

# **Homer, the slut**

Issue One  
August 1990





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## Welcome to.....Homer, the slut

Yes, just what you've been waiting for another 'zine on the Zim. Well, it keeps me off the streets and, hopefully, there are some of you out there, who, like me, can't get too much.

Having decided that this was the case, I was then faced with the problem of what to put in to avoid duplicating the excellent work of *The Telegraph*, *RTS* and *ISIS*. One difference is that this can be much more informal, more of a personalzine.

For this first issue at least I decided to split the 'zine into sections. These being:

### FOCUS ON:

A collection of various views and facts focussing on one song. In this case, *It Ain't Me Babe*.

### LONG BORING ARTICLE

((c) *ISIS* Revisited):

In this case *SAVED* looked at in 1980 and 1990.

### SOME OTHER KINDS OF SONGS:

I remember a Dylan 'zine (was it *Ramblin' On* or an early *Isis* ?) claiming people would be interested in articles on other artists. We shall see! Lou Reed's *NEW YORK* kicks off.

### BITS 'N' BOBS:

A rag bag collection of my ramblings, with an eye on what *Isis*, *RTS* and the *Telegraph* are up to, plus miscellaneous cuttings.

Each section will be individually numbered and may conclude in the next issue.

The following table is an effort to introduce myself without being too boring; since first writing this my strongest tippie has become *Fullers Low Alcohol*....

## THE IMMATERIAL WORLD

Food	Drink	TV	Films (non-D)
1. Indian	Murphys	The Flintstones	Harvey
2. Chinese	Guinness	Brideshead Revisited	The Deer Hunter
3. Italian	Ram & Special	Hill St. Blues	ET
4. Dime Bars	Ruddles County	(old) Dr. Who	Once Upon A Time In America
Sport	Authors	Poets (non-D)	Films (Dylan)
1. Football	Dostoyevsky	Shakespeare	Renaldo & Clara
2. Football	Philip K.Dick	Blake	Don't Look Back
3. Football	J.R.R. Tolkien	Burns	Eat The Document
4. Football	My Dad	Wordsworth (young)	Pat Garret & Billy The Kid





**IT  
AIN'T ME  
BABE**



**BIOGRAPH:****IT AIN'T ME BABE Recorded in New York City 6/64**

"I wrote that song in Italy," said Dylan, "and I wrote GIRL FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY in Italy too and maybe BOOTS OF SPANISH LEATHER. I went there after doing some shows in England. I'd gone there to get away for awhile." IT AIN'T ME BABE remains one of Dylan's most famous, and most durable, songs. The Turtles recorded a hit version in 1966. Years later, Dylan would add lyrics and perform an updated version on The Rolling Thunder Revue. This recording is the stripped down original, the version that guitar teachers still teach their budding students.

**Wilfrid Mellers**

Dylan seeks escape from any human relationship that threatens his personal integrity. These songs are not really cruel, because he is asking the other person not to fear self knowledge.....IT AIN'T ME BABE, ...dismissive in that he refuses to allow the girl's self-regarding love to engulf him, disarms through its lyricism and chuckles through its internal rhymes. Here Dylan's irony laughs rather than blisters, and laughter can be a great healer.

.....

(Talking of BEFORE THE FLOOD =) Songs from various periods of Dylan's career are re-created with a forward-looking, forward-thrusting drive liberated by The Band. IT AIN'T ME, BABE becomes not merely a cheeky woman-rejecting number, but a positive celebration of freedom, chortling in cock-a-hoop abandon.

**John Herdman**

There are a number of songs of the period up to BLONDE ON BLONDE which present, with varying degrees of irony and from differing vantage points such a sane man's view of finished, dying or unpromising relationships.....IT AIN'T ME BABE is a warning off song, aimed at discouraging a starry-eyed admirer.....There is certainly an element of hardness in these songs which can look like cruelty:

*Go melt back into the night, babe,  
Everything inside is made of stone.  
There's nothing in here moving  
An' anyway I'm not alone.*

In neither song is Dylan putting someone down; rather he is advising them to "think positively", in a way which implies a genuine concern.....

**Anthony Scaduto**

IT AIN'T ME BABE tells Suze and all women that the search for an illusory Hollywood-romantic love, for someone who will die for her, who will pick her up each time she falls, a lover "for your life, has turned him to stone because he cannot fulfil such terms.

Michael Gray

When we come to Dylan's more concentrated and sustained expressions of this same theme, of this negative-positive moral, we find, I think, that their plausibility derives from their being always addressed to a particular woman or specific entanglements of which the narrator understands the full worth. It is never, in Dylan's hands, a merely boastful theme - never a Papa Hemingway conceit, an I'm-too-hot-to-hold bravado. The opposite impulse, the desire to stay and be entangled, is always felt to be present, though it cannot (until Nashville Skyline) win. We have this formula in DON'T THINK TWICE, IT'S ALL RIGHT, from the second Dylan album, a song based, for its tune, on Johnny Cash's composition UNDERSTAND YOUR MAN:

*I'm a-thinkin' and a-wonderin', all the way down the road,  
I once loved a woman-a child, I am told:  
I gave her my heart but she wanted my soul  
But don't think twice, it's all right.*

The same integrity of spirit underlies the 1964 song IT AIN'T ME, BABE:

*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, no it ain't me, babe,  
It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe.*

In the first of those two examples, there is a hint of direct reproach, yet the narrator's own doubts give this a redressing balance. The title line is, in that verse of the song, deliberately addressed to the narrator himself. In the second example above, doubt is unnecessary because behind the narrator's careful assessment of the woman involved there is an element of compassion for her needs, and a consequent determination on his part to acquit himself fairly.

.....that chorused "No, no, no" ..... includes a passing reference to that once-famous "Yeah, yeah, yeah" in the Beatles' song SHE LOVES YOU. If IT AIN'T ME BABE reverses SHE LOVES YOU, there's no reason why TONIGHT I'LL BE STAYING HERE WITH YOU should not depend on a reversal of the theme of IT AIN'T ME BABE.

When I first heard IT AIN'T ME BABE I specially liked that line "A lover for your life and nothing more" because in pop songs there never was anything more: to be "a lover for your life" was the ultimate ideal. For me, then, IT AIN'T ME BABE was good in the context of this contrast:.....





Jim Brady

The sleeve note sets the mood for these songs associating love's possessiveness with selfishness and egotism, with the "prison" image conveying how limiting and stultifying 'love' can be:

*I have seen what i've loved slip away and vanish.  
I still love what i've lost  
but t' run  
an' try t' catch it 'd  
be very greedy  
for the rest of my life  
i will never chase a livin' soul  
into the prison grasp  
of my own self-love*

The language of this extract is also typical of the directness and simplicity of these songs (only the versification, the slightly mannered colloquialism and the omission of capital letters distinguishes it from an ordinary prose statement in fact) although it is rather less economical, lacking the vibrancy of ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO and the arresting immediacy of IT AIN'T ME BABE; Michael Gray's comparison of the latter's opening to Donne's characteristic tone is not unreasonable,

*Go away from my window  
Leave at your own chosen speed  
I'm not the one you want, babe,  
I'm not the one you need*

Both songs satirise the impulse to 'know' someone absolutely and finally.....With IT AIN'T ME BABE the tone is harsher but the would be 'lover' is all the more predatory and restrictive and rejection of her is all the more important if the narrator is to be 'true to his own self'. This 'narrator' raises two digressionary points. Firstly, the question of whether he is simply an autobiographical projection of the artist, which is I think, unimportant, since there is no sense of artistic detachment, no irony to suggest that the author does not fully endorse this character's views. The second question is over his alienation; these songs might be criticised in that their 'hero' is always rejecting, never rejected. The sleeve note quoted earlier belies this however, as does the implicit tenderness of this song's chorus:

*But it ain't me, Babe  
No, no, no, it ain't me babe  
It ain't me you're looking for babe.*

The protestation there - in "But" and the repetition of "no, no, no", - suggests regret rather than callousness over the pain that he has to cause and he is sensitive, gentle and humble in its rejection. As in ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO this song delivers a double warning; that you should be neither victim nor agent of people who want to "categorise" and restrict your own unique development. The second verse puts this quite specifically:

*You say you're lookin' for someone  
Who will promise never to part,  
Someone to close his eyes for you,  
Someone to close his heart*

The implicit conclusion is of course someone to close his mind for this is the essence of her demands (as Dylan sees it) and the narrator, true to his own self development, refuses to commit the cardinal Lawrentian sin of emotional dishonesty and falsity to life. Dylan's reasons for rejecting the conventional and superficial notions of romantic love are substantial; the final verse contains another summary of these reasons:

*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' nothin' more.*

The final line puts this line about self-determination succinctly; the irony of "nothing more" refers not only to the impossibly absolute demands of the lover but also to the fate of the narrator; if he gives in he will be her lover and "nothing more" and he will have 'lost' his own personality. His alienation then reveals not selfishness but a healthy regard for his inner being and for the misconceptions (as he sees them) of others. These songs are not so much 'anti-love' as anti-stasis or anti-rigidity. (Dylan later affirms 'love' in any case, for instance he wrote:

*Love is all there is  
It makes the world go round  
Love and only love it can't be denied.*

and although that is a pastiche the sentiment is so prevalent in his later writing that it is clearly genuine). Dylan desires freedom not out of any juvenile irresponsibility but out of a genuine concern that 'love' - in this form - will involve closing his mind and all of the simplification and denial of feeling which that entails; the prime directive in these songs as in all of his work is that people should, as Lawrence wrote, "be true to their own variation".

### **Robert Shelton**

The album (*ASOBD*) closes with the well known IT AIN'T ME BABE, a catalog of love's burden's. Stelzig sees this song and DON'T THINK TWICE,.. as reflections of the "Female Will" that Blake attacked in his proverb from ETERNITY:

*He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy,*

although Dylan has just claimed that even winged birds aren't free.  
(BALLAD IN PLAIN D).

If, as Bill King maintains, "Dylan used the love song to speak metaphorically about human relationships in general," this song, a rejection of the mythology of true love, could also represent Dylan's rejection of the audience's demands.

Paul Williams

A lot of the songs on *ASOBD* are sung to women (ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO, IT AIN'T ME BABE) or are about women (I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, BALLAD IN PLAIN D) or both SPANISH HARLEM INCIDENT, TO RAMONA). Whereas Dylan's earlier love songs have mostly been romantic ones, these new songs express a strong sexuality - clearly the person writing and singing them is sexually active and quite caught up in the push-pull of desire and of sexual union and separation. You can hear in his voice that he's available. You know from the speed with which he enters and leaves the room that he's looking for something.

.....

This phenomenon of people acting on their feelings of closeness to Dylan was already part of Dylan's everyday life by 1965, sometimes sweet, often tedious, and sometimes very scary. He know doubt was already thinking of IT AIN'T ME BABE as a song to his audience as well as boy-to-girl when he recorded it; over the years that aspect of it has become more and more important, and he sings it at times like a prayer to the world to leave him alone: "*it ain't me you're looking for.*" But of course he's also out there singing "*Ramona, come closer*" as well.

Alan Rinzler

Once again, Dylan has selected the final song on the album to sum it all up. IT AIN'T ME BABE is loosely based on the old folk song made famous by Burl Ives.....Remember ?

*Go way from my window, go way from my door  
Go way, way, way from my bedside....  
and bother me no more.*

In Dylan's version, however, he turns a lover's farewell into something far more meaningful: a kind of existential declaration of independence. He's not only high tailin' it away from whatever woman this is meant for, but from us; his adoring audience, as well:

*You say you're lookin' for someone  
Never weak but always strong.....  
Someone to open each and every door....  
But it ain't me, babe...  
It ain't me you're looking for babe.*

"No, no, no," he cries. And what a powerful no, what a chant, what a prayer. And that's the point of the album. I'm not what you want, Dylan says. I'm not your leader, your prophet-hero, I'm not your leader, I'm not a public-politico-protestor. I'm not-not-not, leave me alone!

# *It ain't me babe*

GREAT ARTISTS SING THE SONGS OF BOB DYLAN





Dylan's performance is so strong, so convincing, that we want to identify with him. The song becomes yet another sort of anthem, a personal proclamation of freedom; leave *us* alone, we won't be chained down either. Each of us can recognize ourselves in this situation: in relation to our parents, teachers, lovers, in reaction to the expectations of convention. It's not *us*, either, whatever you expected or wanted or needed, we can't provide it: "No, no, no..."

### **Maurice Capel**

...There is a third movement in Dylan's approach: the autobiographical attempt at describing his own identity and the painting of the collective and historical context are brought together in songs of decision-making, of choice and resolve. This last movement inspired IT AIN'T ME BABE, IT'S ALL OVER NOW, BABY BLUE, RESTLESS FAREWELL, TO RAMONA, MY BACK PAGES and DON'T THINK TWICE, IT'S ALL RIGHT. The third group is probably the most important of Dylan's many-sided output. For, within these songs, the individual faces head-on the tragic ambiguity of human relationships, the essential knot to be cut if freedom is to be saved. IT AIN'T ME BABE casts away an over-possessive woman....

...Dylan is always on the look-out for the alienating powers of society. To behave as he is expected to, even in the privacy of an affair, is for him the beginning of bourgeois enslavement and the germ of all potential crimes. The supreme betrayal is the betrayal against the individual, who must never be taken for granted. 'Neither slave nor master' could be Dylan's motto: better one's own chaos than anyone else's order. Fear of becoming a square is at the heart of IT AIN'T ME BABE and DON'T THINK TWICE, IT'S ALL RIGHT. Torn between sensual raptures and his passion to be free, Dylan's impact in these songs is made by the necessity of taking the next step. Freedom has to win, to ensure the possibility of the next rapture.

### **Jonathon Cott**

...And along with this changing appearance came the radically changed type of love song that he began to sing in the early Sixties - songs that broke the stereotyped mould of boy-pleads-for-girl-for-ever-and-ever lyric. Dylan's idea was to send the girl brazenly and straightforwardly on her way (IT AIN'T ME BABE, ALL I REALLY WANT TO DO, MOST LIKELY YOU GO YOUR WAY). In 1978 Dylan told an interviewer that when he had composed these earlier love songs, he was "writing more about objection, obsession or rejection." But out of these states and feelings Dylan created an art that in its supposed negativity revealed an awareness of the illusions of possessive love....

### **Clinton Heylin**

...Indeed the break up (with Suze Rotolo) is a 'major theme' of ...*ASOBD* with songs like IT AIN'T ME BABE and TO RAMONA seemingly written specifically for Suze.

Michael Gross

..the gauntlet Dylan was throwing down to the world that summer and fall. Not a recounting of, or reaction to, the death of his affair with Suze...IT AIN'T ME BABE, soon to be a hit by the Turtles, was Dylan's declaration of his freedom to ramble, from folk, from Baez, from the little things or the big things - like the expectations of the audience. He was his own man and he'd damn well pursue his own course. Follow at your own risk, he warned.

Stephen Pickering

(ON 3/1/74, CHICAGO CONCERT).

Dylan steps forth out of dimness...his voice slower...IT AIN'T ME BABE...dualism...she is looking for only impossibilities..*"to open each and every door"*.....But it's not the poet's task to enslave his heart...his voice lingers over each situation, then snaps us back to reality.

(ON 4/1/74, CHICAGO CONCERT).

...Turns, guitar held to his side, his eyes glinting in the bright lights...IT AIN'T ME BABE....evocation of David - Martin Buber's *Daniel* - the rungs of consciousness...The precision of The Band-their love of spiritual tonality is moving....*"gather flowers constantly"*...Deserted dreams, betrayed trust...Do fishermen still hold flowers on Desolation Row ?

(ON 6/1/74, PHILADELPHIA CONCERT).

....Dylan leaning over, choosing songs from a long list lying on his stool...IT AIN'T ME BABE....lyrical harshness, the realization of the necessity of freedom, of release...

(ON 30/1/74, NEW YORK CONCERT).

(moving from RAINY DAY WOMEN...) Dylan turns, his legs spread apart, plays for those in back of him in the distant balconies and levels below, nodding and smiling....IT AIN'T ME BABE....atmosphere is softer..."your own chos-sen speed"...Dylan bites out the challenges - "you say you're look-in!"...a lov-er for your life and nothing more!"...

David Pichaske

...We are all pawns, Dylan had already realized; now he proceeds to the corollary: are we not hypocritical in denying "the foe's" essential humanity, and perhaps a bit stupid in thinking we'll bludgeon him into submission? That attitude permeates this album (*ASOBD*)..... IT AIN'T ME BABE might have been written to the audience at the Tom Paine Award dinner.

J R Stokes

(Writing of HERO BLUES.....) Dylan seems to be drawing attention here to the absolute pointlessness dying for someone else.....Dylan had already declared that he certainly wasn't prepared to comply with the girl's demands, for, earlier in the song, he spurns her by confirming:

*You need a different kind of man, babe.  
One that can grab and hold your heart.*

The echoes of this rejection can be heard in a song that Dylan performed for the first time over a year later on May 17th 1964 at the Royal Festival Hall in London. Singing perhaps to another girl who was looking for someone with the qualities of a hero, someone who is "never weak but always strong, to protect you an' defend you whether you are right or wrong," and "someone who will die for you an' more"; he adamantly declares:

*It ain't me, Babe  
No, no, no, it ain't me babe  
It ain't me you're looking for babe.*

## Recording Details

Biograph has the date of composition as June '64; but *Stolen Moments* has Dylan unveiling it at a London concert on 17/5/64. I know which one I believe...

Another Side Of Bob Dylan	CBS 62429	Released 8/8/64. <sup>1</sup> Recorded at Columbia Studios, NYC, New York, 9/6/64.
One Too Many Mornings EP	CBS EP 6070	Timed at 3.30
Biograph	CBS 66509	Released 4/9/1985. (From Another Side Of Bob Dylan). Timed at 3.29.
Before The Flood	Asylum S-201	Released 20/6/74 From Forum, L.A. 14/2/74 (evening)
All Along The Watchtower	???	B-side of single, as above.
Renaldo & Clara promo EP	AS 422	IAMB is from Cambridge, 20/9/75.
Real Live	CBS 26334	Released 29/9/84 IAMB is from Wembley, London 7/7/84.

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This section will be concluded in issue two with: tour details, live performances, my own views and favourite performances and hopefully yours.

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<sup>1</sup> 10th of August according to *Biograph*.

Go 'way from my window,  
Leave at your own chosen speed.  
I'm not the one you want, babe,  
I'm not the one you need.  
You say you're lookin' for someone  
Never weak but always strong,  
To protect you an' defend you  
Whether you are right or wrong,  
Someone to open each and every door,  
But it ain't me, babe,  
No, no, no it ain't me, babe,  
It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe.

Go lightly from the ledge, babe,  
Go lightly on the ground.  
I'm not the one you want, babe,  
I will only let you down.  
You say you're lookin' for someone  
Who will promise never to part,  
Someone to close his eyes for you,  
Someone to close his heart,  
Someone who will die for you an' more,  
But it ain't me, babe,  
No, no, no, it ain't me, babe,  
It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe.

Go melt back into the night, babe,  
Everything inside is made of stone.  
There's nothing in here moving  
An' anyway I'm not alone.  
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, no, it ain't me, babe,  
It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe.

{WRITINGS AND DRAWINGS}.



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## INTRO

This sections consists of an article I wrote in 1980 following the release of *Saved* and my feelings and thoughts towards the album ten years later. The original article - thankfully not published, due to the folding of the magazine it was intended for - was written for a 'non-specifically-Dylan' readership. My view of the album has altered drastically.

So what has changed ? Me, obviously. Where once I was closed to the album because of its message now I can listen to it more objectively. A decade later I'm not so quick to criticise.

Much of the 1980 part I now find acutely embarrassing; it is so palpably the reaction of someone who feels *hurt* or betrayed, someone who never paid attention to Dylan's most important admonitions, "Don't follow leaders". I even let my disappoint cloud other works - I think a lot more of, say, *Nashville Skyline* than I indicate here.

But other things have changed too. Dylan has had a roller coaster decade with some painful lows (Live Aid) but with marvellous highs (*Infidels*, *Oh Mercy*, The Never Ending Tour); my fears that Dylan would never move me again proved utterly unfounded.

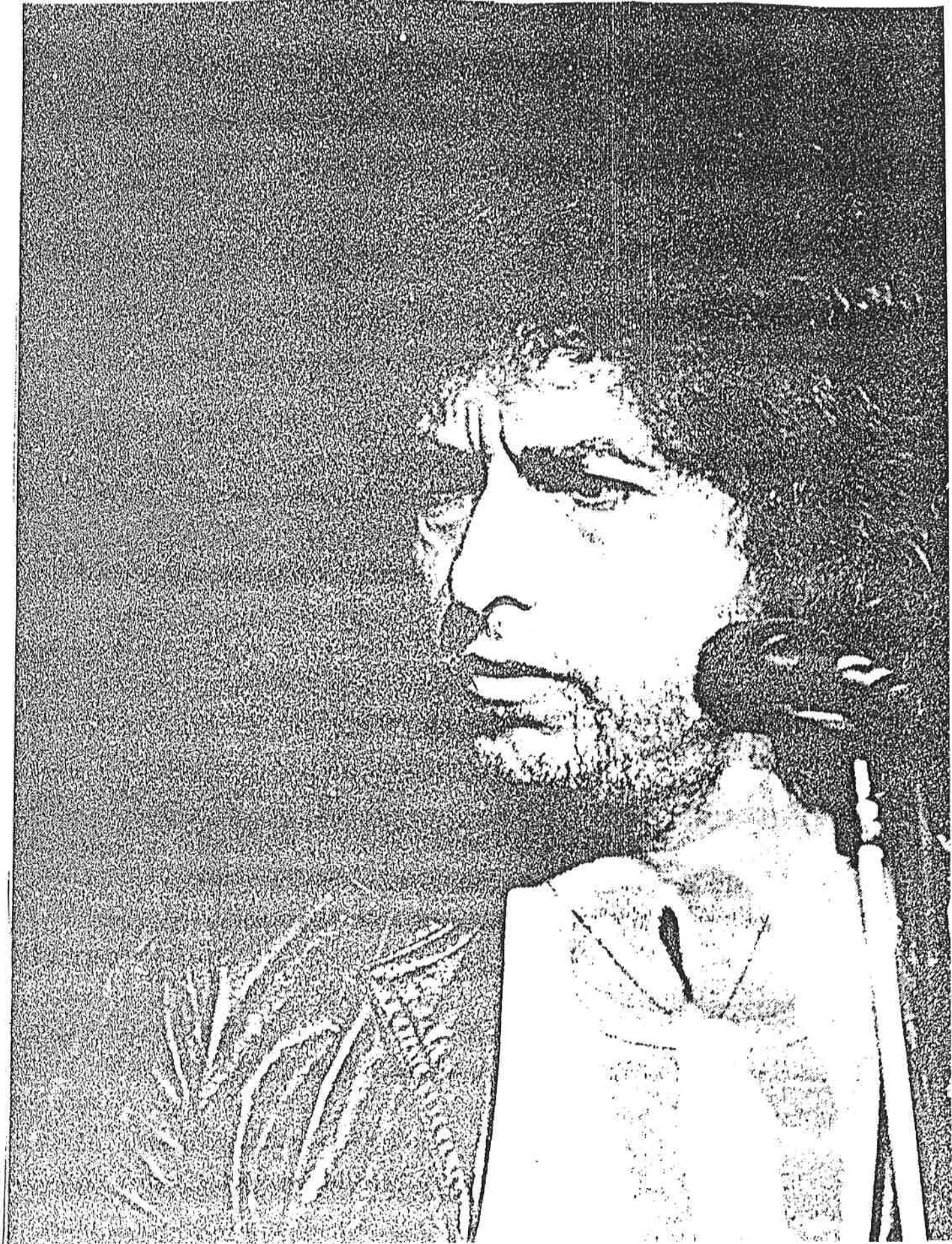
Still I would have agreed with my summing up re the loss of mystery, ambiguity etc. being a killer blow to Dylan's if *Saved* was the only thing to go by. However, soon after writing the original article a succession of events changed my outlook.

Seeing the man himself on the 1981 tour when he half-heartedly tossed in some crowd pleasers but sung his newer material the way that only he can, moved my heart and allayed all my fears. The artist standing up there singing *I Believe In You* was the powerful artist I'd always admired and loved in all his glory. I was glad for him.

Eventually I got a tape of a full 1979 concert, more were to follow. If only we had got a "live *Saved*", as the man himself had wanted, taken from these shows ! I would have been shouting the greatness of the album from the rooftops.

Also there was the "third in the Christian trilogy" (not a description I'm overly fond of) *Shot Of Love*. I remember buying this the day it came out in Glasgow and going to the nearest house I knew where I could play it. I was at Jim Brady's (see IT AIN'T ME, BABE), the man who had given me loads of Dylan bootlegs to tape but who had scorned Dylan since 1978.

By the time the first verse of the wonderful *Property Of Jesus* was fading, Jim was on his way to the nearest record shop.





NO SAVING GRACES IN DYLAN'S SALVATION TRAIL

*For now he raved enormous folly,  
Of Baptisms, Sunday-schools and  
Graves,  
'Twould make George Colman  
melancoly,  
To have heard him, like a male Molly,  
Chanting those stupid staves.*

**SHELLEY: PETER BELL THE THIRD.**

Shelley's castigating and sorrowful lines on the later Wordsworth would serve well as a comment on the second 'born again' offering from Bob Dylan.

Artists should have freedom to change and should not be shackled by audience expectation. Bob Dylan has well exemplified the changing artist.

On the other hand, change should not be accepted uncritically; bad art is not validated simply by change.

Assuming the critic's task to be, broadly, the examination of what the artist says, how he says it, and was it worth the saying, it becomes clear that the 'new' Dylan is not only 'raving enormous folly' but is doing so in 'stupid staves'.

Prior to an examination of the last two albums, however, it is important to set the perspective through a brief outline of Dylan's career. In this manner we can see some of the reasons behind Dylan's conversion to a fundamentalist religion.

I wish to highlight the first two themes separately from my central debate, since they support my thesis while standing outside the main flow of my argument.

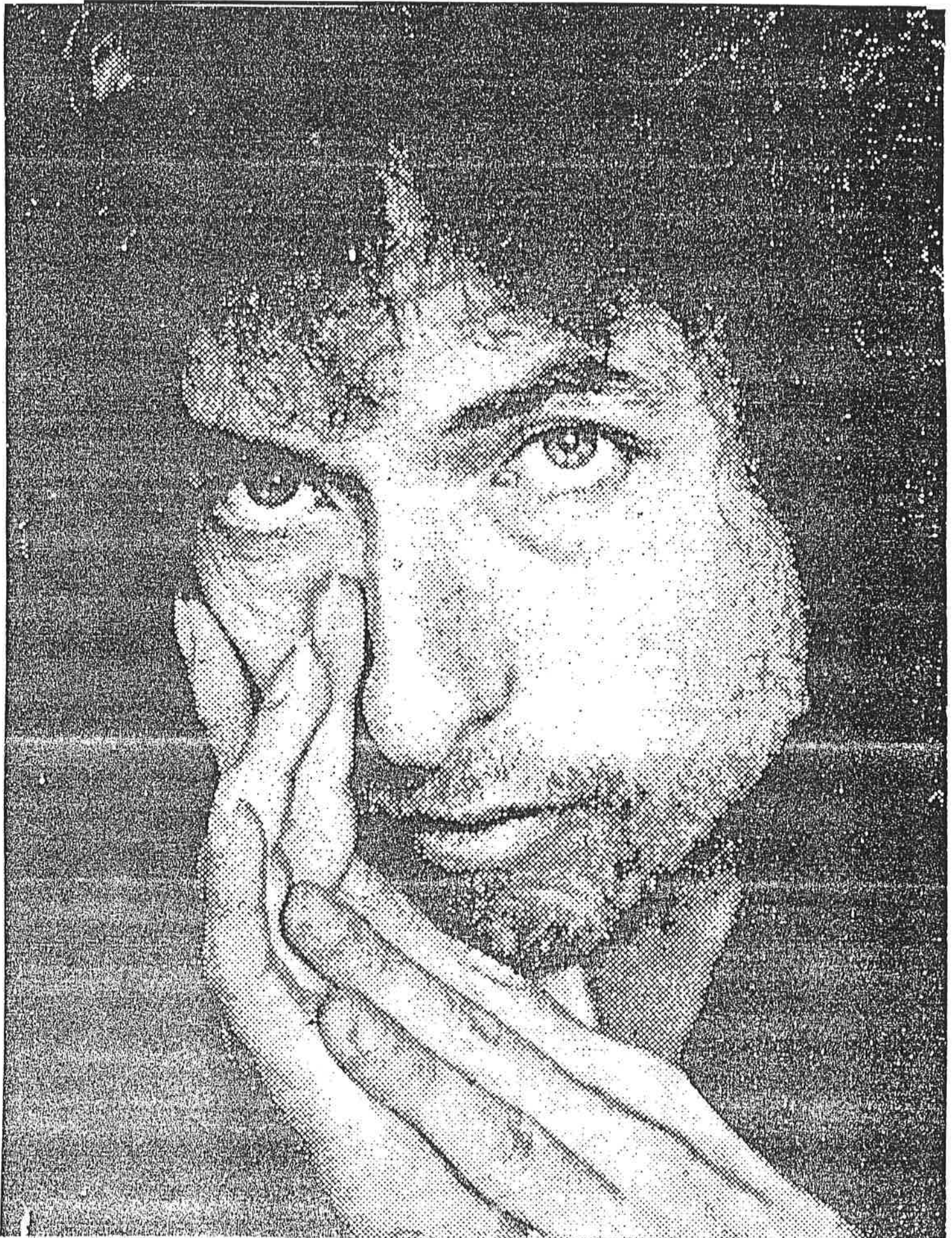
Firstly, the theme of 'rebirth' - though never in so literal a manner as now - has played an important part in Dylan's career. It is a vehicle he uses to express: liberating escape, moving on, further enlightenment, artistic progress.

In *My Back Pages* the rebirth is presented as an event in the development of the artist. Dylan deprecates himself for his naive portrayal of easy political answers in a world he had viewed in a simplistic good v. evil perspective:

*Half-wracked prejudice leaped forth  
'Rip down all hate,' I screamed  
Lies that truth is black and white  
Spoke from my skull. I dreamed  
Romantic facts of musketeers  
Foundationed deep, somehow.*

Each verse ends with a neat expression of rebirth:

*Ah, but I was so much older then,  
I'm younger than that now.*



I shall develop this theme more fully later, when it ties in with the rediscovery of the searching spirit. (Key songs include *Tangled Up In Blue* and *Where Are You Tonight ? (Journey Through Dark Heat)*.)

The second theme, fear of death, is also prevalent in Dylan's work. This can be seen almost obsessively in his early repertoire. The first album alone contains: *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*, *In My Time Of Dyin'* and *Fixin' To Die*.

Through the sixties, until his near fatal motor-cycle accident, it was commonly felt that Dylan was on a death trip - travelling ever faster to a James Dean/Jesus Christ ending. The following three quotes testify to the strength of this feeling.

Joan Baez:

"Bobby may be on a death trip.....I always pictured Bobby with a skull and cross-bones on his head." [1]

An Australian Actress (1966):

"I came to believe that Dylan was Christ revisited. I felt that everything fitted, without being Christian-religious or anything, I felt that what he had to say about living and communication with people was the truest, most honest and most Christ-like thing I've ever heard. I began to feel that Dylan was sacrificing himself in his whole philosophy, his thinking. That he would eventually die or that something horrible would happen to him. I felt it physically, I felt it strongly. I must have been going slightly unhinged. But I know that other people felt that Dylan was Christ revisited, sacrificing himself. Adrian Rawlings came to that conclusion the same time I did. Other people felt it." [2]

Anthony Scaduto:

"(This feeling).....that he was a Christ offering himself up for sacrifice, had been communicated to Dylan over and over again in the previous year or two, and it terrified him. He had always dwelt on death, as far back as his first album....James Dean could not be dismissed from the memory, nor could his brush with death back in Hibbing when he was on his motorcycle and the train almost killed him, or when he knocked down a child with his bike. Death was personally close to him at this time... (1966)..Richard Farina had been killed in a motorcycle accident. Paul Clayton committed suicide the April before Dylan's accident, jumping out of the window after a three day L.S.D. trip. Peter La Farge had committed suicide. Death lurked all around." [3]

Just how far death and Dylan were linked is shown in Don McLean's *American Pie* where Dylan appears in a "coat he borrowed from James Dean."

An identification with Christ is another recurring feature of Dylan's output. An attempted rejection of this occurs in the moving *I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine* when he sings:

*No martyr is amongst ye now  
Whom you can call your own*

Concerning this theme see, especially, *Shelter From The Storm*.

Religion obviously alleviates the major fears of death. Being one of the elect qualifies Dylan for a place in the great C.B.S. home in the sky. In addition, his religious conversion does not necessarily nullify Dylan's Christ identification. In *I Believe In You* Dylan is both martyr and a disciple of Jesus.

The central point I wish to state is that Dylan's career has shown the main traits of Romantic artists for centuries; and that his conversion to religion is in keeping with a long tradition.

In psychological terms much of Dylan's work and personality (until recently) placed him in what has been called the matrist category; in artistic terms he inclines to the Romantic. The two share many of the same characteristics. I am not claiming that to thus categorise an artist is necessarily beneficial, and I do not intend to explain my view of Dylan's art by rigid classifications.

However, we can use such categorisation in a beneficial manner by refraining from the imposition of generalisations; and, instead, use the group of Romantic and Matrist tendencies to provide a basis from which to develop a study of an individual.

Dylan's career betrays many of the main tendencies of the Romantic. Although he played Rock and Roll at school it was through the folk scene that he first rose to prominence. Singing in the folk and blues traditions, Dylan made his mark as a Wandering, Woody Guthrie-type, figure. (Mostly based on elaborate lies). He quickly developed into the Prince of Protest singers. The use of old ballads and the adolescent reaction against society correspond with the Romantic/matrist prototype:

*Dissatisfaction with the world as it is is felt especially by the young, encountering reality for the first time and finding that life falls far behind one's most generous ideals.[4]*

It is also at this time that we come face-to-face with one of Dylan's most crucial themes. That of the wanderer/searcher experiencing life to the full and then continuing on down the road. Images to this are so pervasive in his early period that quoting them is pointless. They occur in classics like *Don't Think Twice It's All Right* and a whole category of songs about roving characters - (succinctly put in the title, *Ramblin', Gamblin' Willie*) - on the road, taking chances, living day by day and moving on.

The image is still as strong as ever on *Tangled Up In Blue* (1974):

*Me, I'm still on the road  
Headin' for another joint  
We always did feel the same  
We just saw it from another  
Point of view....*

This is why themes of rejection and rediscovery are so prevalent in Dylan's work: they are a concomitant to the idea of leaving one place/state for another.

The rebirth theme I have already touched upon, when coupled with rejection its importance increases.







It is worth remembering that *The Times They Are A-Changin'* album ends with *Restless Farewell*; a farewell to past life and loves, and the folk world. (Or, more specifically, the protest movement).

The succeeding album ended with *It Ain't Me Babe*; a song rejecting a woman specifically but in effect everyone who attempts to hold back or limit the individual self.

The following album again finishes with a song of rejection, *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*. A more complex song which sees Dylan moving on to liberation and fulfilment through the medium of rock music.

Explorations of society, self, sex, love, drugs and dreams poured out of Dylan in an exhilarating stream. It was through his mid-sixties rock that Dylan attained his most sustained artistic peak, climaxing in the famous Albert Hall 1966 concert, truly the apex of rock music.

The opposite of these themes of rejecting, searching and exploration are to be found in the 1968 and 1973 (approximately) period. Dylan was now giving us albums of found love and security, ending in songs of acceptance and permanence.

*John Wesley Harding* ended with *I'll Be Your Baby, Tonight* and *Nashville Skyline* with *Tonight, I'll Be Staying Here With You*. A complete reversal of his old Robert Johnson/Woody Guthrie inspired railway songs:

*I can hear that whistle blowin',  
I see that station master, too,  
If there's a poor boy on the street,  
Then let him have my seat  
'Cause tonight I'll be staying here  
With you.*

*Throw my ticket out the window,  
Throw my suitcase out there, too,  
Throw my trouble out the door,  
I don't need them any more,  
'Cause tonight I'll be staying here with you.*

Up to this point the new, settled Dylan was still producing some of the best music of the time. True, it was no longer mind expanding rock, (the music also being more mellow and settled), but *John Wesley Harding*, an album of personal salvation, was superb; especially coming, as it did, at the height of hippy silliness and sub *Blonde On Blonde* offerings.

*Nashville Skyline* was a pleasant country album with a few great love songs.

Next, though, followed *Self Portrait* and *New Morning*. The former a collection of blandness from a cosy Mr. Dylan. The latter seemingly an attempt at answering the critics and re-asserting the "rebirth" theme is one of Dylan's poorest offerings. Perhaps the intentions were good and if we try hard we may convince ourselves that it is riddled with layers of irony. Perhaps. There is one verse, from *Sign On The Window* that sums up Bob Dylan, settled family man:

*Build Me a cabin in Utah,  
Marry me a wife, catch rainbow trout,  
have a bunch of kids who call me 'Pa',  
that must be what it's all about.....*

Resentment followed amongst Dylan followers (as it does through so much of his career). The most extreme feelings being summed up by Meltzer:

*Then there's the unreported deaths of Dylan and Lou Reed both of them dead TO THIS WORLD but for very different reasons. Bob's just a stiff, pure and simple, he's been that way since that mishap with the bike....Bobbo's in New York with Paul McCartney...it's the first recording between two official or unofficially dead guys on record. So it is about time for some of the fake deaths which have been officially reported to be revealed just like Paulie had the integrity to do.[5]*

Although Meltzer seems to have been correct concerning McCartney (we've suffered the decomposings ever since) he was some eight years early with his post-mortem on Dylan.

1974 saw a marvellous tour with the Band and *Planet Waves*, an album mainly celebrating the settled life:

*It's never been my duty  
To remake the world at large  
Nor is it my intention  
To sound the battle charge  
"Cos I love you more than all of that..*

But also revealing other emotions of dissatisfaction and pain as in the tortuous *Dirge*:

*I hate myself for lovin' you  
And the weakness that it showed  
You were just a painted face  
On a trip down suicide road...*

This was followed by *Blood On The Tracks*, the result of a split with his wife and, it is claimed, the reason for her temporary return. It is a marvellous album, possibly Dylan's greatest official record, full of pain, anguish, celebration and restlessness.

Since then, and especially after his divorce, Dylan seems to have been searching for something. Throughout the seventies he threw in the occasional protest song.

*Street Legal* reviewed, and dismissed, normal heterosexual relationships as the answer. It also stood as the climax of the worst of Dylan's mysticism, stooping to Tarot cards of all things.

Dylan, then, seems to have searched for many answers to his position in, and relation to, the world: political protest, self-exploration, a burning out, death trip that took him to the edge, a settled family life, mysticism and Tarot cards. None, however, have worked but at the end of *Street Legal* we are presented with a Dylan who "can't believe he's survived" who has "finally arrived".



His turning to religion should not be seen as too surprising, as Ayn Rand writes:

*".....some ended up where most champions of the non-rational end up: in religion. All of it served to accelerate Romanticism's growing break with reality." [6]*

Perhaps more surprising is the elitist and patriotic nature of his conversion. But this too is an old story again disappointingly repeated:

*"In addition, it would seem that the ego tends to harden with age as well as to become more patrist: Tennyson, for example, ended up as rather querulous. Wordsworth, who made a plea for universal education in his youth, ended by complaining that 'mechanics' institutes simply made 'discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptuous workmen', and later asked even more conservatively: 'Can it , in a general view, be good that an infant can learn much which its parents do not know?' Similarly Coleridge, a pantheist in his youth, finally abandoned poetry and believed the Bible the only revelation needed....."etc. [7]*

The searcher craves for certainty and security - nothing serves the purpose as well as a strict religion. Dylan's last two albums encapsulate the characteristics of a patrist: authoritarian, patriot, hierarchic, pessimistic, looking to the past and conservative.

*Slow Train Coming* was a total movement away from matrist tendencies. We were presented with Dylan the preacher. It has been said that a matrist is a 'be' person and a patrist a 'do' person. Dylan had always been concerned with being. In an interview in the sixties Dylan was asked to 'give advice' on life (a classic example of interviewing absurdity) and his answer was: 'just BE'. Now he was telling people what to do.

The actual singing on *Slow Train Coming* is excellent. Dylan has never sounded so Dylanesque! The only complaint on this score could be the overwhelming clarity and attractiveness, a loss of the old abrasiveness. This change has been successful before but the laid back backing from the Dire Strait's stable makes the overall effect lean towards bland F.M. radio. But, after all, the man is putting across a message and all must be subsumed to that end.

This album takes us right back to 'lies that truth is black and white'. Opening with *You Gotta Serve Somebody* ("it may be the devil or it may be the Lord"), Dylan tells us - all of us - that we must choose one or the other with no other options allowed. The theme is hammered home in the next track, *Precious Angel*:

*You either got faith or you got unbelief,  
There ain't no neutral ground...*

The track *Slow Train* itself brings out Dylan's patriotism. This is not new in Dylan (the Stars and Stripes backdrop in '66 and the moving *Tears Of Rage*) but previously it had been a meaningful extension of his art; now it is part of his whinings and demands:

*All that foreign oil controlling American soil  
Look around you, it's just bound to make you embarrassed.  
Sheiks walkin' around like kings, wearin' fancy jewels and nose rings,  
Deciding America's future from Amsterdam and Paris.*

An album, even one perpetrating hate-filled messages and warnings of damnation, should not be judged on 'message' alone. Dylan's voice makes up for a lot; added to this there are some biting lyrics/observations and a deal of wit and irony.

However the whole point of the clarity (almost to a point of blandness ?) of the album is to get the message across, and the message just gets worse. *When You Gonna Wake Up ?* has Dylan ranting again - judging and condemning. But his facile wording and oh-so-easy targets are painful to listen to:

*You got unrighteous doctors dealin' drugs  
That will never cure your ills.....*

*...You got men who can't hold their peace  
You got women who can't hold their tongues...*

The final track - a magnificent vocal performance - admonishes us: "Don't you burn." Cue Neil Young's piercing declaration: "It's better to burn out than it is to rust."

*Saved* was heralded as a great improvement: the reviews claimed that Dylan had moved away from hell-fire judgements to a celebration of his salvation.

I wish I could agree but I find that all the faults of *Slow Train Coming's* philosophy (sic) are still there; implicit rather than explicit. You are either saved or not; good or evil, black or white.

Musically and lyrically it is the low point of Dylan's career.

The album opens with Hayes and Rhodes's *A Satisfied Mind*, a song you may remember being covered by the Byrds. The backing singers Dylan has been using or the last few years reach their most gratingly obtrusive on this album. (Though they are only scarcely more grating than Dylan's, drawn out "mmmmmmmmms" and moans on this first track.)

The title track heralds what I find so detestable in Dylan's new view; the concept of the elect. It also seems to have now totally destroyed Dylan's writing ability, wit and irony. It begins:

*I was blinded by the devil  
Born already ruined  
Stone-cold dead  
As I stepped out from the womb  
But I've been saved (saved,saved,saved.....)  
Saved by the blood of the Lamb.*

The ridiculous view, later enlarged upon, of the preordination of the selected few and the many damned, has been satirised by many writers employing the irony of which Dylan was such an adept user. The literal absurdity of what Dylan is here propounding is devastatingly shown by Burns, in **HOLY WULLIE'S PRAYER**:

*When from my mither's womb I fell,  
Thou might hae plunged me deep in hell,  
To gnash my gnooms, and weep, and wail  
In burning lakes, Whare damned devils roar and yell,  
Chained to their stakes.  
Yet I am here, a chosen sample,  
To show thy grace is great and ample.*





Dylan elaborates his theme in *What Can I Do For You*, where he gives thanks for being "chosen among the few."

As usual with the elect, however, there is no justice involved:

*Well, I don't deserve it  
But I sure did make it through*

The rebirth theme is obviously central to the album; the Lord has, according to Dylan:

*...made me renewed inside  
filled a hunger that has always been denied...*

(*What Can I Do For You*)

It appears also in *Covenant Woman*:

*I've been broken, shattered like an empty cup,  
I'm just waitin on the Lord To rebuild and fill me up.  
I know that He will do it,  
'Cos He's faithful and He's true.  
He must have loved me Oh so much  
To send me someone as fine as you...*

*Solid Rock* ends the side: a frenetic, near unlistenable, track about Dylan "hanging on to a solid rock which was created long before the foundation of the world". The song consists of a series of endless repetitions and cliched claims of the Lord's virtues and achievements. It would simply be boring if it was not so actively bad.

Side Two opens with *Pressing On*, again consisting of endless repetitions and echoed lines, with a return of the martyr fixation as in *I Believe In You*. Religion as solving the 'problem' of death has already appeared:

*Who would deliver him from the death  
He is bound to die?  
Well you've done it all...*

It is returned to in *Saving Grace* :

*I've escaped death so many times  
I know I'm only living,  
By the saving grace that's over me.....*

Other tracks include the hackneyed *In The Garden*; and the last track, *Are You Ready*, wins the prize for being the most unlistenable track I've ever heard from the big Zim, somehow contriving to be worse than *Solid Rock*.

This article has unquestionably been mainly concerned with 'message'. Perhaps because I have not the sophistication to ignore perpetrations of damnation and self-righteous judgements. Perhaps because Dylan has become explicitly concerned with putting over a message.

The nature of his conversion has resulted in albums of weak music and poor lyrics. This is a result not only of his reversion to preaching 'lies that truth is black and white', but also the accompanying loss of the factors which made his work so great in the past. Dylan has moved to security and permanence to evade - as he puts it in *When He Returns* - living with "fears in the wilderness".

With the answer found there can be no more searching and questioning; with certainty discovered there is no ambiguity and tension. The loss of these latter two features is especially damaging, and that damage is compounded when mystery is also banished. ("You've explained every mystery..." *What Can I Do For You*). With no ambiguity, tension, mystery, wit or irony *Saved* becomes a progression of unconvincing, self-righteous demands and declarations. For those, like myself, who would hope for a resurgence in Dylan's work, (yet another 'rebirth') there appears little hope. Although the albums sound unconvincing to a listener, their extremity would point to Dylan remaining in the same mould with a satisfied mind and certain that he is right.

For Dylanologists, well you can always go back to the famous Playboy interview of 1966:

*PLAYBOY: You told an interviewer last year:*

*"I've done everything I ever wanted to". If that's true, what do you have to look forward to ?*

*DYLAN : Salvation. Just plain salvation.*

*PLAYBOY: Anything else?*

*DYLAN: Praying. I'd also like to start a cookbook magazine....."*

Well, a cookbook magazine by Dylan would really be something to look forward to..... However, I find the matter too serious to end on a flippant note. The final words, like the opening, I leave to Shelley:

*Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine  
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:  
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood  
Above the blind and battling multitude:  
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave  
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty, -  
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,  
Thus having been, that thou should'st Cease to be.*

**SHELLEY: TO WORDSWORTH 1815.**



Endnotes

- 1        Anthony Scaduto    Bob Dylan
- 2        Ibid
- 3        Ibid
- 4        Pelican Books        Rethink
- 5        Meltzer                No One Waved Goodbye
- 6        Ayn Rand               Essays In Romanticism
- 7        Pelican Books        Rethink



## A SATISFIED MIND

This now seems to me to be a perfect introduction to the album. Granted that when the song posits the difference between the materially rich and spiritually poor with the impoverished believers - the latter only have satisfied minds - it is difficult to believe Dylan singing: "I've lost every dime". However, without claiming literal veracity for the song, there is a sense in which Dylan has lost 'every dime' (a large chunk of his vast following, many 'so-called friends', and a great deal of the respect he'd spent 20 years accruing) so it's nice to know he's so happy within himself. His voice is superb on this track.

## SAVED

I still adhere to my earlier objection re the lyrical avowal of preordination. However that had blinded me to the superb driving music of the opening and the joyfulness of the thanks given to the Lord. If, like me, you haven't listened to the album for a while, put it on now and hark at the way he sings:

*And I'm so glad  
Yes I'm so glad  
Well I'm so glad  
So glad  
I want to thank you Lord  
Want to thank you, Lord,  
Thank you, Lord*

The structure leads to each statement being truncated to "So glad", "Thank you, Lord" and that says it all.

(Note that these lyrics are printed differently in *Lyrics*, losing their shape entirely).

It is interesting to hear Dylan sing:

*He bought me with a price,  
Freed me from the pit,....*

It takes you back to the end of *Street Legal* and:

*There's a white diamond gloom on the dark side of this room  
and a pathway that leads up to the stars.  
If you don't believe there's a price for this sweet paradise,  
remind me to show you the scars.*

There is a repeated theme running through Dylan's Christian albums that he was saved at the very last minute. It occurs here also :

*Nobody to rescue me,  
Nobody would dare,  
I was going down for the last time,....*

The music then build into a frenzy excitement, underlining Dylan's point. (The use of the word 'dare' is interesting too; why wouldn't anyone dare - were they frightened of his response ?!).



## COVENANT WOMAN

The title refers us back to the biblical quote on the inner sleeve:

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.*

JEREMIAH 31.31

This has a beautifully sung, stately opening. A description of a woman who has bound herself to the Lord and who will be rewarded in heaven for it. One of the things she affords Dylan is constancy:

*Covenant Woman, shining like a morning star,  
I know I can trust in you, to stay the way you are.*

(Note that these lyrics are also printed differently in *Lyrics*; the last line becoming: *I know I can trust you to stay where you are*. This suggests sloppiness rather than anything else to me.

The music then livens up as Dylan declares his intentions and thanks to her. Boy does he sound grateful!

The following lines echo the sentiments of *SAVED*, with Dylan having been saved at the last and waiting on his 'rebirth' to be complete:

*I've been broken, shattered like an empty cup,  
I'm just waiting on the Lord to rebuild and fill me up...*

Following this are my favourite two lines on the album, one of Dylan's best ever compliments:

*And I know that He will do it 'cause He's faithful and He's true,  
He must've loved me Oh so much to send me someone as fine as you.<sup>1</sup>*

The singing on this track is exemplary, and the stress on the Lord's constancy and the glorious warmth injected into 'fine' could not be conveyed by anyone else I've ever heard.

More thanks and compliments ensue with some marvellous organ and harmonica playing. The Covenant woman is depicted as an "intimate little girl" who knows the inner secrets of this most secretive man.

Kurt Loder, in *Rolling Stone*, claimed that :

*...the song is sunk when Dylan explains that among his reasons for loving this woman is the fact that she's 'got a contract with the Lord/ Way up yonder, great will be her reward'. He sounds like the kind of guy who counts the spiritual spoons behind her back.....*

<sup>1</sup> In *Lyrics* as:

*And I know He will do it 'cause He's faithful and He's true,  
He must have loved me so much to send me someone as fine as you.*  
Again the alterations have a lessening effect.

I feel that this is a harsh view of the song, after all it is her reward rather than Dylan's, which stresses the need for constant faithfulness. The financial tinge to the language - harking back to *A Satisfied Mind* - can, however, be off putting.

## WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU ?

This gives us lists of what the Lord has done for Dylan, followed by the question in the title. The answer is, on one hand, bugger all if he's thinking of giving anything to He who has provided so much, on the other to be 'faithful and true', to always remember that he's 'got a covenant too.'

Unfortunately we are again presented with the smug, undeserving, chosen few.

At first I found this song a bit flat - a common complaint against it if my memory serves me well - however, I've grown to like its dignity and the way he expresses the central question with open-eyed bewilderment (especially at the end) plus the harmonica is again very effective.

The third chorus is again quoted differently in *Lyrics* and yet again to poorer effect.

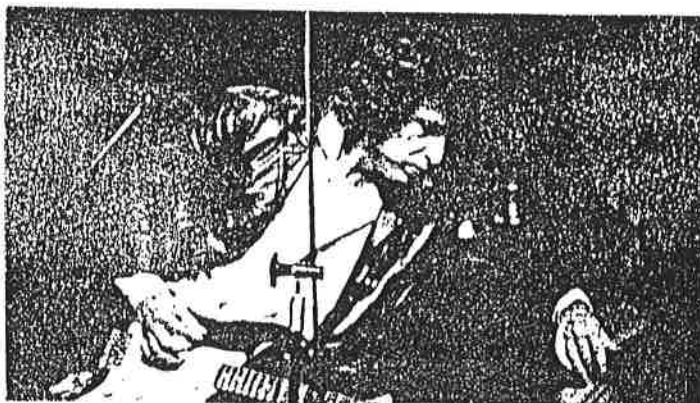
I'd love to hear this live, sandwiched between *What Good Am I* and *What Was It You Wanted*.

## SOLID ROCK

Driving solid rock indeed, but not to my taste this one. Again the theme of constancy and again a list of what the Lord has done for Dylan. Another theme, to be returned to in the next song, is the traditional one of flesh v. spirit:

*Its the ways of the flesh to war against the spirit  
twenty-four hours a day you can feel it and you can hear it...*

Dylan here uses "ways of the flesh" rather than "way", perhaps to imply the multitudinous ways of sin. Conversely, in the next couple of lines, referring to the Lord, we get: "He never give up..."; a mixture of the singular address with the plural verb mode that recurs through the album, alluding to the special entity that He is.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> This technique reaches a higher degree of complexity in the next song when the original sin of Adam is referred to:

*Temptation's not an easy thing, Adam given the devil reign  
Because he sinned I got no choice, it run in my vein.*

## PRESSING ON

This track has a lovely piano and vocal opening, expanding out as Dylan is joined by the girl backing singers, they take a line each then they all merge together.

The music quickens and builds up then the first verse opens with:

*Many try to stop me, shake me up in my mind..*

harkening back to Dylan's near paranoid distrust of his 'so-called friends'.

The other verse has a more interesting opening line:

*Shake the dust off of your feet, don't look back..*

Those last three words do, of course, reverberate with Dylan connotations. The line also alludes back to the opening verse here and forward to *Are You Ready ?*. The exhortation is the same as that given in *It's All Over Now*, *Baby Blue* and *Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window*

## IN THE GARDEN

It is very difficult to listen to this track without hearing all the wonderful and triumphant live versions we've been given. It still sounds flatter and duller than these to me, which originally led me to feel it banal and childish in the wrong sense.

## SAVING GRACE

Yet again a splendid opening. Dylan sounds truly humble and thankful; and there are some great lines to go with the vocals:

*By this time I'd a thought that I would be sleeping  
In a pine-box for all eternity.*

This is surely his finest expression of the closeness he felt to death prior to being saved. I also like the pun in calling the Lord my "sole" protection.

Unfortunately the final verse does not match up to the others but all in all a very affecting performance.

## ARE YOU READY ?

Not for this I'm not, despite Dylan's insinuating and menacing voice. All I can hear in this is banality and cacophony.

But, given another ten years - who knows ?!

**LAMBCHOPS PLEASE SKIP THIS SECTION !**

The idea behind this section is to take a look at the work of someone other than Dylan.

At the rate Dylan is performing and recording this may well be the first and last attempt, there simply isn't time to listen to much else.

As part of the hullabaloo surrounding the release of the *New York* album, Reed was interviewed in the **Rolling Stone** May 1989 issue. There was an interesting exchange concerning Dylan :

**RS** Lets talk about some of your contemporaries. Bob Dylan, for example. He hung out with Warhol at the Factory quite a bit in the mid-Sixties and was at the time, like you, busy transforming Rock & Roll songwriting.

**LR** I always go out and get the latest Dylan album. Bob Dylan can turn a phrase, man. Like his last album [*Down In The Groove*], his choice of songs. "Going ninety miles an hour down a dead-end street" - I'd give anything if I could have have written that. Or that other one, "Rank Strangers to Me." The key word there is *rank*.

I can really listen to something like that. The rest of it is all pop. I have zero interest in it. But Dylan continuously knocks me out. "Brownsville Girl," the thing he did with Sam Shepard, he said "Even the SWAT teams around here are getting pretty corrupt." I was on the floor. I have the same reaction to some of my own stuff. And the only person I can think of that does that for me is Dylan.

**RS** What about John Lennon ? Like you, he wrote frankly in his songs about his life and lifestyle.

**LR** He wrote a song called "Mother" that I though was a really good song. "Jealous Guy." I liked his stuff away from the Beatles. Just my own taste. But the kind of phrasing that knocks me out is Dylan's. For language, Dylan kills me to this day.

The unfortunate misquote aside, this seems a fair tribute to me. Something to stop you getting uptight when Lou sings, in the wonderful *Strawman*:

Does anyone need another self-righteous rock and roll singer  
whose nose he says has led him straight to God ?

A quote, incidentally, that surely alludes to many others as well as Dylan.





# Lou Reed - New York

"Spitting in the wind comes back at you twice as hard"

Lou Reed...what did he mean to you at the beginning of the year? <sup>(1989)</sup> A legend for the Velvets, of course, the band who must've influenced everyone since Adam & Eve hummed a farewell to the Garden.

To me he was also the man behind the masterly Berlin; the brilliant, but patchy, Sally Can't Dance, the criminally popified Transformer.....

After a while I lost touch and only heard Lou's weird metal music and various experimentations at a distance. This year, however, the release of New York was attended by an overwhelming outpouring of critical acclaim and accompanied by the most revealing interviews the man has ever given.

What was all the fuss about? Critics raved about his social (New York) commentary. Lou declared himself a Poet with a capital "P". Nearly every review declared it to be his best ever album. Well the ravings and declarations are well justified. The one slight problem I think there might be is when Lou lets his "I'm a great Poet and demand to be seen as such" intrude on an album that positively vibrates with the anger and strength of telling it how it is ....But more of that later - indeed at the very end - the liner notes tell us that "It's meant to be listened to in one 58 minute sitting (14 songs!) as though it were a book or a movie." They also tell us that you can't beat two guitars, bass and drum and the album gives a helluva lot of backing to that claim as some devilish guitar and drum work backs Lou intoning like some judgemental avenging angel of the Bronx.

## ROMEO HAD JULIET

Straight away the scene is set; a tale of modern Manhattan star-crossed lovers (with Romeo sporting a leather vest, a diamond crucifix earring and a black pony tail) set against a background of crime, drugs and lonely stinking rooms. Reed cleverly links the old legend with the modern day by a reference to the Italians who need a lesson and the wonderful lines: "I'll Take Manhattan in a garbage bag with Latin written on it that says 'It's hard to give a shit these days'". (Unfortunately he follows this up with a direct link between New York and Ancient Rome - a touch of overkill as he'd just made the point subtly and forcibly.) The "love" of Romeo and Juliet, which through the song seems the only hope against a gamut of horrors, ends up as a mere flicker of passion soon absorbed into the general morass: "The perfume burned his eyes / holding tightly to her thighs/ and something flickered for a moment/ and then it vanished and was gone"

## HALLOWEEN PARADE

A lovely use of the old trick of seeing society as a circus or a freak show contrasting with the intense personal feelings of the narrator. The scene is delightfully drawn with a whole list of exotic (and sleazy) characters in the parade, my favourite is the "tacky Cary Grant".

As important, though, are the people who are not there: "There's no Peter Pedantic saying things romantic / In Latin, Greek or Spic." Even more importantly are the real life people who are not there, people the narrator - and we have no indication anywhere in the album that the "I" is other than that first person - people from an insistent past that he desperately wants to forget. The subtitle of the song is AIDS telling us where the missing bodies and souls have gone. I somehow managed to miss this point until recently and had thought drugs had been the cause, I don't feel that really diminished the power of the song. "See you next year."

## DIRTY BLVD.

The mean streets, full of beggars, brutalised children, drugs, whores giving cops blow jobs and wealthy landlords pissing themselves laughing at the rent they charge. Dirty Boulevard in every sense. Plus the first re-christening of America's most famous statue: "Give me your tired and poor and I'll piss on them / That's what the Statue of Bigotry says / Your poor huddled masses, let's club 'em to death"

## ENDLESS CYCLE

The scope narrows from the boulevard to a family. A harrowing description of child cruelty and the oft-commented upon vicious cycle of battered babies growing up to batter their own. Here we have the offspring of a drug-riddled father and drink-ridden mother who will develop into monstrous parents one of whose many excuses will be that they suffered worse. Reed through some highly disturbing imagery ("she's a coward and a bleeder") and clever switches of viewpoint brings out the complexity of this phenomenon and its crippling inevitability. The hummed humdrum ending underscores the perverse "normality" that the constant recurrence of these situations has created.

## THERE IS NO TIME

After all that has gone before is it time to take breath? No Way. The tempo and stakes are raised as Reed directly addresses us with a searing

call to Arms. This is our very last chance to do something. What the time is is negatively defined: it is not the time for patriotism, drugs, optimism, politics, theorising etc. It is not even time for selfhood or articulation. The song ends with the repeated "there is no time...." we can only presume that the word "left" is there by implication as the music dies in a cacophony to mark the end of time itself. The only hope that can be gleaned from all this is that in all the list of "this is no time..." is one 'positive' couplet: "This is the time to Put up or Shut up / It won't come back this way again. " Feel better now ?

## LAST GREAT AMERICAN WHALE

An extended metaphor of this last whale as the last spirit of the original constitution. A tale of racism (the Indians) and the rape of the countryside. At least the Indians are avenged but at the terrible cost of the loss of the Whale and all he stood for. Among this, one of the most important songs in his career, Reed also manages to conjure up one of his funniest observations "Some say they saw him at the Great Lakes. *Some say they saw him off the coast of Florida / My mother said she saw him in Chinatown / but you can't always trust your mother*"

## BEGINNING OF A GREAT ADVENTURE

A bitterly ironic song that, as so often on this album, has superb opening lines that contain the kernel of the whole song: "It might be great to have a kid that I could kick around / a little me to fill up with my thoughts". Yep, we're back with happy families. All the selfish reasons for having kids lie exposed and there's a neat dig at so-called liberals when he muses on what to teach his 'liberal army': "if they catch a hunter / shoot him in the nuts"

## BUSLOAD OF FAITH

Opens with "You can't depend on your family" - no wonder after what we've just heard ! Time and again the song tells us we can only depend on negative things, not on family, friends, religion etc. "You can't depend on the goodly hearted / The goodly hearted made lampshades and soap". The Pro-Lifers get it in the neck for their ludicrous demands that young rape victims be forced to have any resulting children.

## SICK OF YOU

A jaunty tune disconcertingly backs up a daily news digest of environmental disasters and political corruption and stupidity. The whole thing ends up with a 'Spitting Image' type view: "They say the President's dead - / but no-one can find his head / It's been missing now for weeks / But no-one noticed it / he had seemed so fit / and I'm Sick of it"

## HOLD ON

There's a mockingly wicked opening as Reed again takes us into the world of crime and drugs: "There's blacks with knives and whites with guns / fighting in Howard Beach / There's no such thing as human rights / when you walk the N. Y. streets " Again it is a very strong song full of concise, topical imagery : "There's a rampaging rage rising up like a plague of bloody vials / washing up on the beach / It'll take more than the Angels or Iron Mike Tyson / to heal this bloody breach" Again, there is not exactly a lot to cheer about, but it is interesting that Reed states that this is New York's future not his.

## GOOD EVENING MR. WALDHEIM

This is my favourite yet. A brilliant conversational tone that builds to a searing climax and put down of Jesse Jackson. Lou Reed is not afraid to examine sacred cows; not even black, liberal politicians. By implication Jesse is tarred with the same brush as Waldheim and the uniform-loving Pontiff. Not a word is wasted as the song builds inexorably to its climax of "There's no Ground Common enough for me and you"

## XMAS IN FEBRUARY

This is Reed's offering in America's generation later re-examining of the Vietnam war. Again the opening sets the scene : "Sam was lyin' in the jungle / agent orange spread against the sky like marmalade / Hendrix played on some foreign jukebox " It tells a story very similar to The Deer Hunter with steel mills closing down and the trap of the Army beckoning.

## Some Other Kinds Of Songs

## Lou Reed's New York

## STRAWMAN

All the anger and rage that has been building up bursts out here in a searing indictment of all we don't need in modern life. Against a background of Neil Young/Crazy Horsish guitar Reed stacks up a wonderful catalogue of Lennonish rhetorical questions: "Does anyone really need another billion dollar rocket / Does anyone need a \$60,000 car / Does anyone need another President / or the sins of Swaggart parts 6,7,8 and 9."

And that is almost it. However there is one song still to go, DIME STORE MYSTERY: dedicated "To Andy-honey" a song that delves into the duality of human nature or, rather, the dualities of the soul (part human; part divine) and the body (part body, part mind). The Dime Store Mystery, the everyday mystery, pain and wonder of human existence. The song goes

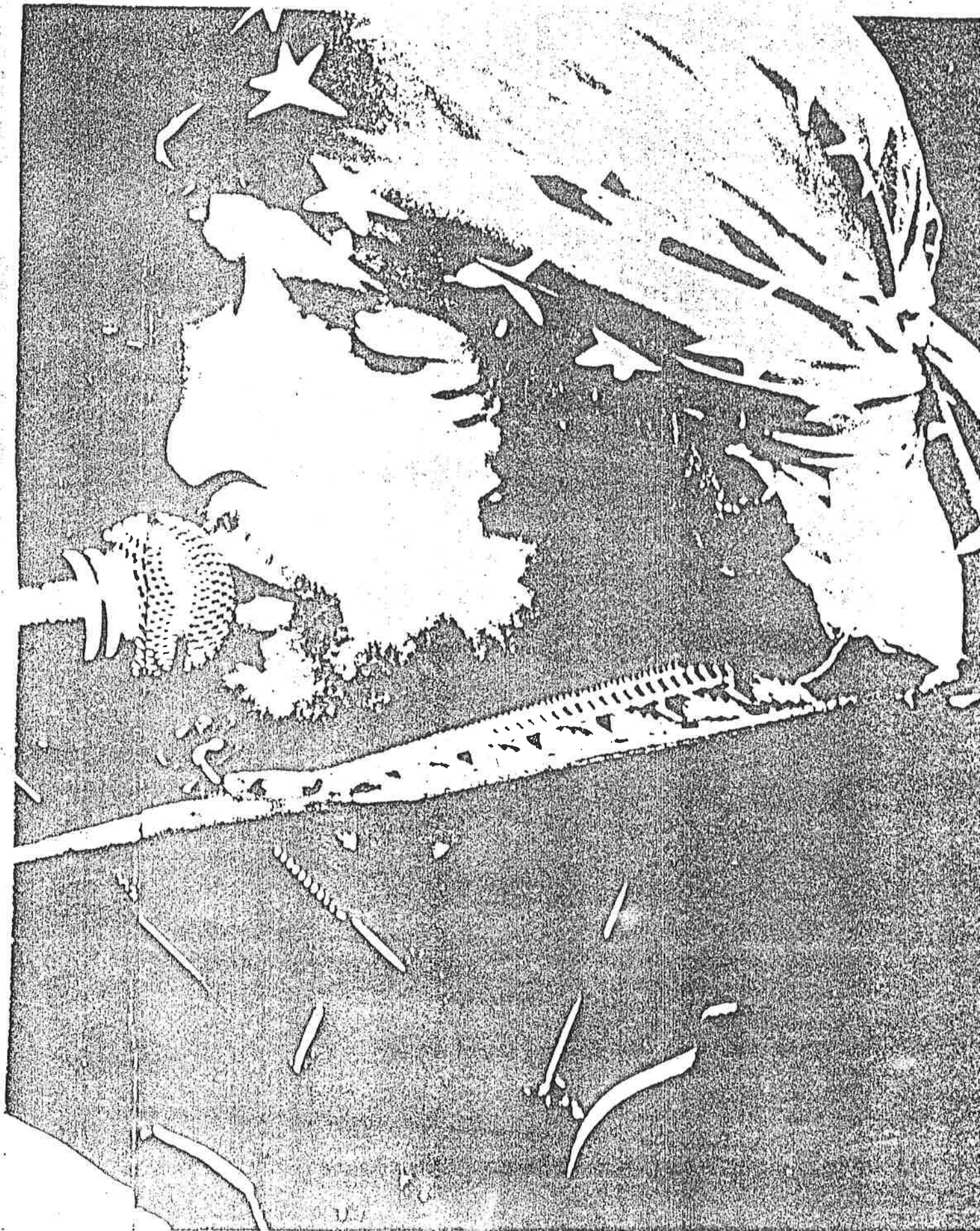
through three main phases: firstly we are presented with Jesus on the cross, almost succumbing to the last temptation, torn between the divine and the human regretting, perhaps, spending too little time on the human. Secondly, we have the great central segment dealing with the attempts of philosophers to understand the mysteries of existence and the impossible search for the one Truth, the final unshakeable Belief. Finally, the scope narrows down to Warhol's funeral and his old friend ponders on what he must have thought in his last few moments - in a beautiful inversion of Christ, Warhol regrets spending too much time on the human and not enough on the divine.

Fairly heavy stuff but most certainly what Lou Reed thinks fitting subject for his album's. Or as he sees it his Art. I agree with him in general. My slight quibble at the beginning of this review does not mean I think these subjects unsuitable, only that this last song seems to be the beginning of a new project and that NEW YORK would've ended perfectly with STRAWMAN.

All in all a stunning return to form for yet another sixties' survivor. Album of the year? - it must be a contender.

And a contender it was until Bobby released Oh Mercy. What a good year for albums 1989 was, from debuts to 'sixties' survivors'.





## A miscellaneous rag bag of thoughts, comments and cuttings.

### Reaction to Oh Mercy

The reaction to *Oh Mercy* and its attendant praise was interesting. Mark Carter, in *ISIS* claims at the end of his "Headlines" that it is Dylan's best ever album ! Other Dylan followers have intimated that they feel the same - or almost so.

Much as I like and admire it, I can't see it as being the equal of any of the following:

*Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Blonde On Blonde*, *John Wesley Harding* or *Blood On The Tracks*.

In addition I would very much hesitate to call it 'better' than:

*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*, *Basement Tapes*, *Desire*, *Street Legal*, or *Infidels*.

I'm sure it is at least the equal of most of that second set but I don't think our enthusiasm for a (marvellous) new LP should make us forget or underestimate the treasures we've already had.

Another odd thing was *The Wicked Messenger's* astonishment at the praise given to *Oh Mercy*, particularly by the N.M.E.. If my memory serves me well, the N.M.E. gave *Down In The Groove* (8 out of 10) and *Dylan & The Dead* positive reviews (either they or *Melody Maker* called the combination a "marriage made in heaven"); given this the praise for *Oh Mercy* was surely to be expected.

Derek Barker (*ISIS* 28) obviously has hearing similar to my own, apart from the "heathens" v. "hear them" 'argument'; I did and still do hear "seems like veneer".

How about giving us you interpretation of *Man In The Long Black Coat* instead of teasing us with clues, Derek ?

Both *The Telegraph* and *Isis* seem to be rolling along just fine, I particularly liked Nick de Somogyi's *Pretexts for Bob Dylan* in the former.

Trouble's been brewing at *RTS*, though, climaxing with Clinton Heylin stating in 22 that 23 will be his last at the helm. The poll he conducted apparently was grim reading for his *RTS*. He seemed genuinely surprised by this, but it was clearly foreshadowed. In particular Bob Jope's lengthy letter to *The Telegraph* 34 which astonishingly went unanswered.

In brief, Bob attacked Clinton for using *RTS* as a forum for private vendettas, and for the childish matiness and for being overbearingly opinionated. The last here was something that sometimes grated with me: the ridiculous reference to Glasgow, the repetitious trashing of *Down In The Groove*, the savaging of *Where Teardrops Fall* and the acoustic '89...; mind you maybe that last one was a put on. I'm surprised Clinton didn't answer this so that we could read his side...





However there we go, so be it etc. My favourite *RTS* under Clinton was 20, a very handy and useful guide to '88 and '89. Lets hope he uses the extra time to produce more goodies like *Stolen Moments* (John Hiatt was obviously impressed !) and *To Live Outside The Law*.

### Some kinda telephone

Wanted Man took a giant leap forward in the services it offers with the introduction of the 'information hotline'. This is really superb. One presumes that John won't be as inconsiderate as to go on holiday next year now that he has to keep the message changing regularly.

### Movie scriptwriters steal back from Dylan shock

I was watching last year's *Pat Garret & Billy The Kid* when the neat little 'Dylan' reference scene:

Billy	How does it feel ?
Pat	It feels like times have changed...

prompted me to think that *The Telegraph* should encourage letters that show scriptwriters stealing from Dylan rather than just *vice versa*.

Here's one for starters. Clint Eastwood stars in *Pale Rider* as a character whose name, like Alias's, doesn't matter. There's a scene where he is about to leave the woman who loves him (Sara !) and ride off into the wild blue yonder - after killing all the baddies, natch - and she says, regretfully realising that she can't hold on to him or make him stay:

I wish there was something I could do or say to change your mind..

Well it's close enough for me.

### The Hamlyn Illustrated Encyclopedia horror story

I was looking something up in the 1988 edition of this august tome when an entry for Clapton, Eric caught my eye. Naturally, I immediately looked up Dylan, Bob. Imagine the horror when I found no entry there - nor under Zimmerman, Robert Allen !

Beatles, the are there, so is Presley, Elvis even Jagger, Mick. I can put up with the inconsistency of the collective-only Beatles and lead singer-only Stones, but Clapton & no Dylan !!!

### Nobody's Child

This became my first ever cassette single and has now been edited down to join the ever growing Dylan-as-contributor mix, a tape consisting of Dylan only excerpts from *USA For Africa*, *Sun City*, Wilbury's etc.

Good ol' *Q* magazine - who even got a letter saying that Dylan had been mentioned in every issue, must've been a Wanted Man subscriber - ran a nice piece on it. Harrison giving Dylan the effusive praise his forlorn vocals deserve.

## Live Mercy ?

I don't much go in for vinyl collecting but *Deadpan Twist* was an irresistible collection; however, now that Bob has performed a stunning version of *Shooting Star* (9/6/90) - highlight of the decade ! - we can surely expect a 'Live Mercy'.

The mention of *Deadpan Twist* takes me on an unashamedly nostalgic trip back six months..

## Look Back In Wonder - The Week Of The Wiggle

There I was taking a course in Eastbourne and my pager is going wild with urgent messages. The only really urgent one was from Lambchops. So I get the news that those in the know were queuing all night for Dylan tickets just ten minutes from my flat. Stunned ain't the word for it. Anyway, the excitement of the coming concerts sends the course on an eccentric path and all is halted as I dash off a letter a la instructions to Hammersmith Odeon and try to calm down.

Time passes slowly.

My cousin, (*hereafter 'Andy'*) 'phones to say he has six tickets for various parts of the venue. Lambchops 'phones to say he has his tickets and is heavily into swapping them around to get best possible seats for every night.

I have no tickets.

Fear sets in. I trot off to The Odeon. (By this time everyone else has tickets). Much hassle here, though not as much as they seem to be getting from Dylan fans.

Finally they locate my letter. They've not sent out any tickets, because I appear to have asked for seven in my first paragraph; they have ignored the rest of my letter.

Just as I break into a state which only you dear readers can possibly imagine, along comes another Dylan fan in a similar situation and state. (Hi, Steve Hussey ! - hope you made the shows in USA or Canada). The staff are getting a bit fed up with this, the rest of the queue look on in bewilderment.

Eventually pity wells in the breast of the staff & I get 7 tickets. They're for all over the place.

Many 'phone calls, much frenetic swapping and buying later - special thanks to those who helped, they know who they are - I'm calm(ish); two very good seats, two in the balcony and one in the middle.

Also at various intervals during the above period the most mouthwatering rumours/reports have been coming in from Paris.

Walking home one night I see that the SOLD OUT signs have gone up. Slightly suspicious of this, I approach the dreaded Odeon staff again and get a very sympathetic response. After requesting first refusal of said SOLD OUT posters, I enquire if it really is sold out each night. Naturally it isn't.



Therefore I get my grubby little paws on restricted viewing tickets for four nights. This turns out to be a life saver.

Eventually the great day of the first concert dawns. My wife, Pia, and Andy are going - Andy is down for the week accompanied by his usual army of goodies. An inspired video choice of electric *Pretty Peggy-O* is the last song we play before leaving the flat. It is the best version I've ever heard of it but is soon to be superseded.

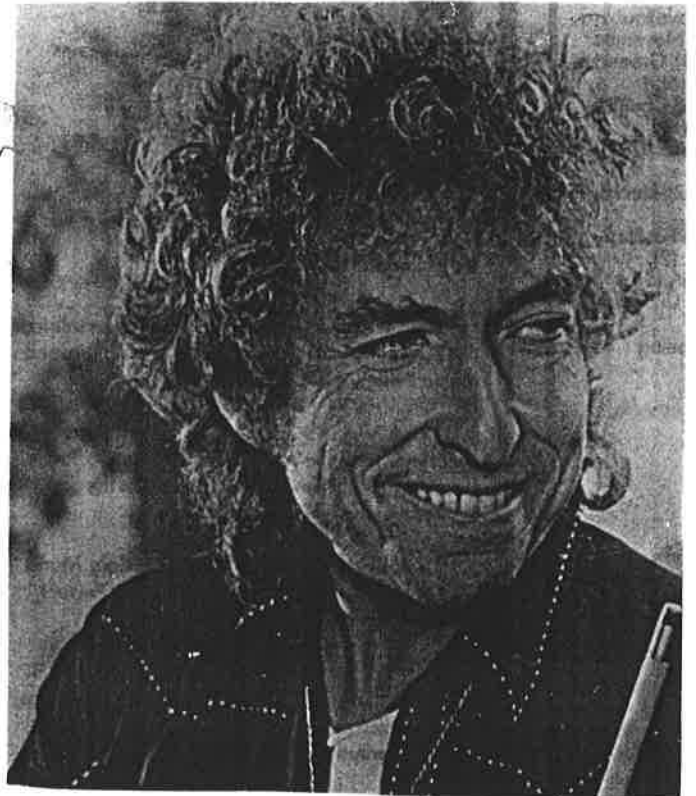
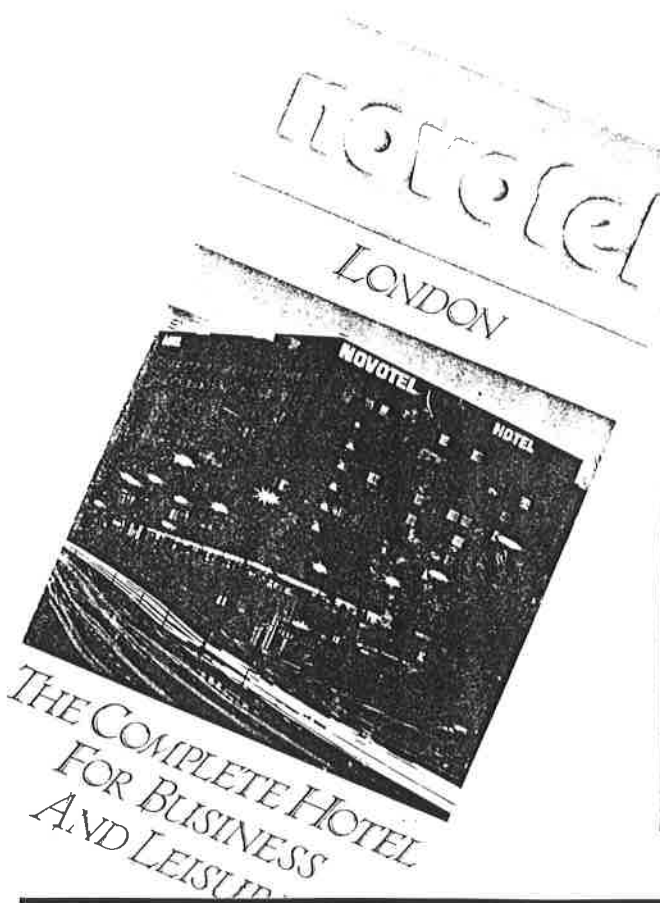
Massive ticket swapping ensues at the Novotel, I sell one of my extra tickets to a grateful punter for face value. (At the same place on Sunday this is seen as a rip off !!).

Then the show itself. The unbelievable proximity, that glorious moment when he first takes stage and we're off into *Stuck Inside A Mobile*.....

Well, you've read enough about the concerts by now...Dylan's mobility and happiness, the great reception given to *Oh Mercy* songs, the brilliant *Tight Connection* etc. etc. The performance of *It Takes A Lot To Laugh*...alone from that first night would've been more than enough to satisfy me for the week.

Pia liked the show, Andy is in a happy daze unpunctured even by the traditional failure to tape the show. Five more nights beckon....my sister (Olive) and her husband (Alex) delightedly take tickets...I get on the bus and chat to the drummer on the 5th...Dylan just gets better and better 'til the glory that was the Eighth.

Must stop all this nostalgia - only six months to go to an even longer stint at the same venue. (Fingers crossed)



## Back To The Movies

I read Charles Shaar Murray referring to *Renaldo & Clara* as 'an abomination unto the Lord' in a recent Sunday paper; presumably we'll get an opposing viewpoint just as extreme when Paul Williams's Volume Two comes out.....

I recently watched *Fighting Justice*, just out on video, quite a good story and the soundtrack includes Hendrix's version of *All Along The Watchtower* and ends with Lou Reed's *Busload of Faith*.

## Lost In The Flood And Other Missing Pieces

I lost my Hammersmith ticket stubs and three obscure newspaper cuttings while collating this issue. I can just about cope with that but I've never got over losing my 1978 programme from Earl's Court even in if it was in noble circumstances...nor never having my *Groom Still Waiting At The Altar* single returned - anybody got any spares out there ?

While on the subject of wants, any spare copies of *Performed Literate* or *The Bible in the Work of Bob Dylan* kicking around ???

## Cuttings

The first cutting is from *Horoscope*, June 1990; the next is from the *Independent* (I think), January 1990, then a review of the first night at Hammersmith from *Hello*, the *News of the Screws* still finds Dylan gossipworthy and, finally, a star football reporter stalks the fields of the Scottish second division for the *Daily Record*.

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## Last Minute Jottings

As of September 1st, Hammersmith Odeon report Dylan shows in early next year as "still possible".....CBS in the States herald the arrival of **Homer**, *the slut* by releasing *SAVED* on C.D.....Tragic news re Stevie Ray Vaughan, insultingly coming across the TV news as a "story of Eric Clapton's friend" Even the well meaning tributes to come will be as insulting as they are for anyone. As Malraux wrote : "the tragic thing about death is that it transforms life into a destiny", death becomes the end of a story and career retrospectives have a fixed beginning and end. This is not the true way to appraise a life that accidentally ends at an arbitrary moment, how differently would Elvis seem if he died young(er) or James Dean if he lived longer ? (to say nothing of speculation over our main man.)

# G E M I N I

# BOB DYLAN:

## *Soul of the Sixties*

BY BARBARA SHAFFERMAN

The decade of the Sixties was a Gemini time marked by youthful enthusiasm, naive idealism, and a sense of living for the moment. It seems no coincidence that two men identified closely with the Sixties were both Geminis: John F. Kennedy, whose vision of Camelot inspired a generation, and Bob Dylan, the minstrel-poet who gave the generation its voice.

Born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota, on May 24, 1941, at 9:05 PM CST, Bob Dylan spent his youth in Hibbing, a worn-out mining town in the harsh North Country of Minnesota, where his father owned an appliance store. As the son of a prosperous merchant and one of the few Jewish children in town, young Bob Zimmerman had little in common with the rugged, blue-collar population of Hibbing and turned inward for company. Music, writing, and art became his outlets; at ten, he played piano, harmonica, and guitar, when not sketching or writing poetry.

Outwardly a quiet, well-behaved child, Bob Dylan led a rich fantasy life. While daydreaming of fame, he tried on one persona after another, searching for an identity to match his dreams. By fourteen, the Gemini restlessness that would always plague him had driven him from one creative effort to another. The only world that met his yearnings for a life beyond the drab reality of Hibbing existed in the darkness of the local movie theaters, where he could identify with the heroic shadows on the screen.

In the fall of 1955, the State Theater showed James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause." Young Robert Zimmerman entered the theater a conventional, middle-class teenager. He emerged as Hibbing's number one greaser-rebel. From then on his costume became

jeans, biker's boots, and leather jacket; his attitude was contempt for conventions.

This metamorphosis was the first of many changes that marked Bob Dylan's life, a life filled with transformations. Because these shifts so often matched popular trends and helped advance his career, he has been accused of expediency. Was he an opportunist or true believer—a man who shifted with the winds of fashion or acted out of real conviction? Astrology gives us an answer.

The dominant feature in Bob Dylan's chart is two strong groupings of planets. He has three planets in Gemini: the Sun,



Mercury, and Venus, and a four-planet stellium in Taurus, including the Moon. Taurus is the sign that represents beliefs and values, and anyone with such a strong

Taurean emphasis must have strong convictions in which he believes absolutely. Combine this with the influence of changeable Gemini, however, and the values shift; the beliefs fluctuate. As a Gemini-Taurus person, Bob Dylan truly believes in his ideals, but these convictions can change at any moment. With a Gemini's disregard for consequences, he will follow his beliefs wherever they take him.

In the fall of 1955, when Dylan took on the Dean persona, the transits affecting his chart were very significant. Saturn opposed its natal place, always a time of personal upheaval; then it went on to oppose all the other Taurus planets. Expansive Jupiter and powerful Pluto were conjunct in the sky at the 28th and 29th degrees of Leo, squaring Dylan's natal Jupiter, the ruler of his Sagittarius ascendant. Uranus, the planet of sudden change, made an important station at 2° Leo 20', conjunct natal Pluto and sextile his Gemini Sun. The planets were positioned for an important identity change.

Throughout high school, Dylan formed bands which at first played popular rock-and-roll songs. As he became more and more fascinated by black rhythm and blues, the makeup of his bands changed and so did his performances. In true Little Richard style, Dylan combined blaring, amplified music with emotional renditions that shocked conservative Hibbing.

In September of 1959, Robert Zimmerman left Hibbing to attend the University of Minnesota. He was attracted immediately to Dinkytown, the bohemian section of Minneapolis near the University. Introducing himself as Bob Dylan, a name he had chosen for himself a year earlier in Hibbing, he performed his rock routines wherever he could find an audience. As he became an accepted part of the Dinkytown scene, he dropped out of school altogether and spent his time absorbing his life around him. He was attracted to the old-time radicals and leftover beatniks who expressed themselves through pure folk music—to them, this was the true language of the people. This set the stage for his second major identity change.

By the summer of 1960, he had become Bob Dylan, folk singer, poet of the people, and apostle of pure folk music. He patterned his new persona after that of his idol, Woody Guthrie. Stories of his origins shifted as often as the sands on which he built them. There was no pattern, no consistency, no honesty. He was variously an orphan, a chronic runaway, and a protégé of black street singers. At times he claimed to be an Okie; at other times he boasted of his Indian heritage. Even the origins of his new name, Bob Dylan, were elusive. Some said it was in honor of the poet, Dylan Thomas; some traced it to frontier hero Matt Dillon; others said it came straight out of the Hibbing phone book.

This confusion between fact and fantasy—his constant role playing and need to alter the truth—has always been a basic part of Dylan's nature. He invented himself many times over, each time differently. As one observer described him, "There's so many sides to Dylan, he's round." This is all revealed in his natal chart.

The conflict between illusion and reality

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is seen clearly when we analyze the elements in his chart. There is a strong emphasis on air (illusion) and earth (reality). This is the practical person whose foundation is in the clouds or the perpetual dreamer who must make his mark in the real world. There is very little fire, which often indicates an insecurity about personal identity, and gives another clue to Dylan's many image changes.

The Gemini Sun, of course, is noted for flightiness. It is difficult for this quick, versatile, clever sign to be bound by the chains of mundane reality. Add to this the expansive nature of his Sagittarius ascendant, which shoots for the stars and refuses to be held back by petty details, and you get someone with no patience for the frustrating limitations of truth.

The planet of communication, Mercury, gives another indication of Bob Dylan's inventive handling of reality. Strongly placed in its own sign, Gemini, it closely opposes the ascendant—a classic position of one who twists the truth and distorts the facts to enhance his own image.

Most important of all is the placement of Neptune, the planet of illusion. It is the most elevated planet in his chart. It closely squares both ends of his Mercury-ascendant opposition, thus becoming the focal point of an important T-square. And it trines his entire Taurus stellium in the Fifth House of creative self-expression. When the T-square is operating negatively, Neptune becomes the planet of deception, and Dylan invents the stories, myths, and lies that tarnish his image. But when Neptune is used constructively, through its trine to the fifth-house Taurus planets, the T-square becomes a dynamo of creative energy that fuels his poetic genius.

The extreme creativity which stamps his work shows clearly in Bob Dylan's chart. His fifth-house Taurus stellium is the focus of his creative activities. The sign Taurus is ruled by Venus, the planet of art and beauty, which also rules Dylan's Libra midheaven and tenth house of career. Both the Moon, which shows connections to the public, and Jupiter, ruler of his ascendant, are part of the Taurus stellium, so sending his creative message to the world comes easily. His important Neptune, the planet associated with creativity, rules the third house of communication and is located in the ninth house of the higher mind, conjunct the North Node in Virgo. For Bob Dylan, creative intellectual activity is the surest path to self-development. This is further shown by the position of his Sun and Venus, both in mentally agile Gemini, in the sixth house of work. His Mars, in Neptune-ruled Pisces, is a classic signature of creative action.

When he had absorbed all he could from Dinkytown, Dylan turned his gaze towards New York. Arriving in Greenwich Village during the winter of 1961, with guitar, harmonica, and Okie accent, he became an instant part of the folk scene, writing and performing. He hitchhiked to New Jersey where his idol, Woody Guthrie, was hospitalized with Huntington's Disease, and became a steady visitor, learning all he could from the master. In

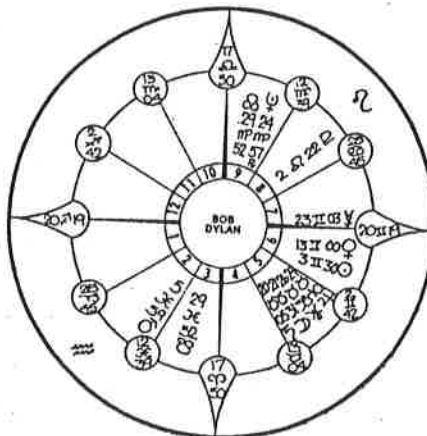
Greenwich Village he mingled with the purists and pros of the folk world, soaking up knowledge like a sponge in true Gemini fashion.

Sept. 21, 1961, was a momentous date for Bob Dylan. He appeared at Gerde's Folk City and somehow managed to get *New York Times* music critic Robert Sheldon to attend. His performance electrified the audience, and Sheldon was enthralled. A rave review appeared in the *Times* a few days later, and Bob Dylan was on his way. Important bookings materialized, he developed a loyal following, and Columbia Records signed him for an album. He was only twenty, but he became the "in" folksinger of the moment.

When Sheldon's review appeared, Dylan's progressed Sun was exactly conjunct natal Mercury at 23° Gemini—certainly a good time for self-expression. Transiting Jupiter made a station at 27° Capricorn, trining natal Uranus. At the same time, transiting Uranus at 28° Leo 30' squared natal Jupiter to give Jupiter and Uranus a double connection, indicating a sudden change in fortune. Saturn also made a station that day at 23° Capricorn, trining Dylan's natal Moon; this change in fortune would be long-lasting.

As Dylan's fame increased, his writing style began to change. Responding to the rumblings of protest around him, his work evolved from simple folk tunes to songs with strong messages. He combined a sense of social awareness with the pure folk music of Guthrie and Seeger to produce songs like "Blowin' in the Wind," which became the anthem of the Sixties. By 1963, Bob Dylan was the most famous "city-billy" around; his fame was rivaled only by folk artist Joan Baez, his longtime professional and romantic partner.

Dylan has always considered himself a poet, rather than a songwriter. The words came first, followed rather casually by a



tune that might be either original or "borrowed." His Gemini Sun and Mercury created songs with depth and meaning, communicating truths that everyone could recognize.

Nineteen sixty-three was a momentous year for Bob Dylan. The Newport Folk Festival in July marked a high point in his career. His electrifying performance and the audience's intense response made him the leading figure in folk music. The fall release of his album, "The Times They Are

A'Changin' along with its title song, established him as the spokesman for the rebellious youth of the Sixties.

Transiting Uranus squared his Sun in 1963 while he was at Newport, and greatness was suddenly thrust upon him. Saturn was squaring its natal place, often an indication of progress on the road to self-development. Transiting Jupiter opposed his midheaven, spotlighting his expanding career. These were all hard aspects, and this period must have been stressful for him in spite of the sudden fame—or because of it.

At the height of his success, a new shift in direction appeared. Strongly influenced by the assassination of President Kennedy and the growing power of the Beatles, he began to write songs that were more literary in tone, with an emphasis on love and feeling rather than protest. The tunes began changing too; simple folk melodies were replaced by the blaring cadences of rock.

This new phase erupted like a volcano at the Newport Folk Festival in July 1965. Fresh from recording "Like a Rolling Stone," Dylan strode onto the stage in Newport with an electric guitar and began performing his new sound to a mixture of boos and cheers. There was a general uproar, and the festival ended with a bitter split in the musical community between pure folk and folk rock, with Bob Dylan the acknowledged king of the latter.

This new folk rock sound spoke directly to the spirit of disillusionment and futility that was growing among young people. It was a time of drugs and hedonism, of "tune-in and drop-out." Once again, Bob Dylan's songs were true to the tone and spirit of the times, and he remained the spokesman for his generation.

Secretly married to Sara Lownds in November of 1965, Dylan's life-style had become increasingly hectic. It was rumored that he was a heavy participant in the drug scene. Physically and emotionally exhausted from concert tours across America and abroad, he was on an express train to self-destruction. A providential motorcycle accident on July 29, 1966, derailed him. Seriously injured, Dylan recuperated in seclusion and began a much needed period of introspection. He lived quietly with his wife and children, first in Woodstock and then in Greenwich Village. He was no longer in touch with the radical times. Family life became his major focus, and his career took second place.

At the time of his accident, transiting Saturn, the planet of limitation, sextiled his natal Jupiter and then, in retrograde motion, slowly sextiled all his other Taurus planets. It was as though cosmic brakes had been applied. Jupiter in Cancer was traveling through his seventh house of marriage during this period, showing the support he received from his wife, Sara.

For eight years Dylan's career seemed stalled. Then he suddenly decided to return to the road, making his first appearance since the accident. "Tour '74," as the concert was called, began in Chicago on January 3, 1974, to a sellout audience and was an



immediate success. Huge arenas were packed everywhere he went, and the old Dylan myth was revived. As *Time* magazine said, "It seemed a moment for a legend—and an era—to live again."

Riding the crest of his success, he decided to organize a radically new kind of tour. He gathered together an oddly assorted group of old and new friends, including Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell, Sam Shepard, Allen Ginsberg, and wife Sara. They formed the Rolling Thunder Revue, which wandered around the country performing in all sorts of places, large and small. His four-hour film, "Renaldo and Clara," was made during this tour.

By 1978 Dylan's marriage had broken up, repeating the destructive patterns of his earlier relationships. His three major romances—with Suze Rotolo during the early Greenwich Village days, the much publicized liaison with Joan Baez, and his 12-year marriage to Sara Lownds—were all wrecked on the shoals of his restlessness. After enjoying an intense relationship, he would suddenly feel trapped. He reacted by having affairs with other women, provoking wild arguments, and behaving in a totally illogical manner.

Dylan's chart has restless Gemini on the cusp of his seventh house of close relationships. The ruler of Gemini, Mercury, is in the seventh house, emphasizing the importance to him of all kinds of relationships: romances, close friendships, and business associations. The planet Neptune, which confuses whatever it touches, is square this Mercury, so he is never able to see a partner clearly. And the wandering nature of Gemini, with its constant search for variety, makes it difficult for him to remain loyal to one person. This is especially true in romantic affairs, since Venus, the planet of love, is also in Gemini—a very difficult placement for monogamy—and it is square Mars, showing problems with the opposite sex. He would form close ties, depend on his partner for emotional support, and then do everything in his power to drive that partner away.

With his marriage ending in divorce, and his film "Renaldo and Clara" opening to devastating reviews, Dylan tried to escape his personal misery through a worldwide concert tour. By July of 1978, he had sung to more than 800,000 people in 50 concerts. He found no peace, however, and began turning inward for spiritual solace. In the spring of 1979, after much soul-searching, he declared himself a born-again Christian.

This was one of his most drastic changes. He renounced his Jewish heritage, allied himself with the reactionary right wing element of Christianity, and concentrated on gospel music in all his concerts and records. The intensity of his religious fervor was reflected in the songs he wrote at this time. His fans reacted negatively, and the critics blasted his albums.

One would expect to find strong planetary activity involved in something as important as a religious conversion. In the spring of 1979, when he became born-again, Dylan's progressed Moon was going through his seventh house of religion, while progressed

sextilite natal Jupiter, the ruler of his ascendant and the planet that symbolizes organized religion. Transiting Neptune, the spiritual planet, made a station at 20° Sagittarius 30' exactly on his ascendant. Transiting Pluto was conjunct his midheaven, bringing a change in his public image. Saturn opposed his Mars in Pisces, forcing structure onto a somewhat unfocused spiritual drive. Lastly, Uranus, planet of sudden change, was opposing his important Moon-Saturn conjunction.

After the first two years, his born-again religious zeal began to wane, and old Dylan standards started reappearing in his concerts, intermixed with the gospel songs. By 1984 his conversion had become history. Indeed, by that time another dramatic change had occurred; he returned to his Jewish roots, studying in Brooklyn with an ultra-orthodox Hasidic group.

With the return of his Jewish heritage came a renewed interest in world problems. This was apparent in the album "Infidels," and the media rhapsodized that Bob Dylan, the protest singer, was back—a new voice for the Eighties. In 1985 he was one of the moving figures in the Live Aid and Farm Aid concerts. At the end of that year, "Biograph," a boxed set of five LP records spanning his whole career, was released. This was a major honor, usually reserved for artists long dead and buried.

Like the "Rolling Stone" he writes about, Bob Dylan has always been a wanderer. His Aries fourth house of foundations, ruled by an afflicted Mars in scattered Pisces, has never allowed him to plant deep roots. His restless Gemini Sun forever drives him onward. The only stabilizing force in his chart is the Moon, exalted in Taurus, closely conjunct Saturn. This is at the heart of his fifth-house stellium; he is truly at home in his creativity.

In 1990 Bob Dylan's progressed Sun at 20° Cancer will begin to sextile this Saturn-Moon conjunction. This may finally give him the stability and maturity that has always eluded him. The progressed Sun will then move on, throughout the 1990's, to sextile the rest of his creative Taurus stellium, while transiting Pluto opposes this stellium during the same period. In addition, from 1993 until the year 2000, transiting Uranus, followed by Neptune, will trine the Taurus planets and go on to trine his Gemini Sun. We may see a major creative breakthrough, with a whole new body of work emerging.

In 1991, Bob Dylan, the eternal Gemini, will be 50 and the whole sixties generation will reach middle-age. What new changes lie ahead for its elusive minstrel-poet? "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind—the answer is blowin' in the wind."

(Note: Bob Dylan's natal chart is based on the data given in Lois Rodden's "The American Book of Charts" and "The Gauquelin Book of American Charts.")

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** Bob Dylan by Anthony Scaduto, New American Library, Inc.—1973; Dylan by Jonathan Cott, Doubleday & Co., Inc.—1984; No Direction Home by Robert Shelton, Beech Tree Books, Wm. Morrow & Co., Inc.—1986; Dylan by Bob Spitz, McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.—1989.





# Apocalypse soon

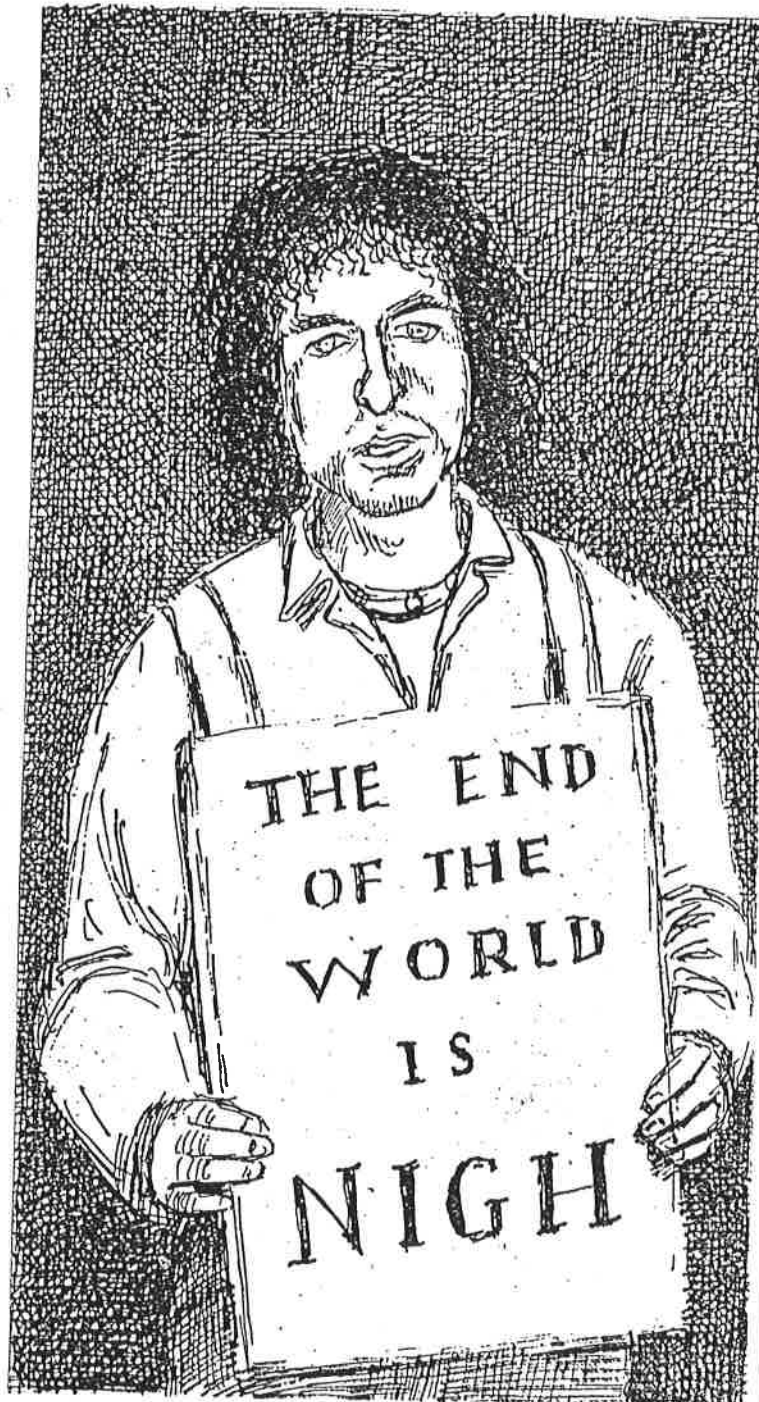
"THE world could come to an end tonight, but that's all right" declares Dylan, laconically, in his 1983 song "I and I". It isn't all right, of course; and the song knows it. And so do numerous other Dylan songs, showing a concern about the end of the world which draws distinctively upon traditional Western figurings of the Last Things.

Apocalyptic hopes and fears characteristically focus intensely around the turn of centuries. As we start the 1990s, it is already possible to read in the press of "our Nineties era of anxious expectation." Dylan brings his new small-venue tour to London this weekend and there is a curious sense in which the singer, who has spent so much energy imagining Ends since he wrote "Hard Rain" nearly 30 years ago, is entering his own decade.

"I... saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and 10 horns". This is the power of darkness seen mesmerising human kind in the New Testament Revelation of St John. The biblical Apocalypse goes on to prophesy the overpowering of the "beast" and the founding of a thousand-year Messianic Kingdom on earth. At the end of that millennium, the prophecy runs, Satan will rise once more before suffering a final defeat that will usher in the final day of Judgement and the establishment by God of "a new heaven and earth".

The mystical numerology and imagery of Revelation allowed down the Christian centuries endless possibilities for reimagining the End, and even when a strictly Christian theology had been in some degree secularised, the ancient Western paradigm of Apocalypse did not lose its force. A powerful apocalyptic pulse directed Romantic visions of political transformations in the last decade of the eighteenth century. And as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, so too did minds turn with an apocalyptic unease. "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold", wrote Yeats in "The Second Coming". "and what rough beast.../Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Unease is the keynote of Dylan's apocalyptic leanings. His work in the Sixties distanced itself from the naively optimistic millenarianism of the times. In "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" (1963), for example, Dylan drew on both ballad tradition and the Bible to compose a picture of a world on the verge of Armageddon. Though in tune with contemporary fears of nuclear holocaust, the song refuses topical references in its attempt at a sweepingly apocalyptic vision. Dylan learned from Revelation the power of obscurely symbolic numbers to imply possession of a secret knowledge. The visionary-speaker of this song has stumbled and crawled on "six crooked highways", through "seven sad forests"; he has heard "one hundred drummers whose hands were a-blazing" and "the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world". But the song merely warns of the "hard rain" that will fall like the pestilences in Revelation. Even the speaker who tells these things sees himself in the last resort overwhelmed by the waters. Unlike Revelation, there is no machinery of renovation to offset the doom.



One of Dylan's preoccupations is a dread at the imminence of an end which may bring no peace

A comparable kind of darkness underlies many of Dylan's more complicated songs of the mid-Sixties. In "Desolation Row" (1965) the impending catastrophe of Western culture is envisaged in terms of the voyage of the *Titanic*: "Praise be to Nero's Neptune / The *Titanic* sails at dawn". Here the Neptune belonging to the drowned passengers of the *Titanic* belongs also to Nero, who presided over Rome while it burned. The end of an over-proud culture is to come in an apocalyptic conflux of water and fire.

Even in a 1964 song that pictures a transfiguration of the old earth, the registering of a millenarian euphoria contains a parody of that euphoria: "Oh the fishes will laugh / As they swim out of the path / And the seagulls they'll be smiling... / The hour that the ship comes in". Obviously, Dylan saw the value in writing songs that take a specific political stand. But throughout this period there is a scepticism about too large an expectation of the good that may be achieved on earth.

These twin tendencies — apocalyptic despair on the one hand, and doubt at apocalyptic expectations of an earthly paradise on the other — feed Dylan's later religious songs. The religious lyrics do identify the possibility of an ultimate hope; as when Revelation's image of Christ as the heavenly bridegroom is alluded to in a 1981 song: "I see the burning of the stage, / Curtain risin' on a new age, / See the groom still waitin' at the altar". But such perspectives are quickly questioned. The closing lines of the 1983 "Jokerman" are again recalling Revelation ("a woman... upon a scarlet coloured beast") as they picture the birth of an Antichrist. But ultimate outcomes are left radically uncertain as the figure of the Jokerman (the questionable spirit of human nature) responds with an ambiguous lack of response:

A woman just gave birth to a prince today and dressed him in scarlet. He'll put the priest in his pocket, put the blade to the heat, Take the motherless children off the street And place them at the feet of a harlot. Oh, Jokerman, you know what he wants, Oh, Jokerman, you don't show any response.

One of the main preoccupations of Dylan's work remains a dread at the imminence of an end which may bring no peace. On his recent album *Oh Mercy* (1989), if it is not the ominous entropy of human systems that the verse notes ("Everything is broken"), it is an awareness of personal mortality as a type of the End: "It's the last temptation, the last account, / The last time you might hear the Sermon on the Mount, / The last radio is playing...". But Dylan is currently displaying a new creative surge, and as he gets set to sing for six nights at the Hammersmith Odeon, it looks very far from being the last time that we will hear from him about the Last Time.

□ Dylan's shows begin on Saturday. *Atkins Day's Jokerman: Reading the Lyrics of Bob Dylan* is published by Blackwell, Paperback £7.95.

## ON THE RECORD

## BOB DYLAN

## RAW AND IMMEDIATE – AND GETTING THE MIX RIGHT

**B**ob Dylan fans have never been offered the most relaxing form of live entertainment. Since 1978 his UK visits have been confined to large arenas, stadiums and even festivals where his voice and lyrics have fought a losing battle against top-heavy instrumentation.

This time round, he played several nights at the Hammersmith Odeon, where Neil Young put on a superb

solo show a few months ago. He was backed by a talented but unobtrusive trio, giving – at least in theory – a strong impression that he had finally got it right. By the end of his first night in London, that feeling was largely borne out.

He opened dramatically with his mid-Sixties *Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)* though he seemed set on strumming



harmonica playing rang out in all its poignant glory, as did *You're A Big Girl Now*, one of his best-ever songs about relationships.

Dylan's choice of material, in fact, was spot-on, half a dozen songs being plucked from the two classic 1965 LPs, *Bringing It All Back Home*, and *Highway 61 Revisited*. These included such quality cuts as *Hey Mr Tambourine Man*, *Queen Jane Approximately* and *Gates Of Eden*. The latter was despatched almost solo, as was an even earlier song, *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carol*. Needless to say, none of these standards sounded the slightest bit dated.

The high point of the evening was the mighty *Like A Rolling Stone* which remained sufficiently like the original for one to almost be able to sing along with. That, of course, was never this troubadour's intention. After all these years Bob Dylan comes over as raw and unsophisticated as any young contender. Perhaps it is that as well as those timeless songs which remains at the heart of his undoubted appeal.

his guitar faster than the song really required, and this continued throughout such classics as *All Along The Watchtower*, *Political World*, from his latest album, and *It Ain't Me Babe*.

On the one hand it was fun to see the star slipping into a crude Flamenco-style groove, but on the other he was hardly doing justice to such a glittering catalogue. On the plus side, Bob's simple but effective



★ THE house in Minnesota where **BOB DYLAN** lived as a child has been sold to an anonymous buyer for £50,000.

DAILY RECORD, Thursday, August 16, 1990

## JACK ADAMS DISCOVERS THE GLAMOUR OF THE CUP

**A**T Firs Park, money doesn't talk, it swears. Ask manager Alan Mackin...he insists cash is a four-letter word.

Times are so tough that East Stirling's latest star signing is paying his own transfer fee – from his £25 weekly wage packet.

Next Tuesday, the soccer Cinderellas – who finished bottom of the Second Division last term – travel to Ibrox to challenge millionaires Rangers.



## FARE THEE WELL

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### Goodbye from....Homer, the slut

So that's all from issue one, I hope you all found something of interest.

The first issue is in some ways the hardest to get out - it is certainly the most instructive layout and printing wise ! Issue two should look a lot better.

Issue two is tentatively planned to look like this:

- **FOCUS ON:** *Desolation Row*
- **NOTHING IS BEST:** The imagery & uses of "nothing" and similar words.
- **SOME OTHER KIND OF SONGS:** I'm not sure about this one yet, since we've new offerings from Van The Man and Neil Young imminent.
- **BITS 'N' BOBS:** This should be pretty full with *Under The Red Sky* and *Traveling Wilburys Volume Two* (or whatever) news and views and at least two issues each of ISIS, RTS and the TELEGRAPH to reflect on.
- **IT AIN'T ME, BABE:** The conclusion of the first section in this issue. Please write with your views, favourite performances etc.

Hopefully it will go out in December or early January. Please send a S.A.E. of approximately the same value as you see on the envelope for this issue. If you've chucked it out make an inspired guess. All letters gratefully accepted and will be printed in full - even the most abusive.

Thanks to Pia for patience and cutting 'n' pasting.

*The Editor*

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**P.S. If anyone you know wants a copy of this issue a S.A.E. will suffice.**



