

BOB DYLAN 70TH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL

'I WAS SO MUCH OLDER THEN...'

On May 24, rock's most revered and enigmatic musician, Bob Dylan, is 70. In this 18-page special, notable fans, from Tom Waits to Robin Pecknold, chose their favourite Dylan song. There's a wealth of arcane knowledge corralled by *Uncut*'s Bobcats. And in an exclusive extract from a new edition of his long-unavailable Dylan biography, *No Direction Home*, we publish for the first time in full Robert Shelton's 1966 tour encounter with a speed-fuelled Bob – 45 years on, still Dylan's most unguarded and revelatory interview...



“The time has gone so fast,”

Dylan at 25 told his friend and future biographer Robert Shelton, in 1966, looking back at his life and career to date. “It’s almost like it happened to somebody else.”

Dylan and Shelton were talking during Dylan’s 1966 American tour. The previous July, Dylan’s electric set at the Newport Folk festival had shocked the folk world that thought it owned him, an act of apparent betrayal that had provoked outrage and dismay among many of his original fans, even as the new music he was making, on *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*, were radically expanding the parameters of popular music. These were among many other things discussed by Dylan and Shelton, in the course of a night-long conversation on a flight from Nebraska to Colorado in one of Dylan’s most unguarded and revealing interviews, Shelton almost washed away at times, as he later reported, in the torrent of things a clearly drugged-up Dylan had to say.

No journalist has ever been closer to Dylan than Shelton, whose September 1961 review in the *New York Times* of Dylan’s appearance at Gerde’s Folk City in Greenwich Village famously introduced “a bright new face in folk music”. It was Dylan’s first write-up of note and its impact on what happened next should not be underestimated. Two weeks later, he was signed to Columbia by John Hammond, and a career was launched that for half a century has held the world in thrall.

Dylan and Shelton became friends, hung out together in the Village and elsewhere, Shelton an eyewitness to the accelerating momentum of Dylan’s world-changing impact first on folk then rock music. It was surely

inevitable that Shelton would write Dylan’s biography, which he eventually did.

It took him 20 years, however, to deliver the manuscript of *No Direction Home*, still the only book on Dylan that has enjoyed his co-operation. By the time it finally came out in 1986, cut to a single volume from the two volume biography Shelton had intended, it seemed oddly after the fact. Major studies of Dylan by other writers were already out.

Dylan’s own reputation was also at an all-time low. And so *No Direction Home* was oddly undervalued on publication, though it has been a principal source of content for sundry subsequent Dylan commentaries, and in many respects never bettered. Shelton died in 1995 and his book has been out of print for over a decade. It’s reissued this month, however, in a revised edition, with much material excised from the original version restored, especially to the extraordinary 1966 interview mentioned

above, which we publish – starting on the facing page – as part of our celebration of Dylan at 70.

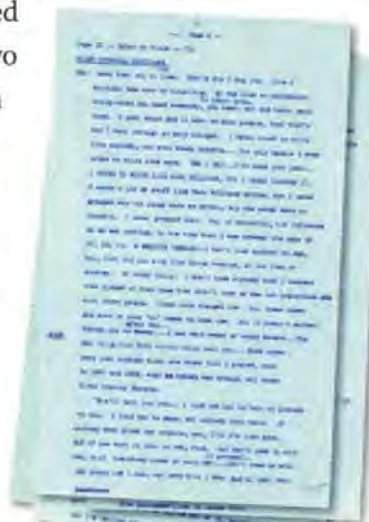
Our 18-page Dylan special also includes Tom Waits, Joan Baez, Roger McGuinn, Iggy Pop, Rickie Lee Jones, Jeff Tweedy, Kris Kristofferson, Robin Pecknold, Richie Havens, Todd Haynes, Sam Beam

and Billy Bragg on Dylan’s greatest songs, alongside a wealth of Dylanalia.

What are the weirdest songs he’s ever covered? Which are the key bootlegs? Which are the great songs he left off the albums they were originally recorded for? Who have been his songwriting partners and oddest collaborators? What are the names he’s given himself for guest appearances on other people’s records? Find out in the following pages. Happy Birthday, Bob...



Robert Shelton and Dylan, at Newport, 1965. Below: Shelton’s interview transcript



With Robbie Robertson
at Westchester County
Center, White Plains,
New York, February 5, 1966



IT WAS JUST past the break of midnight, Saturday night, mid-March, 1966. Lincoln Airport, in the dark, blended into the surrounding farmland. Dylan, five members of The Hawks, two roadies and one guest were in two cars speeding toward the airfield. As we arrived, runway lights flashed on, tower controllers stirred and mechanics busied themselves around the twin-engine Lockheed Lodestar, Dylan's private plane. The pilot and co-pilot went through their pre-flight check. Denver was next, then back to New York for some studio work, then up to the Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, Australia, Scandinavia, Ireland, England, France, and back to the States. This was the beginning of the end of one of Dylan's many careers.

Dylan walked into the dark canteen. He took a plastic cup of muddy coffee from a machine, stood at the window beside a mechanic in white overalls peering into the night. "It must get lonely out here," Dylan said to the mechanic. Both looked at the field, not at each other. "It does," the mechanic replied, "but it's a job. I just take the hours they give me."

"I know how that feels," Dylan said, as they stared across the prairie. Soon he walked on to the field. He'd just evaded 50 fans at his hotel

lobby, but a half-dozen were clustered around the plane. "It was a great concert," one fan said. "We really liked it, Bob," another said. "When are you coming here again?" Dylan said he didn't know, adding: "Thanks a lot. I'm glad you liked the show."

He scribbled his autograph a few times. A shy youth, about 17, approached him. He wore glasses, a neat white shirt and tie. "Mr Dylan," he said, nervously, "I'm interested in poetry, too."

"Yeah, is that so?" Dylan replied. "Yes, sir," the boy answered. "I was wondering if you could spare a few minutes, sometime, to read some poems I've written." "Sure," Bob responded. The young man handed Dylan a large envelope stuffed so full it bulged like a football. "Are all these poems?" Dylan asked. Proudly, the boy said: "Yes. I've been writing more since I began to study your songs." "Well," Dylan said, "thank you. I'll try to read some tonight. Is your address on the envelope? I'll let you know what I think of them." The boy glowed: "That's wonderful. I hope you like them."

Inside the plane, the band members were

LOVE ON THE TRACKS



**ROGER MCGUINN,
THE BYRDS**

**'JUST LIKE A
WOMAN'**

"Because you can hear how much he loves the woman in his vocal performance, probably his best ever! The melody is also quite beautiful. The lines 'Queen Mary she's my friend/Yes, I believe I'll go and see her again' and 'Her fog amphetamine and her pearls' stand out as wonderful descriptions of the '60s with the British Invasion in full swing and the abuse of 'pep pills' being ubiquitous." From the album *Blonde On Blonde* (1966)

already dozing off, a pile of slumping bodies. Bob probably needed sleep more than anyone, though he had revived now and seemed eager to use the minutes until the plane was ready to depart. Literature: "Rimbaud? I can't read him now. Rather read what I want these days.

'Kaddish' is the best thing yet. Everything else is a shuck. I never dug Pound or Eliot. Shakespeare was commissioned to write. He wasn't a mystic, just one of the arch-queens of all. I dig Shakespeare. A raving queen

and a cosmic amphetamine brain."

On his new music: "There was never any change. No instrument will change love, death, in any soul. My music is my music. Folk music was such a shuck. I never recorded a folk song. My idea of a folk song is Jeannie Robertson or Dock Boggs. Call it historical-traditional music. I want to write songs now. Until *Bringing It All Back Home*, songwriting was a sideline. I was still a performer. Then I knew I had to write songs. I don't have to look to anyone to tell I'm good. I know, I'm honest. Get some of those literary

CONTINUES OVER ▶

“Until Bringing It All Back Home, songwriting was a sideline. I was still a performer”

people, some of those poetry people to sit down with my records. That would be good.”

On civil rights: “Look at the South. Blacks are taking over the town. But how groovy is it? Power, that’s all it is. Rich blacks will take over. The kids are just a start. If I was black, I don’t know if I’d want to go to school with whites.” The words poured out of him. “It’s bullshit. All is death, I’m afraid. I don’t want to see myself die. I’d just as soon drive a car off a cliff than do something I don’t believe in. Got to beat the pressure... I saw Chuck Berry at St Louis Airport. You can listen to Buddy Holly when you’re all alone, but Chuck Berry? You have to be out on the highway.”

The road managers, Bill Avis and Victor Maymudes, checked everyone’s seatbelt. Dylan and I sat face to face. On one knee, he held a packet of proofs of his book, *Tarantula*, just sent him by his publisher for approval. On the other was the fan’s envelope. I knew he probably wouldn’t open either that night. I fussed with my tape recorder, cursing the engine noise. I held the mic a foot away from him. His eyes were slits. He was exhausted, but he told me he wouldn’t have slept, even if I hadn’t been there. He just had too much to do.

“It takes a lot of medicine to keep up this pace,” Dylan

said. “It’s very hard, man. A concert tour like this has almost killed me. It’s been like this since October. It really drove me out of my mind. I never had it like this before. It’s been a very weird time, and it really had me down. I’m really going to cut down. Next year, the concert tour is only going to last a month... or two. I’m only doing it like this, this year, because I want everyone to know what we’re doing.” Dylan sipped his tea, sent a cloud of cigarette smoke over his head, tugged his shirt-collar, and continued: “It’s just absurd for

people to sit around being offended by their own meaninglessness, so that they have to force everything else to come into the hole with them, and die trying. That’s the hang-up here. But I’m not involved with that anymore. I’ve told you that many times. I don’t know if you think I’m kidding, or if you think it’s a front. I just don’t care – honestly just don’t care – what people say about me. I don’t care what people think about me. I don’t care what people know about me.



LOVE ON THE TRACKS



ROBIN PECKNOLD, FLEET FOXES
“IT’S ALRIGHT, MA (I’M ONLY BLEEDING)”

“That song changed my life: the worldview and artistry of the lyrics were mind-blowing to me at 13, and presented a way of looking at the world that I think changed me as a person, which is a pretty insane thing for a song to do.”

From the album *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965)

It matters nothing to me. “Playing on the stage is a kick for me now. It wasn’t before, because I knew what I was doing then was just too empty. It was just dead ambassadors who would come and see me and clap and say: ‘Oh, groovy, I would like to meet him and have a cocktail. Perhaps I’ll bring my son, Joseph, with me. Joseph clapped a lot. You liked the programme, didn’t you, Joseph?’ And Joseph, of course, said: ‘Oh, yes, father, father. Yes I did – oh, whoopee!’ And then they ask:

‘Can I bring Isabella?’ And the first thing you know you’ve got about five or six little boys and girls hanging around with Coke bottles and ginger ale bottles and you’re confronted by some ambassador who’s got his hand in your pocket trying to shake your spine and give you compliments. I won’t let anybody backstage anymore. Even to give me a compliment. Give me no compliments. I just don’t care.”

The speech rhythms and the vitality of his thoughts began to rouse Dylan. His eyes cleared: “You can’t ask me about how I sleep. You can’t ask me about how I make it, and you cannot ask me what I think I am doing here. Other than that, we’ll just get along fine. You just ask me anything and I will **CONTINUES OVER**”

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PLEDGING HIS TIME

Key turning points in Dylan’s career



Onstage at Folk City on 3rd Street, Greenwich Village, October 3, 1961



Going electric at Newport Sunday July 25, 1965



GREENWICH VILLAGE, JANUARY 24, 1961

Dylan arrives in New York, crashing on couches and playing Monday night hootenannies in the Village.

WASHINGTON CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH, AUGUST 28, 1963

Martin Luther King makes his “I have a dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial – Dylan performs “Only A Pawn In Their Game”.

NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL, JULY 25, 1965

Dylan’s controversial, first live electric set.

FREE TRADE HALL MANCHESTER, MAY 17, 1966

“Judas!” shouts a voice in the audience. “I don’t believe you. You’re a liar,” Dylan replies, as The Hawks crash into an apocalyptic “Like A Rolling Stone”.

MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT, WOODSTOCK, JULY 29, 1966

Was the crash a genuine accident, or an excuse to “get out of the rat race,” as he later revealed in his autobiography, *Chronicles*?

WOODY GUTHRIE MEMORIAL CONCERT, JAN 20, 1968

Dylan returns to active service after 18 months, at Carnegie Hall in a one-off with The Band, playing three Woody Guthrie songs.

PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS OCTOBER 30, 1975

Dylan launches the 70-strong Rolling Thunder Revue, including Joan Baez, Allen Ginsberg and Roger McGuinn.

SAN DIEGO, NOVEMBER 17, 1978

Someone throws a silver cross onstage. Dylan picks it up – and the following night in a hotel room in Tucson he has a vision of “The King of Kings” and is born again.

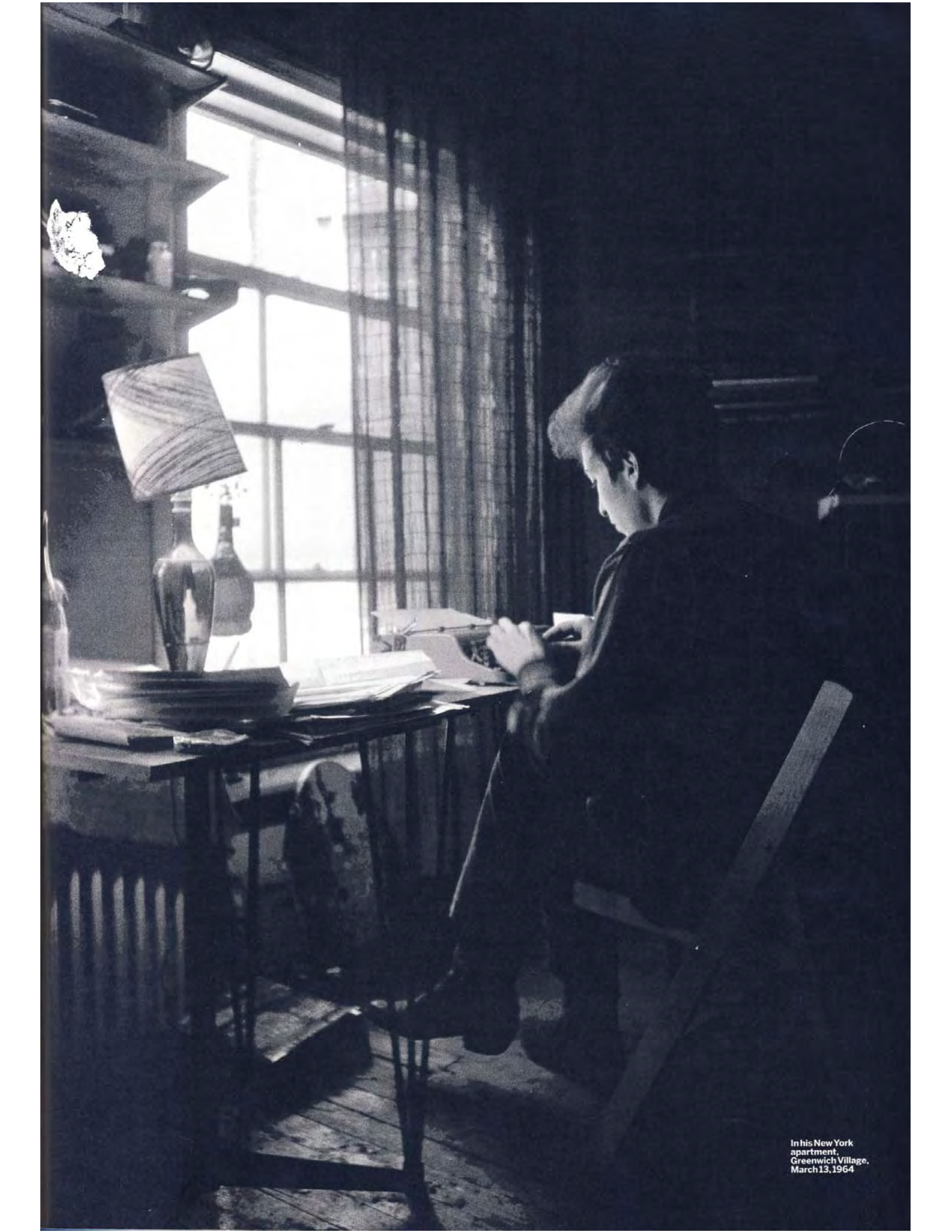
LOCARNO, SWITZERLAND OCTOBER 5, 1987

Contemplating retirement, Dylan has another vision on stage, and embarks on the Never Ending Tour.

THEME TIME RADIO HOUR, XM SATELLITE RADIO, MAY 3, 2006

Dylan begins a new career as a DJ, with the first of 100 eclectic shows.





In his New York
apartment.
Greenwich Village,
March 13, 1964

STREET ILLEGAL

There are hundreds of Dylan bootlegs out there. Here are 10 of the most celebrated...

GREAT WHITE WONDER

One of the rock era's earliest bootlegs, this initially appeared in 1969 in a plain white cover. It spanned Dylan's early folk years through to *The Basement Tapes* sessions.



FREEWHEELIN' OUTTAKES

Like it says: 25 discarded recordings and different cuts, amounting to an alternative version of Dylan's breakthrough second album.



THIN WILD MERCURY MUSIC

Outtakes from *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*. Instrumental "I'll Keep It With Mine" ranks among Dylan's best recordings.



JEWELS AND BINOCULARS

This 26 CD set from the 1966 tour compiles every concert recording, interview, studio session and hotel room jam – plus the audio track to Dylan's missing-in-action *Eat The Document* movie.



THE DYLAN CASH SESSION

Recorded in Nashville over two days in February 1969 – the duets are loose but, historically, monumental.



A TREE WITH ROOTS

Four-disc set of material Dylan and The Band recorded that never made *The Basement Tapes*. Includes more Dylan originals (including "I'm Not There") plus rock'n'roll covers and traditional songs.



PECO'S BLUES

Outtakes from Dylan's heroically relaxed sessions for 1973's *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid* soundtrack, recorded in Mexico and L.A. Ballad "Goodbye Holly" is a lost gem.



BLOOD ON THE TAPES

Almost as famous as *Blood On The Tracks* itself, this compiles earlier (some argue superior) scrapped "New York" versions. The differences can be astonishing: compared with the released version, the New York "Idiot Wind" is subdued and tender.



CONTRACT WITH THE LORD PARTS I & II

1979: the passion of Dylan's new-found faith – and the controversy greeting it – resulted in his most incendiary live tour since '66, caught here during 14 nights in San Francisco.



THE "TELL OL' BILL" SESSIONS

Leaked in 2006, the most recent glimpse of Dylan in the studio finds him at the piano, leading his band through 13 wildly different readings of the song he cut for 2005 movie *North Country*.

shoot right back. I'll give you as much time as I can. I'll come very quickly to the point in all the things I want done, but you can easily go back on me. You can do it anyway you want. But I won't forgive you for doing that, man. It's not going to be a biography, 'cos I'm not dead yet. It's going to be a timeless thing, right?

"Nobody knows about me. What do people really know? That my father's name is Zimmerman and my mother's family is middle class? I'm not about to go around telling people that this is false. I'm not covering up anything I did before. I'm not going back on anything, any statement or anything I've ever done. I'm not copping out on anything I've ever done since I was born. I've given up trying to tell anybody they're wrong in their thinking about anything, about the world or me, or whatever it is. I don't care. You can write anything you want to write.

"There is nothing that anybody can expose about me. Everybody thinks that there's such an exposé, on millions of little tiny things, like name-change or anything. It doesn't really matter to me. The only time it did matter to me, when people would bring up these things like saying, 'you've got pimples.' Or, 'your underwear's dirty, when you are down on the ground.' You understand? It bothered me, then. I don't mean music things. I mean the people for who that was written. Obviously, there are people who like to read that shit. And people might say: 'Oh, I don't believe it' or, 'That doesn't matter to me.' But it tickled them, you know."

TWISTING RESTLESSLY, DYLAN

was getting animated, angry at the phantoms that haunted him, angry at the hungers of his audience. He seemed to want to explain himself. It was so unusual for him to be explaining anything, because no one ever seemed to understand, anyway. He tried a new beginning: "I think of all that I do as my writing. It cheapens it to call it anything else but writing. But there isn't a person on the earth who takes it less seriously than I do. I know it's not going to help me into heaven one little bit. It's not going to keep me out of the fiery furnace. It's not going to extend my life any and it's not going to make me happy."

"What do you think will make you happy?" I asked. "I'm happy, you know, I'm happy to just be able to come across things. I don't need to be happy. Happiness is a kind of cheap word. There's some kind of happiness that is very, very snobbish. Let's face it, I'm not the kind of cat that's going to cut off an ear if I can't do something. I'd commit suicide. I'd shoot myself in the brain if things got bad. I would jump from a window. I sure as hell wouldn't cut off my ear, man, I would shoot myself. You know, I can think about death openly. It's nothing to fear. It's nothing sacred. Death is nothing sacred. I've seen so many people die."



"I won't let anybody backstage anymore. Even to give me a compliment..." Meeting the fans in '65

I asked: "Is life sacred?" "Life's not sacred either," Dylan replied. "Look at all the spirits that actually control the atmosphere, which are not living and yet which attract you, as ideas, or like games with the solar system. Or look at the farce of politics, economy and war." It was another variation on an old Dylan theme: inner despair battling outer hope. "It's become so easy for me to do everything, you have no idea, man, everything at my

command. I can make money now doing absolutely anything. But I don't want that kind of money. I'm not a millionaire, in terms of everything I have. But it is really close. This time next year, I'm going to be a millionaire, but that means nothing. To be a millionaire means that next year you can lose it all. You must realise that I have not copped out on one thing. It's very hard for somebody who does what he does not to have to cop out on some things. I mean, I love what I do. I also make money off it. Hey, I sing honest stuff, man, and it's consistent. It's

all I do. I don't give a damn what anybody says. Nobody can praise me and have any effect on me and nobody can criticise what I do that's going to have any effect on me. Nobody. I'm not going to read anything for me or against me that can possibly have any effect on me. So, therefore, I never really read what people say about me. I'm just not interested.

"When I first really knew I had money I couldn't see, I looked around to see what a few of my agents were doing with it. First of all, I like chauffeurs. When I came back from England last time, I didn't buy a chauffeur, but I sure rented one. I make no bones about it. I need the money to employ people. It all works hand in hand. If I had no money, I could walk invisible. But money now is necessary.

"It costs me money now to be able to walk invisible. That's the only reason I need the money. I don't need the money to buy clothes or nothing." Again his anger mounted. "I'm sick of giving creeps money off my soul. When

LOVE ON THE TRACKS



JOAN BAEZ

'A HARD RAIN'S A-GONNA FALL'

"A song like this is still relevant today. As an anti-nuclear holocaust song, it has less meaning in the post-Cold War period. But looking at the ozone layer and air pollution and acid rain, sure, it still has meaning. With Dylan's songs, it doesn't matter what the exact words are and what the content is, because the song throws you into a context of meaning again."

From the album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963)



With *Village Voice* journalist Jack Goddard (left) and tour manager Victor Maymudes in Sheridan Square Park, New York, January 22, 1965

"I just don't care what people say about me. I don't care what people know about me..."

I lose my teeth tomorrow, they are not going to buy me a new pair of teeth. I've got a lot of people I can give money to and the money that is rightfully mine I actually want. I don't like little short people who smoke Tiparillo cigarettes and have their pockets turned inside out all the time and wear glasses and who once wanted to be Groucho Marx making all the money off me. And there are a lot of them. All in the music business.

"Oh, if it's not the promoter cheating you, it's the box office cheating you. Someone's always giving you a hard time. Even the record company figures won't be right. They're never right. Nobody's going to be straight with you because nobody wants the information out. Do you know that up to a certain point I made more money on a song I wrote if it were on an album by Carolyn Hester or anybody than if I did it myself? That's the contract they gave me. Horrible! Horrible!"

The flashes of despair faded. Dylan could not lose his sense of the ludicrous. "I'm not going to be accepted, but I would like to be accepted, by the Hogtown Dispatch literary crowd, who wear violets in their crotch and make sure that they get on all the movie lists. By those who write record reviews and book reviews and movie reviews and TV reviews and also write about the ladies' auxiliary meetings and the PTA gatherings, you know, all in the same column. I'd like to be accepted by them people.

There's no reason not to be. But I don't think I'm ever going to be. Whereas The Beatles have been." Did he want The Beatles' sort of acceptance? "No, no, no, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying The Beatles have arrived, right? In all music forms, whether Stravinsky or Leopold Jake The Second, who plays in The Five Spot, The Black Muslim Twins, or whatever. The Beatles are accepted, and you've got to accept them for what they do. They play songs like 'Michelle' and 'Yesterday'. A lot of smoothness there."

When I told him Joan Baez planned to record "Yesterday" on her next album, Bob responded: "Yeah, it's the thing to do, to tell all the teenyboppers 'I dig The Beatles' and you sing a song like 'Yesterday' or 'Michelle.' Hey, God knows, it's such a cop-out, man, both of those songs. If you go into the Library Of Congress you can find a lot better than that. There are millions of songs like 'Michelle' and 'Yesterday' written in Tin Pan Alley."

There aren't millions of songs like his being written by anyone, I suggested. "I don't know if I fully appreciate that 'cos it's going

to get to the point where nobody else is going to be able to sing my songs but me. Like, I'm going to drive myself right out of business. I'll have to put out 10,000 records a year, for God's sake, because nobody will record the songs I write."

Did he influence young people because he broke the rules? "It's not a question of breaking the rules, understand? I don't break the rules, because I don't see any rules to break. As far as I'm concerned, there aren't any rules."

He sounded like Lenny Bruce. He was riffing, on a vocal cord, not a guitar chord. The words flowed like music. He was in and out of communication, like a jazzman going in and

out of a melody line. It was "all music, no more, no less," word music, chin music, talk and symbol music. He was fully awake now, riffing on a melody. From colours to poetry, Dylan improvised: "My thing is with colours. Not black and white. It's always been with colours, whether clothes or anything. Colour. Now, with something like that driving you, sometimes it gets very fiery red, you understand? And at times it gets very jet black.

"You just have to make it. When I say **CONTINUES OVER** ▶

LOVE ON THE TRACKS



TOM WAITS
'THE LONESOME DEATH OF HATTIE CARROLL'

"I love the way he tells the tale - it's such a poignant story taken from newspaper headlines. I remember hearing the song for the first time and thinking it was incredible how much detail he'd got in, not knowing if it was invented or from history. I was mystified and later I realised it is something you can do, take a news story and make it sing."

From the album *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (1964)

Onstage with Van Morrison and Robbie Robertson for The Last Waltz concert. 76



TIGHT CONNECTIONS

Johnny Cash and the Wilburys you know. But Bob has been involved in some other, odder collaborations...

BETTE MIDLER

In '75, the Divine Miss M persuaded Bob to duet on a sauced-up version of "Buckets of Rain" on her *Songs For The New Depression* LP.

LEONARD COHEN

Dylan is among the riotous chorus on Cohen's great "Don't Go Home With Your Hard-On", from 1977's *Death Of A Ladies' Man*.

MICHAEL JACKSON AND LIONEL RICHIE

Dylan took his place among the starry cast of USA For Africa's 1985 charity single, "We Are The World". As he sings: "It's true we'll make a better day. Just you and me." Think on.

KURTIS BLOW

Dylan raps! Hear the result — "Street Rock" — on the old skooler's '86 album, *Kingdom Blow*.

HARRY DEAN STANTON

Stanton sang on unreleased tracks from 1974's *Planet Waves*. In 1989, Stanton joined Dylan and Dylan's son-in-law Peter Himmelman to play during the Chabad Telethon, billed as Chopped Liver. (Dylan played flute.)

SLASH AND ELTON JOHN

Both appear on 1990's *Under The Red Sky*; Slash played guitar on "Wiggle Wiggle" and Elton — what else? — piano on "2 x 2".

VAN MORRISON

They first performed together on 1976 concert *The Last Waltz*. But their best hook-up was on a Greek hillside for a 1991 BBC *Arena* doc about Van, when they performed four songs.

WYCLEF JEAN

Bob cameo'd in the video for 1998 single "Gone Till November" by the erstwhile Haitian presidential candidate. YouTube it!

DAVE STEWART

We never pegged Bob as a Eurythmics fan, but serial collaborator Stewart has — among other things — played keys and guitar for Dylan, popped up on the Never Ending Tour, and directed videos, including "Emotionally Yours" and '93's Camden-set "Blood In My Eyes".

JACK WHITE

On March 17, 2004, White made a surprise appearance during the encore of Dylan's Detroit show on "Ball And Biscuit". At Nashville's Ryman Auditorium in 2007, White sang lead on the live debut of "Meet Me In The Morning", as well as "One More Cup Of Coffee" and "Outlaw Blues".

'make it,' I don't mean being a popular folk-rock star. 'Making it' means finding your line. Everybody's line is there, someplace. People think they just have to go through living hell on earth, but I don't really believe that attitude. The only people who believe you have to go through living hell on

earth, or that life is a tragedy, are the simple, close-minded people who have to make excuses for themselves. Everybody's line is there. Despite everybody who has been born and has died, the world has just gone on without them, I mean, look at Napoleon — but we went right on. Look at Harpo Marx — the world went around, it didn't stop for a second. It's sad but true. John Kennedy. Right?"

Isn't the difference, I asked, in what people did when they were here on earth? "Don't you see they did nothing? Has anybody done anything, really? Look at anybody who you think has done anything. Name anybody you think has done something," Shaw, I said. "George Bernard Shaw," Dylan slowly repeated one name at a time. "Who has he helped?" "He helped a lot of people to use their heads," I replied, adding, "You've helped a lot of people to use their heads and their ears." "Well," Dylan rejoined, "I don't think I have, that's all. It's funny that people think I have. I'm certainly not the one to go around saying that that is what I do. At one time I did read a lot of the stuff that was written about me, maybe three or four years ago. Now, I don't even read anything anymore. So I have no idea what people say about me. I really don't. I do know that a lot of people really like me. I know that."

Eight miles high, flying over the Great Plains, he jiggled his knees, like the trays of a scale, proofs of *Tarantula* on one knee and the Nebraska boy's poems on the other. One went up and the other down, in an unconscious seesaw of literary weighing-in. Did he think *Tarantula* was going to be accepted by the literary establishment, by the serious poets?

"First of all," he said, animatedly, "you have to realize that if you are going to write for poets and literary people..." He stopped short. "I think a poet is anybody who wouldn't call himself a poet. Anybody who could possibly call himself a poet just cannot be a poet. They have just settled for the romance of their ancestors and their historical knowledge of facts that never were. And they would like to think that they are a little above it all. When people start calling me a poet, I say: 'Oh, groovy, how groovy to be called a poet.' But it didn't do me any good, I'll tell you that. It didn't make me any happier.

"Hey, I would love to say that I am a poet. I would really like to think of myself as a poet, but I just can't because of all the slobs who are called poets." Who was a poet, then? Allen Ginsberg? "He's a poet," Dylan fired back. "To be a poet does not necessarily mean that you have to write words on paper. Do you know what I mean? One of those truck-drivers that walk down the stairway of a motel is a poet. He talks like a poet. I mean, what else does a poet have to do? Poets," his voice trailed off in inchoate formulations, ideas running too fast for his tongue. "Poets, old people, death, decay, people like Robert Frost poetry about trees and branches, but that isn't what I mean. Allen Ginsberg is the only writer I know. The rest of the writers I don't have that much respect for. If they really want to do it, they're going to have to sing it. I wouldn't call myself a poet for any more reason than I would call myself a 'protest singer'. All that would do would put me in a category with a whole lot of people who would just bother me. I don't want to be in their category. I don't want to fool anybody. To tell anybody I'm a poet would just be fooling people. That would put me in a class, man,

with people like Carl Sandburg, T S Eliot, Stephen Spender, and Rupert Brooke. Hey, name them — Edna St Vincent Millay and Robert Louis Stevenson and Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Lowell.

"I know two saintly people," Dylan continued. "I know just two holy people, Allen Ginsberg is one. The other, for lack of a better term, I just want to call 'this person named Sara'. What I mean by 'holy' is crossing all the boundaries of time and usefulness. Hey, I dig a lot of people, I love a lot of people,

but I certainly don't consider them poets." Two other writers he admired suddenly occurred to him: "William Burroughs is a poet. I like all his old books, and Jean Genet's old books, but I'm talking about writers of this country. Genet's scholastic lectures are just a waste of time, they're just boring. But if we're talking now in terms of writers I think can be called poets, then Allen must be the best. I mean Allen's 'Kaddish', not 'Howl'.

"Allen doesn't have to sing 'Kaddish', man. You understand what I mean? He just has to lay it down. He's the only poet I know of. I can't tell you all my feelings of him because they're just too total. He's the only person I respect who just totally writes. He don't have to do nothing, man. Allen Ginsberg, he's just holy, one of the two people that I know are holy." How is Sara holy? "I want to keep her out of this, I don't want to call her 'a girl'. I'd rather refer to her, if I refer to her at all, I can't really refer to her by any other name than — I don't mean to come on, I know it's very corny, but the only thing I can think of is, more or less, 'Madonna-like'."

WAS BEGINNING TO think he had forgotten my tape recorder, when he asked me: "Are you getting it all? How much tape do you



Robbie Robertson, Michael McClure, Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg outside City Lights, San Francisco, 1965



"I wouldn't call myself a poet for any more reason than I would call myself a 'protest singer'"

have left? Is it still running?" I told him we had hours of fresh tape and he plunged on: "Love and sex are things that really hang everybody up. When things aren't going right and you're really nobody, if you don't get laid in one way or another, you get mean, you know. You get cruel. Now, why in the world sex should force this is beyond me. I truthfully can tell you that male and female are not here to have sex, you know, that's not the purpose. I don't believe that that's God's will, that females have been created so that they can be a counterpart of man's urge. I just can't believe that it is that way. There are too many other things that people just won't let themselves be involved in. Sex and love have nothing to do with female and male. It is just whatever two souls happen to be. It could be male and female, and it might not be male and female. It might be female and female or male and male. You can't turn your back on it, man. You can try to pretend it doesn't happen, and you can make fun of it and be snide, but that's not really the rightful thing. I know, I know."

The kaleidoscopic monologue was running at full tilt, his verbal floodstream driven by a submerged pressure built up during years of talking more guardedly for publication. Inevitably, music displaced all other topics, even though he had remarked to me before we got on the plane "music is only 20 per cent of

what I am." Still, music was his métier, compulsion, work, and play.

"I want you to have explanations of my songs in your book," Dylan said. "Things nobody else will ever have."

"Such as," I broke in, "who Mr Jones is to you?"

"Well," Bob parried, "I'm not going to tell you that way. I'm going to tell you about the stuff that I want to tell you about. I could tell you who Mr Jones is in my life, but, like, everybody has got their Mr Jones, so I can't really say that he is the same for everyone. I can't give Mr

Jones a name, you understand. I know he's there..." and he plunged into the subject of "Ballad Of A Thin Man" and "Like A Rolling Stone".

Nothing struck me so strongly as this passage from the surge of Dylan's two-in-the-morning flood: "Mr Jones' loneliness can easily be covered up to the point where he can't recognise he is alone, suddenly locked in a room. It's not so incredibly absurd, and it's not so imaginative, to have Mr Jones in a room with three walls

with a midget and a geek and a naked man. Plus a voice, a voice coming in his dream. I'm just a voice speaking. Anytime I'm singing about people, and if the songs are dreamed, it's like my voice is coming out of their dream." I marvelled at Dylan's "outside insight" to describe how his singing might reach others. He was speeding along now, attacking some myths about schooling and the professions.

"Why, I don't even want to talk about college. I have no respect for college. It's just an extension of time. I hung around college, but

it's a cop-out, you know, from life, from experience. A lot of people started out to be lawyers, but I venture to say that 100 per cent of the really groovy lawyers haven't gotten through school the way they ought to. They've always been freaks in their school, and have always had a hard time making it; so many lawyers just take people for what they're worth. They all make deals and all are very criminal, but doctors, lawyers, all these kind of people—they're just in it for money, and

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LOVE ON THE TRACKS

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON
'LIKE A ROLLING STONE'

"I was living in Nashville when I first heard it. By then, well, nothing he did surprised me. I just loved it; it was like an anthem. To still have Bob Dylan around – and ticking on all cylinders, too – we should feel very grateful. I love Bob unconditionally. For what he's done. But for what he's doing, I love him, too."

From the album *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965)

WHEN I CO-WRITE MY MASTERPIECE

Bob's songwriting partners, from The Band... to Michael Bolton!

RICK DANKO & RICHARD MANUEL

Two *Basement Tapes* collaborations: Danko co-wrote the sessions' most famous song, "This Wheel's On Fire", and Manuel one of the greatest: the majestic "Tears Of Rage".

CARL PERKINS

Sat in with Johnny Cash during 1969 sessions with Dylan. Dylan had one verse of "Champaign, Illinois", but was stuck on the rest. Perkins came up with a rhythm and improvised lyrics. Dylan told him: "Your song. Take it. Finish it." It appeared on Perkins' 1969 album *On Top*.

JACQUES LEVY

Dylan's intense collaboration with theatre director Levy produced seven of 1976's *Desire's* nine tracks – as well as another three songs left off the album.

HELENA SPRINGS

A singer with Dylan's band during the gospel years, Springs co-wrote around 20 songs with him. Most remain unreleased, but Eric Clapton covered two – "Walk Out In The Rain" and "If I Don't Be There By Morning" – on 1978's *Backless* album, and The Searchers cut "Coming From The Heart".

SAM SHEPARD

Playwright and actor Shepard co-wrote one of Dylan's greatest '80s songs, "Brownsville Girl" – the standout on 1986's *Knocked Out Loaded*.

CAROLE BAYER SAGER

Serial co-writer of maddeningly catchy numbers (including "A Groovy Kind Of Love"), Bayer Sager co-wrote unsettling ballad "Under Your Spell" on *Knocked Out Loaded*.

THE TRAVELING WILBURYS

Who knows who wrote what in the supergroup formed with George Harrison, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne? On their *Vol I* album, "Dirty World", "Congratulations" and "Tweeter And The Monkey Man" clearly bear Dylan's signature – but according to Harrison, everyone pitched in.



MICHAEL BOLTON

Yes, really. Dylan co-wrote "Steel Bars" on Bolton's *Time, Love And Tenderness*, from 1991.

GERRY GOFFIN

Dylan teamed up with the Tin Pan Alley songwriter for Goffin's 1995 solo album, *Backroom Blood*, co-writing the ragged "Tragedy Of The Trade" and the nightmarish "Masquerade".

ROBERT HUNTER

Poet and "non-performing" Grateful Dead member, who co-wrote two tracks on 1988's *Down In The Groove* and much of 2009's *Together Through Life*.



DYLAN AT 70

With Joan Baez, Newport Folk Festival, 1963

"I can make money now doing absolutely anything. But I don't want that kind of money..."

for resentment. They put in their time and they're going to get it back. I agree with them that way. But I'm sure it could be done in other ways, and it's not – I've known people who've been loaded down with burdens and who have been in the right to collect, and who have been so innocent, that when they got lawyers to get them what they deserve... Do you follow me? The party's lawyers they are suing make deals with their lawyers. Like, it happens all the time, man. How anybody could have respect for lawyers baffles me! I have lawyers working for me I never see. I don't see my lawyers. Anytime they see the chance, they jump on it."

Did he want to talk about Joan Baez? I wondered if he would shed any light on his attitudes then toward one of the most intriguing show business liaisons of the time? Or would he bite my head off? "Me and Joan?"

Bob asked. "I'll tell you. I hope you do explain it, if you can do this book straight. She brought me up. I rode on her, but I don't think I owe her anything. I feel sorry for her. I want to explain this. I want you to print that, because I am not

joking. I feel sorry for her, knowing that I don't have to feel sorry for her because she would definitely not want me to feel sorry for her, or anybody to feel sorry for her. I feel bad for her because she has nobody to ask, nobody to turn to that's going to be straight with her. She hasn't got that much in common with the street vagabonds who play insane instruments. She's not that kind of person. Her family is a very gentle kind of family. She's very fragile and very sick and I lived with her and I loved the place. Can you

write all this in your book? If you can't, man, it's a waste of time. I mean, is your book going to be a mature book, or is this all just a waste of time?" I reassured him.

Dylan was in a strangely defiant mood, seeming to stress his most unappealing, anti-heroic side, daring me, it seemed, to take at face value all his negative thinking or self-destructive patterns. In retrospect, I think he was pleading for understanding that, behind all the applause, there was a lot of pain. He talked of an earlier time, when we had knocked around the Village together. "After Suze moved out of the house, I got very, very strung out for a while. I mean, really, very strung out." But, he told me, he'd survived those emotionally straining periods.

"I can do anything, knowing in front that it's not going to catch me and pull me, 'cos I've been through it once already. I've been through people. A lot of time you get strung out with people. They are just like junk. The same thing, no more, no less. They kill you the same way. They rot you the same way."

I didn't press him as to who could rot him and kill him, but I suggested that it reminded me of the line in Sartre's *No Exit*, "Hell is other people." Dylan joked: "Whatever it is, man. I don't know Sartre. He's cross-eyed, that's all I know about him. Anybody cross-eyed can't be all bad." He hit the bottom, saying: "I have a death thing, I know. I have a suicidal thing, I know."

Later, I asked him if he wanted to leave all this despair on the record. He said: "I haven't explained those things I said against myself. I'll explain them, and you better well use them, you can put in what I talked about it, if it's in

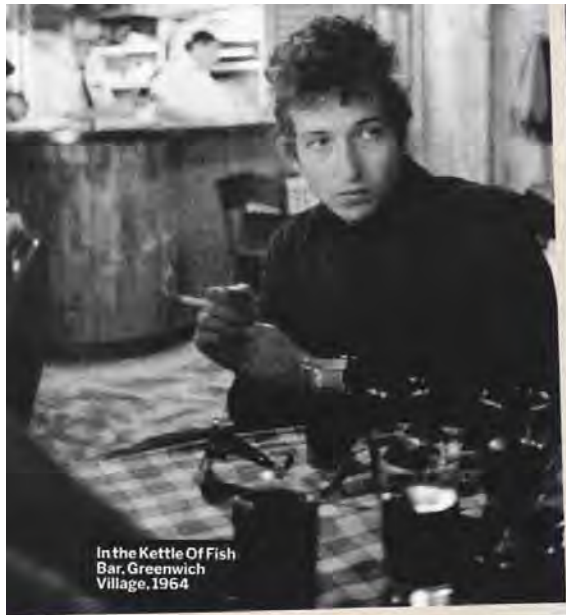
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LOVE ON THE TRACKS



TODD HAYNES, DIRECTOR. I'M NOT THERE 'SAD-EYED LADY OF THE LOWLANDS'

"They say it was recorded at dawn, the only complete take of a song his musicians in Nashville had no idea had five long verses until they were recording it. They say it was the first song dedicated to Sara Lowlands. But the power of the song exceeds the lore of its origins. Even beyond its mythic declarations it seems to be summoning a carnival past, a dawn's view of antiquity and modernity conjoined, fused in an epic hymn to devotional love." From the album *Blonde On Blonde* (1966)



In the Kettle Of Fish Bar, Greenwich Village, 1964



With Suze Rotolo in an outtake from the *Freewheelin'* session, NYC, 1963. Inset above: Woody Guthrie - "I dug him..."

context. Nobody knows about where I was at. A lot of people think that I shoot heroin. But that's baby talk; I do a lot of things. Hey, I'm not going to sit here and lie to you, and make you wonder about all the things I do. I do a lot of things, man, which help me. And I'm smart enough to know that I don't depend on them for my existence, you know, and that's all. Man, that's where it lays, like that."

Our conversation drifted to the folk-song "movement". We were bitter then because the folk world was so hostile toward his electric merging of folk and rock. "Nobody told me to go electric," he said emphatically. "No, I didn't even ask anybody, I asked not a soul, believe me. Hey, I went electric on my second record. Why don't you bring that out in the book?" The *Freewheelin'* album, released in May 1963, Dylan reminded me, had "four electric songs. The only reason they cut out the electric ones was because I didn't write them. Columbia still has them; they are trying to retouch them." Before The Beatles were known in America and before the "folk-rock" craze of 1965, Dylan had tried to show he was not a performer to nest in any pigeonhole. "I hate all the labels people have put on me, 'cos they're labels. It's just that they're ugly, and I know, in my heart, that it's not me. I have not arrived at where I am at now, I have just returned to where I am at now, knowing it's the only way. What I am doing now is what I must do before I move on."

Dylan began digging his heels in about the music world and his early attraction toward folk music. I scarcely needed to ask questions, for he was monologuing now. "I hate to say this, because I don't want it to be taken the wrong way, but I latched on, when I got to New York City,

because I saw a huge audience was there. People I knew I was not taking advantage of. I knew I wasn't going to stay there. I knew it wasn't my thing. Many times I spoiled it. Many times I went against it. Any time they tried to think I was like them, I knew I wasn't like them. I just told them whatever happened to be in my mind at the time. I didn't have any respect for any of the organisations. In New York City, they are all organisations. I had respect for the people. Woody [Guthrie] turned me on romantically - Woody used his own time, in a way nobody else did. He was just a little bit better, just a little smarter, because he was from the country. I met Woody

and I talked with him. I dug him, I would dig him, I imagine, if he were around today." He cited some reservations about Guthrie's style, and I asked if Woody's work then seemed too simple for him. Dylan shot back: "No, not simple at all. The fundamental objection is that I can see why he wrote what he wrote. I can see him sitting down and writing what he wrote, in a very calm kind of a way. I am not putting him down. You can print all this, man. I'm not copping

out on my attraction to him, and his influence on me. His influence on me was never in inflection or in voice. What drew me to him was hearing his voice. I could tell he was very lonesome, very alone and very lost out in his time. That's why I dug him."

Dylan stressed that at the height of his involvement in the folk world, he still loved rock'n'roll. "Suze Rotolo could tell you, 'cos Suze knows more than anybody else that I played, back in 1961 and 1962, when nobody was around, all those Elvis Presley records. She'll tell you how many nights I stayed up and wrote songs and showed them to her and asked her 'Is this right?' Because I knew her father and mother were associated with unions and she was into this equality-freedom thing long before I was. I checked the songs out with her. She would like all the songs. Suze is a very talented girl, man, but she is very frightened."

We talked about *Sing Out!*, the folk magazine that had lionised Dylan, then turned against him. In defence of Dylan's changes, I had wrangled with them. He cautioned me against my wasting time with polemics. "Don't you understand? If you're smart, you just gotta keep going, you're just not going to stand still. Everyone else is going to die. I don't mean die. I mean, they are going to decay and go crazy. If I could help them, I would love to see them straightened out. But I know in my heart that it is impossible to straighten all these people out,

LOVE ON THE TRACKS

BILLY BRAGG
"CLOTHES LINE SAGA"

"After a while, we took in the clothes..." begins this tale, a song which exudes a damp air of mystery due to the fact that the listener seems to have arrived just moments too late to hear the significance of the clothes hanging on the line. Like an overheard conversation on a noisy train: banal, yet intriguing.

From the album *The Basement Tapes* (1975)

because they are all so nine-to-five, and so involved with that life that it is impossible. I don't want nothing to do with it. *Sing Out!* has a big organisation; they know they control a lot. They have a very big hand in a lot of money. They have an Establishment. Believe me, Bob, they make a lot of money. The only person in that organisation I respect is Moe Asch, who is old and hip. He's the only one who knows that he's not serious, that he's not a clown, that the whole world is not a circus. He knows. The rest of the people there don't know it. They have power, fake, phoney power. They're dumb. They're clods. I never signed their petitions. Hey, dig it, man.



yourself. I'm not talking any Zen Buddhism bullshit. I don't mean to say that you have to like yourself and everything's groovy. I wouldn't tell anybody to follow any formula at all. None at all. I don't want nobody's mind; I would quit. A lot of people know I would've quit. A lot of people know that, man. I quit after England, and it was just done, I could quit again." Already, he told me, he'd withdrawn, for a while, from Woodstock: "I moved out a long time ago. Before the summer [of 1965] ended, I moved into New York City. I couldn't make it up there anymore because it wasn't private anymore. It will never, ever happen again. I'm never

I bought me a 31-room house. Can you imagine that? It turned into a nightmare, because, first of all, I wrote *Highway 61 Revisited* there and I don't believe in writing some total other thing in the same place twice. It's just a hang-up, a voodoo kind of thing. I just can't do it. When I need someplace to make something new, I can't go back there because—have you ever smelled birth? Well, I just can't stand the smell of birth. It just lingers, so I just lived there and tried to go on, but couldn't. And so the house is up for sale now." We talked a bit about The Beatles, whom he had first seen at New York's Delmonico Hotel during their 1964 tour. He told me, however, that he felt, at that point, much closer to Marlon Brando than to any of The Beatles. "I wish you could meet Brando. There's nobody like him. No-one's treated him right, in the press."

"It's become so easy for me to do everything, you have no idea, man, everything at my command"

They're gonna decay. If you're out of it, groovy! But I'm telling you, man, get out of it. It's not that you have to put them down to leave it."

He eyed the packet of poems from the Nebraska fan, knowing he wouldn't read them that night. I told him how touching it was when he told that airport mechanic how lonely it got out there. "Well, I loved him, man," Dylan replied. "He's a poor cat. What's he doing out there in Nebraska? I just wanted to know. Hey, it's lonesome every place. The people that can't live with it, that can't accept it—they are just going to blow up the world, and make things bad for everybody, only because they feel so out of place. Everybody has that in common—they are all going to die."

"Hey, I could be right here right now and anybody could be jealous of me and whatever I've got, the same way that I've been jealous of people before. I know what that's like. But, it's like you've got no faith, like you don't like

going to tell anybody where I live again. People want to tear me apart, man.

"Hey, I don't take people up to the country now, 'cos the country is a very alone place. And if you don't dig being alone, if you haven't got something to do, you're just going to take the bus back. You're going to get bored and go back. I can be alone as long as I have to be alone. I don't give a shit about being with people. I don't have anything to say to anybody. But it's hard for other people like that."

Dylan's search for the place to be "alone" has kept a lot of real estate agents and moving men busy. He asked me: "Do you know what I did when I got back from England, man?"

On this tour, I'd seen a lot of cracks developing in Dylan's relationship with his manager, Albert Grossman. "There are things Albert tries to push on me. There are things Albert and I naturally agree on, and some things I have to tell him to agree on. He's only come across once on his side. The rest of the time, I don't want him telling me shit."

Dylan's wide swings in mood were something I'd grown accustomed to long before. After one encounter on this trip, in which he expressed what I could only view as his deep and pervasive pessimism, I tried to counter his depression. A few days later, he scorned me

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IGGY POP
'POSITIVELY 4th STREET'
"You got a lotta nerve to say you are my friend". I love that negative energy! But actually a very beautiful performance by him is 'Blood In My Eyes'. He didn't write it, but that's a great recording. I love those later folk albums. His version of 'Froggy Went A-Courtin'—I love it, isn't it fucking great? All those things like 'Stack-O-Lee', just beautiful and pure and great."
Released as a single, 1965

I'LL KEEP THEM WITH MINE

Dylan has played dozens of unlikely cover versions on the Never Ending Tour, but he's recorded plenty, too

THE BOXER
Bob harmonises with himself by singing both Simon and Garfunkel's parts, going gloriously off-key...
Available on Self Portrait (1970)

BIG YELLOW TAXI
This take on Joni Mitchell's hit was recorded as a warm-up during the *New Morning* sessions. Columbia added it to *Dylan*—a ragbag cash-in issued when Dylan briefly left the label for Asylum.
Available on Dylan (1973)

WHEN DID YOU LEAVE HEAVEN?
Jim Reeves and Pat Boone had already covered Guy Lombardo's hit from the 1936 film *Sing Baby Sing*. Why not Bob?
Available on Down In The Groove (1988)

PEOPLE GET READY
Dylan recorded the Curtis Mayfield And The Impressions classic several times, notably during the '67 *Basement Tapes* sessions and for the '75 film *Renaldo &*

Clara. It also turns up on the soundtrack to the 1990 movie, *Flashback*, starring Dennis Hopper.
Available on Flashback OST (1990)

TRAIN OF LOVE
"I used to sing this song before I ever wrote a song, and I also want to thank you for standing up for me, way back when," said Dylan, introducing this during a 1999 television tribute to Johnny Cash.
Available on Kindred Spirits: A Tribute To The Songs Of Johnny Cash (2002)

RETURN TO ME
Dean Martin's '57 hit was recorded by Dylan in 2000 for the second season of *The Sopranos*.
Available on The Sopranos—Peppers & Eggs: Music From The HBO Series (2001)

RED CADILLAC & A BLACK MOUSTACHE
Warren Smith's obscure 1957 rockabilly track was Dylan's inspired choice for a tribute to Sam Phillip's legendary label.
Available on Good Rockin' Tonight: The Legacy Of Sun Records (2001)

MUTINEER
The title song from Warren Zevon's 1995

album—and recorded by Dylan and his touring band live in Australia as a tribute while Zevon was dying from cancer in 2003.
Available on Enjoy Every Sandwich: The Songs Of Warren Zevon (2004)

MUST BE SANTA
...or just about anything else from the opinion-dividing 'seasonal' album. Check out the hilarious video on YouTube.
Available on Christmas In The Heart (2009)

LONDON CALLING
Finally, one not officially available, but Bob having a stab at this at Brixton Academy in November 2005 lives on in *Uncut*'s collective memory banks...

"I hate all the labels people have put on me... they're ugly, and I know in my heart, it's not me"

for misunderstanding his moods. "I am not pessimistic," he told me. "I am just trying to get that across in the shortest, most concise way possible. If I am pessimistic, I am not even going to talk. I'm just going to go in the corner. One thing I have never done and will never do is force my moods on other people. Why should I sit around and talk to somebody for hours and then have them think that I am pessimistic? That's an insult!

"I'll tell you what the drag is, what hangs everybody up is that I'm not stopping. They call me dead. It's very silly for them to call me dead, and they know it. There was a time, last year, when it just went overboard.

Everybody recorded my songs and it would have been easy for me, at that time, to have written up another huge batch. Everyone would've done them. They'd have lapped them up," he said of the folk-rock surge of 1965.

Dylan's ambivalence has confounded and confused everyone who's ever been close to him. It sometimes confuses him. As late as 1976, he was saying that his Gemini personality "forces me to extremes. I'm never really balanced in the middle. I go from one side to the other without staying in either place very long. I'm happy, sad, up, down, in, out, up in the sky and down in the depths of the earth." At least that was consistent for, 10



With manager Albert Grossman, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 1, 1966

LOVE ON THE TRACKS

RICKIE LEE JONES
"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"
 "No matter how many years go by, this song evokes such a personal, social reaction in me, as powerful to me as it ever was. It is the eternal youth banner, made into sound, with the voice of loving defiance. Now, still, every time he gets to 'come senators' I get choked up. His voice shakes, makes my heart shkr ke. It stops me in my tracks."
 From the album *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (1964)

years earlier, as we rode on this plane, he was swinging widely. When I said I'd like to interview Phil Spector, Dylan said, "Sure, sure, go see him." Then he told me how Spector had annoyed him but "tell him that when I think about him, I really love him." Another area of ambivalence is the press, critics, tastemakers. Dylan dislikes them and taunts them, even as he is ineluctably drawn to them. Dylan went on: "Hey, magazines, critics,

Newsweek, Time, Look, Life—all of it is very meaningless. It doesn't seem to me to change anybody's mind. When people like something,

other people go around trying to figure out why people like these things. I mean, when they really like something, they like it. They get involved in something, that's all. It happens to them. And anything that happens to you, happens to you. 'Like' and 'dislike' are just unreal words."

I sought to move to an area of his enthusiasm, black musicians. "Ask Aretha Franklin about me, man," Dylan said, "or talk to the Staple Singers. Why don't you talk to Mavis Staples? I'd be interested in what she says. And to Purvis and Roebuck Staples, too. Remember that night when Mahalia Jackson came out from the dugout [at a 1962 gospel festival at Randall's Island in New York] in three limousines? Remember, with her goddamn maids, who lifted up her dresses and opened up her doors? She sure has class.

"A lot of people think that the modern spade musicians are getting a raw deal. A lot of them are, because there are real genius people playing in dives. A lot of them are. But an awful lot of the records you hear are all copies. They, too, are imitating who they think they should think they should imitate. That don't mean you have to give them a million dollars and a house in the suburbs and a golf course. That's what we're talking about here. We're not talking about equality, or enough food to eat."

Why had he become so hopeless about the Civil-Rights movement, when it had once so engaged his energies? "I'm not pessimistic about it. No, no, I don't want to be misunderstood about it! I don't think that anybody who is taught to get his kicks off a superiority feels—man, that's a drag! But the word 'Negro' sounds foolish

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BLOOD ON THE TRACKLISTING

Ever contrary, Bob has a history of leaving some of his greatest songs off his albums. Here are 10 that (very) nearly got away...

- 1 PERCY'S SONG (1963)**
First person ballad, recorded for *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, narrating a friend's conviction for manslaughter following a car crash. It lay unreleased until 1985's *Biograph*.
- 2 FAREWELL ANGELINA (1965)**
Recorded for *Bringing It All Back Home*. Joan Baez covered it in 1965. Dylan's version was eventually released on 1991's *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3*. Not to be confused with
- 3 UP TO ME/CALL LETTER BLUES (1974)**
Two omitted from *Blood On The Tracks*: the former a companion to "Shelter From The Storm", the latter an early incarnation of "Meet Me In The Morning". They turned up on *Biograph* and *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3* respectively.
- 4 CARIBBEAN WIND (1981)**
"Angelina", which was recorded for — then promptly left off — 1981's *Shot Of Love*.

Shot Of Love out-take. Dylan obsessively rewrote and re-recorded this epic song for weeks before giving it up. One of several versions surfaced on *Biograph*.

- 5 GROOM'S STILL WAITING AT THE ALTAR (1981)**
Apocalyptic electric gospel, discarded from *Shot Of Love* and relegated to the US cassette single b-side of "Heart Of Mine".
- 6 BLIND WILLIE MCTELL (1983)**
A mesmerising out-take from *Infidels*.
- 7 SERIES OF DREAMS (1989)**
Dylan reportedly spiked this from *Oh Mercy* because "I



only put 10 songs on my records." It's on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3*.

- 8 MISSISSIPPI (1997)**
Dylan recorded several

takes for *Time Out Of Mind* (three appeared on 2008's *Tell Tale Signs*). The first official release was Sheryl Crow's version on her '98 *Globe Sessions* album. Dylan finally nailed it on 2001's "Love & Theft".

- 9 RED RIVER SHORE (1997)**
Routinely hailed by the small army of veterans who played on *Time Out Of Mind* as the sessions' greatest song. It naturally hit the editing room floor. Two takes surfaced on *Tell Tale Signs*.
- 10 CROSS THE GREEN MOUNTAIN (2003)**
Recorded for Civil War movie *Gods And Generals*, this bleak but compassionate eight-minute survey of a world gone wrong is also on *Tell Tale Signs*.

JANIPERSON/GETTY IMAGES



Onstage at Island Garden, Hempstead, New York, February 26, 1966

coming from my mouth. What's a Negro? I don't know what a Negro is. What's a Negro? A black person? How black? What's a Negro? A person living in a two-room shack with 12 kids? A lot of white people live in a two-room shack with 12 kids. Does this make them Negro? What's a Negro? Someone with African blood? A lot of white people have African blood. What's a Negro? An Ethiopian kind of thing? That's not a Negro, that's an ancient religious pajamariding freak! I've got nothing against Negro rights. I never did."

KNOWING HOW MERCURIAL Dylan was, I tentatively began to explore with him how he changes his mind about people, about his own music, his own past work. I said: "You have always been wildly enthusiastic about the recording you've just finished, and then you turn around a few months later and say it was nothing. At least, you always did that in the past." "No, no," Dylan flashed. "I like the last record. Hey, I made *Bringing It All Back Home*, and I love that record. I made *Highway 61 Revisited* and I love that record, I love the *Blonde On Blonde* album. What I was trying to do on my fourth album, on *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*—well, I was just too out of it, man, to come across with what I was trying to do. It was all done too fast. All done in one session. I liked the idea of it. No, I don't like the first album. You know, though, I've done some stuff on that first record that still stands up. Like my harmonica playing. Like in 'Man Of Constant Sorrow', the arrangement of that I like. 'In My Time Of Dying' still stands up. But as a whole, it doesn't make any kind of sense. It's not consistent."

Wasn't the really his own worst critic? "Of course I am my own worst critic! Those aren't my words, those are your words. A lot of the stuff I've done, man, as far as I'm concerned, the last three things I've done on records, is beyond criticism. I'm not saying that because I think I'm any kind of god. I'm just saying that because I know, I just know. I've been at it too long. I wanted to call that album *Highway 61 Revisited*. Nobody understood it. I had

to go up the fucking ladder until finally the word came down and said: 'Let him call it what he wants to call it.' I have to fight for songs on the album. I put them on there because I know it is right. And sure enough, it turns out to be right."

Our talk drifted back to some things he'd written about himself, like the 1962 prose-poem memoir "My Life In A Stolen Moment".

Dylan wove a web of ambivalence: "I don't disavow it. Please don't get me wrong. It is just not me. Somebody else wrote that. But I am not that person of five years ago. It's almost as if I were him," he said, pointing at one of the sleeping Band members. "That's what it's like in my mind. I have no question to answer about it. I don't disavow it. I wasn't me, then. You're talking about something that somebody else did, because they had to do it."

I asked him: "Can I say that when I quote things you wrote or said in the past, then?" Dylan replied: "Sure. All right, but put it in context. It was done out of—it was bled from my hand and from my arm." "By who?" I asked. "By my brain," Dylan replied. "I remember all of it. I remember the drafts. I remember the words I used to write then, thinking they might someday be novels. I remember why I did them. I remember all the reasons. I remember all the shucks and all the cons. All the cute, funny things. Like, man, I am so lucky now. I wouldn't be lucky if I couldn't produce. That's what I thought the last six months. Oh, I was really down. I mean, in 10 recording sessions, man, we didn't get one song," he said, referring to *Blonde On Blonde*. What slowed things down? "It was the band. But you see, I didn't know that. I didn't want to think that. I'm not saying it

IT IS ME, BABE

10 Dylan aliases

ELMER JOHNSON

In concert with The Band (1969)

BLIND BOY GRUNT

Allas on *Broadside* anthology album (1963)

ELSTON GUNNN

Live piano player with Bobby Vee

LUCKY WILBURY

Traveling Wilburys Vol. 1 (1988)

SERGEI PETROY

Writer, *Masked And Anonymous* (2003)

BOO WILBURY

Traveling Wilburys Vol. 3 (1990)

JACK FROST

Producer of his own recent studio albums (1997-2009)

BOB LANDY

Piano on *The Blues Project* compilation album (1964)

TEDHAM PORTERHOUSE

Harp player on *Ramblin' Jack Elliott's 1964* album, *Jack Elliott*

ROBERT MILKWOOD THOMAS

Piano/vocals on Steve Goodman album (1972)

was a mistake, 'cos I know I'm going to do it all again. If I go back to Nashville, man, and everybody down there can't make it, I'm going to take a plane until something else happens. That's just the way it is. You can't blame anybody else. I don't have the right to blame anybody. It's not that I blame myself, man, it is just that I was down, I was down."

I chanced a Hollywood star-interview question—just what does he do with his money? I held my breath for his outraged response. "Tell them," Dylan said, making his first and last full financial disclosure, "tell them to check their pockets." We laughed. I asked him what he saw in his future. "I can't talk of the future," Dylan said slowly. "I can only talk a little more about it than I used to be able to talk about it, but, still, I can't talk about it all that much. I know there's a movie. I'm going to make a movie, and it's going to be groovy, you know. Then, there's this book for Macmillan," Dylan said, tapping one of the envelopes still resting on his lap. "It's already been fucking publicised and written about, and everybody's expected it," he went on, eyeing the *Tarantula* envelope warily. "Every time I look in the paper, there is something about this book. And I gave away the title, which I shouldn't have done. So, I'm thinking of changing it now. You know, I just don't like

the obvious. Obvious things are a step backwards. Nobody should step backwards because nobody knows what's behind them. The only direction you can see is in front of you, not in back of you."

The plane's vibrations had been diminishing, even though it hadn't been descending sharply. We'd forgotten that Denver is so high, the ground comes up to meet a plane from the East. The Hawks stirred themselves, wiping sleep from their eyes. They looked at Dylan, surprised he was still awake, still talking. Bob asked Robbie Robertson if he was up to a few hours' work when they got to the motel, and Robbie nodded. As the plane touched down gently on the runway, Dylan kept talking. He looked at the package of poems from his fan in Nebraska, and said he'd have to read them some other time. His eyes went back and forth between the two envelopes of writing on his lap. "I know how that boy feels. I know what it's like being a boy in a small town, somewhere, trying to become a writer."

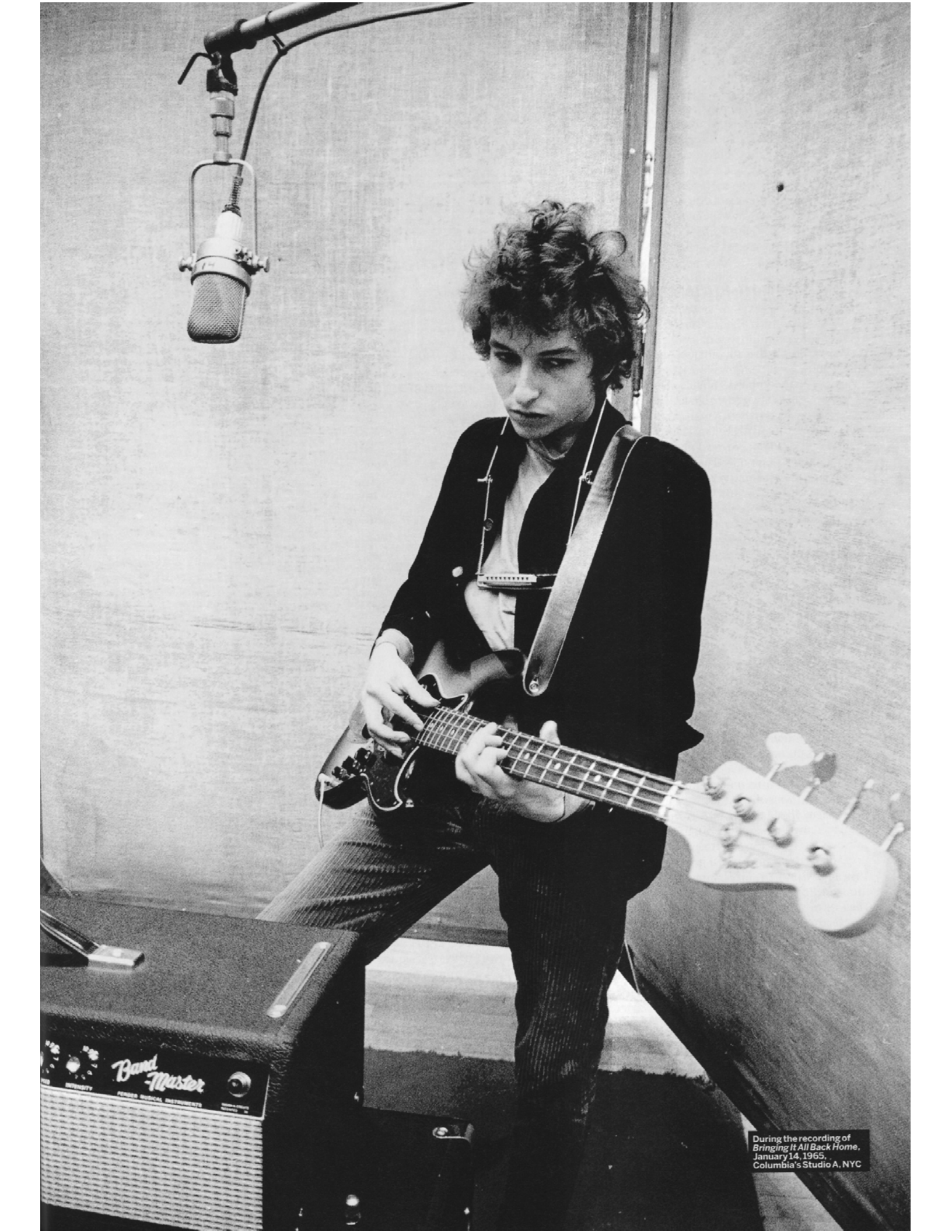
The arrival at Stapleton Air Field was almost imperceptible, the ground coming up to meet the plane. At the airport, Dylan called Sara in New York. Luggage assembled, **CONTINUES OVER ▶**

LOVE ON THE TRACKS

RICHIE HAVENS
'MASTERS OF WAR'

"That song goes to the crux of the problem. It's an indictment of cruelty and disrespecting human beings. Dylan was coming out with this on the *Freewheelin'* album when I first arrived in Greenwich Village in 1962, but it's still as relevant today."

From the album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963)



During the recording of *Bringing It All Back Home*, January 14, 1965, Columbia's Studio A, NYC



Playback to the Highway 61 Revisited recording sessions, Columbia's Studio A, summer 1965, NYC

cars rented, the convoy sped off to the Motel De Ville on West Colfax Avenue. The rooms were reserved for Ashes & Sand. Dylan took room 102, Robbie 104, and I was up the corridor at 108. Though there'd been a time change, it was nearly 3am, and I thought Dylan was finished for the night. "Give us about 10 minutes," Dylan said, "and then come down to the room."

Robbie and Dylan were sprawled out on twin beds, holding acoustic guitars, starting an hour's jamming. I drank some coffee and tried to bring myself to life to tape them at work. It was all new material; I couldn't put a title on anything. When Dylan came to "Sad-Eyed

the front of the car, conserving his voice for the Denver concert. Looking like the *Blonde On Blonde* cover, his frizzy electric halo, which Hendrix and others soon affected, surrounded a lean face drawn with fatigue. "I don't know how it will look to me today," Bob said to me, "but when I first went up there, Central City looked like paradise. It seemed so far away from anything I'd seen or done before, it was sort of magic to me. Imagine a kid just out of high school coming up here in the mountains! Feeling like he was discovering the world." We passed a jerry-built shack of corrugated iron, tar-paper and wood scraps. "Look for the TV

began to settle, and an opera house was built in 1878. Boosters called the town "the American Salzburg". By the time Dylan first got there, arts festivals were annual events.

We parked near the old courthouse, ambled down Eureka Street into Main. "Nothing's changed. It's almost exactly the way it was," Bob said. We passed the opera house, like a film crew sizing up a location. Some tourists ogled Dylan. A teenager yelled, "What's he doing here?" Up Main Street, a small nameless bar was dark. It had a large, circular window front, like an aquarium. "This was the place," Dylan said, peering into the fishbowl. This was where the Gilded Garter had been, where Dylan had "scuffled" for a few dollars that summer. As he described it to me in 1961: "I was onstage for just a few minutes with my folksy songs. Then the strippers would come on. The crowd would yell for more stripping, but they went off and I'd come back on with my folksy songs. As the night got longer, the air got heavier, the audience got drunker and nastier, I got sicker, and finally I got fired."

We edged away from the saloon. "Oh, it only lasted a few weeks," Dylan said, "but I suppose I'll never forget it. They paid me very little, but they threw in sandwiches and drinks, and all the strippers I could watch. All the noisy drunks were thrown in free, too." We went in to a little curio shop where Dylan spent 15 minutes rummaging for mementoes. He bought some postcards with a dollar he'd borrowed from me and, with the change, a tiny cowboy hat. There was an original snapshot of John Dillinger, the public enemy shot down in

"I'm not the kind of cat that's going to cut off an ear... I'd shoot myself in the brain if things got bad..."

Lady", he said: "This is the best song I've ever written. Wait till you hear the whole thing." Robbie's face was grey with fatigue. I had to get to bed and assumed that tomorrow would be a long sleep-in. Dylan said: "Let's go out to Central City tomorrow morning. You'll like it. Meet me here at about 11."

NEXT MORNING BOB was on the phone to Grossman in New York. "I've got five new songs to tape," Dylan told the telephone. "Uh-huh, uh-huh. I don't think they're giving us a fair count. Yeah, yeah. Sinatra wants it? What about Otis Redding? I'd rather he do it." The trip to Central City seemed to relax Dylan but he was quiet on the drive and I thought he was depressed. "I want to save my voice," he explained. "It's hoarse this morning."

Dylan had first made the 25-mile trek from Denver to Central City by bus and thumb. It was the Wild West reincarnate—gold mines, sheriffs, buildings out of a movie set. It was a Sunday afternoon in 1966 when Bob made another sentimental return, with Bill Avis and Victor Maymudes in our car, circling slowly along twisting Highway 58. Once a lifeline to Denver, for supplies going up and gold nuggets going out, this route through scrubby, eroded hill tops, was just a tourist road now. Bob sat in

aerial, just look for it!" Bob commanded. First we saw a bearded recluse puttering with his goats and pigs—and then the aerial. Bob fingered the dial until a DJ's voice poked through the mountain passes. "Here's the latest hot single from Simon & Garfunkel, Homeward Bound!" Dylan listened silently, fingering his collar, then his chin.

Within a few turns, we were back in 1859: worn stone buildings, gingerbread wood houses on hillsides. In May 1859, nine Georgia prospectors, led by one John Gregory, struck gold here. Gregory's Diggings, as it was dubbed, was mobbed with 20,000 people in three months. Cornish miners brought their love of music. The first local hit song was "Paddy Casey's Night Hands", about a legendary Irish miner. Showbusiness was showbusiness, even in 1862, when George Harrison, owner of the Montana Theater, fired 35 shots into Charlie Switz, a rival. Old George, more popular than his victim, was acquitted. Some high-culture people

his prime. The shopkeeper told him it was 20 dollars, "a very rare item." Dylan studied the picture, like a still from *Bonnie And Clyde*: "I'll think about it and let you know." After a quick lunch of eggs and hamburgers, we headed back to Denver. "The time has gone so fast," Dylan mused. "It almost seems like it happened to someone else."

After the outing, we returned to the motel. I assumed Bob wanted a nap before the concert but he said I should come down in half an hour. When I did, he was puttering around in a faded old shirt and jeans—we were suddenly back

four years to simple times in the Village. I turned on the tape and threw questions at him for another two hours. He was less frenetic than in the plane, but no less candid. We talked about Hibbing, New York. Dinkytown, Woodstock, Memphis and London. Dylan flicked on the television and, without ever losing the continuity of his thread, became engrossed in a horror film. Some miscreant was brewing an evil potion. "Hey, look at **CONTINUES OVER**"

LOVE ON THE TRACKS

JEFF TWEEDY, WILCO
'HURRICANE'
 "It's just a power... fucking... powerhouse: song, delivery, performance. There's the rawness of Scarlet Rivera's [violin] playing and then there's Dylan just spitting out his lyrics. There's a couple of songs on *Desire* like that. He was angry, and Dylan's kind of at his best when he's angry."
 From the album *Desire* (1976)

MICHAEL LOCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; AUTUMN DE WILDE

that!" he exclaimed boyishly, "He's going to get his back full of cyanide!"

He shuffled around the room, hanging up some of his clothes, one eye on the TV.

"How the hell can you get any work done on a tour like this? How can you write?" I asked. "It's hard, man. It's killed me, ever since September, and it drove me out of my mind. I never had it like that before. It was a weird time. It had me down." He would cut down next year, he said. "It embarrasses me to talk about the career thing, 'cos it's very hard to talk about. It's been so dumb, 'cos in my own mind, I know how lucky I am and I don't know how long it could go on."

We talked about people who had been important to him along the way. "Suze, I will be kind to her the rest of my life. Suze, any time she wants anything, she could always come to me." But he had no patience with some others: "Just con people – they shouldn't be associated with me, 'cos they are just going to get hung up by idiots that know they have known me."

Time passed quickly and I was afraid I was wearing him out. "Don't worry, I'm OK."

He played around with the cowboy hat he'd bought for his daughter, then dramatically pulled out his "rabbit suit", brushing it off for another night's performance and saying how unusual it was to be dressing up for a concert. He laughed at himself. I turned off the tape. "I wish you could come down to El Paso next week," Dylan said. I told him I had to see a dozen people on the West Coast first. He said two concerts in Oklahoma had to be cancelled due to further work on *Blonde*. "You couldn't make it to Europe in May, could you?" Dylan asked. I said I doubted it, I had to work. "Well, I've got to go to work. Drop back after the show."

Dylan's reserve of energy to tackle another concert for 3,000 people amazed me. He'd been doing this since autumn. At Denver Municipal Auditorium, where the acoustics were a jangled echo, the audience was unaware he'd done this 17 times in less than a month. After the concert, I returned to Dylan's crowded motel room. The air was charged, Dylan quite stoned. He started to describe Lennon and McCartney beating a retreat from his Albert Hall concert a year earlier. Dylan mimicked The Beatles running downstairs, halting for breath at landings, looking to see if they were pursued, then running down another flight. It was good pantomime. The Hawks roared. Some fans began calling up and friends dropped in. Bob was expansive, but couldn't hide his fatigue. I decided it was time to quit and he saw me to the door. "Now, Bob, I'm trusting you to be honest with your story." Through all the fatigue and stoned haze, the old graciousness was coming out. "See if you can't make it to El Paso, or England. It'll be different there. It'll be better there."

He returned to the room and started telling everyone that it was getting late and he had some things to do. One by one they left. The party was over, for that night. ☺



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY BOB

What's on this month's very special free CD...

T O MARK Dylan's 70th, we thought we'd put together our own *Theme Time*-style CD on the subject of parties, birthdays and general celebration, spiced with a handful of appropriate covers from the great man's own songbook. Enjoy!

1 THE TUNE WEAVERS

Happy, Happy Birthday Baby
We kick off Bob's million dollar bash with a song he might've enjoyed on his 16th, back in '57, when this made one-hit wonders out of Margo Sylvia & Gilbert Lopez and their doo-wop group.

2 ROBYN HITCHCOCK & THE VENUS 3

Not Dark Yet
"The greatest song ever written about growing old," according to Emmylou Harris, given a wonderfully world-weary treatment by Hitchcock and the Venus 3, featuring Peter Buck.

3 WANDA JACKSON

Let's Have A Party
"Elvis recorded this before Wanda did, but you can give me Wanda's version any day," Bob said when he played this on his *Theme Time Radio Hour*.

4 KATHY YOUNG & THE INNOCENTS

Happy Birthday Blues
Young was just 15 when she recorded this in '61. The Californian singer later moved to London, where she married John Walker of The Walker Brothers.

5 NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS

Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again
Memphis legend Jim Dickinson (who played on Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind*), suggested this arrangement to his sons Luther and Cody from his hospital bed, shortly before his death in 2009. "He couldn't talk so he wrote it down on a piece of paper," according to Cody.

6 BUDDY KNOX
Party Doll

Another song Bob might've heard on his sweet 16th, when Knox – who hailed from a tiny Texan farming town named Happy – hit the charts with this hymn to teen innocence.

7 SUFJAN STEVENS

Happy Birthday
"Keep your proverbs short and sweet" Stevens [below] advises with Dylanesque wisdom on this simple slice of acoustic charm from his debut album, *A Sun Came!*, recorded in '98 when he was still in college and playing with folk band Marzuki.



11 THE INNOCENCE MISSION
Happy Birthday

Husband-and-wife Karen and Don Peris recorded this birthday lullaby on 2007's *We Walked In Song*. According to Karen, the band are currently recording a children's album.

12 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

Lisa's Birthday
"Lisa's had more birthdays than there are sad country songs/ About trying to love two women and only taking one girl home..." Mike Cooley wrote this twanging classic for 2008's *Brighter Than Creation's Dark*.

13 THE CRESTS

16 Candles
The New York doo-woppers took this high in the *Billboard* chart in 1959. The song was covered by Bobby Vee, with whom Dylan briefly played piano.

14 HANK WILLIAMS

Next Sunday Darlin' Is My Birthday
In *Chronicles*, Dylan eulogised Williams as the creator of "the archetype rules of poetic songwriting". Even though Bob turns 70 on a Tuesday and Hank didn't actually write this one, we still couldn't resist.

15 OKKERVIL RIVER

Your Past Life As A Blast
Mainman Will Sheff is a huge Dylan fan, although as far as we know he didn't write this for Bob. This reminded us of "Series Of Dreams", and if anybody's past has been a blast...

16 SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR

Forever Young
If our favourite Dylan cover out of Africa was Youssou N'Dour's "Chimes Of Freedom", it's now got a rival in this lovely take on a song reputedly written for the Bob's then three-year-old son Jakob in 1973.