way and come up with a melody and a song. I don't know anybody else who could do that, either. What can I tell you? He was from that old line of playing where every note was a note to be counted.**

You were very close, right?

**Yeah.**

What was the nature of your friendship?

**We'd known each other since the old days, really. I knew the Beatles really early on, all of them.**

What was your relationship with John Lennon like? Somewhat competitive?

**Yeah. Only to a certain extent, but not really. Him and McCartney both, really, they were fantastic singers. Lennon, to this day, it's hard to find a better singer than Lennon was, or than McCartney was and still is. I'm in awe of McCartney. He's about the only one that I am in awe of. He can do it all. And he's never let up. He's got the gift for melody, he's got the rhythm, he can play any instrument. He can scream and shout as good as anybody, and he can sing a ballad as good as anybody. And his melodies are effortless, that's what you have to be in awe of... He's just so damn effortless. I just wish he'd quit [laughs]. Everything that comes out of his mouth is just framed in melody.**

What do you think accounted for that period in the Sixties that was so remarkably creative?

**It was a more singular time. I think what we talked about in the early part of the interview is something to be thought about: the first atom bomb that went off. That was explosive, and it gave rise to a different type of personality. You had fiery people, whereas before, everything was more in the backwoods and more secretive. The same things were going on back then, they were just more isolated or taking place in the upper rooms. That's what I think, anyway. I don't know why it was a more powerful period of time. I don't feel it was any less uncomfortable than it is today.**

What does it feel like to grow older? Do you feel wiser? Happier? More creaky in your bones?

**Things begin to happen that you never considered before. You realize how fragile a human being is and how something insignificant, like what happened to your finger or your toe or something like that, may be enough to really sit you down for a while. I've certainly had trouble in those areas. As you go on, you realize life goes by at a very fast pace, so you've got to slow everything down, because it's going by too quick. I think we all realize it's still going down fast, and we're just not quite as agile as we used to be.**

Do you feel wiser?

**Wiser? Not necessarily.**

Happier?

**I don't think happier... Happiness to me is just being able to breathe well.**

You seem happier to me, less angry and amped up and pissed off.

**Oh. It depends what hour of the day you catch me in, though. It'll get better before it gets worse.**

Do you still try to reach your audience every night, every listener there?

**In the same way that the Stanley Brothers would have done or Chuck Berry would do: try to display talent in a way that could be conceivable.**

Are you thinking about that person in the last row or up there in the balcony?

**No, I'm not. I know a lot of performers say they do, but I don't know how much they really do. To me, the relationship between a performer and the audience is definitely anything but a buddy-buddy thing, any more than me going in and admiring a Van Gogh painting and thinking that me and him are on the same level because I like his painting.**

So you're there to do your art, and they're there to appreciate it and try to understand it.

**I would hope so. I think so.**

How do you describe your influence when you first came out?

**Maybe just like what the books say, that my stuff allowed people to write and perform stuff they felt like singing, which hadn't been done before. But I don't think about that as much of an influence.**

You just gave them the opportunity to open up their own thinking?

**Yeah, but I never opened up my own thinking. My stuff was never about me, per se, so everybody who came after who thought it was about me, per se, or them, per se, they took the wrong road.**

Do you think you have any influence on things right now?

**Well, how many performers are out there doing what we do night after night? How many shows are you going to go to? We play on some of these festivals, and me and my band are the only performers there doing anything remotely close to what we're doing in the type of music that it is. It almost like Tony Bennett or something – it's, like, archaic. You have to be thankful that you still have a generous audience.**