

# Homer, *the slut*



May 1991

Issue Three

## HOMER, the slut

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Hello again! What a busy four months it has been: the latest UK leg of the tour, the Grammys and the box set. I'll just slip this out while he is in South America, before the birthday bash(es) and the next trek round Europe.

All this activity has had a great effect on the contents for this issue. As I steer through the rocky road between *Isis* and *The Telegraph* this issue leans more to the news than the analytical. This is particularly so because the UK tour dominates this issue. It is a bit of a monster *Bits & Bobs* - though far from completist - I hope it will provide a good reference point in the future. (i.e. don't blame me if you get bored trying to read all the concert clippings at one sitting.)

I also felt that the release of the box set was too crucial not to be commemorated in some way, therefore more cuttings have been put in at the last minute. Issue Four will swing back towards the analytical side of the road but, with the US/South America /Europe/US legs of the tour, the birthday and more on the box set, I guess there will be a fair bit of news too.

As most of you will know, I wanted to produce a special tour issue straight after the gigs. The frustration of the financial impossibility of this led me to raise a subscription charge, which works out in the following manner.

Subscription charge for four issues is £10:00 (UK), £15.00(Europe) and US\$30.00 elsewhere. There will be standard issues every four months, namely **January, May** and **September** plus a one-off special on a UK tour or new release. In the increasingly unlikely event of there being nothing to justify a special one off issue, the subscription merely runs on to the next standard issue. (I will try to avoid asking for subscriptions in January as I know you'll all be paying for tickets then!) Subscription forms are enclosed, pass them around, give them to friends etc.

Editorial Policy re submissions. Obviously I'm not being an editor at all if I just print everything that is sent to me verbatim. However, it would be just as worthless to only publish things I agreed with. I do not see my job as changing the opinions that are sent to me and, in any case, would never do so without first consulting the author. It should be obvious that I disagree with many of the opinions contained in *Homer*. (Dylan fans are notoriously harsh on the man himself, whether as a guilty reaction to how deeply he moves them or a result of something else only they can tell.) In I. G. Roberts's excellent article I am at times in 100% agreement with him and at time diametrically opposed to his views, none have been altered. Another example comes in Steve Hussey's **Some Other Kinds Of Songs** - he has intuited the reasons behind this section, and by chance I feel similarly re The Pixies - however, if I agreed that Dylan is "no longer the most creative writer in rock music" I'd hardly spend my time running a fanzine about him. Please send in your work without fear of editorial interference in your arguments. (When I think you're really being unfair I'll just write my own counter-argument!)

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**\*\*\* Please Note \*\*\***

(Mark Carter and Chris Cooper are contributors to *Freewheelin'*, a privately circulated magazine.)

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### The Warmline

On my home number, 071 385 1114, I update Dylan news and gossip about three times a week. This is not designed as a competitor to Mr Bauldie's, indeed I've even refrained from putting news on mine before his. **The Wanted Man** has the connections and should be our centre of information. I am using a standard home ansaphone and, therefore, have a shorter message. However, I update mine more often and you can answer back, leaving any info or perhaps a quiz question after my message and the tone. It isn't important, but, if you can 'phone during normal working hours please do so, otherwise Pia or I may answer. (And you wouldn't want that would you!)

Andrew Muir

"Oh No! Not more set lists."

Fear not, gentle reader, they are only for the shows reviewed herein

Feb 2nd		SECC Hall 3, Glasgow
1		Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		All Along The Watchtower
4		Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)
5		The Man In Me
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	Mr Tambourine Man
9	A	It Ain't Me Babe
10	A	Don't Think Twice, It's All Right
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Gotta Serve Somebody
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14		God Knows
15		In The Garden
16		Like A Rolling Stone
17	A	The Times They Are A-Changin'
18		Masters Of War

Feb 3rd		SECC Hall 3, Glasgow
Instr.		The Mountains Of Mourne
1		Subterranean Homesick Blues
2		What Was It You Wanted
3		Watching The River Flow
4		Positively 4th Street
5		I'll Be Your Baby Tonight
6		Gotta Serve Somebody
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	The Ballad Of Hollis Brown
9	A	Boots Of Spanish Leather
10	A	Mr Tambourine Man
11		Under The Red Sky
12		Just Like A Woman
13		Political World
14		I Shall Be Released
15		Like A Rolling Stone
16	A	Blowin' In The Wind
17		All Along The Watchtower

Feb 8th		Hammersmith Odeon, London
1		Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		Masters Of War
4		Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)
5		The Man In Me
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll
9	A	Desolation Row
10	A	It Ain't Me Babe
11		Everything Is Broken
12	P	What Good Am I?
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14	P	God Knows
15		In The Garden
16		Like A Rolling Stone
17	A	Blowin' In The Wind
18		Maggie's Farm

Feb 9th		Hammersmith Odeon, London
1		Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		Masters Of War
4		Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)
5		The Man In Me
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	Don't Think Twice, It's All Right
9	A	One Too Many Mornings
10	A	Mr Tambourine Man
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Man In A Long Black Coat
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14	P	Shooting Star
15		I Shall Be Released
16		Like A Rolling Stone
17	A	The Times They Are A-Changin'
18		Highway 61 Revisited

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**MEANTIME LIFE OUTSIDE GOES ON ALL AROUND YOU**
**Bob Dylan in Glasgow**

by Joe McShane

Thirteen years ago I dogged school and got on an overnight bus to London. I'd joined a mini-exodus from Glasgow, en route for Earls Court to see Bob Dylan for the first time.

He had not played Scotland since 1966 and, it was agreed, never would again. The nearest we'd come was in 1977 when Baez took in good spirits that every request from the audience at her Glasgow show was for a Dylan song. Any Dylan song.

And so it was that I queued eight hours and spent the same time travelling 400 miles to London. That following evening, though, with his breathtaking, bare-bones rearrangement of **Tangled Up In Blue** and some new song of "Yankee Power" - two personal highlights in a set of highlights - any remaining rational, critical perspective of Dylan vanished for me.

He closed that concert with **The Times They Are A Changin'**. They certainly are. I, like many of my countrymen, now live and work in London, and Dylan is playing Glasgow for the second time in three years. In 1989, a marvellous greatest hits romp was marred by the cavernous main hall of the S.E.C.C., inept security and a random seating plan that made for sheer pandemonium during the first two numbers.

The power and glory of Dylan's return performance was a victim of a booming, inaudible sound mix. He didn't say a word. For many in the audience that added insult. It should have been so different. In 1991, we hoped it would be. He was playing twice and in an all standing hall, half the size of the other one. For me, no more sleepless bus rides and warm lager. Now it was Heathrow and complimentary G&Ts.

**Saturday 2nd**

He opened with **Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)**, wearing what most of the audience instantly agreed was a tartan jacket. He knows what country he's in! And the voice? Pure **Under The Red Sky**. He's most at home with his lower register drops down at the end of most lines....*Tell/Fell/Behind/Mine*. The effect is hypnotic, melancholic.

But that band, mere shadows of Smith, Aaranson and Parker. Why replace those that had gone before? Why not a new band with a new sound? They are a garage band at best and trudge through **Lay Lady Lay**, **All Along The Watchtower** and **Stuck Inside A Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)**.

Dylan is singing well and shouts a long awaited "Thank you" early in the set, but he'll have an uphill struggle with this high-school band. The introduction to **I Shall Be Released** becomes **The Man In Me** and leads to a long, and typically greeted, harp solo, before he stirs up a whirlwind by singing "Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle 'til the cows come home." Well...I could have handled another couple of verses, but 'til the cows come home'? Not when the acoustic set is to follow! Nonetheless, this was the early highlight.

An unmistakable harp solo and he's riding that train going west, his voice soaring as high as the harp at the end of the lines:

*We thought we could live forever in fun*

and

*A thousand dollars at the drop of a hat*

This is glorious stuff and the crowd are with him on every verse. (If only he'd sung every verse.)

Mr Tambourine Man marked the arrival of party time despite his delicate singing. The audience were now so enthusiastic that not even a poor harp solo at the end dampened thunderous applause.

Dylan's smiling broadly now and playfully syncopates his singing on the chorus of **It Ain't Me Babe** to quell any chance of a sing-a-long. Everyone gets the joke and they cheer now every time he looks vaguely in their direction. He's inspired to perform a last verse full of emotion and power. Double-bass and drums arrive at the party for a joyful **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right**. Then it's back to the garage for **Everything Is Broken**.

I have a moment of panic as Dylan uncharacteristically lifts a scarf that has been thrown onstage. Bigotry, reflected through football, still divides this city and Dylan holding aloft team colours - barred from most bars in the area - could lead to something nasty. God, I'm paranoid. It's a tartan scarf, an excuse for another outbreak of general happiness.

Gotta Serve Somebody's lyrics got their usual rearrangement:

*You might be black girl, you may be white  
Livin' in daytime, sleepin' at night*

He clearly enjoys singing **Seeing The Real You At Last** and the "Hammersmith '90 wiggle" re-appeared to boot.

The second **Under The Red Sky** selection, **God Knows**, was magical, sticking close to the original version, despite jumbled and omitted verses. I loved it. How's that for balanced journalism?<sup>1</sup>

He segued into **In The Garden** saying that, while it was one of his lesser known songs, it was one of his favourites. We'd never have guessed considering how many times he plays the bloody thing.

The band had their customary problems ending the song, the crowd roared through the shambles. Dylan agreed that it did have an "awfully long ending....But its all over now". I was never so glad to hear the first chords of **Like A Rolling Stone**. At its conclusion he asked us to thank the band, God knows why.

The encores saw Dylan again throwing any possibility of a sing-a-long with a totally different melody. As the band came on for the final song, a friend commented that he'd made no reference to the Gulf war. **Masters Of War** came a split second later, no-one missed the poignancy. He tipped his hat, waved and was gone.

The crowd were delighted by his performance, everyone looking forward to tomorrow. I doubted, on tonight's evidence, if the band were capable of changing the set.

## Sunday 3rd

The second show, however, kicked off with a new instrumental and, as Dylan stepped forward to miss the first line of **Subterranean Homesick Blues**, it wasn't the band I was worried about. He looked ten years older than the previous evening; bulging eyes, very jowly and he hadn't changed his clothes. He looked unsteady on his feet as he crouched to play a hand-cupped harp solo. On **Subterranean**? I felt it was going to be one of those nights.

**What Was It You Wanted**, as close to a rockabilly version as possible, pulled from Dylan a stunning vocal:

*Are you paying attention, go ahead and speak*

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<sup>1</sup> Just fine, Joe

His voice soaring, assaulting his victim. He's peaking early: setting the melody pattern and building and building on it. The whole thing was going backwards, marvellous! Then it was back into that hand held harp solo to end this and for a spirited **Watching The River Flow**.

A couple of the chords from **Joey** introduced **Positively 4th Street**. They were playing it way too slow. Despite this, Dylan sang a stately vocal before wandering off stage six verses in. There was complete confusion in the band and crowd. MEANTIME LIFE OUTSIDE GOES ON....

Where has he gone? What's he doing? Changing guitar it seemed. The song appeared to last for hours. When he finally chose to re-appear to an amused roar, he came in at exactly the wrong point and sang exactly the wrong verse. (We got the last verse second last and the second last, last.) And he blew the punch line! Of **Positively 4th Street** of all songs. What is he up to?

A bar room shuffle through **I'll Be Your Baby, Tonight** followed, with Dylan singing the middle eight three times in a row. If he is this girl's baby tonight he may be too "tired" to deliver the goods. He reminded us, in case we'd forgotten, that this was one of his old country songs and that **Gotta Serve Somebody** was gospel, before pointing out that we:

*Might be living in a mansion  
Might be living on the street  
Living in cold or suffering in heat*

After treating us to harp solos on each of the first three songs, **Bob Dylan's Dream** was delivered without one! The mood changed with **Ballad Of Hollis Brown** as he ran line into line without a break. This bleak nightmare was faithfully delivered to a silent audience hanging on every word.

*Is there anyone who knows,  
Is there anyone who cares?*

The contrast from the previous evening's joyous, acoustic performance was breathtaking - as was **Boots Of Spanish Leather**. His singing full of emotion as he asks her to carry herself back to him untouched and three times tells her to *Take heed*.

**Mr Tambourine Man** and **Under The Red Sky** follow, before **Just Like A Woman** and **Political World** are given confident outings. He's really in his stride now, having overcome the debacle earlier in the set.

*Thank You. Crime don't have a face, its got everything but a face, it don't need a face.*

Quite.

Familiarity breeds contempt and I have had difficulty fully enjoying **I Shall Be Released** and **Like A Rolling Stone** for some time. Tonight, though, as Dylan's vocal soars and descends alternately, I'm mesmerised. In the same word he drops and raises his voice an octave.

*Protection/ Fall/ Wall*

*Loud/ Realise/ Alibis/ Eyes*

Yet again his singing has transformed tired arrangements. Yet again I know why I keep coming year after year.

At the end of **Like A Rolling Stone** he doesn't leave the stage but carries straight into **Blowin' In The Wind** and **All Along The Watchtower!** An extended set? No.

*Thank You, everybody. Long Live Scotland.*

This is a typically nonsensical statement that is so touching it sends a shiver up my spine. How many times has he done this to me?

The band may be appallingly bad but the singer and his songs are still great. **Roll on Hammersmith.**

8/2/91

YOU GO  
LAY  
MASTERS  
MEANS  
WIGGLE

POBS DREAM  
HATTIE  
DESOLATION  
AINT ME

BADREN  
LONG BLAK CNT  
REAR ME

GOD KNOWS  
IN THE GARDEN  
STONE

BUMM  
MASCIE



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**Friday 8th February****Andrew Muir**

After all the build-up, waiting and damn-near hysteria, it was nearly time for Dylan to appear. Having missed the Glasgow shows (don't people buy second-hand cars anymore?) I was in a state of great excitement. It had been an endless and aggravating day, punctuated by the news of Andy's inability to overcome the weather. Steve and I go in early-ish, after Van Morrison's appearance from the very beginning with the supporting Georgie Fame at the Royal Albert Hall, I want to be prepared. Anyway, after giving away two tickets for nothing and being offered only two pounds for the third (front stalls! I keep it as a memento), it gets too depressing and cold outside.

We catch a bit of Graham Parker, needless to say it doesn't register - except for the moment when he switches from acoustic to electric guitar. "Judas" comes the shout, everyone laughs, Parker included.

The stage is set-up, there are movements in the darkness, the roar grows to a crescendo. Suddenly he's there! It's always a relief to see him, since the '87 shows I've worried about him making it at all, but especially tonight, following the reports of his state for the second Glasgow show.

He seems happy but sober. Other details begin to penetrate my excitement: that tartan-ish jacket, the gaps in the audience in front, that oh-so interesting electronic keyboard and the huge banner proclaiming "Thanks for coming, Bob" taking one's thoughts to the Gulf. The opening song has passed and I've only caught a few words. He's into *Lay Lady Lay* and I'm beginning to settle down (relatively speaking, you understand):

Why wait any longer, when he's standing in front of yoooo..

The close of this song sees us move forward a few rows to two vacant 'E' aisle seats. There is a great cheer for *Masters Of War* as thoughts of the Gulf return, Dylan's harmonica solo elicits another roar of approval. We've a great view now and Dylan gives a nearly-as-good-as-the-Grammy's rendition. Dylan seems to be getting into it, unfortunately a gent right in front of me is getting increasingly out of it. My view is now continually disrupted by his insistence on swaying wildly while 'secretly' smoking a joint and the resultant intermittent altercations with the security guards.

Bob meanwhile is giving us *Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)*, evoking memories of last year's glorious run that climaxed unforgettably on this very day. It leads to a comparison that will haunt this leg of the tour and, perhaps, many dates to come. We take our chance when Dopey has another run-in with security to flee to row B, just in time for *The Man In Me*. It is a double delight - a perfect view and one of the rarer songs. From now on I'm close enough to catch every quizzical look shot out from beneath that remarkably grey-free, curly hair.

Oh what a wonderful feeling...

It was about then that I realised how pedestrian the band are and how it was restricting Dylan. He seems about to step up a gear and really fly but is brought back to Earth each time.

After a remark about "there being a man in everyone", *Wiggle Wiggle* erupts. Regretfully for us, this genial invitation to boogie coincides with the reappearance of our acquaintance from earlier. Further down the road to oblivion, he nevertheless unerringly positions himself just in front of us, giving it his best rubbery John Travolta shot.

Acoustic time and **Bob Dylan's Dream** gets a deservedly marvellous reception. That opening harmonica solo is just so evocative. In hindsight this was one of the poorer performances of the song - sometimes it worked spectacularly well, other times it misfired - but at the time it was exhilarating despite the slurred lines, mixed up verses and total omission of the second verse. (This last would've brought thunderous applause for "weathered many a storm", I'm sure.)

We finally get rid of Mr Travolta here too, he hadn't changed his routine one iota from **Wiggle Wiggle** which is quite a feat but not one we appreciated at the time. Steve tapped him on the shoulder to ask him to calm down a bit, he took fright and scurried off, joint in hand, not to be seen again.

Dylan produced a glorious **The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll**. This was far and away the best performance so far, even if it was the least enthusiastically received of the acoustic songs. Drawing the plaudits were a lovely **Desolation Row**, the cheers which greeted the first singing of the actual words were an eloquent testament to how much this song continues to mean to his fans, and a hoary old **It Ain't Me Babe**. (Bob obviously read the first two "Homers" in the wrong order!)

Following the litany of dysfunction and alienation of **Everything Is Broken** we get the first attempt at the keyboards during the smouldering **What Good Am I?**. This was one of the evening's highlights, although I was disappointed later to notice that it had replaced **Man In A Long Black Coat**. (See set list two pages back.)

It was also, of course, completely disrupted by Bob's abortive attempts to play the keyboards. A sound engineer who came on to try to help only added to the brouhaha. An ill placed microphone hit Dylan in the face (or, rather, vice versa). His good mood, which had been punctured only by the occasional dark glance at an errant guitarist, was transformed into an ugly snarl. (Joe later translated that snarl into something along the lines of: **WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM, A \*\*\*\*\* CRIPPLE?...**) The transformation back again from this outburst to the emotion filled rendition was breathtaking.

Sandwiched between two songs that Dylan loves to perform, **Seeing The Real You At Last and In The Garden**, was **God Knows** with another stab at the keyboards. He was still tying himself up in knots. It opened with what sounded remarkably like a snatch of **Blowin' In The Wind**, once Bob settled down this became another stand-out, as it would be each time it was played. I loved the way the band came crashing in after "*scissors to a string*". The two halves to the song in this kind of performance offer such differing, but mutually supportive, interpretations of the one song. (His antics at the keyboards notwithstanding!)

He doesn't leave the stage at all prior to the encores. The entire band wait on the darkened stage for a short time. It had been presumed that this was an alcohol fuelled oversight in Glasgow but it turns out to be the norm. And it is a more agreeable arrangement that the falsity of trooping off the stage each night and responding to the cries of "more" by trooping back on again to absolutely no-one's surprise.

We get a "Thank Yooo" after **Blowin' In The Wind** and a spoken intro to, a very fine, **Maggie's Farm**. That's it. I applaud loudly as he leaves the stage, as does Joe who asks me what I thought of it.

*"That'll do me fine."*

My reply draws a surprised look from a passing stranger. Joe - on his third show and therefore having a very different perspective - said that he felt Dylan had never got out of second gear. He was quite right, of course. But then, Dylan's second gear is better than anyone else's first, he appeared to be in pretty good health and humour and there were seven more nights to look forward to.

Nothing left to do but go home and report to the ansaphone for the home bound victims of the weather. Oh, and puzzle over the significance(s) of **Seeing The Real You At Last** being abbreviated to **Real Me** on the hand-written set list that Paul had adroitly acquired.

**Saturday 9th**

Hazel Hogg

This show had all the right ingredients: Bob having a great time and showing it, and an audience fresh and unscarred by the disappointments of the coming days. The magic was definitely there and, to me, this show stands well apart from the indifference of the rest of the London run.

Bob, for once, appeared to be really enjoying himself, smiling, grinning and bouncing around the stage. The vocal performance was very fluid and controlled, carrying you with it as it soared and snarled its way through the set. The sheer good humour of the man was irresistible and the audience couldn't believe its luck.

**Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine):** He thundered straight into a cracking, spirited rendition. The vocal is clear, no mumbling. The audience love it, sensing that this is going to be a good night.

**Lay Lady Lay:** As a song about seduction this would certainly have worked on me. There was nothing tired or lack-lustre about this performance. The only slight disappointment was Bob's harp solo, which didn't really come off.

**Masters Of War:** Along with 90% of the audience, I was certain this was **All Along The Watchtower**. indeed it may have started off that way, but, somewhere in the middle of a long introduction, changed its mind. A sadly truncated version, but thundered out with true power and venom.

**Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again):** A lovely, rolling version, slick and fast, Bobby gleefully playing about with the vocals.

**The Man In Me:** Sung with deceptive gentleness, full of heart and power, wandering up and down his vocal register. Unfortunately he picked up the wrong harp for the solo but otherwise it was perfectly, if puzzlingly, played to the tune of **I Shall Be Released**.

**Wiggle Wiggle:** A spirited version of one of my least favourite songs, at least it signalled the imminent start of the acoustic section, surely something special on a night like this.

**Bob Dylan's Dream:** started quietly, almost whispered, but built and built; a vocal pure enough to break your heart. The accompaniment was slightly scrappy but the audience had reached nirvana and didn't care.

**Don't Think Twice, It's All Right:** was beautifully timed, the momentum just carrying the song along on a wave of pure joy. The vocal soared and jumped octaves all over the place. The most unadulteratedly happy live performance I have seen since the first night at Birmingham in '87 when **I Want You** brought tears to my eyes.

**One Too Many Mornings:** The most appropriate term for this is "bloody brilliant". A soft, lilting, emotional performance. The song is semi-acoustic as the band have returned: snare drums and double bass hum along in the background. The song is way too short, it should have lasted several hours.

**Mr Tambourine Man:** A tinkling, flowing stream of sound as Bob runs line into line to produce a gentle, flowing momentum. An exquisite Dylan vocal and a skillful Dylan guitar solo.

**Everything Is Broken:** Back to full electric, the song is rattled through at a lively pace. **Rock Around The Clock** had nothing on the dancing going on in the aisles.

**Man In The Long Black Coat:** proceeded at an almost slow-stop pace with an unusual, almost surreal, vocal with the band sounding quite professional and sure of themselves.

YOU GO YOUR WAY  
LAY LADY LAY  
WATCHTOWER / MASTERS  
MEMPHIS / SERVE SOMEBODY  
MAN IN ME / SIMPLE TWIST  
WIGGLE

---

B'D'S DREAM  
DONT THINK TWICE  
NO. COUNTRY / BOOTS  
TAMBOURINE

---

BROKEN  
LONG BLACK COAT  
REAL YOU  
SHOOTING STAR / GOD KNOWS  
GARDEN  
ROLLING STONE

---

BLOWIN  
MAGGIE'S / HIWAY

**Seeing The Real You At Last:** Bob really lets go on the vocals here; growling and howling the words, his voice strained with sarcasm and disgust. A marvellous version marred only by the band getting a bit lost.

**Shooting Star:** A very quavering vocal here, probably produced by the strain of crouching over the keyboards like that. Needless to say the audience loved it.

**I Shall Be Released:** He is well away now, God knows what he is doing to his vocal chords. Every ounce of emotion is squeezed out by a restrained and powerful build up.

**Like A Rolling Stone:** A slightly inaudible start, but when he got going, boy did he go! The audience joined in like it was Friday night down their local.

**Encores:**

**The Times They Are A-Changin':** A semi-acoustic version, obviously well rehearsed, with impeccable timing and a bouncing rhythm. Bob excels himself with an excellent harp solo.

**Highway 61 Revisited:** Real rhythmic rock 'n' roll - even the golden oldies in the audience were gently twitching, everyone else was going nuts. Bob, ever the maestro, was hamming it up for all he was worth; bowing, waving and even throwing back a hat that someone had enthusiastically launched at him.

This show was, without a shadow of a doubt, the jewel of the 1991 Hammersmith residency.

Feb 10th		Hammersmith Odeon, London
1		Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		All Along The Watchtower
4		Gotta Serve Somebody
5		The Man In Me
6		Wiggle Wiggle
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16	A	Blowin' In The Wind
17		Maggie's Farm

Feb 12th		Hammersmith Odeon, London
1	P½	Tangled Up In Blue
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		All Along The Watchtower
4	P	Simple Twist Of Fate
5		Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleedin')
9	A	Tomorrow Is A Long Time
10	A	Desolation Row
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Man In A Long Black Coat
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14	P	What Good Am I?
15		I Shall Be Released
16		Like A Rolling Stone
17	A	The Times They Are A-Changin'
18		Highway 61 Revisited

## Sunday 10th

Andrew Muir

I spend a strange day listlessly watching football, unable to concentrate. Evening eventually arrives. Bang! He's back on stage and straight into a lively **Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)**. Unusually for an opening song he enunciates very clearly, pulling out (some) of the last words in time honoured fashion. *I'll go laaaaast*. Biting down on other words

*I'm not gonna tell you, this time, why that is...*

How many times has he told, we wonder. Then it's into our by now familiar second song, he's giving it lots of power and emotion:

*Stay, Lady stay, stay-ay-ay....with your man a-while*

Then? Not a lot, it doesn't take off. After a promising opening, the temperature is lowered and it very much sounds as though she's not gonna stay and he, knowing this, just goes through the motions.

A grunge rock version of **All Along The Watchtower** - its first London airing - follows. Half the audience and band thought it was **Masters Of War** at the beginning. A London first, too, for **Gotta Serve Somebody**. Bob obviously enjoys this...*in a King Size Bed*...as do I but the thought occurs that it's hardly a suitable replacement for **Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)**.

**I Shall Be Released** chords lead us inevitably into **The Man In Me**, which is quite lovely until it tails away in an iffy ending. Dylan ignores that to immediately pick things up with the intro to his party piece: *Wiggle, Wiggle, Wiggle*...and wiggle we do.

It's goose-pimple time again as **Bob Dylan's Dream** takes us to a higher plane. Just forget bands like these and do an acoustic tour next time, Bobby. A little joke at the start of **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** prefaces a powerful rendition that brings roars of approval from the audience. He's really cooking. He plumps for **Boots Of Spanish Leather** - seemingly as a request, though the hand-written set list gives it a 50/50 chance - and gives a highly stylized performance. (He also laughs as the appropriateness of the line *Take heed of the stormy weather* strikes him; the audience respond as though he'd told the funniest joke they'd ever heard while simultaneously scoring the winning goal in a cup final.<sup>2</sup>) An okay **Mr Tambourine Man** concludes an acoustic set that had started off with two world beating performances.

It was that kind show, some great others merely adequate. As an all round show it wasn't as good as the previous night but it had some of the best individual song performances of the Hammersmith run. Other highlights were **Man In A Long Black Coat** and a superlative **Shooting Star**.

Dylan again seems to be enjoying himself - during **Seeing The Real You At Last** for example - and I can't help noticing that some of the gestures and mannerisms that look so spontaneous are being repeated in an obviously predetermined manner. I'll have as close as possible a view of this at Tuesday's show thanks to Lambchop securing me a centre, front row ticket. I won't be reviewing that one as my "partners in absurdity" reckon I wouldn't be objective enough. Check!

A more pressing worry, though, is what will I do tomorrow night without a show to go to - swap seats with Pia to get nearer the TV for the New York video ?

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<sup>2</sup> well, okay, I mean the two people in front of me did

Tuesday 12th

Paul Wright

Midway through this year's London residency and the atmosphere in the auditorium is strangely relaxed (our editor excluded!). Expectations are lower than at this stage of last year's concerts. Since then we've had Dylan plumb the depths of his art in Europe, where we watched him perform to fields seething with plastic and beer. His later concerts in the States held little to rave about, the new LP, *Under The Red Sky*, given the usual muted acknowledgement in concert.

So what do we get tonight?

The band are loose (when are they not?). Jackson's guitar is fine, but Wallace's depth charge drumming and Garnier's staggeringly anonymous bass playing are painfully inadequate. Diaz is just, well..there.

The opening chords of *Tangled Up In Blue* are chugged out by the band loosely followed by a swaying Dylan stabbing away at the keyboards. A mediocre romp through one of the few 70s songs showcased in this segment of what has ominously been dubbed "the never ending tour". A number of sojourns to the keyboards and a few lost words later sees the band grind the song to a halt.

Wedge between this opening parry and an exquisitely drawn *Simple Twist Of Fate* are a nice and sleazy does it *Lay Lady Lay* - Dylan locks into the vocals nicely, but unfortunately Jackson somewhat scapily closes the song with an attempted Robertson-style guitar solo - and *All Along The Watchtower*, which suitably fills tonight's Gulf slot.

*Simple Twist Of Fate* provides the highlight of tonight's show. Dylan once again draws the band through the opening few bars on those skeleton keys, and then launches into the saddest of vocals, hinting at the Barcelona '84 triumph, running up and down the scales beautifully. This as probably as near as Dylan comes to finding the essence we all wait for.

Vocals to the fore again on *Stuck Inside Of Mobile (Again!)*. Dylan's breath control symmetry working a treat here, stretching and hovering over the end of lines like some famished vulture tearing and picking at so much flesh.

*Wiggle Wiggle*: a humorous sideways glance at sex and death in recent years, which mixes poetic flippancy with a nod and a wink towards that "big disease with a little name" (Prince). Needless to say the performance was throw-away garbage, but what a song. Really!

Thumbs down to the chronically unimaginative Diaz, as he joins Dylan's current rendition of the more deserving *Bob Dylan's Dream*. When will Diaz give up and go back to the erstwhile roadie-ing where his skills and not his weaknesses are on display?

For the second time we are witness to Dylan's London accent during *It's Alright Ma*, in a very bland version where *plaites* and *gaites* go Eastend. *Tomorrow Is A Long Time* is served up in a gently rocking mode, resembling the musical equivalent of a very bumpy haycart ride down a country road.

As with a whole number of songs performed over the last couple of years, but made even worse by the majesty of what could have been, *Desolation Row* meanders clumsily through a smattering of verses: a musical museum piece which Dylan only just reveals to his audience "so's we can say we've been there".

*Everything Is Broken* is just that, throwaway hoedown nonsense.

2-12-91

TANGLED

Lay Lady Lay

WATCH TOWER

Simple Twist/Memphis

MAN IN ME

Wiggle

---

BOB'S DREAM

ALL RIGHT MA

E TOMORROW

D RESOLUTION

---

BROKEN

LONG BLACK COAT

REAL YOU

WHAT GOOD AM I

RELEASE

STONE

Times / Highway 61



Whilst the gloomy **Man In A Long Black Coat** and **What Good Am I?** were performed with some semblance of feeling and passion, these moments were soon dispelled by the gruntish sprint through **I Shall Be Released** and **Like A Rolling Stone**, which gave not an ounce of the wit or soul which these songs deserve, and were once accorded. Sadly the consistency of the indifference with which these songs have been performed recently, seems to have dulled the senses of much of Dylan's audience.

It feels strange to be so negative about a Dylan gig, and even sadder to recognise that I feel pretty much the same way about his entire brief stint of concerts. This is the case for all but the second night in Glasgow, where we were witness to the supremely scorched earth approach (as they say) to his music, which we saw for the first time during the '87 tour. While this type of performance is not to everyone's taste, for me, at least, it provides moments of seeing Dylan once again straining at the leash of his art, appearing like some ravaged Shaman, not always succeeding in his attempts, but happy to throw himself headlong into his dark box of musical mantras. Sadly, out of the ten gigs I saw this time around, Glasgow provided the only truly magnificently shattered night of music: the vocals swirling and wasted. As for the other nine, put them down there with the Dead gigs - "down where they're wounded".

Feb	13th	Hammersmith Odeon, London
1		Tangled Up In Blue
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		Masters Of War
4		The Man In Me
5		Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	To Ramona
9	A	Desolation Row
10	A	Gates Of Eden
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Man In A Long Black Coat
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14	P	Shooting Star
15		God Knows
16		In The Garden
17		Like A Rolling Stone
18	A	Blowin' In The Wind
19		All Along The Watchtower

Feb	15th	Hammersmith Odeon, London
1		Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2		Lay Lady Lay
3		Masters Of War
4		The Man In Me
5		Gotta Serve Somebody
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	Love Minus Zero/No Limit
9	A	Mr Tambourine Man
10	A	Girl From The North Country
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Man In A Long Black Coat
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14	P	Under The Red Sky
15		God Knows
16		I Shall Be Released
17		Like A Rolling Stone
18	A	It Ain't Me Babe
19		Highway 61 Revisited

Wednesday 13th

Debbie Sims

This was, for me, the night the money ran out; and, given the superb form Dylan was in the previous night, I was hoping for great things from the man. I didn't get them! He came on stage hatless, for me a bad sign, he is somehow more animated when "in character". (Although it doesn't much matter whose character as long as it isn't Bob Dylan.)

He began with **Tangled Up In Blue** but without the same conviction as last night. Then it was rapidly into **Lay Lady Lay**, a favourite of mine; but one, like too many others, to which Dylan no longer relates. He includes it merely as a 'greatest hit' for the casual observer (of which there surely can't be too many?).

Next was the obligatory **Masters Of War** which met with approval from the audience, although the significance and aptness of the lyrics seemed to escape Dylan. **The Man In Me** was played unimaginatively, and then we were once again into the increasingly dull **Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)**. Next was a bit of new album promotion, and Dylan and the band bounced into **Wiggle Wiggle**. This is a song which Dylan seems genuinely to enjoy playing, almost relishing the inane of the lyrics.

The acoustic set began with **Bob Dylan's Dream**. Not a favourite of mine, and not one which I became more fond of over the five nights at Hammersmith. **To Ramona**, on the other hand, was beautifully played and was a real highlight of the night's show.

Dylan then chose to desecrate **Desolation Row** in a somewhat spectacular style. If he cannot remember the words, tune, or which harmonica to play, then maybe he'd just better leave this one alone. God knows what the 'one nighters' must have thought of this shambles, although increasingly this was the one song during which my companion claimed to decipher some words - surely not?

**Gates Of Eden** was given a similar treatment and, although it had its moments, the slurring of the words and the general impression that Dylan wanted to get the song over with as quickly as possible, did not make this a classic performance.

**Everything Is Broken** was romped through pleasantly enough and confirmed my suspicion that Dylan is much happier playing new material than 'golden oldies'. **Man In A Long Black Coat** was treated to some very effective, atmospheric lighting and some excellent guitar playing by John Jackson. Incidentally, despite the inane grinning, I thought John Jackson was very good and definitely improved with hearing (or maybe with playing?).

**Seeing The Real You At Last** was thumped out in a seemingly accusatory manner. It was also somewhat ironic. Throughout the show Dylan often appeared to have serious trouble in seeing anyone or anything. He enjoyed this song and amused us with his, by now familiar, face-pulling routine, along with a couple of barely disguised nose-thumbs. This was followed by a version of **Shooting Star** which he had perfected the previous night. He again adopted his rather uncomfortable looking pose at the piano half sitting, half standing. However the song was passable enough, but then I'm biased!

The show concluded with, predictably by now, **God Knows**, **In The Garden** and **Like A Rolling Stone**. The first two possibly the last remnants of the 'born again' phase, although maybe not? **LARS** presumably to gather us back into the fold before the finale. However, Dylan's unique phrasing of the lyrics did not encourage a general sing-along, even if that's what the lighting engineer had intended.

The somewhat perfunctory encore consisted of **Blowin' In The Wind** and **All Along The Watchtower**. By then it was almost a quarter to eleven, the lights went up, the background music started and we all filed out once again. In the pub afterwards the atmosphere was rather subdued and even depressed. Someone said to me that I couldn't let this performance be the last one I saw (for this year), unfortunately it was.

## Friday 15th

Steve Hussey

I think I drew the short straw on having to review this one. I loved both Saturday shows and the first Sunday wasn't too bad either, but tonight, like the Friday before, Dylan never got into top gear. The band never helped, of course, turning out a startlingly dull array of guitar breaks, bass lines etc. But not too much blame should be laid at their plodding feet - after all, who was the guy that hired them?

Bob also shows a worrying lack of imagination in tonight's set list. The charms and subtleties of *Wiggle Wiggle*, *Seeing The Real You At Last*, *Everything Is Broken* and *Masters Of War* are not very obvious on the sixth night. (Despite this they are greeted with the same glee and silly hat waving as seemingly every other show.)

One last gripe - Dylan's voice. Time and again during the week I heard friends and various other bystanders complain that they couldn't understand a word the man said or sang. Bob has got so lazy (or tired), and he looks increasingly to hide among the boys rockin' and rollin' behind him. (And in Cesar's case that's well behind him.) But it needn't always be like this, the acoustic sets, where Dylan has to work hard with his singing show that he can still deliver with feeling and clarity.

Tonight was not without its positive points: *The Man In Me* was a highlight, as it was in every show, *Girl From The North Country* was breathtakingly simple and effective. It was also good to hear *Under The Red Sky* and *God Knows*. But these points on their own were simply not enough to make the evening anything other than a disappointment.

Feb	16th	Hammersmith Odeon, London
1	P	Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2	P	Lay Lady Lay
3		Masters Of War
4		The Man In Me
5		Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again)
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	Love Minus Zero/No Limit
9	A	Mr Tambourine Man
10	A	Boots Of Spanish Leather
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Man In A Long Black Coat
13		Under The Red Sky
14		Seeing The Real You At Last
15		God Knows
16		In The Garden
17		Like A Rolling Stone
18	A	Blowin' In The Wind
19		Maggie's Farm

Feb	17th	Hammersmith Odeon, London
1	P	Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)
2	P	Lay Lady Lay
3		Masters Of War
4		The Man In Me
5		Gotta Serve Somebody
6		Wiggle Wiggle
7	A	Bob Dylan's Dream
8	A	Love Minus Zero/No Limit
9	A	Mr Tambourine Man
10	A	Girl From The North Country
11		Everything Is Broken
12		Man In A Long Black Coat
13		Seeing The Real You At Last
14	P	Under The Red Sky
15		God Knows
16		I Shall Be Released
17		Like A Rolling Stone
18	A	The Times They Are A-Changin'
19		Highway 61 Revisited

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**Saturday 16th****Andrew Muir**

I'm getting cool enough to spot the clothes he's wearin' straight off now. Mind you, the long, shiny brown shoes would've grabbed anyone's attention tonight. Along with those, he was wearing: a striped blazer, leather waistcoat, black T-shirt, with a bit of a white one sticking out at his midriff.

Who needs sartorial elegance when you can perform like this? We get a great show tonight. He opens with the usual two - but at the keyboards. *Lay Lady Lay* is very good which augurs well, I've come to use that as a bit of a barometer for these shows.

The remainder of the first electric set is simply staggering with back-to-back great performances. It's the same old songs, but what a transformation as he gives them that extra edge. There's nothing lack-lustre about tonight's show. The audience is wildly appreciative, whether as a result of the performance or because the hall is full of people who - due to last weekend's weather - are at their first show, I'm not sure. Probably a bit of both.

Steve is convinced Dylan turns it on when Pia is there - (no, she didn't go to the last night!) - I only hope that he plays *Love Minus Zero/No Limit* again as it is her all time favourite. He does! He also falls about laughing during *Mr Tambourine Man*, whatever strikes him as funny is so good he relays it to the band and a jolly good laugh is had by all. (See the interview with John Jackson in *The Telegraph* for what happened.) This could puzzle a few tape listeners in the future.

Now whether you regard this clowning around during a song as showing disregard for the audience or reflecting the intimate atmosphere of the Hammersmith Odeon is up to yourselves. I'd like to think the latter and that he felt amongst friends, though perhaps we went too far when we applauded the yawn at the end of *Seeing The Real You At Last!*

A superb acoustic set (again) is followed by the second electric beginning as usual with *Everything Is Broken*. For a change, though, we have Ron Wood sneaking on stage to provide a tiresome distraction. He just about gets to grips with the song as it ends. Ron stays on for *Man In A Long Black Coat*, and reappears for *Like A Rolling Stone*, thankfully though, his contributions are minimal. (It should perhaps be said that Wood and Harrison behaved much more like guests at a Dylan concert should the following night. Though they still overstayed their welcome a bit.) At least we were spared Eric "It's so nice to see so many white faces in the crowd" Clapton.

Without quite fulfilling the extravagant promise of the first half of the concert, Bob still delivers an above average second half. There is much clowning about and visual entertainment. I'll never forget *Maggie's Farm* of all things - now how do you explain that to someone who's only got a tape to listen to?

Rumour amongst fans suggests that Dylan was seen this very afternoon being walked around The Odeon car park to sober him up. Either it is true or there are some budding tabloid writers amongst us. If the former it would suggest that there is a great deal to be said for an alcohol fuelled Dylan nowadays. Glasgow 3rd bears most eloquent testimony to this.

Dylan is so relaxed and there is such a celebratory feeling to this concert that I have a fleeting worry that Bob thinks it's the last night and won't turn up tomorrow. (Whaddya mean, you wish he hadn't?)

If you only could make one Hammersmith show, I hope it was a Saturday.

**Sunday 17th****Hazel Hogg**

Everything his revered Bobness does provides us with endless hours of fun and amusement: the performance, the post mortem, the speculation and then the inevitable post-tour "cold turkey". Everything, that is, with the exception of this tour's London stint. The last night of the residency was the culmination of a campaign of unremitting dreariness, a night so excruciatingly similar to all the other nights in style, content and (bar Saturday 9th) standard of performance to be doubly disappointing simply because it was the last night.

There's no need for me to compare the last night with the others in any detail because, with the exception of the first Saturday, this show was a carbon copy of every other London performance.<sup>3</sup>

If you were not there, all you need to know is that he was in fairly good spirits, wore his cowpoke hat and a white\cream\yellow jacket. (Difficult to tell due to the famous Dylan spotlight - a forty watt bulb somewhere at the back of the stage.) And that he alternated between the familiar half jig - half shamle around stage and crouching demonically over the keyboards.

**First Electric Section:**

**Most Likely You'll Go Your Way (and I'll Go Mine)** was ragged, mumbled and slurred. **Lay Lady Lay** was wheezed out, lacking passion or sensuality. **Masters Of War** and he seemed to be warming up, a fairly good vocal but thrown out at great speed. **The Man In Me** just seemed to rumble along, there was still some effort on the vocal but it was let down badly by the indifferent performance of the band. **Gotta Serve Somebody** showed how truly abysmal the band is, bring back the Heartbreakers, G.E. and the gang - almost anybody. Overall, a bit of a shambles. Dylan has a brave, but fairly misguided, attempt at a harmonica solo. **Wiggle Wiggle**: I hate to say it but this was awful.

**Acoustic Section:**

**Bob Dylan's Dream** sounded as wonderful as ever, touching and for moments almost achingly beautiful. **Love Minus Zero/No Limit** was clear and pure, soft and restrained, a sweet, little harmonica solo. I could forgive him almost anything. **Mr Tambourine Man**: pretty but nothing to get excited about. **Boots Of Spanish Leather** was gently mumbled, taken a little too fast and sadly cut short.

**Second Electric Section:**

**Everything Is Broken** had lots of twang and a heavy beat but not much else. **Man In A Long Black Coat** and Dylan showing some real flickers of enthusiasm here and the band is more together than usual. **Seeing The Real You At Last** sounded like they were trying to make last orders. **Under The Red Sky** : astonishingly a jewel, taken at the right pace, with a gentle, yearning vocal performance. **God Knows**, well I'm glad somebody does. **I Shall Be Released** - so will we soon! This was very lack-lustre. **Like A Rolling Stone** and we're on the home stretch now, a surprisingly good version.

**Encores:**

**The Times They Are A Changin'**, a pleasant little sing along. **Highway 61 Revisited**: "A song about the road", he tells us. Now this is Rock and Roll, a thumping good, get down and boogie version.

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<sup>3</sup> Including, say, Tuesday's Simple Twist Of Fate???

And this was all we got, Ron Wood and George Harrison came on and attempted to stuff yellow flowers down the revered neck, at which Bob looked none too amused -- and then he was gone. I can honestly admit that, Dylan being assaulted with flowers included, the only surprise of the evening was a car spontaneously combusting outside the Hammersmith Odeon afterwards.

If this seems an unwarrantedly negative review, it is because it is hard to describe the disappointments of this leg of the tour and, especially, this how. I have never before seen a Dylan last night that was not something special, did not contain some gems. After waiting night after night for something to treasure, the last night was a crushing disappointment, being exactly the same as nearly all the other nights, differing neither in content nor standard of performance. In truth it scarcely merits as a review from nearly any other night will tell you the same story. Only peoples' reactions will be different.

## Later Reflections

Andrew Muir

Hazel's reactions from Saturday 9th to the last show, while seeming extreme, reflect the views of many. See, too, the conclusion Chris Cooper comes to in the next article. There was a growing dissatisfaction among diehard fans as the residency progressed. "The band were awful, he wasn't trying, he was drunk, the shows were too short, there weren't enough song changes."

Was all this true? Well the band certainly were not very good, but as Steve points out, where does the blame for this really lie. He certainly seemed a bit pissed on occasion, but only once outrageously so, and it seemed to coincide with better renditions. Note too, at his drunkest, on the 3rd in Glasgow, Bob was so out of it he played a show from a different, superior tour.

The shows always seem too short! I think what annoyed people - and quite rightly so - was the impression he gave, on some nights, of wanting them over as quickly as possible. A feeling of: "Let's belt through the rest of the songs before last orders". Not that England's ridiculous licensing hours would restrict Bob Dylan.

Why should this feeling have arisen? Maybe it was a false impression. After all he often seemed very happy and, if he were bored, why go on touring, night after night, tour after tour. All the talk of "paradox" and "enigma" seems to have come home to roost.

As to song changes - the nub of the problem for most fans - are we not a bit out of order here? Even setting the second Glasgow show aside, there were many changes. Look at the set lists for the first two London shows, seven changes for the second night! More, surely, than any other artist would make, nearly 40% of the set. Were we spoiled by last year, or should Bob take into account the large number who go every night?

Again, I think that this misses the point. If he performed the same eighteen or nineteen songs each night as well as he has for large slices of the Never Ending Tour, wouldn't we have been happy anyway? I know I would have. We could have clung to a different song each night as a personal highlight. Two of my favourite Hammersmith songs were **Masters Of War** and **The Man In Me** on the Sixteenth. It didn't matter that they weren't new to this leg of the tour. Anyway he has proved times beyond number (unless you're Ian Woodward or have Dave Percival's **The Concert Charts** to hand) that new life can be breathed into old standards.

I think we are spoiled to some extent, with the non stop videos and tape releases, on the other hand it's as recently as November '90 that Bob played much better shows.

As a final point, I think we should be advised to take the extent of some people's disappointment with a sackful of salt. I'm thinking of the reaction when there was the possibility of a May return to these shores and the sudden upturn in bookings to Europe in June. Whatever: **THANKS FOR COMING, BOBBY.**

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**The Never Ending Tour In Glasgow & London 1991**
**By Chris Cooper**

1990: *This is the last time, never again.*

1991: *Well, we really ought to got to Glasgow as well - it'll be good practice !*

Why do we do it? I meant it last time too, yet here we are again: another tour, another fortune spent and a handful of tickets to show for it! There is something about a Dylan tour that gets in the blood. I really never intended to go to so many shows, to try so many videos. It just sorta creeps up on you.

I was one of the crazy few that queued for a night again, in the freezing cold, for my tickets. Then I had the same argument with the Box Office.

*I want Front Circle or about 8th row downstairs, centre.*

*We still have 2nd row seats, Sir.*

*I want to sit further back.*

The same quizzical looks. Oh well, all in a taper's day I guess.

I come away poorer but happier. The right seats (I hope). A month later the next batch goes on sale. **Shit!** Back we go; more seats. Then more! Come on, Bob, play fair - why piss us around like this?

So I sit back. I talk to others. White Rose is not gonna bother this time. KCM is off everywhere.

**What!** *You're not gonna do Glasgow !!! But the security will be so easy there.*

Then the bugger sells me a new (to me) video camera and - what so far proves to be a foolproof - a way of getting the blighter into gigs. I offer White Rose my old camera, cheap - 300? *Too Much.*

He comes back, 200?

*Sorry, it's gone*

*Never mind*

A week later he buys a new camera; like I said, it's a crazy game!

Of course you know what happens next.

February 1st finds Dizzy and I on a train to Glasgow. It's a cold bleak day, but the long journey goes quickly with Dizzy to keep me company. We get to Glasgow and make our way to an obscure book shop where my Glasgow tickets are waiting. First problem: there is only one for the Saturday show.

*Oh well, we are told, there will be plenty on sale outside.*

So we go to our hotel, which has magically jumped in price from the promised 25 quid or so to 80 an night! Well, it's not often that Dizzy and I leave the kids behind. We spend a pleasant day in Glasgow on the Saturday. However I make the mistake of having a Scottish breakfast. The haddock was great but the porridge flies through my digestive system with all the subtlety of a runaway express train.

On to the SECC, where we soon discover a total lack of ticket touts and no spare tickets for sale! Dizzy and I wander around meeting the usual bunch: Ian W, the two Daves, Adrian, KCM...the same faces - all very sympathetic but no spare tickets.

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An hour goes by and we are getting desperate when I score one from a sailor for 25 quid.  
**Lets go in!**

On the way to the entrance, I manage to lose Dizzy. We meet up inside and she goes almost grey when I point out to her that in her haste she was carrying all "the gear" in. Much is disguised, but there are a few loose bits in there - like a 2x lens !! Anyway, we are in and we prepare for the show.

I'm not gonna bore you with the technical details. Film wise all goes well. I am well pleased. The show is ragged, though, with the new band unsure of what to do. Cesar and Jackson exchange places on lead guitar a lot. It makes for an uneasy Dylan, who at times strolls to the back of the stage, watching the proceedings like he was part of the audience.

**Bob Dylan's Dream** is very nice, so, too, is **God Knows**. We leave smiling.

I must say that, for a taper, there is no greater feeling of satisfaction than that moment when you get through the exit doors and you know that's one in the bag. I sometimes think it is this stimulus that makes us carry on. It is specially nice on night one of a tour. Filming is such a competitive business, you really feel up against to start with. So to get one under the belt, and a good one too, is very rewarding. I sleep happy that night.

I am up early in the morning, though. I want to see how it has come out and the TV in our room has the ariel socket welded in! Nothing else for it, I tip toe into the tv lounge and plug in. Looks great! In no time at all I have the hotel porter and a group of guests in there for a private viewing!

Dizzy eventually gets up and we have breakfast, then wander around Glasgow.

Poor Dizzy begins to feel unwell now, by the evening it looks like she won't be able to make the show.

Eventually I go it alone. I am full of confidence tonight as I reach my place at the front of the queue. I start to open the bag...

*No bags allowed in tonight, Sir. You'll have to leave it here.*

He points to a pile of bags thrown into a corner! I tell him I'll take it back to the hotel. Then he gets nasty:

*What have you got in there? You were here last night...*

Before things get too heavy, I split and take it back to the hotel. I find Dizzy feeling better and head back, getting there just as Graham Parker ends his set.

No need to hover back tonight, so I push to the front. We get a most amazing gig. Most of the set is different, though we get **Bob Dylan's Dream** again.

The shock is the state Dylan is in. I mean he is **pissed**, totally wasted. He hasn't got a clue. **Positively Fourth Street** gets three starts and never really ends. At one point he even drops the guitar! This is a poor night indeed. I'm almost glad i don't film it.

Back to the hotel. The next day the hotel porter asks me what the film is like!! After breakfast, we head home with the weather starting to turn bad. I have a few days rest ahead.

So it's on to London. **Did you notice the snow?????**

I mean, what a bummer! That really screwed up most of my plans. Instead of 50 minutes it takes 7 and a half hours to reach Hammersmith! I meet DP, who agrees that I can stay ay his place for the first three shows. Dizzy is not happy but is as understanding as usual.



Now, much had been thought of Hammersmith security, many stories of heavy times. Then we get rocket launchers in Whitehall. You gotta expect the worst? Well, good old Hammersmith doesn't let us down.

In I go, 6th row tonight; 12 zoom? Yeah, why not!

First thing I notice is the addition of an electric keyboard on stage. I get ready. Tonight is a lap job, I think.

I sit poised, on walks Dylan. UP everyone stands!!! Now dear old Lambchops is a nice guy, but he has decided that he and his band of merry men who occupy the front row every night will stand all night and scream their devotion. OK, that's their choice; but by standing up in the front row they force all the downstairs to stand up. This means that filming is much harder, the gaps this creates makes it easy to be spotted and forces most of us to get the camera up to the eye.

I am in good company tonight, I can see White Rose and DH , each with camera poised. I try filming a section, but it's mostly heads. Dylan jumps into focus in the viewfinder, VERY close. Then I see movement behind *me*. I drop the camera into the bag. The very same black guy that busted me last year leaps into my place, feet astride my bag, camera still running, he busts DH!!! (I have a great audio.)

Whilst this is bad news for DH it is very instructive to me, I watch the master go to work as he skilfully rescues the tape. It's a lesson which stands me in good stead when I get caught at the Wednesday show.

This signifies the end of filming attempts, though. No way to go on now, tomorrow is another show. Meanwhile, however, Dylan is continuing. He treats us to a very similar show to the first Glasgow. However, we get a stirring **Desolation Row** (my first for 25 years!!) and then he goes to the piano for **What Good Am I?** There is a great bit here where Dylan is too far from the mike and calls in a roadie but by not keeping an eye on the distance of the mike he manages to head butt it! The band is still ragged but now Cesar seems to be playing much more laid back.

We file out and DP drives carefully back in the snow. I spend Saturday discussing tactics and preparing for the next show. This is the first of my balcony nights. Come the show and security is no better than the previous night. Up I go.

After a few minutes, I settle into the business. This is a lot better, I get a very watchable show tonight. This is just as well, as I later decide that this is one of the best shows. Cesar is now pushed to the far side of the stage.

The set, though, is getting rather familiar; the first half is virtually the same, though the band is tighter tonight. We get to the keyboard part...will he? YES but tonight it's a superb **Shooting Star**, probably my favourite *Oh Mercy* track. Like **A Rolling Stone** is also particularly good tonight.

I leave the hall, with that same rush, whole show tonight!!

At DP's we watch it through, then it's round to his mum's for Sunday dinner. Thanks Mrs P, for the hospitality!

For the Sunday show I am back in the sixth row. But this is gonna be bad news as I meet KCM, and discover he has got caught both nights!! I now form my "cunning plan" to swap my downstairs tickets for front balcony. I manage to do this for tonight and get a complete film of a rather average gig. It does have its high points, of course. **Shooting Star** again and a very nice **In The Garden**. However, these three shows have been very similar indeed. It makes the value of doing them all decrease. There are a lot of empty seats up there tonight, is it the snow or the grapevine? I head home for a day of domesticity before the Tuesday show.

The Tuesday show, what can I say? **Tangled Up In Blue**: no guitar, Dylan stalks the stage, like a deformed gangster, in his hat and coat. Superb stuff, this for me was the night to see, **Simple Twist and What Good Am I?** on keyboards. And also the acoustic **Tomorrow Is A Long Time** and **Desolation Row**; again, what can I say? (Oh yeah, the camera was working fine again.)

By now I was getting very confident. I was taking over those balcony seats alright, getting people to swap places an all was going well. They say pride comes before a fall, well I nearly bought it on Wednesday.

Wednesday, I meet our very own John Welburn who is beaming that 'tonight will be fine'. I offer his mate, Paul, my spare seat, it is closer and, anyway, I don't like empty seats by me. **Tangled Up In Blue** again, but tonight he has a guitar. We also get a lovely **Gates Of Eden** and **Desolation Row** for the last time.

Then I get busted!!

Well, it had to happen, you know? Fortunately Paul plays his part well and does not flinch when the videotape comes his way. The security are actually quite pleasant upstairs; I must say that they treat it all light-heartedly.

Without Paul there would be no tape of Wednesday, so, thanks Paul. I leave the show with more than a cold, though. I have started to cough and sneeze now. At least I am going home for a day or two....or so I thought! I wait till 3:00am for a train that eventually takes me 30 miles...and then brings me back. It is 4:30am and I am still at Kings Cross, feeling more dead than alive.

I stagger back to the Barkston Hotel where Romeo is staying. I sleep there for a few hours and then 'phone home. Greg answers the 'phone but fails to note my hotel down! I eventually wake in the late afternoon. I head home to a very relieved Dizzy.

I can honestly say that I have never felt so ill. I was ultimately forced to miss the Friday show, but I had to make the end.

Held up by antibiotics and aspirin, I stumble back to London for the last two. I gotta admit that I felt a little uneasy as I entered the Odeon. Would they recognise me? No.

Up to the balcony where I cough my way through an enjoyable, if rough, gig. We are treated to Ron Wood at the close of the set for **Like A Rolling Stone**, nice one, too. Of course the two opening songs on the keyboards comes as a surprising change, but a bigger one is **God Knows** on the keyboards!

The last night of a tour usually feels special, but this one did not. Perhaps my cold was affecting me, but it seemed a re-run of the previous night except this time George Harrison and Woody came out and threw flowers over Bob during **Highway 61 Revisited**. That doesn't sound much, does it?

The video? Oh, that's ok, yeah, got it all - but I'm not sure what for.

I'm not gonna do them all again.....

This time I'll stick to it. There's no longer any need. I think Bob sees himself as a sixties sideshow. You come to see the legend, not hear him; it's not important that he's out of tune, that the band are virtually rehearsing on tour. If that is what he believes, then he is wrong. Dylan is a professional and he should not be seen to give so many unprofessional shows. The man I know cared enough to want it to be right, I hope he cares that much again. I'll watch and wait and hope. Oh sure, I'll go to a few more gigs, and I'll possibly have the trusty camera too, but that's not to say all of 'em. Let's get it in perspective.

Postscript

Ring! Ring!

"Chris?"

"Yeah"

"Have you heard? Six nights in Mexico, soon"

"Really ! Wow!

(A voice from the kitchen) "Don't you dare!"

That's what dreams are for, I guess.

The original magnetic mover appears courtesy of *Freewheelin'*.

ROCK & ROLL - That 'difficult' second childhood...



"Yeah, but Bob was so much younger when he recorded that - he's older than that now."

# IT TAKES A LOT TO LAUGH

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO ENJOYING A BOB DYLAN CONCERT IN FEBRUARY 1991.....

Two foot now, and still falling!

..... STAY AT HOME AND MEASURE SNOW DRIFTS.....

YOU THINK THIS IS DEEP, I'M ACTUALLY RIDING A HORSE!!

..... TRY TO GET TO THE GIGS ANYWAY POSSIBLE, AND END UP STUCK IN SNOW DRIFTS.....

..... F... F... F... FORTY POUNDS... FORTY P... P... GIBBER... WIBBLE.....

..... SPEND THE GIGS IN A STATE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS, HAVING FAINTED AT THE PRICE OF THE OFFICIAL SWEAT SHIRTS.....

..... SPEND THE GIGS EITHER SQUINTING THROUGH A VIEWFINDER OR IN A STATE OF ABJECT TERROR, TRYING TO HIDE THE VIDEO CAMERA FROM OVER-ZEALOUS SECURITY.....

..... SIT BEHIND SOME CRETIN WHO INSISTS ON STANDING UP THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SHOW AND SINGING ALONG TO ALL OF THE ACOUSTIC NUMBERS, OR SCREAMING OUT TOTALLY DUMB COMMENTS.....

..... TRY TO DECIPHER DYLAN'S LYRICS AND WORK OUT WHAT SONG HE'S SINGING, WHILE DESPERATELY TRYING TO CONVINCE YOURSELF THAT WATCHING A TOTAL PISS-ARTIST MASSACRE HIS CLASSIC SONGS IS STILL A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.....

UGH... VIDEO CAMERA! KILL!!

PREHISTORIC MAN

BOB DYLAN 'HAPPY HOUR' 1991 TOUR

HEY, MR. TAMBOURINE MAN... LA, LA, LA, LA, LA!... THANKS FOR COMING, BOBBY!! WE LOVE YOU! BOBBY! BOBBY!! YAAAGH!! BOBBY!!

SHIT!

PRAT

HE WALKS ALONG WITH A... HIC! ... SAILOR THAT TALKS... MUMBLE... HIC!... DOCKS... PARROTS ALL COME IN... MUMBLE... HIC!

WHAT HAPPENED?

DEDICATED TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THE GIGS. AND BOB, WHO ALMOST MADE IT

© M. CARTER

★ 11-3-91

**Graham Ashton:**

*Thanks for issue two of Homer, the slut. Maybe your correspondents who were puzzled by the title might get round to reading Tarantula someday?*

*I admire your efforts in putting the mag together. That "middle ground" between The Telegraph and Isis\Look Back is a difficult one to fill. There's certainly a need, but I'm not sure that reprinting comments about songs from books we all have or duplicating newspaper cuttings that anyone who's interested will have collected anyway is the best territory to aim for.*

*More interesting, to me at any rate, were the individual responses to Under The Red Sky. That leads, inevitably to the obvious point that you yourself made the major creative input to the magazine with your well-written and perceptive essay on "Nonsense Verse". I suppose you could follow up with "nonsense videos" and "nonsense concert versions" but all the same, eventually the steam will run out and one person on their own will not be able to fill a Dylan fanzine. I hope you'll be able to garner contributions from those in the Dylan world with some thoughts in their head that they haven't nicked from stories in the press etc.*

*As for the mag being a "freebie", I think you must be daft. Nobody minds paying for anything they really want and it's ridiculous to expect people who get the mag not to reciprocate at least your time, effort and costs in putting it together. I enclose a modest contribution with this letter.*

Well I've been accused of many things in my life, but never creative input! Some pertinent points here. FOCUS ON is looking like a candidate for the chop at the moment, as no-one has written in to 'defend' it yet. On the other hand the newspaper cuttings have proved very popular; mainly due, I guess, to the sheer number of publications these days. Most people like to have them gathered together.

As to the point re my input - aren't ninety-per cent of videos "nonsense"? Seriously though, I'm sure that you'd all have tired of me pontificating in each & every issue. Thankfully contributors have stepped forward already and this issue completes the move from personalzine to magazine begun with Alex Hill's review in the last issue.

Re Homer being a "freebie", events have proven you correct. Incidentally, your contribution was far from "modest" and suffices for your first year's subscription.

**Mel Gamble:**

*Well done, getting 2 on the streets is proof of a certain level of organisation. The second is a definite improvement both in terms of content and production.*

*You seem to be veering more to the analytical, though generally understandable. Can you sustain the level by writing a large part yourself, or can you call on others to write for you? Sounds hard work to me.*

*Whatever, I'll look forward to the next one, and the next Homer, the slut.*

As above, really, Mel. Yes, it is too much hard work to do it all! I really found myself rushing to finish both the main articles in Issues One and Two because I'd got tied up in layout & reproduction.

**Mark Carter:**

*Thanks for the second issue of Homer. Excellent stuff! I was most impressed. Keep up the good work, I'd like to see you continuing for as long as you want to....(Mark goes on to offer various contributions - all of which were gratefully accepted)....Anyway, should be lots to comment on soon. If the track listing for the cd box set proves to be correct, then it's going to be a classic. My mouth is watering already!*

Yes, mine too. I was saying to Joe McShane today: "Imagine in 1986, if someone had told you how many times he was going to play Britain and that a set including Foot Of Pride, Blind Willie McTell and Farewell Angelina would be released in the next 5 years..." Not only would we not have believed it, we'd have called the men in the white coats!

Alex Hill:

*Thanks for a great second issue. More of the same would be much appreciated. Keep on keepin' on.*

*A few random thoughts on Issue 2. FOCUS ON must continue if only for the less well informed like me. It also provides much needed background for newcomers to Dylanology. A service much to be desired if only to provide an introduction to the club. Remember Andrew, the two youths who introduced themselves to us before the Wednesday Hammersmith concert? Remember how impressed they were with HOMER? These young men need this kind of service to support and give shape to their interest. I therefore disagree strongly with Steve Hussey, it is not the more "obscure" songs that need this treatment but the classics of yester-year.*

*MODES OF NONSENSE VERSE was a very interesting and thought provoking piece. It sent me scurrying hither and thither across the bookshelves looking for further associations. Herewith a few odds and ends.*

*Did you ever wonder what happened before LILY, ROSEMARY AND THE JACK OF HEARTS were reunited? Look no further than Lewis Carrol and EVIDENCE READ AT THE TRIAL OF THE KNAVE OF HEARTS. Well, maybe.*

*How about Mervyn Peake as another source? With Dylan's penchant for the grotesque and Peake's mastery of it this seems a distinct possibility. The vast labyrinthine castle of GORMENGHAST and its bizarre inhabitants, its rigid society and the peasants outside seem a fertile area for research. This is the society where the outsiders annually present great works of art to the Lord of Gormenghast. These Bright Carvings are then placed in a dusty attic that no-one visits. Peake was also a fine poet and illustrator, one of his shorter poems may just give you some indication of his talents and seems to me to encapsulate a lot of Dylan's work.*

The vastest things are those we may not learn.  
 We are not taught to die, nor to be born,  
 Nor how to burn  
 With love.  
 How pitiful is our enforced return  
 To those small things we are masters of.

*In MODES OF NONSENSE VERSE you mentioned Surrealism that also sparked various thoughts. It is, as you say, all too easy to force meaning where no meaning is implied. The "pure surrealists" eschewed all meaning in their work. One example being Louis Bunuel and Dali's film LE CHIEN ANDALOU which was simply a series of grotesque, absurd images with no narrative link or intended meaning. Dali continued in this vein through most of his work while Bunuel became more political as time went on, witness such films as LOS OLVIDADOS.*

*There is perhaps an obscure link here. One scene from the video to TIGHT CONNECTION TO MY HEART had two young people running hand in hand across a deserted landscape. They arrive at the top of a small hill and look down, then the scene changes. There is a sequence from a Bunuel film (the name of which escapes me at present) which looks exactly the same, and I mean exactly. The two people look the same, the landscape looks the same, right down to the dead trees at the bottom of the hill. However when the two look down in the Bunuel version they see skeletons dressed as catholic bishops and cardinals. I leave you to make a connection if there is one. It is possible we go too far, it may be that the important thing is not the intended meaning but the perceived meaning. It may be how the listener reacts is what matters and Dylan is the catalyst. On the other hand he may just be pulling our collective plonkers. More on perception and understanding at a later date.*

*HAMMERSMITH, Saturday (9th) and Wednesday.*

*He is trying very hard to please, but the band are rather incoherent and thrashy. Musically the overall feel was that the whole thing was thrown together with the constituent parts not gelling very well. The drummer in particular at times seemed to be on another planet altogether. That is not to say these two nights were without their highlights. In particular Saturday's SEEING THE REAL YOU AT LAST, EVERYTHING IS BROKEN and a superb SHOOTING STAR. I was personally delighted to hear ONE TOO MANY MORNINGS fairly well rendered, though there are those I understand who would disagree. SHOOTING STAR also stood out from a mediocre lot on Wednesday as well as a rumbustious ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER, with TO RAMONA bringing a wistful smile to my face. And on both nights, WIGGLE WIGGLE continues to delight and should become, if it isn't already, a concert favourite.*

Quite a few things here, Alex.

i) You've certainly put the cat amongst the pigeons re FOCUS ON; I'd just about decided against that. Though as far as the "youths" - (& I feel old enough already, thanks) - are concerned, I'm not even sure they were in the same universe as us. (Maybe I'll hear from them, though).

ii) The bit re "connections": Yes, it can be easy to go too far if one is going to insist on definite connections. But it all depends on why one is making them; or how illuminating they are. For example it would have been very surprising, but not altogether impossible, that Kafka hadn't read Dickens. A comparison of the two's works would not, however, have been invalidated in kafka had never read a line of Dickens. It would be surprising, but certainly not impossible, that Dylan has not read Elizabethan verse quite extensively. It is undeniable that Dylan is familiar with the Bible, nursery rhymes, Shakespeare, F Scott Fitzgerald, Dostoyevsky, The Beats and the French symbolists. (To mention a few from various literary traditions and to say nothing of the musical and oral traditions which are more central to his art.)

Your point re Peake, though, I can see no connection here. (Which doesn't mean there isn't one). I printed this because it is such a good poem. I think "connections" are valid if they arise out of the work itself. This morning on the tube (empty due to security alerts) I had peace to read the "Poems on the Underground." One was by Michael Drayton: (1563-1631)

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part  
Nay, I have done: you get no more of me.  
And I am glad: yea glad with all my heart,  
That thus so cleanly I myself can free  
Shake hands for forever, cancel all our vows,  
And when we meet at anytime again  
Be it not seen in either of our brows  
That we one jot of former love remain

Now whether Dylan has ever read this I do not know; but if one was discussing the Don't Think Twice\Most Likely You'll go Your Way type of song this would be a useful comparison. Not only do you have a similarity of sentiment but also of voice. I can almost hear Dylan singing bits of this.

iii) The bit re Bunuel & the videos. I presume you mean Unbelievable as the video - however, does it matter since they're both such crap? And I don't know what you mean by "pulling our plonkers". If the director of the video (not Dylan, incidentally) was having a private joke, good on him, I'm glad somebody got something out of it. Bunuel influences on Dylan are very far from unlikely, however - though it is not an area I know anything about, so how about looking at Renaldo & Clara with this in mind?

iv) One Too Many Mornings was lovely, Alex; don't listen to mid-tour fatigue merchants!!!

### **Dave Wingrove:**

*I was very interested by your MODES OF NONSENSE VERSE and enclose a copy of a tape with Nottamun Town on it, just in case no-one else has sent you one. Also some other Fairport Convention renditions of Dylan songs, which you may or may not have heard.*

*Okay. To MODES. Ten thousand. Yes, a nicely rounded figure, as the Chinese know only too well. Their term for 'Everything under Heaven and on the Earth' is "The Ten Thousand Things". To them it's the most significant of numbers.*

*But to the meat of your piece, "Nonsense". It strikes me that a lot of this results as an attempt to break down old ways of thinking - to climb over the barriers of pre-conditioned thought/structure. Like **Finnegan's Wake**, it serves not as an end in itself, but as a staging post - a resting point - before new structures are created and improved upon.*

*There's a lot of fun in the process, of course, as is implied in your quotes from Mr. Haunton's book. But you're quite right - what's at the core of this is surrealism - the Object Trouve and the whole Dadaist movement, which sought to break down the great arch of imagist order and provide the "shock of the new".*

*Sometimes Dylan does this. Sometimes, it seems to me, he fails. The passages you quote - from **Farewell Angelina**, **Gates Of Eden** etc - are perfect examples of what I'd call a 'breaching of expectation'. They take our breath as images because they are so unexpected - because these are ways of seeing something that we've never encountered or never considered before. And that's, as you say, good poetry.*

*Not that I wish to argue with you, Andy, but I'm a little suspicious of your interpretation of **Ballad Of A Thin Man** - maybe only because I put much more importance on the title than you seem to. The 'Thin Man' surely is thin because he is so superficial he almost doesn't exist. I'm sure that you're right re this being a reporter approaching Dylan - and the song being a put down of this 'type', but... Well, there's another possible interpretation. The 'Thin Man' was what the Vikings called Jesus Christ when they saw images of him on the cross in the towns of northern England they attacked. And maybe... Just maybe, Dylan knew this and is writing about his own response to the succession of interviews etc. Maybe he is the thin man, being crucified by this succession of Mr Jones's?*

*Only a thought...but ambivalence of this kind is surely at the heart of Dylan's best work?*

*But anyway....re sensory overload - you're absolutely right re this and re Dylan's perpetual struggle with words. And, again, you're quite correct that this is child's play. Indeed, one might argue that the artist must - at a certain point - become a child again (usually by having children, but not necessarily so) if he is to progress.*

*One other thought occurs to me: **Under The Red Sky** (not heard as of this date) seems very much a vision of Armageddon - then why don't you go to source? To the **Book of Revelations** with its links to **Ballad Of A Thin Man** - and angels with swords coming out of their mouths! And to its rich nonsensical imagery? Especially to the image of the fish and to its meaning (as a symbol - as in **Chung Kuo**<sup>1</sup>) of the violent overthrow of everything - of the **END** of society..of the day when the dead rise...*

*So: A good opener to a debate on the album, but far from (as I'm sure you know) exhaustive. I'd like to see what people make of your piece and what they add to it.*

*And now I'll go away and buy the damned album!*

Well Dave, if I got to you to buy the album I count it as a success and if you haven't bought the cd set, please put this down & do so at once!

We appear to be largely in agreement. You are quite re the Book Of Revelations; I was just getting round to all this when I ran out of time. (See also Andy Wright's letter on Issue One, below). I'll try and balance the writing & publishing sides of the 'zine better in the future.

As far as the title was concerned, I completely ignored it! I was discussing the song primarily on the lines of "nonsense verse" and it didn't fit! Your points here are very intriguing. I'd never heard that about the Vikings before, you've probably set a few people off on a fresh track there.

Thanks for the tapel

---

**1** This reference to the Chinese, and the later one to **Chung Kuo**, are to Dave's set of (7) novels under the general title **Chung Kuo**. Parts One and Two (**The Middle Kingdom** and **The Broken Wheel** are currently available. Damn fine they are too, though Dylan has been suppressed (along with the entire history of Western civilisation)!



**John Thorndike:**

*Many thanks for issue two, I've finally realised where the title comes from and it is, I suppose, a better title than "Popeye Squirm", "Hector Schmecter" and "Benjamin Turtle"*

*Seriously, though, I enjoyed **Homer** immensely. Your own **Modes Of Nonsense Verse** bridged the gap between the **Telegraph** and **Isis** nicely. I don't know about it [**Under The Red Sky**] being a "dainty dish to set before a king" rather an unappetising side dish that you'd refuse to pay for at the end of the meal. Nevertheless that's just my own opinion (I hate the album, bar **Born In Time** and **Handy Dandy**) and one which I may develop in the future, or not; it is still good to read the opinions of others even when I don't agree with them.*

***Bits & Bobs** (nice title) is, as no doubt you've been told a thousand times a bit too similar to **Isis**. The only alternative that springs to mind immediately is that you undertake a kind of 'mopping up' exercise, pulling together all the articles/reviews etc. that haven't been printed in full in the preceding **Isis**. But that's just an idea.*

Ah, the title; lets put that one to rest. OK, it is the name of a character in **Tarantula**. But why that particular character? Two reasons: one trivial and personal the other serious and relating to the whole idea of writing on Dylan. Firstly, I conceived of the magazine and the title when I was living a life to make **Homer** look like a teetotaller. Secondly, I think the name brilliantly summarises Dylan's feelings towards the predominance given by cultural snobbery to literary, written culture over oral, spoken/sung traditions.

The "mopping up" idea is one that occurred to me, but logistically it would prove well nigh impossible. Timing would be difficult, I'd need to stockpile every cutting, wait for **Isis** to appear and then go to print. Everything else would be held back and lots of time wasted collecting unused material. Nevertheless, I had thought of moving toward "obscurer" cuttings only but this brought howls of disenchantment from many of those I suggested it to. I think this problem area will take care of itself once the birthday has passed. This has been an exceptionally high profile period for **Bob** but it can't go on like this forever. (Besides a future tour or album would be dealt with in a special issue).

**Ian Roberts:**

*Belated thanks for Issue 2, which is excellent (although poorer for the deletion of **Some Other Kinds Of Songs**.)*

*Your article on nonsense, nursery rhyme and **Red Sky** was not only very readable but has also enhanced my appreciation of the album. However, whilst I find **Red Sky** an enjoyable, very well produced, interesting and worthwhile addition to the Dylan canon, I'm reluctant to regard it as more than a slight achievement according to his own lights. Yes, it is a much better collection than **Down In The Groove** or **Knocked Out Loaded** but beyond that I don't see it as a significant event.*

*It's certainly a surprising and, in many senses, welcome release after **Oh Mercy** though, isn't it? Just about the last thing I'd have anticipated, in fact, as must be plain from the dark forebodings of my review of **Oh Mercy** and **Dylan in the 80s**. (SEE ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE)...A friend of mine said that **Oh Mercy** sounded like the work of a man who'd been told he'd got a terminal disease and that **Red Sky** was like he'd been given a reprieve, and it is a bit like that, isn't it - the latter's air of randomness and its playful sense of the macabre.*

*Anyway keep on keepin' on. I'll look forward to future issues.*

*P.S. All that winter wonderland shit prevented me attending the two concerts I'd got tickets for. Mind you, the unaccountably inexplicable set lists have tended to alleviate the sense of loss..*

*Enjoyable, well produced, interesting and a worthwhile addition..."; yep, I'd go along with that & not really claim any more. I'm not so sure though, that it is not in fact a grimmer album than **Oh Mercy**. As for the concerts, well you'll find plenty of divergent views within these pages on what you missed.*

## Andy Wright: On Issue One:

*Intro: A very pleasant welcome to a new fanzine. You make yourself seem like a friendly and interesting person. (How did you manage to achieve this minor miracle? He he.)*

*It Ain't Me Babe: I don't feel that I can fairly comment on this section as I've been aware of it for quite some time. Saved 1980: I think this was, and still is, a good article. The points you made were what most of us were thinking at the time, so I think you are a bit hard criticising it now. Saved 1990: Again I agree with many of your views in this article. I can't help but think that you rushed this article a bit and could have made a more thorough job of it. Perhaps this is due to editorial pressures!*

*Some Other Kinds Of Songs: Well I'm not really sure if this section should be in a Dylan zine. But I really did find it interesting. I haven't heard New York yet, but I look forward to hearing it. Bits & Bobs I'm sure I've heard this title before! Check your tapes! This is an invaluable section; ESSENTIAL.*

*Well I never thought you'd do it. Congratulations on a superb effort.*

Thanks for the kind words, Andy; the personal digs are all that I would expect. Your correct re Saved 1990, the same occurred in issue two with Modes Of Nonsense Verse (see Dave Wingrove's letter, above).

## And On Issue Two:

*Desolation Row: Though, like many others will be, I'm familiar with large sections of this text; some of it was unfamiliar to me. This section is essential, it provides good reading and an invaluable reference point.*

*Modes Of Nonsense Verse: This type of article is not usually my cup of tea, but this is an exception. For once I was able to follow the ideas without becoming bogged down in the language. Under The Red Sky and many other Dylan compositions have been made clearer through this article. If this is a sample of the sort of thing you can write, let's have some more. Street Legal, Shot Of Love and Nashville Skyline are three little written about albums you could cover.*

*Red Eyed Under The Red Sky: Another well written article. Well done Alex! Though I must add that I thought Alex's comments on TV Talkin' Song - 'a fairly average song' - and everything had to say on God Knows were totally unfair.*

*Bits & Bobs: Totally indispensable, an absolute must.*

*Overall, great to see the cartoons and that Homer is well bound, as it should be. An excellent effort this time, cousin. I think you'll be hard pressed to match this effort. Can't wait for issue three!*

Thanks again, Andy. You have come out strongly in defence of the "threatened" sections, Focus On and Bits & Bobs, enough others have joined you to keep them safe! As to albums to "cover" yes, I'll keep those in mind; the first two you mention always seem to elicit sharply opposed viewpoints.

## D Hinksman:

*Thanks for the free issue of Homer, the slut. I'm really impressed by anyone that finds something nice to say about Under The Red Sky! It was a dreadful piece of work, the tracks were rewrites of previous songs, plus a copy of Lucille. It deserved to be insulted. Any other artist would have deserved to lose his recording contract.*

Mmm, give it time - it might grow on you ?!!

**John Green:**

Many thanks for my copy of *Homer The Slut*, no. 2. With the shows now over I've had a chance to go through it.

Certainly an interesting read, it seems you are trying to pitch things midway between *The Telegraph* and *Isis*, which is probably the best idea. Hope things work out fine.

It was nice to bump into you at Hammersmith albeit for only a few minutes, trust you enjoyed the rest of the shows. Seems a big downer now it is all over.

Thanks, John. It was nice to meet you too but, as with so many others, it was all too brief! It was a strange day when I bumped into you; I was going about the shops, hairdressers, bookies etc. that I normally do on a Saturday and all I seemed to do was bump into Dylan fans. (Perhaps the combination of resident Dylan diehards and Scottish rugby fans had drunk the Novotel dry and forced everyone out into the harsh sunlight? (Only a wild suggestion, you understand!))

**Steve King:**

Re the article you mentioned in the last *Homer* about Medgar Evers. I remember it but I don't seem to have it as I didn't notice any Bobby content. It was mostly about a possible retrial of a now quite old man. And I believe it was either a *Guardian* or *Independent* article.

Please don't drop *Focus On* as I really think it is a good idea to look at all the aspects of a song from all the angles. Plus it's good to have all the source material of one song in one place.

The article I had didn't actually mention Dylan either, Steve. In fact Pia had found it for me and cut it out of the *Evening Standard*; I promptly "filed" it somewhere. Thanks for everything else you sent, anyway.



"HEY A.J. ... IT'S ME... BOB ... I SEE YA FINALLY GOT PROMOTED MAN!"

**Ray Turner:**

*We met very briefly in the "Blue Anchor" at Hammersmith, where I was delighted to receive from you issue 2 of **Homer, the slut**. An excellent magazine, far more than a time filler between Wood Green and Hammersmith stations. I look forward to no. 3...*

*I was very disappointed to read that you are considering dropping the **Focus On** section of **Homer**. PLEASE DON'T. Books on Dylan are thin on the bookshelf at the moment, and the opportunity to read your well edited criticisms of the songs is very welcome. Even for those who have these books and articles, I am sure there is benefit to be gained in reading them grouped together in this way.*

*I found the articles **Modes Of Nonsense Verse** and **Red Eyed Under A Red Sky** very helpful. Whatever delights **Under The Red Sky** holds have been slow in coming to me (or me to it). Due to your article I have been able to approach the album in a different way and so change my initial view (distaste).*

*Having said **Modes Of Nonsense Verse** was fine and useful, I must tell you that one of your pages was missing. I would like to complete my reading of the article. The missing page is 5/6.*

*I managed 4 nights at Hammersmith. I thought Dylan was sensational, outrageous and so full of daring. The shows, because of this, were constantly exciting. The band grew in stature throughout the concerts. There may be no "Smith" (greatly missed), but there is a fuller sound and Dylan had to work harder (**NO BAD THING**).*

*Technically it may not have reached the heights of Hammersmith 1990 but there was a spirit and daring in Dylan's performances that, for me, lifted these shows above last years. However, as Steve King pointed out to me, that may have been in no small part due to all that rather strange and heady smoke in the air. Well, whatever it was I loved it.*

As you may have gathered by now I answer the letters more or less as they come in. Focus On stays! I've included the embarrassing bit about the missing page in case anyone else has the same problem - extras have been printed! Ray, you are by far the most enthusiastic person I've met or read re the concerts. Some of the reviews contained herein will have your blood boiling. I reckon Steve King is making a mistake, though, because the Odeon is a "No smoking" area now !!!

**Sandy Hamblett:**

*This is a totally honest letter. OK? I just wanted to ask the following: "Do we listen, do we 'really' hear?"*

*While reading the **Focus On Desolation Row**, I found myself getting desperate. All the talkin, dissecting, searching! Do we really hear? When I heard the song for the first time (about three months ago) I saw myself in it. It brought tears to my eyes. **Desolation Row** is upon us - do we really see? Do we learn anything from Bob? We pinpoint what his songs may be, we recognise truths - but do we try and change it? Are we resigned to it before even trying? Can you not see everyone in "Thin Man"?*

*I don't like the society I live in - but how to get away? To come across an artist who seems to sing it as it is made me think I'm maybe not losing my head. His music does that for me, and I'll be eternally grateful. But where will it get me?*

*Until then, I'll play along with the charade until I can think my way out!*

I take it some of these many questions are rhetorical. However, for starters: Yes I can see everyone in the "Thin Man", I can equally see many societies in Desolation Row. When I first heard the latter it brought tears to my eyes too. (Still can) And yes, I think we try and change it - I presume you are going to - but I am now, 15 years later, "resigned to it"; somewhat different from "before even trying".

I detest the society I live in, and I believe there are ways of 'getting away'; however nearly all of them are escapist or misanthropic. (Both of which I've a lot of time for). Bob's music does the same for me as it does for you & I'm just as grateful - but I don't expect it to get me anywhere. It sure as hell makes here a better place to be, though.

**Ian Lee:**

*Many thanks for the free issue of **Homer**, the slut which I enjoyed immensely. I hope you find the niche you're looking for. The magazine's title is certainly unusual (from **Tarantula** isn't it) and it made welcome alternative reading from the **Telegraph** and **Isis**.*

*I particularly liked the idea of the **Focus On** section - how about **Visions Of Johanna** as a possible song subject? I agree with your views about **Under The Red Sky**, it deserved better reviews from the critics, but then I remember **Blood On The Tracks** getting similar bad reviews initially. They never get it right.*

*...My wife and I managed to get to the Feb. 13th show and were amazed how the band had improved since the show at Glasgow on the 3rd. John Jackson, in particular, who now seems a very good replacement for G.E. Smith.*

*I was pleased to see him playing piano on **Shooting Star** and thought **God Knows** was superb.*

*Visions Of Johanna has been proposed by a couple of others too, so it looks likely! (I'll leave it until Bob's a little less active as that will be one hell of a **Focus On**.)*

*I think you have to grant that the reviewers treated Oh Mercy OK, but you're spot on in general. I'm not so sure about the band as you are, but I agree that the **Under The Red Sky** songs were the stand outs.*

**Jeff Stevens:**

*My initial feelings when I heard about the appearance of **Homer** were concerned with whether there was a market for yet another Dylan fanzine. Having read #2 I feel that there is, although I think that it would be preferable to produce your magazine on an irregular basis - perhaps to coincide with the appearance of a new album or tour - rather than trying to compete with the long established organs of the **Telegraph** or **Isis**. The problem with these is that they are inevitably rather predictable in format and perhaps adopt an over-reverent approach to the man and his music at times.*

*I feel that **Homer** #2 manages to combine the best elements of both, the analytical approach of **The Telegraph** and the more informative and personal **Isis**. Although reading the umpteenth review of **Under The Red Sky** can get tedious after a while!*

*I particularly enjoyed **Modes Of Nonsense Verse** and Alex Hill's **Red Eyed Under A Red Sky**; they forced me to look more closely at the last album, although nobody has successfully explained to me why, at the grand old age of 40, I should be interested in reading, or, indeed, listening to nursery rhymes in the first place!*

*...I have to admit to feeling uninvolved in the recent **Hammersmith Odeon** shows and the mindless frenzy of some of the so-called fans leaves me cold. The 3 cd retrospective promises some gems but the problem with hearing Dylan sing material from twenty-five years ago is that it only underlines how bare the cupboard is now. A fact that was further emphasised at the recent 'Grammy' awards by a decidedly ramshackle present day version of **Masters Of War**.*

*I suppose the "over reverence" is a result of sending them to Dylan's office - you wouldn't like him to read anything nasty, would you?*

*I suspect you'll find the concert reviews in this one a tad tedious! I certainly wouldn't recommend reading **Bits & Bobs** straight through. Hopefully, though, it will be handy in the future to have the album and tour reviews all together.*

*Why listen to nursery rhymes indeed! Only if the songs already do something for you; if they don't ignore part two of my article!*

*As you'll see from **Bits & Bobs**, I was pleased with his performance at the Grammy awards ceremony. However, I agree the gap between now the mid sixties output seems to be enormous, **Farewell Angelina** is the most exciting thing I've heard in a long time. On the other hand **Blind Willie McTell** ain't twenty five years ago.*



## **Andy Wright: On Under The Red Sky and Wilbury's Volume Three:**

**Wiggle Wiggle:** *What a laugh! Most people say this song is nonsense. SO WHAT! Dylan is having great fun and making good music doing so. This should have been a hit single.*

**Under The Red Sky:** *by now we all know of the nursery rhyme origins of this song. I just love the feel of it. The almost cosy opening two verses followed by the horror of the rest.*

**Unbelievable:** *This is exactly what I feel about this song. I really love it. The lyrics suggest so much, endless possibilities to what they could mean. The music complements the lyrics wonderfully. Pure Magic.*

**Born In Time:** *Absolutely lovely! This is Dylan doing what he does best. I'd die to hear him sing this in concert! The lyrics are brilliant. I rate this song as high as any he's ever written. The vocals are also superb, he's probably never sung better.*

**TV Talking Song:** *I really like this too. The 1990 talkin' blues song, from 'Born In Time' to back in time. Dylan hasn't really written anything like this since the '60s so it's actually about time he did. Interesting theme too.*

**10,000 Men:** *Another blast from the past, 1960s revisited etc. I'm not really sure about this song. It really doesn't do anything for me, though it's pleasant enough.*

**God Knows:** *If Dylan had written this in 1979/80 it's quite possible that many more of us would be more Christian. It's well written, well sung and maybe God really knows!*

**Handy Dandy:** *A wonderful song, from the opening chords you realize that this is a bit special. Many people ask, 'who is Handy Dandy', Dylan himself? Prince? I don't think so, I believe there is a bit of 'Handy Dandy' in all of us.*

**Cats In The Well:** *Doom, Gloom and Despair a-plenty in this song. Dylan's giving us all a warning. The cat maybe in the well but the shit's about to hit the fan!*

**Conclusion:** *This album is a worthy successor to Oh Mercy, though it is very different in style and content. How the hell can so many people get upset? This album is first rate!*

**Traveling Wilbury's Volume Three:** *Well I see that you don't rate this album too much. Well I'm afraid I totally disagree! My first impressions were not very favourable but it has really grown on me. I think we have to realize that Dylan is not trying to say anything important here, despite the efforts of his companions. Dylan is just having a good time with his buddies.*

*The truly good thing about this album is how relaxed Dylan is. His singing is terrific, the vocals on 7 Deadly Sins are unreal, as good a recorded performance as he's ever done (vocally)! Dylan's voice dominates the whole album, it's the one you're always looking for, much as Roy Orbison's did in Vol 1.*

*Sure, I would have to agree that there are no songs like Tweeter And The Monkey Man, but most of the songs are at least the equal of Congratulations and Dirty World. In fact, I believe; She's My Baby, Inside Out, If You Belonged To Me, 7 Deadly Sins, Where Were You Last Night, and Blue Moon to be better than either of those two!*

*Dylan needs to do sessions like these, they allow him to relax and get away from the pressure of being BOB DYLAN. After the first Wilbury collection we got Oh Mercy and Under The Red Sky plus his best live performances in years.. If he follows Volume Three with more of the same, I say more power to the Wilburys.*

*It's not what's being said that puts me off Volume 3 (apart from the facile ecology bits), but the ELO-ish sound. I've always liked 7 Deadly Sins, though, and I like the rougher sound of Volume 4.*

## Gillian McLaughlin: A case of mistaken identity?

Dear Ed.,

I was somewhat thrown towards the end of Dylan's most recent concert offerings at Hammersmith. Having been singularly unimpressed by Dylan's own performances in February, I could not resist the temptation of seeing my fellow Scot, Roddy Frame, give his own version of a Dylan support.

I was amazed, not to say honoured to find myself sitting beside what I took to be our esteemed, if reclusive, editor as my neighbour certainly looked and sounded like you. My instincts, however, began to tell me I must be mistaken, as I have it on good authority that you do not waste precious moments that might otherwise be spent chewing the cud with other Dylan obsessives, on watching Dylan support bands. It was an uncanny resemblance though.

My initial impressions were finally blown sky high when your clone was seen, not only to sing along with a few lines and jump about in a generally excited fashion (irrational behaviour any of us could be guilty of so far down the line in a Dylan tour), but then actually began to shout a request.

Please settle an argument - was it you? There's a ten pound bet riding on your answer.

Is there a faint whiff of a wind up in the air? I am tempted to answer, in time honoured editorial fashion, "shhurelly shome mistake?". However, here is what happened: I did indeed attend the said Roddy Frame slot. I believe Mr Frame played twice, though I'd need confirmation from regular support slot attenders on this. If this were true it would probably be Mr Frame's second appearance I attended. Why go? And why go once? The answer is simple, despite a liking for Mr Frame one would not have attended had one not needed to be in the Odeon anyway! With Mr Dylan's sharp starts one had to be in or very near the Odeon in case he suddenly took stage. For most people this meant a nearby bar, or the Odeon Bar. In fact this was also the case for me on all nights but the one you mention the reason being that I was with Pia, who had a bad cough that was easily set off by cigarette smoke. Having already swapped her Friday ticket (with Buzby) to avoid coughing through Friday she could only be persuaded to attend if she was kept away from cigarette smoke. (She was understandably worried about ruining others enjoyment/taping.)

As to your other observations these are also easily explained. I was indeed jumping about in excitement, I was soon to see Bob and this was one of the two concerts which I attended without the aid of anti-diahorrea tablets. As to singing along, the similar accents have confused you, I was probably chanting "gerroff, gerroff it's Bobby soon, Jump to it". I was conversing with Pia re the sad story of Andy being unable to attend previously due to the weather - unbeknown to me a song had ended, so I was still speaking in a loud tone - "Yes WHAT A BLUE WINTER it has been" I said. "No I'm not going to play WALK OUT TO WINTER" Mr Frame appeared to respond. Who gets the tenner?

## Peter Guy:

Thanks for the complimentary copy of "Homer, the slut". I must confess, I was a little wary at first. I have subscribed to a couple of fledgling fanzines before, and seen no more of the magazine or my subscription.

However, I was impressed by the quality of Homer, both content and production, and also saw some familiar names dotted about, so here is my tenner, with best wishes.

Thanks to you to, Peter. Note to all: I will reimburse the subscriptions if I do not produce the four issues.





**John Lindley:**

JOHN IS REPLYING TO A LETTER - AS WELL AS ISSUE TWO - SIMILAR TO THOSE OTHER OF YOU WILL HAVE RECEIVED. A GENERAL SOUNDING OUT AS TO THE VIABILITY OF ANOTHER MAGAZINE ON THE MARKET.

*Homer, the slut, issue two, was excellent and a huge improvement on the already promising debut issue, I thought. I particularly liked the idea of turning a large percentage of the magazine over to the new album and greatly enjoyed your Modes Of Nonsense Verse article which was quite fascinating.*

*I had at first thought that the footnote identifying Alex Hill, responsible for Red Eyed Under The Red Sky, as one and the same as Alex Hill the T.V. weatherman, was a joke, until I heard him predicting on TV the weekend after the shows that a particularly threatening band of cloud was about to 'wiggle like a big, fat snake'! Now there's a weatherman I'm prepared to believe in!<sup>1</sup>*

*Personal taste only, but I was happy to see the practice of artists other than Dylan being featured in the magazine was dropped for issue two. I would also support the idea of a Homer, the slut that devoted issues to a particular tour (or segment of) or album etc. And I feel that any xeroxed clippings therein would be best restricted to that subject.*

*As for a subscription fee in future - I feel this would be both necessary for you and inevitable, although you'll have to think very carefully about the size of such a fee against the already established mags - The Telegraph, Isis and Look Back. As there are, I guess, limits to the amount of magazines most people will be able to afford. As long as you can avoid duplicating the areas that each of those magazines cover best I think you will have a good chance of success.*

*Nice to meet you after the last show - pity the meeting was so brief.*

*It was a pity, John, but I didn't want to keep the party backstage waiting - you know how it is! I'm glad that you agree with the idea of special issues devoted to one topic but I'm afraid you're (so far!) outvoted on the Some Other Kinds Of Songs section. Time alone will tell if enough people support Homer, but I must report that the initial response makes the outlook quite hopeful.*

**Ian McKay:**

*Reading through your article on Ballad Of A Thin Man, you may have missed (or deliberately ignored) two, even three, phalli lying about the room.*

*In stanza three Jones is handed a bone, which reminds me of a line in Diggin' My Potatoes. The relevant stanza went something like:*

*I crept by your window  
Thought I heard a moan  
Thought I heard you sayin'  
You are sucking my sweet bone.*

*So Dylan's use would not be new.*

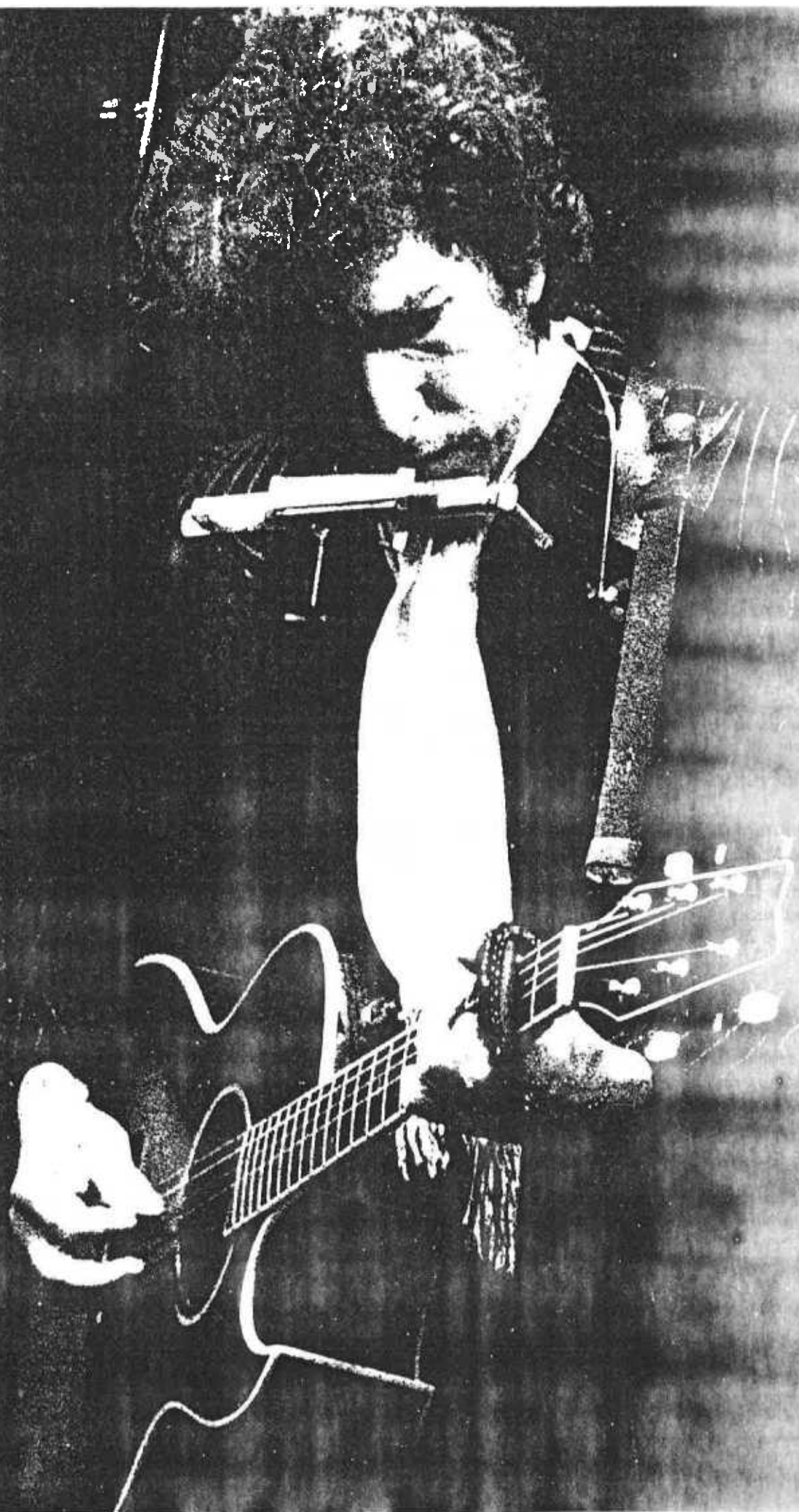
*In the seventh stanza we have, thrust at us, the one eyed midget, and, for good measure, there's even talk of milk. And then, there's the title itself, apparently another of his knobness's male member symbols - or is this merely obsession on my part?*

*Surely Mr Jones deserves our sympathy rather than our contempt as he struggles through, kicking against the pricks. Anyway it's a dull tune, and I've never liked the song.*

*There are too many holiday postcards in Eastbourne for your good, Ian. No, only joking, it is not obsession on your part. The phallic connotations in stanza seven plus the others I pointed out are quite clear. The title I'm just not sure about in this regard and the "bone" in stanza three does not connote the penis to me. I refer you to an exchange in Webster's The Duchess Of Malfi (from memory, so apologies to the author):*

*Women like best that part of men that hath no bone  
Fie, sirl  
No, lady, I mean the tongue.*

**I QUITE RIGHT TOO, JOHN. HE'S ALSO MENTIONED "A HARD RAIN THAT'S A GONNA FALL" AND THERE HAVE BEEN A COUPLE OF APPROACHING WICKED MESSENGERS.**



**The Pixies****Steve Hussey**

Bob Dylan is not the biggest force in rock music today nor is he now the most creative songwriter and *Under The Red Sky* was quite a way from being the best album of last year. Having said that I feel I must point out that Dylan's work has moved me consistently more than any other artists(s). However, throughout the 1980s a lot has happened, much of it without Bob Dylan.

I think it's vital to keep abreast of some of these things, if only to keep Dylan's work in perspective. Listening to other types of music is vital in this respect and this doesn't only mean buying the latest Neil Young album (great as it is). It's my hope, and, I think, your editor's, that this will be a column to spark an interest in other - dare one say younger (i.e. anyone under the age of fifty come May 1991)- bands.<sup>1</sup>

This edition's article concerns the Boston band The Pixies and specifically their 1989 album *Doolittle* (on 4AD records). They line up as what appears a pretty standard 4-piece band:

<b>Black Francis</b>	<b>Vocals &amp; Guitar</b>
<b>Joey Santiago</b>	<b>Lead Guitar</b>
<b>Kim Deal</b>	<b>Bass</b>
<b>David Lovering</b>	<b>Drums</b>

Their music is hard to nail down; somewhere between rock, punk and thrash metal. They are extraordinary live (I saw them at the Hammersmith Odeon last October) and they lose little impact on record.

*Doolittle* opens with *Debaser* and *Tame*, two tracks that pretty much sum up what The Pixies are all about.

They don't give an inch to any concept of introduction, they just scream their own presence. Black Francis' voice seems totally manic, almost hysterical; matched only by Santiago's guitar.

At this point it appears only to be a matter of time before self combustion takes place.

Indeed the demonic style of the opening songs signal the general sound and feel of the album. Tracks like *No. 13 Baby*, *Crackity Jones* and *Gouge Away* all take the listener through menacing scenery at a frightening pace.

However, you are given respite by two tracks that are essentially pop songs, placing you briefly, but thankfully, on familiar ground.

*Here Comes Your Man* and *La La Love You* are two pretty mindless little ditties, but by their banality they give the rest of the album a strong sense of contrast to remind you that what you are getting is different and special.

*Monkey Gone To Heaven* and *Hey* are the songs that make this into an outstanding record.

The first is a forerunner to Lou Reed's *Last Great American Whale* and, for me, it is the most beautiful and frightening description of what is to come for mankind. The lines in the last verse are delivered with such conviction and force that they still shake me up.

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<sup>1</sup> It also my second, and greater, hope that I won't have to write this column again, so any ideas for other subjects will be gratefully accepted!

The second shows what can be achieved with an economy of words. The song contains just two verses but their description of desperation and sadness brilliantly sung and played, leaves no room for escape.

This is a great album from a good band, but don't just take my word for it.



## By way of another intro...

Hardened veterans of the first two issues will know that this section is normally split between my informal rambles and cuttings from the press. Well it is the same this time but I've thrown out most of the former as the latter just grew & grew in size. Whether this is seen as a bonus or a penalty is down to individual preference! (Whadya mean 'shurrup and get on with the cuttings?' Anyway here was my immediate response to the Grammy's, including the full text of what he said for the two of you out there without it on video.

### That Happy Grammy Broadcast

Our man was in typical form at the Grammy's (a lifetime award). After a rousing intro from Jack Nicholson, Bobby launches into an 'ugly' version of **Masters Of War**. (Good timing, Bob). Just the thing to shake the event up. His nervous acceptance bordered on farce...one lengthy pause either a deliberate build-up to a punch line or an out-of-it Bob just closing down for a few moments, difficult to tell..

No-one seems to know if he is going to speak or not - least of all Bob - Nicholson seems very worried....Bob at mike, eventually:

Well, well.....awright..yeah...my father didn't leave me much, he was a very simple man, you know, he didn't leave me too much, but what he told me was this:

SCRATCHES NOSE, RUBS FACE, LOOKS DOWN AT AWARD

He said, uh.....he said so many things ya know.

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER....BOB RAISES HAT. JUST WHEN IT SEEMS ALL OVER HE CONTINUES:

He (my father) said:

*It is possible to become so defiled in this world that your own mother and father will abandon you and if that happens, God will always believe in your own ability to mend your ways.*

Thank you.

People were immediately on the 'phone to me saying he was dreadful and the outcry seemed universal<sup>1</sup>. Isn't it amazing - depressingly so - how easy it still is for an individual to go on one of these ever so polite award shows & 'upset' people. Then again, I believe many liked, or wanted to like, Dylan not for himself, just as a nice, cosy symbol. Diana Ross dressed up to the nine-to-the-power-nines and mindlessly applauding seemed to sum it all up. Well nice one Bob, a vintage performance. Most people are comparing it to Live Aid - the Nicholson connection making this difficult to avoid. I think Bob was much more in control here, the same Bob who blackened his eyes and teeth before the Hammond tribute and wore the handkerchief headgear for **Hard Rain**. What was surprising, to me, was the pretty favourable response of the US press, (see cuttings), I can't imagine our lot being so thoughtful about it!

### Box Set Sold Out?

Dave Wingrove reports that he was unable to buy the box set a couple of weeks after its release. Not only was the shop sold out but they intimated that Sony/CBS had not pressed enough copies. Hence the quick plummet down the charts? It would be a great pity after all the coverage it received. I would imagine most people going into HMV or Virgin with £25:00 to spend on the set would, on hearing it wasn't in stock, spend their dosh on something else.

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<sup>1</sup> DYLAN LOVERS IN THE U.S. HAD TO PUT UP WITH A LOT OF THIS - SEE THE LATEST LOOK BACK. (OH, AND HASN'T THAT MOVED UPMARKET!)

Under The Red Sky Going cheap, cheaper...

I went into Virgin to buy the box set and, as usual looked around the Dylan shelves. It was interesting to note that **Under The Red Sky** was on sale at the normal price on cassette racks, while simultaneously being twice reduced in the "sale shelves". It was going at £3.99 as of 2/4/91. (Incidentally the busker at Marble Arch was giving the Dylan numbers laldy that morning - he smiled in anticipation as he saw what I was carrying & was suitably rewarded for **Mr. Tambourine Man**.)

Protest On The Power Station (BSkyB)

Shown on April 2nd, a repeat of a programme, **Suggs on Saturday**, that focussed on protest for at least part of the show. I caught it by chance - no video to hand - as **Subterranean Homesick Blues** belted out. This was followed by a collection of songs closely, or loosely based, on the 60s protest movements. Gambo came on and was very good, unfortunately Suggs is hopeless in his presenter role and had to be corrected on some points. Then they showed the ubiquitous **Eve of Destruction** - (but by the Pretty Things) - and talked of McGuire & folk rock. Gambo put Suggs straight and talked of Dylan as starting folk-rock and being the head of the folk scene earlier. He then eulogised ("just what you need to hear" quoth Pia) about his lyrical and literate statements "when he was still a kid". Good stuff this, anybody see or tape it?

Inaccuracies Inc.

The number of inaccuracies in journalism about Dylan is quite staggering. Some of it is, of course, intentional; it would be a strange fellow that accused the British press of honesty. However, lots of it is the product of sheer laziness and incompetence. Consider the following from **Time Out**:

The great man cometh yet again, apparently undeterred by Gulf glitches and with a line-up of musicians that hasn't been finalised and won't be until the first gig commences. No matter what one thinks of Dylan's recent output (and certainly **Have Mercy** was an impressive return to form) its unlikely that these concerts will be anything but the usual musical and emotional bombardment from a man who has spent virtually all of the last four years on the road, with back up singers varying from Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers to rocking George Smith, the Grateful dead and the late, lamented Stevie Ray Vaughan. It's also possible that every gig will be completely different, if not in tone or line-up then simply in repertoire. Recently at a gig in Hartford, Connecticut, Dylan not only played for a total of four hours, but included songs as surprising as **Dancing In The Dark** and **Moon River**.

The signs are good and it's to be hoped that he's in the right frame of mind. Over the decades Dylan's stage persona has changed from the arrogant troubadouring of **Don't Look Back** and the riotous **Albert Hall** electric tour with the Band, through the pale white-suited presence at the isle of Wight, to celebrity cruising, to those lovely and moving reunions at **Earl's Court**. Even if Dylan doesn't pull it off this time, the support of **Graham Parker** will provide ample consolation.

With a slight effort this could have been a nice preview of the concerts, however count the errors for yourselves.

Savings of the Tour

From before the tour from a well known collector from the south coast:

*I'm just going to put empty cassette boxes on the shelf with the dates on them.*

After the tour, of course, a great many more were saying that....and that brings us to our next saying for during and after the shows. **Lambchops's**:

*You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink*

*You can queue up all night and buy tickets for Dylan fans, but you can't make them think.*

Adam Sweeting: Hey! Mr Evergreen Man

Mr Sweeting wrote a largeish profile in early February in *The Guardian*. Being a keen *Guardian* reader, my sister promptly 'phoned and told me. I went out, bought it, photocopied it incorrectly, (losing the last two paragraphs) and promptly misplaced the original. You'll be getting used to this by now. If anyone can send the remaining paragraphs I'll put it in the next issue. Half of you probably read the paper anyway.....

King Prat: Pop profile of Jonathan King by Sean O'Hagan

You just can't keep a good sister and her paper down. The relevant section of the prize prat's prattle went thus:

"Back then, I was highly amused by Bob Dylan because I honestly thought he was winding everyone up with his lyrics. Since then, of course, I've discovered he was deadly serious. Anyway, the whole premise of the song was to write a lyric that rhymed moon with June without anyone noticing because they'd all be too busy thinking how deep and Dylanesque I was. It worked."

Joni X 2

From *Vox*, (April): As she likes to point out, Dylan spawned his imitators early, but it took rather longer for her own strange dissonances and idiosyncratic melodies to filter down to what she contemptuously views as lesser inheritors.

It offended me when they would call Donovan the new Bob Dylan,

she rages, fidgeting on the edge of her chair and squirting off malevolent jets of smoke.

Think about it. Really, it's absurd! Who, in their right mind could compare that kind of talent to Bobby's?

From the excellent *Off The Record* by Joe Smith:

Speaking of strange reactions, right at the time I made *Court And Spark*, which was my most successful album, David Geffen was trying to sign Dylan for what turned out to be his *Planet Waves* project. David and I were sharing a house, I'd been working on *Court And Spark* under his nose, and maybe he heard it through too many stages, but I knew I was making something special.

I was so excited the night I finished it. I brought it back to the house to play it. There was a bunch of people there, including Dylan. I played *Court And Spark* for everyone, and Bobby fell asleep and snored all the way through it. When the record came to an end, the people went, "Huh?"

Then they played *Planet Waves* and everybody jumped up and down. There was so much enthusiasm. Now, *Planet Waves* wasn't one of Bobby's best projects, and I hadn't expected it to be a competitive situation, but for the first time in my career I felt this sibling rivalry. It was an ordinary record for Bobby, a transitional piece, and yet everybody was cheering. Finally, one of the women took me aside and said, "Don't pay them any attention. Those boys have no ears."

Thanks and Last Minute Jottings:

Thanks to all who sent in cuttings and especially to Mark C & 20 Pounds..., Steve K. & Jackie and Olive. I haven't reprinted the recent *Vox* and *Q* freebies as I presume you'll be collecting them.....Bob is in the current issues of *Mirabella* and *Marxism Today*, a reasonably unique feat I would guess, though maybe Madonna has managed it.....On Tuesday 12th at Hammersmith Bob swapped his hat before the final song, as far as I could see the hats were identical...(explanations for this welcomed)....Other thanks to Lambchops for tickets, tapes, info, set lists and patience...to everyone who wrote and sent things in for this & future issues, especially Alan MacDonald, who included (amongst his many) another article that drew parallels from the Dadaist manifesto & *Ballad Of A Thin Man*..Future thanks to those who bring back mementos from the June Euro dates...anyone out there going to South America?.....Helsinki 28th now off...Kalvoya 28th not 30th...Have a great summer & I hope to see you all in Leicester.

PAGE	SOURCE	AUTHOR	DATE	COMMENT
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5&6	The Scotland On Sunday,	Anon	3/2/91	
7	The Guardian, The Glasgow Herald,	Michael Gray David Belcher	5/2/91 4/2/91	One for them all to copy, eh Michael?
8&9	The Melody Maker	Allan Jones	9/2/91	
10	The Scotland On Sunday	Michael Gray	27/1/91	
11-12	The Western Mail (Cardiff)	Tony Burroughs	2/2/91	
12	The Scotland On Sunday	Reader's Letter	10/2/91	
13	The South Wales Echo	Tony Burroughs	6/2/91	
14	The Sunday Times	Robert Sandall	10/2/91	
15	The Financial Times N.M.E. The Independent On Sunday	Anthony Thorncroft Bobby Surf Richard Williams	15/2/91 16/2/91 10/2/91	
16	The Western Mail (Cardiff)	Polly Toynbee	21/2/91	Wales's due a show!
17	The Daily Mail The Evening Standard	Spencer Bright Max Bell	12/2/91 11/2/91	
18	???	Tony Kenwright	??/2/91	
19	Stage And Television Today The Independent	Andrew Cowen John Bauldie	21/2/91 11/2/91	
20	The Times	David Sinclair	11/2/91	
21	The Daily Express	Jill Parkin	19/2/91	
22	The Daily Mirror The Sun The Daily Express The Daily Mail Today	A. N. Arsehole A. N. Arsehole A. N. Arsehole A. N. Arsehole A. N. Arsehole	15/2/91 15/2/91 15/2/91 15/2/91 15/2/91	Good Grief.
23	The Melody Maker The Daily Telegraph	Andrew Mueller James Delingpole	23/2/91 11/2/91	Oh Dear
24	Courier And Advertiser	Nic. Outterside	22/2/91	This man's a star!
25-26	The Mail On Sunday	Michael McGovern and Pete Clark	10/2/91	Their annual hatchet job.
27	Daily News The Daily Express New York Post (abridged)	David Hinckley Ivor Key David Bianculli	24/2/91 22/2/91 21/2/91	
28	The Daily Mail The Sun Manchester Evening News Q	A Hack A Hack A Hack "Stories"	14/3/91 13/3/91 14/2/91 Q 54	At first I thought the Mail had found Lambchop's interview!
29	New York Newday NME	Jon Pareles "Public NME"	21/2/91 9/3/91	
30	Musician ??? (USA)	Dave Dimartino David Hiltbrand	Dec 90 ??/11/90	
31	??? (USA)	Robert Christgau	??/10/90	
32	The Glasgow Herald	Ian Bell	15/4/91	
33	The Glasgow Herald The Glasgow Herald The Glasgow Herald The Glasgow Herald	David Belcher David Belcher ME ! David Belcher	9/4/91 16/4/91 20/4/91 23/4/91	
34	Sunday Life  Entertainment Weekly	Gwyneth Jones Fred Goodman	?/2/91 4/2/91 5/4/91	
35	New York Daily News New York	David Hinkley Elizabeth Wurtzel	18/4/91 15/10/90	



**H**E HAD been called a protest singer, a poet, a spokesman for a generation. But in 1979, on a winter's night in Tempe, Arizona, Bob Dylan was proving just a little too visionary for his audience.

In a lapse between songs he had begun to deliver a bleak sermon. "Every time God comes against a nation," he croaked, "first of all He comes against their economy. If that doesn't work, He comes against their ecology... He did it with Egypt, He did it with Persia, He did it with Babylon. He did it with the whole Middle East. It's a desert now — it used to be flourishing gardens. All right. If that doesn't work, He just brings another nation up against them... then just watch your newspapers... There's gonna be a war called the Battle of Armageddon which is something like you never even dreamed about. And Christ will set up his Kingdom, and He'll rule it from Jerusalem."

The idea was not entirely original. Dylan had long been warning of a hard rain which was a-gonna fall, but the specifics of this doomy scenario were borrowed from Hal Lindsey's doomy tract *The Late Great Planet Earth*. So far, so prophetic. But Dylan and Lindsey got the protagonists wrong, their battle was to be initiated by Russia and Iran.

Such outbursts were a common occurrence throughout 1980, when Dylan was in the first flushes of a relationship with the California religious group, the Vineyard Fellowship. Dylan's conversion to Christianity — he rejects the term Born Again — had been encouraged by his then girlfriend, actress Mary Alice Artes. He told one interviewer: "Christianity is making Christ the Lord and Master of your life... the resurrected Christ, not some dead man who had a bunch of good ideas and was nailed to a tree, who died with those ideas."

Since then, Dylan's faith has undergone a further overhaul, a flirtation with an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect. He has lost some of his evangelical zeal, but the Nostradamus-like images have remained in his songs. His 1990 LP *Under A Red Sky* sees the world still on the edge of destruction, and talks of slaughter and dogs going to war.

At the end of February, Dylan will be presented with a Grammy for Lifetime Achievement. He visits Glasgow this weekend for two sell-out concerts at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre. He has been touring, almost without a break, for three years, and though his shows are erratically executed, he appears to prefer the live circuit to the studio. His records perform modestly these days. *Under A Red Sky* has sold 320,000 in the UK, a million worldwide. By common consent his artistic peak came 25 years ago, and few are prepared to defend the work that followed 1979's *Slow Train Coming*, which announced his religious conversion.

Robert Allen Zimmerman was born in Duluth, Minnesota, on May 24, 1941. His father Abe was an appliance dealer, and the Zimmermans soon moved to the faded iron-mining town of Hibbing, where Bobby lived until he was 18. He appears to have embroidered his teenage years. Early biographies paint him as a rambling lad who regularly ran away from home, an image which is hard to reconcile with the distant, small town boy who enrolled at the University of Minnesota in September 1959. An interview with a fellow student recalled him as the kind who might have been picked on at school — "short, with a crewcut and peach fuzz on his face".

He lasted six months at university, then headed for New York, where the folk boom was in full swing. Re-inventing himself; not for the last time, Zimmerman became Dylan, in homage to Dylan Thomas — though he later denied it, saying he had a relative called Dillon. His early influences included country singers Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams, and bluesman Leadbelly. Curiously, descriptions of Dylan at this time often remark on his resemblance to Charlie Chaplin, who Dylan called his "biggest idol". He continued: "This takes time to explain but I mean... he's one of the men."

More important, though, was folk singer and real-life rambler, Woody Guthrie. Dylan's pursuit of him was obsessive, and the artistic debt he owes him is immense. Guthrie was resident in the insane asylum section of Greystone Park, New Jersey, dying from Huntington's Chorea, when the 19-year-old Dylan first came calling.

The two didn't know each other, but Dylan sat on the bed playing Guthrie's songs. His guitar had on it the slogan "This machine kills fascists", as had Guthrie's before it. Dylan sent a postcard to a friend. On one side was a photo of Guthrie. On the other Dylan's excited scrawl. "I know Woody. I know Woody... I know him and met him and saw him and sang to him. I know Woody — Goddam."

After a rapid rise on the coffee house circuit of Greenwich Village, Dylan was signed by CBS. His first LP, largely reworkings of folk standards was recorded in 1961, at a cost of \$402. The session stopped when producer John Hammond ran out of tape. The record sold 5,000, and became known as Hammond's Folly. It was Dylan's second LP, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, which made his name, after Peter, Paul and Mary had a hit with *Blowin' In The Wind*. It captured the emerging spirit of political change, a notion which solidified in songs like *Talkin' World War III Blues* and *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*. But if Dylan's songs protested, he himself was politically evasive. In 1964 he told *New Yorker*: "I agree with everything that's happening, but I'm not part of no Movement... I just can't have people sit around and make rules for me. I do a lot of things no Movement would allow... I just can't make it with any organisation."

A year later he outraged his folk fans by abandoning acoustic purity for electrical amplification. The mid-1960s are commonly held to be his creative peak, albums like *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde* showed him applying his vitriolic sneer to lyrics which sounded enough like poetry for critics to claim that he had redefined rock music. Musically, his contribution is harder to quantify. Dylan's strength was that he drew from many American forms — blues, pop, country and folk — though the resulting hybrid usually relied on his distinctive vocal whine to carry it forward. Despite enormous critical clout, his musical influence has been limited. Justin Currie, of Glasgow group del Amitri, perhaps the most Dylanesque group to achieve chart success in recent years, readily admits a debt to Dylan, but says he has not made a good record since 1966. "I could never really write like Dylan.

Then I realised that if you put three chords together and moan a bit it sounds like him."

**D**YLAN'S peak came to a symbolic end in July 1966, when he fell from his motorbike and hurt — some reports say broke — his neck. "Since that period, I more or less had amnesia," Dylan told *Rolling Stone* in 1978. "It took me a lot of time to get to do consciously what I used to do unconsciously." The accident has attained the same mythic importance as Elvis's induction into the US army, but doubts have been raised about what actually happened. Bob Spitz's recent biography claimed the crash was a PR ruse. John Bauldie, editor of the authoritative Dylan fan magazine *The Telegraph*, thinks there was an accident, but that its gravity was exaggerated to allow Dylan to break a number of contractual commitments, and recover from a debilitating cycle of drug abuse. Without the break, he feels, Dylan might have died, such was the pressure he was under. After the crash the protest singer became a homemaker, settling into parenthood and domesticity with his wife Sarah.

The records of this period *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline*, were a gentle return to his folk/country roots. Meanwhile, in the real world Vietnam was unfolding. Dylan avoided close identification with the anti-war movement and made no significant artistic statement until *Blood On The Tracks*, an angry intensely personal record which followed the collapse of his marriage.

One day in 1974, after a long period of self doubt, Dylan had called on Norman Raeben, a New York art teacher, who helped him recover his sense of vision. "My wife never did understand me ever since that day," Dylan has said. "She never knew what I was talking about, what I was thinking about. And I couldn't possibly explain it."



*Bob Dylan settled on to the touring circuit with the limited enthusiasm of a man who has known no other lifestyle*

The Rolling Thunder tour of 1975 reunited him with his colleagues from the protest years, among them Joan Baez and Allen Ginsberg — his appeal has been nostalgic ever since. Now a divorced father of five, Dylan has settled onto the touring circuit, with the limited enthusiasm of a man who has known no other lifestyle. In interviews he remains evasive, answering questions with questions, or feigned deafness. Even his most celebrated protest lyrics are open to re-interpretation. "Don't follow leaders, watch your parking meters," rings with nothing so much as the self-serving individualism of Reagan's America, while *Maggie's Farm* tells of a place where "everybody wants you to be just like them" yet will "fine you every time you slam the door". Though the song was adopted as a Thatcher-bashing anthem throughout the 1980s, its message sounds like a Conservative critique of the nanny state.

John Bauldie says that Dylan's core values have remained constant throughout his life, despite frequent upheavals. "His stance is basically one of someone who has very fixed opinions on the nature of the world and who has been able to frame them with experience as he's grown older." Bauldie says there is "more sorrow, less anger, these days".

Perhaps the secret of Dylan's longevity is not the strength of his commitment, but his vagueness. In one of his (thankfully infrequent) film roles, Dylan appeared in Sam Peckinpah's bloody 1973 Western *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. Dylan didn't say much, he just watched, his presence alone giving a pointer to the film's hidden agenda — Vietnam. In one scene, as a brief moment of calm falls on the town, Garrett is shown having a haircut. In the mirror he sees a shabby youth slurping whisky. He turns to face him. "Who are you?" Garrett asks. "That's a good question," Bob Dylan mumbles.

# Just like a rolling drone

**Michael Gray**  
watches Bob Dylan go through the motions

**B**OB DYLAN shuffled on stage at the Scottish Exhibition Centre on Saturday night wearing a tartan jacket and looking like he'd had a drink. He obviously has a pre-City of Culture notion of Glasgow.

He played an unbelievable set. He began by asserting the strength of his eighties repertoire — Property Of Jesus, Jokerman, Blind Willie McTell, Most Of The Time and Under The Red Sky.

Then he moved to the piano for an inspired run through songs he has dreamed out of the keyboard over the years: Black Crow Blues, Dear Landlord, Father Of Night and Ring Them Bells.

Next came an acoustic set of brand-new, unheard songs — one or two with lines as long and pauses as telling as Visions Of Johanna, when that was premiered live in 1966, ahead of *Blonde On Blonde*'s release.

Then it was back to the electric band for two reminders of the seventies repertoire, *Never Say Goodbye* and *Black Diamond Bay*. He bowed out on two from his current LP, *Handy Dandy* and *Cat's In Wells*. For the encore, the Memphis Horns joined him for *Brownsville Girl*.

Actually, none of this is true except the tartan jacket and him looking like he'd had a few. The rest is a blueprint for a concert at which

Bob Dylan would give generously across the whole range of what he can do.

Instead we got what a poor Bob Dylan concert offers today: minimum effort, minimum show and an over-worn greatest hits collection from the sixties. He has already abandoned his recent work — there's no chance of hearing *Jokerman* or *Brownsville Girl*; every chance of his thousandth *All Along The Watchtower* and *Maggie's Farm*. He didn't finish with current album high points but as ever with *Like A Rolling Stone* — as he has on tours for more than 25 years.

Dylan compares himself with Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino — who, like him, just keeps on keeping on and, he says, are as good as ever. This is a depressing defeatism. These people each wrote a comparatively small number of successful songs and then, in the early sixties, stopped writing. Each has settled, since, for touring round wearily re-singing the same 20 "hits".

It's wholly reductive of Bob Dylan's enormously prolific, decades-spanning work that he should do the same, as if he only ever wrote this small bunch of songs that runs from *Don't Think Twice* to *Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat*.

Muttering into the microphone, hiding in the oblivion of the guitars and under lights so low it was hard to see him even from the front, Dylan was obviously suffering. "God knows it's a struggle" was his most heartfelt line last night. It surely doesn't have to be this way.

SECC, Glasgow  
DAVID BELCHER

*Bob Dylan*

PERVERSE old crittur, our Dyl, as everyone who tried a singalong on the "no, no, no" chorus to *It Ain't Me Babe* found out on Saturday night when he deliberately obliterated the space for it by careering along too fast. At his SECC show 18 months ago he'd battered through his back pages with similar high-speed, punk-rock gusto in a splendid performance which managed somehow to be simultaneously intense and perfunctory.

Around half of Saturday's gig was more enthralling than the last time, while one-third was less good. The worst stretch found Bob revisiting roots he probably never had in the first place. A spot of boring old blues. Some lumpy R&B. Then he got into the field of contemporary adult stadium-rock, which was even worse.

God Knows recalled cod Led Zep. While *In The Garden* is one of Bob's faves (he told us it was), it can't be many people's. Everything Is Broken boomed limply; You Got to Serve Somebody was literally dull. Why does his newer stuff ditch sharp poetry for bloated plod-rock, spurn wise and pithy aphorisms for empty cliché, abandon Gerard Manley Hopkins for Blind Lemon Jefferson and Dave Lee Roth?

Perversity is one answer. Jazz is the other. Jazz: continual re-invention of self. Improvisation. Never doing the same thing twice. Turning everything inside out to show you the magic of how it works. Jazz was what Bob Dylan did with all his early stuff on Saturday. Extemporising brilliant new vocal melody lines all over the place. Slurring here, growling there; placing the *emph asis* on all the wrong *syll ables* for no reason other than he can, and still the songs will function.

Of course the early stuff endures because it's structurally strong and simple. At the same time it is unconstrained by formula, either lyrical or musical. Too complex a means of transmitting information and opinion, too open to interpretation and misinterpretation — is that what you think now, Dyl?

His encore of *The Times They Are A-Changin'* was, paradoxically, not that much changed. Then he ploughed tonelessly, unrecognisably, terribly through what I can only guess was a newer one. Perverse to the bitter end. Dyl earns a yes, yes, yes from me, but the numbers of younger folks leaving prematurely signalled different.



# KNOCKED OUT LOADED

**BOB DYLAN**  
SEC, GLASGOW

YOU go to a Bob Dylan show right now and sure as dogs bark, you end up cast as an extra in the touring version of rock's most compelling existential drama. These days more than ever, the Dylan Live Experience is genuinely a theatre of the absurd - hilarious, mad and violent; "Waiting For Godot", directed by Sam Peckinpah.

If Dylan is dedicated to anything anymore, it's the idea of keeping his audience on their toes. This is proving to be exhausting, and it's beginning to take its toll. I spend the Saturday afternoon before the first of his Glasgow concerts drinking at the bar of the local Holiday Inn with a group of travelling Dylan fanatics. They've come from England, Germany, Holland and America, and most of them will see all 16 of Dylan's current European dates.

These people are like war correspondents, swapping stories about earlier campaigns. There are battle-hardened accounts of wild-eyed drives across Europe and America, feats of uncommon dedication. The individual honours, however, go to the German, who once drove to Istanbul, 48 hours without sleep or food. He arrived, exhausted, at the stadium where Dylan had just started his set only to find that his name had been left off the guest list, where Dylan's tour manager

two days earlier in Greece, had promised it would be. To the strains of something distant he couldn't quite make out, he quietly got back in his car and drove home.

You can't count on this kind of stoic enthusiasm forever, though. And there are dark mutterings around the table that the two shows on this tour so far have maybe not been worth all the trouble, time and expense. For a start, Dylan is breaking in a new band and the feeling is that even by Dylan's own notoriously slack standards, they are woefully under-rehearsed.

There are general lamentations about the absence of GE Smith, the guitarist who had recently served Dylan so well. Pre-tour rumours had suggested that Smith had been replaced by Chris Spedding, the veteran English session-musician and versatile guitar mercenary. This now turns out to be fiction. GE Smith has been replaced by a lanky adolescent named John Jackson, plucked from bar-band obscurity in Nashville, and a second guitarist, one Cesar Diaz, who until his recent promotion, was one of Dylan's guitar roadies. The other new recruit this time out is Ian Wallace, the four-square former King Crimson drummer who played with Dylan in the late Seventies. Only the be-hatted bassist whose name no one ever remembers remains from the line-up that played Hammersmith last February.

The group had apparently not distinguished themselves in either Switzerland or Belgium. They had obviously prepared only a limited repertoire, and for the first time in years, Dylan had been forced to play identical sets at consecutive concerts. Furthermore, there are sinister rumblings about Dylan's drinking. In Belgium, he was allegedly pissed virtually senseless, singing off-mike throughout most of the show. When you could hear him, his singing was apparently slurred, more incoherent than ever. Those lyrics he could remember were delivered with an off-handedness that bordered on bored indifference.

I was inclined to put a lot of this down to exaggeration, the baleful mourning of disappointed fans. Then I got to the SEC, four songs late after a colourful tour of suburban Glasgow. From outside the hi-tech barn of the Exhibition Centre, we could hear Dylan's hysterical muezzin wail, but I couldn't have told you what he was singing if my life had depended on it.

Turns out this is an incendiary deracination of "Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again", Dylan employing the kind of scorched-earth approach to his repertoire that characterised his famous vandalism of his back-catalogue at Wembley in 1987.

Dylan looks as much of a mess now as he did then. The ragged comanchero look has been abandoned, however. Dylan now resembles nothing so much as an alcoholic lumberjack on a Saturday night out in some Saskatchewan backwater, staggering around the stage here in a huge plaid jacket and odd little hat. The band, meanwhile, have all the charisma of a death squad in some bandit republic. They're making a hell of a racket, though. "The Man In Me", from "New Morning" is despatched with some grace, but the version of "Wiggle Wiggle" that quickly follows is unbelievably chaotic. These people aren't so much under-rehearsed as almost complete strangers to each other and Dylan's music specifically. Dylan, hilariously, doesn't seem to give a f\*\*\*.

The number crashes to a halt, everyone looking very confused, and Dylan and Duaz are left alone on stage for the show's acoustic section. Poor Diaz. Old Cesar here couldn't have looked more worried if he'd just been conscripted by the Republican Guard. He acquits himself manfully on a briskly paced "Bob Dylan's Dream", but things quickly get desperate for the hapless chap. He starts strumming the intro to "Mr Tambourine Man". After a couple of minutes he pauses, waiting for Dylan's vocal entry. He turns to look for Dylan, but Bob's not at his microphone. He's somewhere at the back of the stage wrestling with his harmonica holder which has come loose and now appears to be attempting to strangle him.

GE Smith, of course, would've busked the momentary crisis, thrown in a few flamenco flourishes or something, just to keep things moving. Cesar, more programmed, less intuitive, just plays the intro again and looks vaguely panic-

stricken, still waiting for Dylan. But Dylan doesn't seem to be in any particular hurry to bail him out. In fact, he looks highly amused watching Diaz sweat it out.

When he does get to the microphone, Dylan gets one of those volcanic bursts of inspiration that leave you breathless. He takes "Mr Tambourine Man" and turns it inside f\*\*\*ing out. You'd think there wouldn't be much he could do to a song as venerable as this that he hadn't done before. Miraculously, however, he finds new, vivid life in its aching, antique bones. What does it sound like? The Velvet Underground laying waste to "Black Angel's Death Song" is what. This is a serious impressive interpretation, a dazzling tour-de-force that eclipses even the beautifully poised versions of "It Ain't Me Babe" and "Don't Think Twice" that follow.

Dylan is suddenly in charge. The band come back to reinforce the beleaguered Diaz and Dylan leads them through an appropriately holocaustal "Everything Is Broken" and a quite regal "Gonna Serve Somebody". "Seeing The Real You At Last" is dusted off from "Empire Burlesque" to cool the temperature a little, but the subsequent re-reading of "God Knows" is hair-raising. Dylan then throws the band for another loop, by ploughing straight into a nightmarish take on "In The Garden", the inclusion of which takes everybody by surprise. The song seems to be winding down when at Dylan's insistence, the group smash into a protracted, cacophonous coda. It goes on forever, an excruciating, hellish din.

"That ending went on for a long time," I think I hear Dylan smirk as the smoke clears. "But it's finished now..."

On top of it now, and in a big way, Dylan, legs akimbo, hat juttingly perched on his madly nodding head, hauls the band into a riffing firestorm that turns into "Like A Rolling Stone". The sheer imperiousness of recent outings is here replaced by a startling gut-busting irreverence, an irresistible impishness. I begin to feel transported. Dylan is laughing his hat off.

There's no such flippancy, though, when he comes back for the encores, "The Times They Are A-Changin'" is played straight, thousands of voices bolstering the chorus - lump in the throat time, for sure. And then, at the death, there's a version of "Masters Of War", sober, harrowing, everybody but Wallace thrashing acoustic guitars and Dylan's voice rasping through the cordite. "You ain't worth the blood that runs in your veins," he snarls, and Glasgow cheers him to the final echo.

And he stands there at the end, knocked out loaded, a little unsteady on his feet, but triumphant. He tips his hat to the crowd, grinning. And then he's gone.

Astonishing, again.  
ALLAN JONES

# Will he play the piano this time?

BOB DYLAN is back in Scotland next weekend — for only the second time since the mid-1960s — with a new, mystery band.

He plays the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre — hall three; 3,500 people; standing-room only — next weekend as part of a short European tour which begins in Zurich tomorrow.

Dylan's Scottish debut was on the 1988 "Never-Ending Tour" — his first with a rock band. He was booed at concerts all across America and Europe. He played the Glasgow Odeon on May 19: "Folk Fans Walk Out On Dylan," reported the *Daily Mail*, while even then the *Daily Record* called Dylan: "The Legend In Black."

A quarter of a century on, this tour stands out as one of the supreme moments in rock history. After it, Dylan quit touring until the mid-1970s — and from then on he was playing in stadiums rather than concert halls. A further 15 years later Dylan finally revisited Scotland, playing just one date, at the SECC's largest arena, and attracting a strikingly varied audience — including many who were not even born at the time of the singer-songwriter's previous visit.

They were there to see a legend and he gave them one. Still wearing Cuban heels, still with a shock of curly hair, and still playing pertinent, sharp songs with a raucous, stripped-down band, Dylan offered the kind of raw, spontaneous show that few major artists dare to try. There was no reliance on hi-tech or theatre or dance or lasers, or even a rudimentary light show. "At a Bob Dylan concert," as one Glasgow musician remarked after that show in amazement, "you see the wires, the amps, the hardware: nothing's pre-programmed. It's all real and laid bare."

That Scottish date two years ago was at the start of what has become known as the Never-Ending Tour. It began in June, 1988, and has been running, with only short breaks, ever since. Mostly it has played small halls instead of stadiums (in pointed contrasted to the Rolling Stones, The Who and Pink Floyd), with Dylan endlessly reshaping his 1960s material (folk and rock), using a high degree of spontaneity and drawing on a working repertoire of more than 100 songs from three decades of his 500-song catalogue.

Often he cycles to concerts and performs in semi-darkness. He is Bob Dylan, and Michael Gray heralds his return to Glasgow

However, since playing New York in October last year, Dylan's band has collapsed in chaos — and his current concerts will mark the British debut of a new line-up whose personnel remained in doubt even a few days ago. Guitarist G E Smith has quit and Dylan has reportedly sacked drummer Chris Parker. This leaves bassist Tony Garnier and Dylan himself. Two guitarists have work-permits for the tour (unknown John Jackson and Dylan's former guitar tuner, Cesar Carillo-Diaz). A pianist has been rumoured.

After it was first reported last summer that G E Smith was quitting, several different guitarists were up on stage with Smith and Dylan, getting last-minute tuition before Smith's departure. Since then, more guitarists have been

tried out on-stage. This has been a novelty, even for Dylan. He's often used some concerts as rehearsals for others, but this was the first time he'd used them as auditions.

The Never-Ending Tour has seen plenty of other weirdness, even for so notoriously eccentric an artist as Dylan. He has taken to cycling to work, arriving in this way at the stage doors of halls all over Europe and the States while the support-act is playing its set. He has barred all professional photographers and performed in half-darkness.

For one year he left his trademark harmonica behind altogether. For two years, he performed without speaking a word to his audiences and sometimes, as in Dublin last year, he wore on stage the pimp-roll hooded jacket (hood up!) in which he imagines he moves incognito through the streets. In Paris, in contrast, he wore a 1950s Elvis-style gold lamé suit. And for a short while in 1989 he took to ending concerts by jumping down into the audience and disappearing up a side-staircase before anyone knew what was going on — including, the first time, the rest of the band.

Bob Dylan crackles with his own unique electric charge, often managing to sound and look uncannily like the young man once booed for doing the same things he still does today. Yet he also has an extraordinary, ancient, bio-degradable voice in concert these days, gorgeously capable of guard-down reverie and yet so shaky it can enmesh a simple phrase in about 18 vowel-sounds.

Another basic way in which Bob Dylan is so unlike other performers in popular music is that while most compose their faces one way for a love song and another for a rocker — the equivalent of people who say "but seriously though" and expect a hush to descend — Dylan's face in performance registers 50 fleeting expressions per second ... so it's worth pushing down to the front for what seem likely, by any standards, to be two extraordinary shows at which anything might happen from the once-youthful rebel who will be 50 in May.

□ Dates: Next Saturday and Sunday SECC Glasgow: February 5 Ice Bowl, Belfast: February 6 The Point, Dublin: February 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 Hammersmith Odeon, London.



Notoriously eccentric, and becoming more so

BOB DYLAN invented himself in the early Sixties — and has gone on re-inventing himself at regular intervals ever since.

But as his British fans prepare to welcome him on the latest of what are fast becoming annual visits, there's no disputing that the American singer/songwriter/poet remains a major rock influence.

News of an album release is a big event; new tour plans are hailed as important as the Second Coming. And then the guessing games begin. Which musicians will he be using? What direction will his music take?

It's been like that for the best part of 25 years now. Once Dylan had established himself as the vital voice of America's young people, every career move was closely analysed. Even his dustbin was searched.

From protest songs like *Blowin' In The Wind* and *Masters Of War* through country and western to tunes espousing



**BIRTH OF A MYTH:**  
A young rebellious Bob Dylan as he appeared when he started out on the road to stardom.

Christianity, he has set trends, caused confusion and sparked controversy.

Adulation and disparagement have come in equal measure to a man who claims he has never been fully understood.

No one is really sure what lies the other side of his tousled hair and dark glasses. The word enigma could have been invented for Dylan alone.

Each period of "Dylan Is Washed Up" headlines has

been followed by reviews of the "Dylan Back At His Best" variety.

As he heads for Britain again, his star is currently shining quite brightly. By the time he goes home, who knows, it could be on the wane again.

For years, though, Dylan could do no wrong. He was born into a Jewish family, Robert Allen Zimmerman, and raised quietly in a bleak mining town in Minnesota.

At college, where he was influenced by the Beat Generation poets and rock 'n' rollers like Little Richard, he adopted a new persona.

Singing in small coffee houses, he dropped Zimmerman for Dylan, apparently in tribute to Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas.

He then travelled to New York to visit one more of his heroes, the folk singer Woody Guthrie, who was dying in hospital.

He decided to stay on in the Big Apple and try to make a go of it as a folk singer himself.

It was Columbia Records svengali John Hammond who spotted Dylan when he was backing another singer at a recording session.

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His first album, called simply *Bob Dylan*, was released in 1961, followed in the

## Profile

**Legendary singer BOB DYLAN begins a string of major concerts in Britain and Ireland today; next month his record company releases four CDs of previously unavailable songs. Not bad for an artist who will be 50 this year, as TONY BURROUGHS reports.**

next few years by *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and *The Times They Are A-Changing*.

The music was folk with rock touches, and with social conscience songs like *Chimes Of Freedom* and *Desolation Row*, Dylan was quickly established as an important new musician.

His career from there underwent regular changes. Subsequent albums showed more of a rock influence, especially the critically-acclaimed *Blonde On Blonde*.

The single *Like A Rolling Stone* was a major hit in 1965; songs like *Mr Tambourine Man* (The Byrds) provided success for other artists.

After a near fatal motorbike crash in 1966, Dylan returned with music showing country influences.

Into the Seventies and he experimented with many different musical styles and wrote songs taking up a variety of causes. At heart, though, he remained a rocker.

Following a period out of favour, he won his way back into the critics' hearts in the middle of the decade with albums like *Before The Flood* (recorded with The Band) and *Desire*, and with the Rolling Thunder Revue, a tour in which he returned to playing small venues.

His conversion to Christianity was announced with 1979's *Slow Train Coming* and was less than rapturously received by fans and critics alike.

A period of patchy releases followed — an album with the Grateful Dead was regarded as the worst thing he had done — but he confounded observers once more with a spectacular return to form in the late Eighties.

First came the *Travelling Wilburys* LP, in which he teamed up with George Harrison, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne in a supergroup. Then, in 1989, he released his finest record for years, *Oh Mercy*. Fans sighed with relief — their Messiah still had something to say.

Although he will be 50 this year (on May 24), Dylan has never stopped working hard. He can boast a canon of almost 40 albums, several hundred songs, half-a-dozen books and a handful of films.

He tours regularly with a variety of line-ups — sometimes with a stripped-bare trio, sometimes with a star-studded backing group featuring rock alumni like Eric Clapton and the Byrds' Roger McGuinn.

Dylan has made some notable visits to Britain. In 1965 he was booed by outraged

folkies for taking to the stage with an electric backing band. He played to 250,000 at the second Isle of Wight Festival in 1969, and to 150,000 in Surrey 19 years later.

Now he's back for 10 more dates and afterwards fans can look forward to a four-CD collection called *The Bootleg Series, Rare And Unreleased 1961-1990*, consisting entirely of unissued material.

Thirty years worth of unheard songs should keep even the most committed Dylanologists happy, but it's doubtful if they'll bring us any closer to understanding the man.

Much has been written about him but even the girlfriends he has had since splitting with his wife Sara in 1977 say he remains a mystery.

He once said: "I'm not concerned with the myth. The myth can't write songs. It's the blood behind the myth that creates the art."

And on another occasion: "People dissect my songs like rabbits, but they all miss the point. I don't think I'm gonna be really understood until maybe 100 years from now. When I'm dead and gone ... people will figure it out."

Happy birthday, Bob.

TOUR DATES: Glasgow (Feb 2,3); Belfast (5); Dublin (6); London, Hammersmith (8,9,10,12,13,17).

## The marvellous music is the true measure of the man

AT FIRST I thought why bother — Bob Dylan (Profile, February 3) does not need me or anyone else to defend him. But the sheer waste of an opportunity for an interesting piece was irritating enough to make me reply to the anonymous writer who presented such a negative and uncomprehending "profile". I wonder just how familiar with the subject he or she is?

The letters column is not the place for a proper consideration of Bob Dylan, so I will confine myself to challenging what the writer calls "vagueness". For the last three decades, media hacks and 'profilers' have

been enraged and baffled by Dylan's refusal to answer mostly inane questions. He has never played the media-courting pundit who produces the instant "sound-bite" so beloved by journalists who use such platitudes to fill their columns.

Of course it cannot be claimed that the sheer consistency of the great albums before 1979 still happens, but I would maintain that there are rewards to be found in subsequent releases for those who listen.

For anyone who cares passionately about words and people, Bob Dylan will

always be worth listening to, for his bitter black humour, lust, tenderness, irony, insight and endless invention and re-creation. For those who attend the sell-out concerts these qualities, and not simply nostalgia, are what matters. Dylan's songs, even on an off-night, are more worthwhile than any one-hit wonder.

As an afterthought: I wonder if *Scotland on Sunday* will profile Justin Currie of del Amitri on the eve of his 50th birthday?

Kate Deasington  
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TONY BURROUGHS

# Bob's back at 50 — and he's still an enigma



**BLOWIN' IN:** Bob Dylan who is currently touring Britain.

**BOB DYLAN INVENTED** himself in the early Sixties — and has gone on re-inventing himself at regular intervals ever since.

But as his British fans welcome him on the latest of what are fast becoming annual visits, there's no disputing that the American singer/songwriter/poet remains a major rock influence.

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From protest songs like *Blowin' In The Wind* and *Masters Of War* through country and western to tunes espousing Christianity, he has set trends, caused confusion and sparked controversy.

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## Svengali

At college, where he was influenced by the Beat Generation poets and rock 'n' rollers like Little Richard, he adopted the new persona. Singing in small coffee houses, he dropped the "Zimmerman" for "Dylan", apparently in tribute to another poet, Dylan Thomas.

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**'I don't think I'm gonna be really understood until maybe 100 years from now'**

## ROBERT SANDALL wonders why the unpredictable old folkie is back on the road again

**F**or the third time in less than three years, that most inscrutable rock legend Bob Dylan is back on tour in the UK, and thinking caps are firmly in place. The Dylan enigma still remains intact — 25 years of cat-and-mouse games with interviewers, multiple changes in musical direction, and several abrupt spiritual U-turns have seen to that. But the grounds for puzzlement have shifted. The question of what Dylan might be trying to say has been superseded by speculation about why and how he is saying it. Where we used to mull over his words, the mystery now surrounds his work rate.

For the past five years, it has been prodigious. As well as a deservedly unremembered starring role in the film *Hearts of Fire*, there have been seven new albums — four solo studio efforts, two collaborations with the Traveling Wilburys and one live set featuring Dylan in concert with the Grateful Dead. He has toured exhaustively: from the middle of 1988 until the summer of last year Dylan and a three-piece band embarked on a non-stop world tour, only pausing while their leader knocked out a couple of albums. After swiftly dispatching last autumn's *Under the Red Sky*, Dylan was temporarily forced off the road by the departure of his saddle-sore guitarist, G E Smith. Now, with new band behind him, he is back with 16 dates in Europe, then five months of solid gigging around the States. And so it goes on.

He can't be doing this for the money. As his approach to recording albums has become progressively more casual — Dylan never attempts more than one "take" of any song nowadays — so sales of his work have, understandably, declined. Among the glut of recent albums, only 1989's critically esteemed *Oh Mercy* passed the 100,000 mark over here; and in the US, Dylan has been dying a death in the stores for years. He scored his first 1m-seller in 1976 with *Desire*, peaked again three years later with *Slow Train Coming*, and hasn't achieved any significant commercial success at home since 1983's *Infidels*.

Far from boosting the bottom line, Dylan's commitment to saturation touring has probably been counter-productive. Keeping yourself out of sight for strategic periods is the first law of rock box-office, and it is thanks to his repeated conviction that "my songs are to be done live" that Dylan can no longer fill arenas in the US. And with the notable exception of Britain — where he is still sufficiently revered to attract 25,000 customers to his current late-night residency at the Hammersmith Odeon, a third more than he pulled last year — Europe seems to be losing interest altogether. Only two of the 16 dates on this current "European" tour have been played on the Continent.

The most important reason, though, for the dwindling popularity of Dylan's concerts must be their bafflingly erratic quality. I have seen the man play four times during his recent offensive. The first of these shows, in 1987, was so awful — particularly whenever Dylan opened his mouth to croak — that I almost vowed never to return. Two years later he was stunning, his voice and phrasing unrecognisably controlled, the band fiery and cohesive. Last February he seemed merely middling again, throwing away his best melody lines and plodding through a lot of country numbers. Reports last weekend from Glasgow of the first British shows this tour were nearly all bad, describing a ragged and unrehearsed new band with a disorganised singer.

But that was then. Last Wednesday night at the Dundonald Ice Bowl near Belfast I saw another side of Bob Dylan. Perhaps it was the fact of returning to a city he hadn't played for 25 years. Maybe the band had been practising. But after an uncertain start dominated by rather tentative wham-bam guitar heroics, Dylan hit his stride during the acoustic interlude. After delivering *A Hard Rain* and *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*, with chilling authority, he seemed to relax, and that extraordinary adenoidal caw began to find employment as a singing voice rather than a mumbling one. Smiling, and occasionally raising his cream straw hat to the crowd, he introduced local hero Van Morrison for a duet on *Tupelo Honey*, then concluded a representative sample of 35 albums' worth of material with a brisk reading of that famous anthem to downward mobility, *Like a Rolling Stone*.

This week at Hammersmith, of course, anything could happen. Dylan's problem now is temperamental. Like another wayward, ageing "great", Miles Davis, he seems to have lost or abandoned his self-editing faculty. He does what he does, and sometimes — but only sometimes — it works. And doing such a huge amount of it may yet be Dylan's best way out of a blind alley. □

Dave Hogan



*Times a-change: Dylan at Wembley in 1987 and on TV in 1965*

# Bob Dylan

ODEON HAMMERSMITH

Anyone slipping into the Odeon Hammersmith this week – not easy, because Dylan still sells out – would quickly realise that they had invaded the rites of a particularly arcane mystery. This is music? This is show biz?

For much of the time the darkness was almost total, one spotlight half distinguishing a hunched figure, heavily curled, dressed in many wrappings of black – like an illustration from an obscure Gothic novel. Occasionally Dylan raised his fist in salute, and murmured a word of thanks. The atmosphere was heavy with smells, particularly the rich, suffocating, sweet, heady

smell of hippie squats of the 1960s. The audience stood in quiet awe, sometimes stirring in anticipation as it thought it recognised one of the classic songs of the century only to freeze in uncertainty.

For Bob Dylan is quite the most perverse performer, making Nina Simone and Van Morrison seem as reliable as Cliff Richard. He tours constantly, playing the smaller halls rather than the giant venues, which shows he has some sensitivity to the feelings of his fans. But what happens on stage at each concert is known only to Dylan, his particular God of the moment, and perhaps his band, although the

rather makeshift, supporting musicians he has hired for this visit seemed so cowed by his perverse personality that they hardly attracted any attention. Being kitted out like Mafia hit men complete with black hats did not help their visibility.

I caught him genial but recondite, sometimes choosing the same key as the band, sometimes playing the same melody, but not always aligning it to any known recorded version of the songs. Occasionally he sang with great passion and precision, especially on "Desolation Row" but even songs made for venom, such as "Like a rolling stone" were allowed to float away from

any sense or relevance.

And yet, and yet. He is not totally resting on a deserved reputation as one of the three or four creators of pop music. There is something compelling about the man. You realise he is destined to play and to play rock music. He needs the ignored audience as much as it needs to keep the faith. And what if he does distort and twist and mock and parody the songs – they are so much his creation that he has that privilege. But for any non-believer it would seem like a the celebration of a perverted ritual.

Antony Thornecroft

## BOB DYLAN

LONDON HAMMERSMITH ODEON

HUNCHED AND hollow-eyed, greying, dead hair crowned by improbable headgear, pathetically dependent on a wheezy old mouth organ to evoke memories of a dim and distant past – but that's enough about the audience, what of Bob Dylan?

He's had a hard time of it recently. The last LP 'Under The Red Sky' was widely drubbed as witless, the 'never-ending' tour looking more and more like a monstrous merry-go-round scattering players to the wind with every circuit of an increasingly uncaring globe.

So the last rites were being rehearsed for his second run of Hammersmith shows in 12 months, what with his guitar roadie installed as a replacement for the departed GE Smith and a seemingly makeweight second guitarist added as ballast. And it certainly started depressingly enough (Dylan dumping the increasingly hilarious mix of exotic wig-warmers and King's Road rocker gear for a delightful tartan tux pressed treds and patent leather boots – Rudy Vallee meets Danny De Vito) hunched over the mic spewing out 'Most Likely You Go Your Way And I'll Go Mine' with all the attention to melody and scansion we've lately come to expect.

'Lay Lady Lay' – despite some spirited guitar and harmonica interplay – followed suit until 'All Along The Watchtower' became the first bruised and bleeding casualty of the night, abandoned after three or four minutes of Dylan's geriatric wanderings about the drum riser for another tune. Which? Ten years ago the game amongst Dylanologists was to spot minute alterations to lyrics in Dylan's live interpretations. Nowadays it's challenge enough just to work out what song he's playing.

CALL IT hopeless nostalgia, if you like, but I wanted to hear what the spokesman for my generation had to say about the war. I felt like finding out if, now that the chips are down, the author of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" would be prepared to speak again with the voice that made us think and made him famous.

Then I remembered what one of his cronies from the folk-club days had said, when Dylan had become a pop star and while the American military were still struggling to "liberate" Vietnam: "I'd forgive him everything," the friend said, "if he'd just write one good new song against the war."

## BOB DYLAN, Hammersmith Odeon

He didn't, of course, and on Friday night, in the first of eight concerts at Hammersmith Odeon, he acknowledged the unfolding of contemporary history only in the choice of his third song, "Masters of War", a 1963 tirade against arms-dealers which now received a treatment no more expressive than the deadpan interpretations of "Lay Lady Lay" and "Memphis Blues Again" on either side of it. At such moments, you can sense a battle going on inside him. Maybe he's been refusing to give himself away for so long that he's simply

lost the ability to make a straightforward connection.

We had arrived, wrapped against the February snow, like figures on an early Bob Dylan album cover. He's a North Country boy, of course, and always seemed most at ease in a warm jacket, a scarf and thick motorcycle boots – clothes to keep out a Minnesota winter, or a cold snap in Greenwich Village. Instead, his bright green checked jacket seemed unseasonal, and too often the music sounded similarly devoid of context or meaning.

But with the onset of a purely acoustic section came the first signs of daybreak: 'One Too Many Mornings' was – shock, horror – performed, a wizened melancholy informing the old road rat lament. What came next simply stunned: 'Mr Tambourine Man' – with stand up bass and brushes – was spectacular: dynamics, melody, the works. Performed with almost mariachi precision, truly Dylan cannot have performed these two songs any better in the last, ooh, 15 years.

It was remarkable. A performance reborn. 'Oh Mercy' material shook with confidence and vigour, 'Shooting Star' taken with Dylan caught 'twixt seat and ill-positioned mic at the piano. And loving it.

The set quickly shot to a climax that shimmered with real interplay and genuine surprise: 'Like A Rolling Stone', surely his hoariest live moment for decades, spinning away lithe and quick witted at last.

In these dying numbers – and an encore that reprised acoustics galore for 'The Times They Are A Changing' followed by a bitchin', slide-driven 'Highway 61' – Dylan was grinning wildly, all schlock rock moves and bold melodic feints, as full-voiced as he's been in over a decade.

While the Stones cheerfully celebrate their larger-than-life legacy, the giant inflatables, the silly-money sets and soap style bust ups a good-natured swap for their less-than-the-sum-of-its-parts performance, Dylan has been hard at work whittling away still further at his Mystery Tramp persona – backing himself with virtual flyweights, performing in ever-shrinking concert halls – until he seemed content to let even his talent wither and die (see the last LP). No matter. On this evening's showing, if he will never again genuinely inspire, he's only just begun to charm.

Bobby Surf

He looked marginally less twitchy than on his last couple of visits, but he and his competent four-piece band rose above a general flaccidity only in a lucid version of "Bob Dylan's Dream", a twangy-guitar arrangement of the recent "Everything is Broken", and a goodish "Desolation Row", its fast shuffle rhythm lightly driven by string bass and wire brushes. Worst was the idiotic new "Wiggle Wiggle", run close by perhaps the most perfunctory version of "Like a Rolling Stone" he's ever played and a closing "Maggie's Farm" which simply underscored the conclusion that he no longer listens to the news.

Richard Williams

**POLLY TOYNBEE**  
profiles the singer  
who renamed himself  
after his hero,  
Dylan Thomas.

# Dylan: the wrinkled rebel with a cause

**T**HOSE OF us of his generation may look at his rumpled face and shudder a little. Can that be the ethereal prophet, the one who struck such awe with his moaning songs, clouded looks, and mystifying aura?

Snatched by photographers against his will earlier this month — as if the camera might steal his soul — here he is in his rumpled sweat shirt and old leather jacket, his hood not quite covering the wrinkled, troubled expression.

It is Bob Dylan on one of his frequent concert tours of Britain for seven nights — the Billy Graham of his era.

Is there anyone around now who was shocked when he laughed at Jack de Manio on the Today programme in 1965? It was a laugh that struck right to the hearts of the rebellious British young of the day.

The time might have been right — reminiscences of Vietnam, perhaps — but curiously the time is out of joint. *The Times They Are A'changin'*. The Gulf is not Vietnam. It does not bring back the atmosphere of those days, thank God.

Dylan does not sing to the soul of a disaffected youth culture, frightened and horrified in their innocence at what the grown-ups are doing with their bombs. His audiences are the middle-aged now — not a new young following.

## NASAL MONOTONE

A Jewish boy from a dismal industrial town in Minnesota, Robert Zimmerman renamed himself Dylan after his hero, the poet Dylan Thomas.

He is taken seriously in some quarters as a poet — Philip Larkin praised him, and some US universities offer courses in his work. The world divides about his ability to sing — the fascination of his nasal monotone self-absorbed and inward is incomprehensible to many, but others worshipped at the shrine.

He idolised Woodie Guthrie, the genuine folk hero of the Thirties and still with all his millions of dollars, clings to the image of a wandering just soul. In fact his wanderings take him from a fantastical Californian palace built to his manic specifications, to a farm in Minnesota and a millionaire's New York apartment.

Greenwich Village is his natural home, where he started out singing and blowing his harmonica in the cafes from the age of 19.

The folk revival was already in its heyday, and he was signed up early on. His affair with Joan Baez set them on a dual throne, the music of the war.

But he has always liked to shock his fans — casting the old aside and finding new worshippers as he goes. He abandoned folk for rock — and the beards and sandals were replaced.

In 1978 he converted to extreme



**BOB DYLAN** has always liked to shock his fans — casting aside and finding new worshippers as he goes. Most of his songs are introverted, seeking for meaning within himself and his own life.

fundamentalist Christianity, which stunned his rock followers. It seemed to place him suddenly on the side of the establishment. Most of his songs are introverted, seeking for meaning within himself and his own life — which has often led to extremes of the incomprehensible, and frankly dreadful.

Watching his performance in the US Live Aid concert with my children, they were totally non-plussed. Who was this freak who couldn't sing, couldn't perform, mumbled and stumbled, they asked?

He was plainly a clipped-out has-been of some kind — but of what kind? What on earth could he ever have been, they wanted to know? The story came out later that he'd spent two days rehearsing his performance with Keith Richards and Ron Wood, but that bizarre self-destructive urge grabbed him again

as he stepped out onto the stage and sang a song unremembered which neither of the other two had ever heard of.

He doesn't like things easy. In fact, he has frequently successfully made things as hard for himself as he can. Some say he is mad, or at least mad in parts. As reclusive as Howard Hughes, he is obsessed by privacy and secrecy. As with Howard Hughes, it breeds fantastical rumours.

When he had a motor-cycle crash in the midst of his greatest period, *Blonde on Blonde* for instance, he disappeared from vision for a long time. It was said there was no crash, or not a serious one, and he was in fact taking a cure for drugs. Who knows?

There's hardly a wild story told that hasn't attached itself to his enigmatic self.

His reputation has yo-yoed now for years. His fans are still there, though grayer. People still argue hotly about him and the extent of his talent. But no-one calls him a charlatan or a poet.

His introspection and navel gazing irritates some — but no-one doubts that he is an agonised soul, trying to find solutions, and meanings, never giving up the search.

In that sense, he remains young, though he'll be 50 this year. He still believes there are solutions. He is still angry and obsessed, and he is not corrupted.

Where people divide is on whether his agonies are still interesting. His admirers see him still as a reflection of America, a voice from its psyche that is more than mere 'Sixties nostalgia.

Well, now he has children with bands of their own. He still has a dif-

ferent girl in every town, he still travels, he's still a mystery. And he still has the kind of fans — Dylanologists — who live and breathe his whole life for him.

Maybe he's the kind of hero who should have died young — what Janis Joplin and other dead young heroes might have become if they'd had to live through the cycles of success and failure, consigned to oblivion and What-Ever-Became-Of only to be picked up and dusted down for yet another rediscovery come-back tour, and audiences whose wrinkles and grey hair frighten them like looking in the mirror.

But Dylan keeps bouncing back with something new, something different, and it's not gimmicks, but something dredged up from deep within him. Sometimes he still comes up trumps.



ALL TOGGED UP: Bob Dylan gets carried away

PICTURE: ALAN LEWIS

SPENCER  
BRIGHT

IN the twilight zone of Bob Dylan's mind, a performance is an exercise in perversity. So instead of the search for excellence, he prefers to ignore rehearsal and specialises in mockery, sometimes of himself, often of the audience and frequently of his own venerated material.

He could have the finest of bands, but instead chooses a hotchpotch of newcomers and codgers, currently on view at the Hammersmith Odeon (until February 17).

Dylan discards his favoured leather gear for a somewhat kitsch blue plaid tuxedo. Of course, he still looks a scruff. His togs match the sound — all over the place.

The classics bear little resemblance to their original versions. Nothing wrong here if there is an engaging re-interpretation. But on Lay Lady Lay we got mumbling Bob over a band that distinguished itself by not knowing what tempo or which chords it was heading for. Not their fault: they have to live with Bob's notorious capriciousness.

Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again had more of the same, but with Bob's voice sounding like a gazoo — though there was some pleasant rolling rock.

The strange, banal Wiggle Wiggle, from his new album *Under The Red Sky*, came over far more pleasingly live. Since it was harder to get annoyed by the lyrics due to Bob's incoherence, it was possible to bounce along with the pop riffs.

Occasionally, Bob would surprise himself and get carried away by the enjoyment his music can engender. It happened on the quaintly-titled Bob Dylan's 115th *Dream*, where there was careful phrasing and some impassioned moments.

Elsewhere there were occasional sparks, a welcome intensity on *Like A Rolling Stone*, but several moments of confusion, too. There was rarely that feeling that the venerable poet had locked into gear and carried us away with him again.

The great Dylan is  
ever so mumble

# Joker wild

NEVER ONE to use two words where 10 will do, Bob Dylan introduced himself at Hammersmith with a cheery *Most Likely You Go Your Way And I'll Go Mine*. A thermal glow settled on the Odeon.

It's been a while since any but the most hardened Dylan-watchers came to see him for spiritual nourishment and that seems to suit him just dandy. These days he treats a well-worn back catalogue like a stand-up comedian relies on favourite jokes. Everyone knows the punchlines; it's the way he tells 'em.

Dylan's recent ally G E Smith has been replaced by two guitarists—John Jackson and Cesar Diaz. They busked willingly while the writer tampered with the script, omitting verses altogether on *Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*.

The ramshackle under-rehearsal only worked by accident. *Memphis Blues Again* and a coherent *Lay Lady Lay* were built to handle the sloppy approach; in *The Garden* needed more structure.

BOB DYLAN  
Hammersmith Odeon

For *Desolation Row* and *It Ain't Me Babe*, Dylan strapped on a 12-string and tinkered with electric piano before thinking better of it. Sometimes he was hysterically loose, his harmonica frame becoming tangled up in the velvet lapels of a jacket made for a smaller man.

When the bits fell into place on *Wiggle Wiggle* it was clear that cranky Bob was enjoying taking liberties. He introduced the number as "a song for the man in me, for the man in everybody" and smirked like a cartoon chipmunk.

The familiar finale—*Like A Rolling Stone*, *Blowin' In The Wind* and *Maggie's Farm* (surely this should be retitled *Major's Smallholding*)—lacked the ornery critter's recalcitrant touch.

But you never know with Dylan. Sometimes he lays on a surprise feast and then insults the guests. On Friday he was practically gracious and forgot the vegetables.

Max Bell

# Watch those pigs fly

**T**HE early reviews of Bob Dylan's current concert tour didn't look too good. Rumour had it he was hitting the bottle. Fact had it his band were awful. "Not so much under rehearsed, more like complete strangers to each other and Dylan's music in particular," claimed Melody Maker.

The frequency with which he has been returning to these shores has by now lessened the sense of excitement fans once felt.

In his fiftieth year we may suspect that his best days as a live performer are behind him, but we still make the annual pilgrimage in the rarely disappointed hope that he'll still be capable of a few surprises.

There's even the realization creeping in that he's not going to live for ever. The rock'n'roll road with its side-walks of excess and dangerous crossroads have taken the best. Dylan's been hard travellin' it for 30 years.

**TONY KENWRIGHT**



**Rock**



One of the things that has helped him survive the relentless pressure of being Bob Dylan is that he's never tried to please anyone but himself.

He's released great albums, good albums, even the occasional awful album but he's never felt the need to explain himself.

His records reflect where he was at, spiritually and emotionally, at the time.

He doesn't call them Listen Without Prejudice or do interviews detailing the pain of their creation. He just leaves it to people to find him - not the other way around.

Similarly, in concert the pressure to please an audience doesn't occur. If he'd have tried to pander to fickle tastes he would have either burnt out or be playing Vegas by now.

As he illustrates from the lyrics to *Trust Yourself*, the rule of the road for Dylan has always been "to thine own self be true".

So there we were, back at the Hammersmith Odeon not expecting too much, but still hopeful. Discussing the great gigs, like last year's. Bemoaning the disasters, a



short list always topped by his 1987 appearances with Tom Petty in Birmingham.

"Maybe he'll make a real effort," says one of the party and we all have a good laugh. The day Dylan kicks aside his loose, almost shambolic approach and actually tries pigs will fly.

**T**WENTY minutes into his set the heavens were filled with winged porkers. This was Dylan as we hadn't seen him before. Walking on stage without a guitar. Playing a harmonica with one hand and hitting chords on an electric piano with the other, he wasn't simply revisiting his back catalogue he was re-inventing it.

For all that's been said about Dylan's phrasing and delivery there has been, of late, little evidence of any real inspiration in that department. Since 1984 his style has been one of almost

self-parody with little in the way of new ideas. Now suddenly the songs were undergoing a remarkable transformation.

*Times They Are A' Changing*, one of the fans' least favourite songs, suddenly burst to life with the lyrics being spat out in staccato bursts like machine-gun fire, to accompanying applause at the end of almost every line.

Like a Rolling Stone was reduced to a cryptic shorthand with lines compressed beyond comprehension yet crackling with vitality.

You waited for him to blow it, but remarkably he never did. Even the band, who must have had some practice since Glasgow, rarely misplaced a note.

This wasn't an old hippies benefit night, this was young, vital rock. Vengeful and violent. Proof again that Bob Dylan is out on his own and remaining Forever Young.

## HAMMERSMITH ODEON Bob Dylan

WHO'S going to stop the war? Not Bob Dylan for a start. He probably doesn't even know it's going on. Shambling onto the Hammersmith Odeon stage, with an anonymous four-piece backing band, he kick started Tangled Up In Blue as a prelude to a 90-minute set which was, in turns, sublime and infuriating.

Dylan is 50 this year and certainly looks his age, but, at times during the show, showed a youthful edge that turned back the clock by 20 years. He's still more Zimmerman than Zimmer frame and his capacity to surprise may be somewhat diminished, but it's always a danger to write him off.

Oh Mercy (1988) was the first classic Dylan album since the seventies' Blood On The Tracks and raised hopes of a resurrection, but last year's Under A Blood Red Sky found him floundering once again, despite a strong supporting cast. Significantly, the only track he played from this most recent of efforts was the totally inane Wiggle Wiggle: "Wiggle wiggle wiggle like a bowl of soup," I ask you!

Dylan, you see, is still a rocker at heart. The most unsatisfactory parts of the evening were when he gave his band free reign to 'rock out.' All Along The Watchtower, Stuck Inside Of Mobile and a turkey from Empire Burlesque were simply thrown away,

with Dylan's voice an unintelligible drawl. But he did seem to be having fun, smiling at times and striking guitar hero poses. He has a lovely knack of pretending to play the solo while the actual guitarist is hiding at the back of the stage.

Desolation Row was one surprise choice but, again, it was squandered with Dylan mumbling the words and playing havoc with the melody. Thankfully it was curtailed after the first few verses.

The magic was turned on in the middle of the show in the now customary acoustic section. In the early sixties Dylan wrote some of the most important songs in the history of popular music which helped define the era. At Hammersmith he exhumed a fair few of them. Bob Dylan's Dream, It's Alright Ma, The Times They Are A Changin' and, the stand-out of the evening, Tomorrow Is A Long Time were dusted down and performed with a freshness which must have surprised even the most devout Bobcat. Whether this was a political gesture or a nostalgic trip down memory lane is open to debate as, typically, Dylan only said two words on stage: "Hello everybody."

Simple Twist Of Fate, from Blood On The Tracks, was performed with double bass accompaniment and piano from Dylan. It was a heart-stopping moment and pure magic. The more Dylan relaxed, the better his singing became. Even the stoop he

affected for the early part of the show seemed to improve.

The final gallop began with a great version of Like A Rolling Stone. It's amazing how he can still instil enthusiasm into this song which he must have now performed thousands of times. For once the band played with him rather than competed amongst themselves and some simple syncopation added yet another twist to the song.

Dylan's songs are organic beasts, often changing, being reinterpreted to give them a new emphasis. Witness the Live At Budokan set from 1975. As the show wound up with another plank spanning sesh on Highway 61, the audience - a curious cross-section of young and old, middle and working class - were convinced. If only he'd mentioned the war.

ANDREW COWEN



Thanks for coming, Bobby." read the 18-foot-long banner held aloft in the front row of the stalls at Hammersmith Odeon on Friday night. Unfortunately, the notoriously myopic Bob Dylan did not seem to notice this extensive piece of gratitude. Neither did he see the big bouquets of roses cast at his feet, nor was he aware that, more often than not, his guitar refused to accommodate itself to the same key adopted by the rest of his band.

Nothing unusual here, however, for regular Dylan watchers, who have long learned to accept all manner of onstage chaos. A Dylan show is, they will tell you, not as other shows. Rather, it's a particularly wobbly tight-rope walk which owes a good number of its thrills to the manner in which it courts disaster.

If it's the unpredictability of it all that gives the *cognoscenti* their kicks, Friday's more casual attenders were well satisfied with a generous gleaning of greatest hits. "Blowin' in the Wind", "Like a Rolling Stone", "Lay Lady Lay", "Masters of War" and "It Ain't Me Babe", for example, were all competently executed, while regulars seemed especially to enjoy "The Man in Me", "Seeing the Real You at Last" and the rarely heard "Bob Dylan's Dream".

They took further delight in the unexpected provision of an electric keyboard, which Dylan gamely tried to play twice - on "What Good Am I?" and later on "God Knows". Both efforts, alas, were unsuccessful, first because the microphone mounted over the keyboard insisted on poking him squarely between the eyes, and secondly because, having sat down to play, he found himself, to general audience hilarity, wrestling with his guitar and ever-recalcitrant harmonica-holder, both still hanging inconveniently around his neck.

It could be argued that all this occasionally amusing palaver is not so much admirably *risqué* as woefully unprofessional, more shambles than show. Certainly the sharp, G E Smith-led trio with which Dylan set out on his Never-Ending Tour back in 1988 are now nothing more than a memory. Standing in their shoes is a bunch of recently hired hands, in the process of re-inventing themselves as Bob's band - drummer Ian Wallace, a veteran of the 1978 tour, is reliably metronomic, Tony "Interesting" Garnier plays bass, and John Jackson and Cesar Diaz are the guitarists.

Jackson, upon whom much will depend in coming months, grins madly throughout, even at the most lyrically sombre moments. He is fluent enough but still lacks the kind of confidence that is only gained with experience. Diaz, a lesser talent, is competent but workaday. Nevertheless, there is enough energy and initiative about the band to suggest that they are likely to get very much better as a unit very quickly.

Dylan is approaching his 50th birthday now, and why he doesn't choose to sit comfortably on his considerable laurels, back in Malibu instead of chasing around on the gig-circuit, remains, from the outside, a baffling question. Yet his vocal meanderings still engender extraordinary exhilaration in an audience, and perhaps we should be grateful that he seems resolute on going his own way, while there's this much to delight in. As Jeff Lynne, who partners Dylan in The Traveling Wilburys, once said, with infinite wisdom: "Bob is Bob and that's why he's Bob"

John Bauldie

# Slow train comes after all

## Bob Dylan Hammersmith Odeon

BOB Dylan cuts a lonely figure in 1991. A few months shy of his fiftieth birthday he seems more desperate than ever to clamber down from the pedestal on which he has been placed. To this end he dashes off albums like *Under the Red Sky* with undistinguished riffs and kindergarten rhymes. He tours incessantly, admirably favouring theatres over arenas and playing "secondary circuit" cities in America, yet giving the impression that he could not care less about maintaining his performing standards, let alone how many tickets or records he sells.

He gives virtually no interviews and forbids photographers to attend his shows, yet he is still the subject of a steady stream of books and profiles. An increasingly ramshackle man of mystery, he is an institution at odds with the modern world. A place is still reserved for him at the top table, but he only seems able to function in splendid limbo on the sidelines of rock.

On this tour he has been breaking in a new backing group. The musicians who took the stage at Hammersmith were Tony Garnier (bass), Cesar Diaz (rhythm guitar), John Jackson (lead guitar) and Ian Wallace (drums), a band of no discernible pedigree, unless you count Wallace's stint with progressive rockers King Crimson in the early Seventies.

Dylan wore a semi-acoustic guitar, and a buttoned tartan jacket which gave the impression that he was carrying concealed weight around the midriff. His posture was crouched and his movements doddering, especially when wrestling with his harmonica cage. His hair was cut back to *Freewheelin'* length and every so often he ran one or two hands through it as if working up a shampoo lather.

They began with "You Go Your Way and I'll Go Mine", which was clearly the first chance the engineer on the mixing desk had been given to sort out the volume levels. As with most of the material, it was reworked into a kind of garage-band rock-swing style.



Bob Dylan: an institution at odds with the modern world

Dylan's voice had a harsher timbre than of yore, and his delivery of "Lay Lady Lay" was pure self-parody as he mumbled the words in an impossibly oblique drawl with no obvious heed for the metre of the verse or the melody of the song. A clumsily rocked-up arrangement of "Masters of War" was a barely-recognisable travesty of the original, the searing venom of the words lost in the mêlée of approximate chord changes and unstructured guitar solos.

But after this unpromising start the show gradually began to gell. The turning point came when Garnier installed himself with an upright bass, Wallace picked up a pair of brushes and the band embarked on a peculiarly affecting version of "Desolation Row". This was followed by a jazzy rearrangement of "It Ain't Me Babe" and then "Everything is Broken", a slinky little blues which at last allowed some of Dylan's wit to shine through.

Jackson gradually revealed himself to be a handy picker, and a sparky camaraderie developed both within the band and between the band and Dylan himself.

Despite abandoning a botched attempt at playing the piano, Dylan was clearly enjoying himself by the time he led the troupe into a finale of "In the Garden", "Like a Rolling Stone", "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Maggie's Farm". Dylan has become a master at recasting these old songs in different frameworks, often disguising their original melodies on the way. What a wonder it would be if he could write some new ones that were able to stand the test of live performance.

DAVID SINCLAIR



# Same songs, but the fans are a-changin

BY JILL  
PARKIN

**B**OB DYLAN'S records don't sell very well these days. Tracey Jones from South Wales, on the other hand, has done wonders for red rose sales.

Every day of Dylan's stay in London, she has sent one up to his hotel room, while she shivers on the steps outside.

"Sent up two on Valentine's Day, though they were a bit dearer than usual," said the 23 year old, who travelled up from Barry last Wednesday and went home yesterday.

*"I just want an autograph. I've sent up notes and a picture for him to sign."*

But 50-year-old Dylan has obviously forgotten what it's like to be blowin' in a Minus Five wind with nothing but a passion to keep you warm.

Writing complicated lyrics like 'Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, like a gypsy queen, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, all dressed in green' has left him too exhausted to write his name.

Those of us, rather older than Tracey, who remember playing early Dylan on big sister's Dansette, when a really practised ear could just about make out what the great protest balladeer was protesting about, would rather like to bung up his mouth organ with the lyrics to *Blonde on Blonde* and keep our memories.

**W**AY back in the Seventies, Bob Dylan changed back into Robert Zimmerman — a icst leader. But no one told him. He still thinks he's Homer in denim, smiting his bloomin' lyre long after his strings have gone.

Still, there we were, me and Tracey the barmaid, on the look-out for the great man on the steps of the Royal Garden Hotel in Kensington. There are flashier places to stay, but Dylan's not that sort.

He dresses down, collar turned up, hat or hood pulled down. He's one of the richest men of rock, but he certainly wouldn't get a job as doorman at the Royal Garden.

There were comings and goings. His minder, big Jim Callaghan, paid to protect the popsters from the paparazzi, came in.

The band, costumes in hand, came out and set off for the Hammersmith Odeon in a coach. No sign of Mr Tambourine Man himself.

Tracey, who had forked out £20 each night to watch her hero four times, probably in the hope of finally catching the words, has his picture all over her bedroom wall. "I've got to



PAY LADY PAY . . . Tracey Jones dishes out for Bob

meet him. I spend all my money on Dylan things. I'm not interested in any blokes who don't look like him," she says.

Lord knows how many there are in Barry, but around Kensington that day there seemed to be quite a few. We nearly took pictures of several exceptionally scruffy passers-by.

*As darkness fell, a man sat behind a candelabra at the piano in the foyer to play Moon River.*

We checked him out. Couldn't be Dylan — he was smiling. Big Jim and his charge had given us the slip. At gloomy Hammersmith Odeon, the sensitive songster had banned cameras, so we smuggled one in, in pieces and in pockets. Ah, yes, there he was. There was a time when he looked as if Dusty Springfield had lent him her make-up box, but these days Dylan doesn't bother with the eyeliner; he just orders the lighting men to keep his face in shadow.

**H**E began with Lay Lady Lay, a song so wonderful you could almost forgive the bad grammar, and anyhow, half the audience had gone to school since grammar was dropped.

The oldies were there, carried back across the years to long players, long reeferers and long hair, but the majority were today's students who wouldn't know a campus sit-in if they came across it in their personal organisers. The nice girls and boys of the Nineties have poached our protester. Dylan sounds as though he were gargling to music. He always did, but now he sounds as though his false teeth are down there too.

He was a couple of minutes into Like A Rolling Stone, before I recognised it. It was clearer on the Dansette.

Rather like a Frank Sinatra audience, Dylan devotees know they've come to see the man who used to be great rather than to hear him at his best. Some had brought binoculars and one group had a telescope. But lots of the crowd felt distinctly fobbed off. "Let's hear it, Bob," they yelled impatiently. The response of the middle-aged man in the white jacket was to take the mickey out of his own songs.

Oh, horror, even out of his sacred Sixties canon! He put on a Donald Duck voice for Mr Tambourine Man.

**S**TILL, some didn't mind and loved it all. Looking round, you could see that the big thing about legends and their concerts is that they enable young men to do in public what they would normally do privately in their bedrooms — you never saw so many playing an imaginary guitar. Everyone was standing up and Dylan, occasionally throwing out an arm in wild abandon, began to look as if he might enjoy this legend stuff. But time was nearly up.

He put on a straw hat for a slow song. The oldies sighed, and remembered love and lust in the days of flared jeans.

After one more number, Dylan raised a forefinger in farewell. He gives no encores.

The best Dylan encores are on 12-inch plastic. If he passed Tracey on his way into the hotel, let's hope he dropped her a few words.

*How about "It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe"?*



Picture: NIKOS

● AMERICANS have never quite got the hang of the British weather. Even frequent visitors like Bob Dylan.

● On a freezing night in London he arrived back at his hotel from a Hammersmith Odeon concert with his coat on back to front. But then shy Bob was more concerned about shielding himself from the camera than the cold.

● His fellow rock superstars Bill Wyman and Eric Clapton warded off the chill with true Brit grit. Bill sported his chunkiest cricket sweater. Smart Eric protected his two greatest assets — his soulful voice and his guitar-plucking fingers. And showed Bob it's possible to stay warm and keep your cool.

★ LOOKS like singer Bob Dylan has become a wrap star — as he covers up in a blanket to beat London's icy winds.

★ Dylan, 49, was arriving at his Mayfair hotel after a sell-out concert at the Hammersmith Odeon.

★ Thousands rocked as Bob put new gusto into his old favourites — which include *Blowing In The Wind* and *Shelter From The Storm!*



## Hey, Mr Gaberline Man!

WHO'S that buried under the pixie hood and ankle-length gaberline coat, being hustled into his London hotel early yesterday by an economy-sized minder? It's the King of Protest, Bob Dylan, after one of his string of concerts at the Hammersmith Odeon. Perhaps the 49-year-old American singer was contemplating a new protest — about the weather.

# Dylan dresses down and out

HE may look like a tramp being shown the hotel door.

But Bob Dylan was on the way in to the Mayfair Hotel in



Dylan of the 60s

London when this picture was taken yesterday.

The multi-millionaire singer songwriter, 49, — slaying in the capital as part of a European tour — obviously believes in dressing down for the occasion.

Asked about the hooded jacket and old coat, an aide said: 'Just because he's very rich it doesn't mean he has to wear designer gear. He doesn't dress like this to disguise himself from his fans — this is how Bob Dylan dresses.'

CHILLY: Dylan's feeling really blue — with the cold

★ THE great Bob Dylan did his worst to make a dramatic entrance.

He wore a rather tatty full-length cape with hood attached which blew around him untidily in the wind.

And his ageing face was wrinkled against the cold as he walked from a car to the main

By KATE BATTERSBY

door of his hotel in London's Mayfair.

★ Onlookers were not impressed. One said: "He looks just like a garden gnome." But those who count don't care — and they packed his latest London concert to prove it.

# Hobo Bob blows in

HOW many roads must a man walk down before he can find a luxury hotel room? Not many if the man is veteran rocker Bob Dylan who, despite his hobo appearance, will never be a resident of cardboard city.

Wearing a grubby hooded sweatshirt, tatty old jeans and battered trainers, he checks into his £1,000-a-night suite at London's May Fair Hotel after a concert at Hammersmith.

The singer, who is 50 in three months, can't resist acting like a down and out, despite his multi-million-pound fortune. He certainly makes a change from the hotel's usual clientele, which includes Michael Jackson and Madonna.

**BOB DYLAN****HAMMERSMITH ODEON, LONDON**

THE trouble with yer living legends is that when you actually see them in real life, when you're actually, for the first time, within shouting/photographing/bottle-throwing range of the physical manifestation of their presence, they tend toward the anti-climactic. Stonehenge, The Coliseum, Pompeii, you name 'em, you get there, and you think "Bugger me, looks just like the pictures. For this I endure the toe-curling oh-my-gaaard-ing of these f\*\*\*ing American tour groups. Harumph. Bring back the rope." Which is by way of observing that despite — in fact, because of — his inestimable stature and influence, Bob Dylan is on a hiding to nothing every time he wanders onto a stage and commences wrestling with his neck-brace harmonica. Just imagine trying to live up to being Dylan. Be enough to drive you mad. Yeah, well.

It would certainly be wrong to suggest that tonight's performance wasn't ripe with the faint but discernible aroma of fruitcake, but it would be doing Dylan a greater disservice to perpetuate the myths that the old chap is irretrievably out to lunch. This was madness as method, eccentricity as energy. (Similar qualities, though in slightly diluted form, were to be seen earlier in an encouragingly irascible support slot by Graham Parker.)

You could advance several convincing arguments that Dylan's ever-troubled muse is, these days, firmly of the opinion that it's a teapot, but it certainly remains intact, alive and kicking. He was great, pretty much. "Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again" was a barely recognisable, rambling but nonetheless engaging shambles, Dylan alternating between his traditional bitter drone and fits of the giggles; "Wiggle Wiggle" was hilarious; "Desolation Row" (this was a bit of a night for the semi-famous tunes, see, the ones that only changed some of the world), an guitar and upright bass, was beautifully bleak; and "What Good Am I?" was delivered with wrenching, hurting sincerity. So many fans, so many opinions, and he still can't work out who he is. If only more songwriters would have the decency to be this tragically fascinating in their dotage.

Dylan himself cuts a figure verging on the comical — short, big shoulders, thin legs, helpless hair — he looks like a ragdoll in a tartan jacket from Game Show Hell. He wears his legend like a dull aunt's Christmas tie, confused, contemptuous and uncomfortable. He wanders about the stage at will and at random, plays keyboard a bit and then doesn't, and bewilders the f\*\*\*ing hell out of his poor bloody band (two leftovers from the crowd

scene of a film with a Scott Joplin soundtrack and one gee-whizz guitar geek. Oh yeah, and a drummer). He *still* cannot play mouth organ for toffee, but this lifelong deficiency has now assumed the mantle of unifying in-joke, the laughs, cheers and nudges that greet the first appearance of the harp-holder kind of a membership ticket, a Masonic handshake for lapsed hippies. Dylan thinks it's pretty funny too.

Still, to avoid giving the impression that Dylan '91 is only a juggler and a trapeze away from being a three-ring circus (but fire-breather? Tightrope? He's got 'em), it should be stressed very heavily indeed that anyone who chooses to deliver his most hackneyed standards ("Like A Rolling Stone", "Blowing In The Wind", the encores) with minimal regard for the key, tempo or tune that everyone knows to avoid the cringe-worthy, embarrassing spectacle of a singalong — to provoke some reaction other than the expected, anyway — is some sort of minor deity. At the very least.

We should all be so incorrigible in our old age. The old buzzard flies high.  
ANDREW MUELLER

**ROCK****The sad truth about Dylan**

James Delingpole on the short-lived thrill of seeing a 'living legend'

AMONG the many myths that have built up around the "legendary" Bob Dylan is the one about his live performances. He plays two sorts of gigs, so the story goes: very good ones and very bad ones. But as Dylan demonstrated when he played the Hammersmith Odeon, it is not as simple as that.

For the true aficionado, there can be no such thing as a poor Dylan concert, for Dylan can do no wrong. But for the uninitiated who roll up expecting to judge a Dylan event in much the way they would treat any other rock concert, a truly second-rate evening lies ahead.

The sad truth is that Dylan has accumulated so many adoring fans in his long career

that he does not have to try any more. He simply stands on stage hunched like a vulture on a telephone wire, twangs his guitar and mumbles his way through his extensive repertoire with all the clarity of a bad Marlon Brando impersonation.

Occasionally, when he can be bothered to make an impression, he flaunts his versatility by tinkling almost experimentally on an electric piano or — that old crowd-pleasing chestnut — blows sweetly on his trusty harmonica.

None of this would make any impression on an audience with any reasonable critical faculties, were it not for the fact that it provides a nostalgic frisson for those who have seen him doing it before on historic

Sixties television footage. It is the thrill of seeing a "living legend".

This thrill, unfortunately, is short-lived. Soon it becomes simply irritating to be surrounded by an audience yelling and waving their arms with all the glazed rapture of a charismatic Evangelical service when the object of their adoration is giving such a commonplace performance.

The lighting effects, deliberately one imagines, were minimal. The ageing backing band was competent but poundingly monotonous. And Dylan's justly praised lyrics — sung, in the traditional manner, through the nose — were, of course, completely unintelligible.

# Blowin' out their minds



THE Times may have changed for sixties icon Bob Dylan, but with his 50th birthday only two months away the man has lost none of his power to enthral an audience.

And though 'the old road' is rapidly fading, Mr Zimmerman is unpredictable as ever and an enigma in the true sense of the word - as his audiences at Glasgow's SECC found out last weekend.

Saturday night saw a sullen Dylan take the stage with a muddled and lack-lustre 'Most Likely You Go Your Way and I'll Go Mine.'

Unhappy with guitars, fiddling with different harmonicas and generally looking irritable, it appeared that Glasgow was the last place he wanted to be.

As his new band looked like disintegrating entirely they somehow managed to struggle through 'All along the Watchtower,' 'I Shall Be Released' which became 'The Man in Me' after two instrumental verses, and a truly awful 'Stuck Inside of Mobile'.

Disinterest became almost mutual as audience applause

Then a third of the way into performance either Bobby took an extra 'shot' of something good or simply woke-up, and produced a nerve-tingling acoustic set.

The 'rarely performed' 'Bob Dylan's Dream' grabbed hold of the evening air, a beautiful 'It ain't me Babe' and 'Mr Tambourine Man' put everyone back on the right tracks.

The second half was nothing short of stupendous, with a dark 'Gotta Serve Somebody' - when at least half the audience thought they heard the line 'you may live in Baghdad' - a terrific 'God Knows' - from the new album - and a gut-twisting 'In the Garden'.

The band was in full-throttle and smiles actually started to appear on the two young guitarists faces, even if the 'man' didn't allow himself that luxury.

But all good things must come to the end, and a dire two-verse 'Like a Rolling Stone' reminded us of where we all came in.

Some may have doubted the wisdom of buying a ticket for the Sunday night as well,

others may have doubted their sanity in coming at all.

But it's amazing the difference 24 hours can make.

Once more donning a bad-taste tartan jacket, the man who has become a 'legend in his own lunchtime' strode on stage with a sense of purpose - which I have not seen in him before.

A tight instrumental - that sounded uncannily like 'Flower of Scotland' - blasted into a pulsating and re-phrased 'Subterranean Homesick Blues,' delivered with such purpose and passion that at least the first nine rows were going 'bananas' a minute before its close.

Just what the repertoire was after that is anyone's guess - 3,500 people were entranced and soon lost sense of which number followed which.

But a beautifully delivered 'Under the Red Sky', a charming 'Just Like a Woman', a new improved biodegradable 'What Was it You Wanted?' and a cutting version of 'Gotta Serve Somebody' - outshining the previous night's rendition -

were but mere highlights of a performance the calibre of which Dylan hasn't produced for many years.

The acoustic set once more gave the 'master' a chance to pull-out any more lights he may have been keeping under bushels, and 'Hollis Brown' brought tears to many eyes.

'I'll Be Your Baby Tonight' showed Robert Palmer et al how the song should really be sung before the band crashed through number after number to a finale of 'Released' and 'Rolling Stone'.

Bananaritis had really set-in and Dylan didn't even leave the stage before the audience emotionally pulled him into a strange but beautiful 'Blowin' in the Wind' and a demonic 'All along the Watchtower'.

Pure enjoyment are words not strong enough to describe 90 minutes of ecstasy.

But perhaps Mr Dylan's beaming smile, doffed hat and strangled cry of 'Long live Scotland,' said it all.

Nic Outterside



**Superstar Dylan well wrapped up and surrounded by minders in Greenwich Village**

Report and picture from  
**MICHAEL MCGOVERN**  
 in New York

**H**E LOOKS like a New York panhandler in his filthy hooded sweat-shirt and clumsy gloves. He could be a tramp. In fact he's a rock star.

His costume is not for a new video or the latest pop fashion, it is the outfit of a recluse.

Bob Dylan shuffles through the mean streets of his beloved Greenwich Village just as Greta Garbo did before him on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

In three months the world's most famous protest singer will be 50. It has been a long, strange trip since he started singing his anti-war songs in 1961 in the Pindar of Wakefield pub in King's Cross, when nobody knew him or wanted to take his photograph.

This week — 30 years on and with an ocean of experiences behind him — he is playing a larger London venue, the Hammer-smith Odeon. Now everybody knows him and nobody is allowed to take his photograph.

### **Mystery**

Dylan watchers claim he has become an eccentric, mercurial character shunning publicity, hiding behind his non-image. The man who sang *Blowin' In The Wind* and was a spokesman for the flower-power generation rarely speaks to his public now.

But evasiveness is the best part of Dylan's act. Robert Zimmerman, as he was born in Hibbing, Minnesota, likes to make himself a mystery.

*In fact he's neither a mystery nor an enigma. just a very clever pop star.*

He has many of the trappings and accoutrements of the rock world. Like many stars he likes a plethora of pretty women. A former bodyguard and close friend said last week: 'He has women everywhere he goes. In Belfast, he knows a colleen or two. He loves women, every day: white, black, brown or round. He never has to worry about women, like we do.'

One of his best-known loves is the sexually-hip, smart, brassy blonde, Sally Kirkland, who traded the social life of a Philadelphia debutante for an acting career and later exchanged drugs for yoga.

She is known for lines like: 'I'm into health . . . I don't wear underwear, it's not healthy for a woman.'

Kirkland, who became a celebrity in the Sixties for appearing nude on Broadway in the play *Sweet Business*, claims: 'Bob is the Howard Hughes of his day.'

### **Wealthy**

Certainly, like Hughes, he surrounds himself with the best bodyguards in America including superagent Elliott Mintz, former minder to some of Hollywood's hottest talent.

And like Hughes, Dylan is immensely wealthy. He likes to give the impression of an impoverished beatnik. He claims: 'Money changes the quality of the work that's being done. When I started I had nothing.'

That is why he retains the fantasy of a street cred musician. But now he has everything. The apartment in New York, a ranch in California, an estate in Minnesota and a yacht in the Caribbean.

*He also has much of the arrogance and insensitivity that comes with fame, money and adulation.*

**‘Hiding behind an image of an eccentric recluse’**

Dylan was offered a million dollars to do a book on humour. He contacted a struggling ghost writer and shook hands on the deal. Two months later, the writer eventually managed to contact Dylan to ask about his contract. Dylan replied: 'Forget that for now. Let's wait until we need the money.' On another occasion last

year he sat, barefoot and shirtless, in a \$4,200-a-day hotel room on a stifling afternoon. Dylan's guests were sweltering. When asked why there was no air conditioning, he replied: 'I don't believe in it.' End of conversation.

There is no denying Bob Dylan is a brilliant songwriter, but he was so idolised in the late Sixties that it is difficult to put his work into proper perspective.

He has gained pseudo-respectability with the intelligentsia — including dons like Christopher Ricks of Cambridge, who said: 'Not all his works are perfect. He's only as good as Shakespeare.' Dylan Studies are offered in US colleges. The Guardian called him a 'Homer in denim'. Ageing hippies still quote him. Keith Floyd peppers his TV cookery recipes with Dylan-speak.

Yet when asked about his lyrics there is often a perfectly simple explanation. Asked to explain the couplet from *The Long Black Coat*, 'People don't live or die/People just float,' Dylan said: 'I just needed something to rhyme with coat.'

It is often the singer's minders who help to deepen Dylan's mystery. A reporter from *Q* magazine who had made eight attempts in two weeks to speak to the great man was given some pointers.

Don't treat it like an interview, he was told. 'Bob will clam up or wander off if you fire a volley of questions at him. Try not, in fact, to ask any questions.'

## Damage

He was certainly not to be asked about his motorcycle smash in 1966, generally thought to be a cover to give him time to recover from drug dependency.

He has admitted to Robert Shelton, his biographer, that he exaggerated the physical damage because he wanted to get off the road after some hard touring.

In fact Bob Dylan has manipulated public interest for the past 30 years with more skill than Elvis Presley, whose image as the mean, swivel-hipped sex symbol of rock grew ever more incongruous as he slid into middle-aged, overweight alcoholism.

Dylan has deliberately kept the people guessing, skipping from protest songwriter to country and western, rock 'n' roll and back to protest. He has confounded his ardent fans by switching from Judaism to Born Again Christian, LSD and back to Judaism. Now he's into physical fitness, with his own personal trainer, and mysticism.

He currently sees himself as the King of the Gypsies and says: 'You know what happens to a gypsy king when he gets old, all his wives slowly start dropping away, his children too, till one day a gypsy king finds himself all alone, on the beach.'

*In other words washed up — like any other ageing rock star.*

## A little light on the music

Bob Dylan at  
Hammersmith Odeon

**WHEN** all's said and done, it helps to be a legend. Dylan may not sell many records now, but he remains fatally attractive to those pop fans who consider themselves possessed of brains.

They hummed with anticipation. Which sort of Dylan would they get tonight? What would the world's favourite trick cyclist get up to?

The first clue that he was in one of his lighter moods came with his appearance in a blue-checked dinner jacket. Profundity was obviously out for tonight. Dylan addressed not one word to the faithful. What he did do was cheerfully slaughter his back catalogue with every means at his disposal.

## Approach

These means included a four-piece backing band who seemed convinced that there was nothing wrong with the world that a little pub rock wouldn't put right.

Renditions of *Masters Of War* and *Blowin' In The Wind* showed that Dylan was abreast of world events, if not musical ones.

His approach to his trademark harmonica was pure Tommy Cooper — inept, hilarious and not much magic.

There was no encore.

Pete Clark



Homer, the slut

By DAVID HINCKLEY

New News Staff Writer

**B**ob Dylan stole the Grammy show Wednesday night at Radio City.

Sure, Quincy Jones won six Grammys. But were music fans discussing Quincy Jones over the water cooler Thursday morning? No. They were discussing Dylan.

It was a discussion that went like this: "Did you see that?" Or "What was that all about?"

People who follow popular music for a living had the same reaction. In the press room at Radio City, writers clustered around TV monitors looking for answers. What's that song? Who's that band? What did he say?

This much we know: Jack Nicholson was presenting Dylan with the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences' Lifetime Achievement Award. Jack spoke, a montage of Dylan performances was shown, the curtain parted and Dylan played a song with a four-man band.

They were all wearing hats. The music was sharp. The words were not. Someone in the press room asked if he were singing in Hebrew.

After the song, Nicholson produced the plaque for "Uncle Bobby," who responded to the applause by leading a round for Nicholson.

As Jack talked, Bob stood beside him and started to sway back and forth. He wasn't too well shaven and his face wasn't as lean as it sometimes has been. His eyes seemed either shrouded or rolling. To be frank, this guy could have scared an unsuspecting kid. He took the plaque and did a silent "aw, shucks" routine. He turned

away. But he was trapped. He would have to speak.

"My Daddy was a very simple man," he began. He paused. He said his Daddy had this goofy son. He paused again. He paused a lot. He started to talk about some of the things his Daddy had said. He paused again.

"He said so many things." He paused again. Finally he grabbed his hat, as if it

### Wednesday night was no aberration.

was in imminent danger of soaring up into the proscenium of the Great Stage, and muttered that perhaps the most important thing his Daddy said was that "you have an ability to mend your own ways."

He left. He left a sea of open mouths is what he left.

Top that, anybody. But if you think this was all an exercise to explore the outer limits of weirdness on national TV, think again.

A call to Dylan's record company Thursday confirmed that the song was "Masters Of War." Okay, it didn't sound like "Masters of War," but Dylan is like that. He rearranges.

So step back and consider what he did on the Grammy show. He sang "Masters of War," a straight-ahead anti-war statement on a night when most folks were just sending best wishes to the troops. Then he offered the simple folk wisdom that we can't blame anybody else for what we're doing. It's our behavior and we have to fix it. A pretty powerful message,

right? It also makes sense.

And yeah, maybe it was lost on some folks because his behavior and demeanor were so bizarre. But this isn't a guy who is used to addressing audiences, and if it all comes out weird, what's wrong with that? Music can use it in an age when most of what passes for weirdness is planned and choreographed like a Vanilla Ice video.

Here's a guy who has gone whole shows without saying a word. A guy who followed Led Zeppelin at Live Aid with three acoustic numbers. Wednesday was no aberration. It was Dylan.

Bruce Springsteen told the audience during his November concerts in Los Angeles that he read an interview in which Dylan said a movie director had told him, "Just be yourself." And Dylan said he replied, "Which one?"

He never lets us get lazy. Now there's a lifetime achievement.



BY  
DAVID  
BIANCULLI

**G**ARRY Shandling, who's made insecurity and insincerity his twin comedy trademarks, was two-thirds of the way through hosting last night's Grammy show when he said, in all sincerity, "This is a great show, isn't it?"

Not really, Garry.

Later, as the CBS Grammy telecast was shifting into overtime at 11 p.m., Shandling prefaced a performance by Wilson Phillips by saying, "In case there's anyone left in the world who doesn't know it, Wilson Phillips is a he, not a they... Did I say that right?"

Not really, Garry.

Tracy Chapman's microphone went dead during the final verse of her rendition of "Imagine," and the songs excerpted in the Grammy salute notably excluded "Give Peace a Chance" — possibly because of the current political climate regarding the Gulf war.

That didn't stop Bob Dylan, another Lifetime Achievement honoree, from being defiantly true to his own beliefs, as well as to his own musical past. After a rambling but affectionate and literate introduction by Jack Nicholson, Dylan launched into a song of his own choosing, slurring and scowling the words so that they were virtually indecipherable.

The delivery, as well as the song selection, may

have been deliberate, because Dylan was performing a high-caliber version of his 1963 song "Masters of War." How many of his peers, much less the viewers at home, knew that Dylan was singing such caustic verses as: "You fasten the triggers for the others to fire / Then you set back and watch when the death count gets higher / You hide in your mansion as young people's blood / flows out of their bodies and is buried in the mud"?

Regardless, Dylan received an appreciably warm reception, and even made everybody laugh with his well-timed comic pauses. On this night as in decades past, Dylan stood above the rest.

Otherwise, I was more entertained by CBS's "Family Dog" promos, and by Ray Charles' Diet Pepsi commercials, than by most of the Grammy telecast they interrupted. That's not to say that there weren't some nice acceptance speeches (Quincy Jones, "From a Distance" songwriter Julie Gold) and intriguing strange-bedfellow performances: Any show that makes room for The Judds and Aerosmith, for Placido Domingo and Billy Idol, and for Tony Bennett and Living Colour is worth watching.

Well, make that worth hearing. As TV, last night's Grammy telecast was a half hour late and a lot of quality short.

From IVOR KEY in New York

**S**INGER Mariah Carey, who found fame after handing a record boss a tape of her act at a party, yesterday won a Grammy award for best new artist. And the 20-year-old New Yorker ex-waitress was also voted top female pop vocalist for her soaring hit Vision of Love.

But it was Quincy Jones who thrilled the black-tie crowd of 6,200 at New York's Radio City Music Hall by winning six of the seven categories in which he was nominated.

His awards included producer of the year, album of the year and best rap performance by a group. He won the latter for performing with artists including his son Quincy Jones III on the hit, Back on the Block.

### Legend

British pop star Phil Collins, who had eight nominations, won only one award — record of the year for Another Day in Paradise.

Another popular winner was rock legend Bob Dylan, who shared a joke with Jack Nicholson after the actor presented him with a Lifetime Achievement award.

Evergreen Eric Clapton won the prize for best rock vocal with his Bad Love. And rebel Irish singer Sinead O'Connor, who boycotted the ceremony, also won a Grammy.



Queen: Miss Fire

# 'My cosmic love for Bob Dylan lasted across the centuries'



King: Bob Dylan

A DANCER 'obsessed' with Bob Dylan has told how they had a passionate two-week affair during his 1986 Australian tour.

Gypsy Fire, 44, told a court she believed she had known the Sixties singing star several times in previous lives.

Describing their meeting at a Dylan concert, she said she danced near the stage and he sang two songs — one called I Need a Shot of Love — while

looking at her. Their affair, which she called 'beautiful, cosmic, spiritual and passionate' began the next day.

Miss Fire admitted being obsessed with Dylan and believed they had been a king and queen in ancient Egypt and had met again about the time of Christ, the Supreme Court in Sydney heard.

She knew they would meet in real life because she sent 'so much love' to him.

Miss Fire, whose real name is

Emelia Caruana, is suing Truth Newspapers, claiming she was defamed in an article headed: 'I was Dylan's sex slave.'

She claims the magazine turned 'beauty into sleaze, smut, filth and ugliness', destroying her reputation and career. Her family did not speak to her for eight months, she lost all her self-confidence and gave up dancing.

The case is expected to last two weeks.



Bob Dylan... "licked lips"

# I danced naked for Bob Dylan

ACTRESS Gypsy Fire danced naked for Bob Dylan wearing only the star's HAT, a court heard yesterday.

Miss Fire, 44, said she had a two-week fling with the singer during his 1986 Australia tour. She went to Dylan's Sydney concert and climbed on stage after he appeared to lick his lips at her.

But security staff dragged her off by her BREASTS.

## Hauled

When she met her idol later in his hotel she complained: "How'd you like to be hauled off stage by your b\*\*\*\*?" He replied: "It's been done to me before."

Miss Fire told Sydney's Supreme Court she later danced naked for him in his bedroom. She is suing Australia's Weekend Truth newspaper over an article headlined: "I was Dylan's Sex Slave." The case continues.

As far as legends are concerned, Dylan is at a disadvantage. For a start, he isn't dead. Indeed, he is noticeably troubled by the ageing process. His music has softened into insignificance and, far from attaining a look of all wise maturity, he merely looks chubby, depressed and unenigmatic.

Recent stories in the tabloids have portrayed him as some kind of grumpy down and out and, artistically, that image seems quite correct. Great food for a Goldman hatchet job, isn't it?

At the 33rd Annual Grammy Awards ceremony to be held on February 20 in Los Angeles, prestigious Lifetime Achievement Grammys will be presented to John Lennon (posthumously) and Bob Dylan. Before then, Dylan, whose 30-year recording career is also to be marked by the forthcoming 4-CD "rare and unreleased" box set. The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-4, brings his Never Ending Tour back to London on February 8 for eight sold-out shows at the Hammersmith Odeon, Bob pals Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, George Harrison and Ron Wood are no doubt already preparing themselves in case they'll be needed for "surprise" end-of-show guest appearances, while The Troggs' Reg "Wild Thing" Presley may well also be waiting for the much wished-for "Bob wants to know if you're ready" call.

Unlikely as it may seem, Reg Presley is one of the few people "in rock" that Bob Dylan has begged to be introduced to. The tale takes us back to 1986, when Dylan was in London filming the ill-starred Hearts Of Fire.



One afternoon, Ron Wood played Bob the infamous Troggs Tape, which apparently provoked uncontrollable fits of giggling. When, a few days later, Woody excitedly discovered that the very same Reg Presley was recording in the next studio, a delighted Dylan demanded to be introduced to the erstwhile Trogg, who

was to be found plucking frustratedly at a bass guitar when Bob wobbled in to meet him. "How long you bin playin' bass?" asked Dylan, enigmatically. "All fuckin' arter-noon, mate!" Reg replied, sounding exactly like a tape-recording of himself. Needless to say, Dylan dissolved.

## The dirt on Dylan

I AM pleased to note that Mr Albert Goldman, for my money the finest pop biographer in the world, has at last found a subject worthy of his talents and has finally decided to allow his team of frighteningly professional researchers to get fully to grips with the peripheral elements surrounding Bob Dylan. Within that mighty, late, I should imagine, lies a massive hornets' nest and I for one can hardly wait to get stuck into it. One thing is certain, there are still many ageing Dylanologists in this world who will be more than willing to leap into a state of violent indignation the moment this book surfaces. Nobody likes to see the myth of their particular hero decimated and laid bare. Lifelong fans of Dylan, no doubt, will be terrified of feeling foolish, as the object of their adoration — so perfect in their eyes — finally begins to show gaping flaws. This is why Goldman is so fascinating. Although much of his work is based on interpretation of the facts (and parallel books, based on exactly the same evidence, could tell it in completely differing ways), he does have the curious knack of dismantling an artist's charisma.

The effect he has on die-hard fans is nothing short of glorious. Speaking as somebody who dislikes any kind of hero worship, I see Goldman as a champion of good sense and honesty. Blind adoration is, at best, dangerous, and, at worst, positively moronic. Just look at the furor caused by Goldman's last work, The Lives of John Lennon. Wasn't it wonderful to see bearded, balding, Beatles fanatics by the score completely miss the point of the book — which was not to denounce the talent of Lennon, just weaken the legend — and go unintelligently on the defensive.

Dylan is a far more interesting subject. There was a time when he really was just about the most talented man on the planet, and, of course, when The Beatles were singing "And with a love like that... y'know you should be glad." Dylan was arousing the global consciousness of western youth.



# Grammys Turn Into Quincy Jones Show

By JON PARELES

A list of the winners, page C17.

The 33d annual Grammy Awards belonged to Quincy Jones. His album "Back on the Block," an ambitious attempt to bring together black musical styles from jazz to soul to funk to rap, was named Album of the Year, and it brought awards to nearly everyone who worked on it, a multi-generational roster of musicians from Ray Charles to the rapper Ice-T.

Mr. Jones was named nonclassical producer of the year and songs from the album won in rap, rhythm-and-blues, jazz fusion and two instrumental arranging categories: "Back on the Block" was also named best-engineered album. With 19 previous awards and 8 under his own name from "Back on the Block," Mr. Jones became the musician with the second-highest number of Grammys, behind Sir Georg Solti, who won 28.

Phil Collins's "Another Day in Paradise," a despairing song about homelessness, was named record of the year. The ballad "From a Distance," most recently recorded by Bette Midler, was named Song of the Year, the second year in a row that Ms. Midler had recorded the winning song.

**The Song of a Lifetime**

"From a Distance," a song that is five years old, has also been recorded by Nanci Griffith and by the Byrds. It is an elegiac song about racial problems and global tension, and lately it has become associated with public sentiment about the war in the Persian Gulf. "I lived through the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, and I feel that in one way or another I've been writing that song my whole life," Ms. Gold said backstage.

Sinead O'Connor boycotted the

awards last night, because she maintained they honored commerciality rather than artistic achievement. "She worries too much," said Garry Shandling, the host. In his opening monologue. But even if she didn't want it, she received an award for "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" in a new category, alternative music. "If they send it to her, she'll send it back," said Miss O'Connor's spokeswoman, Elaine Schock.

The Grammy Awards ceremony was held yesterday at Radio City Music Hall, in New York for the first time since 1988. Virtually everyone in the major leagues of the recorded-music business — performers, executives, technicians, hangers-on — descended on the hall yesterday. By one count, there was a 3,000-person waiting list for tickets to the 6,000-seat hall.

"It's harder to get tickets to the Grammys than to get nominated," said Ms. Gold. The war with Iraq went nearly unremarked; a few performers mentioned "peace" or said they were sending out prayers to the soldiers in the Persian Gulf.

The awards ceremonies, telecast on CBS-TV, have usually been held in Los Angeles, which has the largest local chapter and the headquarters of the 8,000-member National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. Backstage, New York Mayor David N. Dinkins said he would do "anything I have to" to bring the awards ceremony back to New York in the future. The ceremony was broadcast to more than 60 countries, including, for the first time, Saudi Arabia, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Mariah Carey, the 20-year-old singer and songwriter from New York whose debut album has sold three

million copies, won the Best New Artist award and the Female Pop Vocal award; another New York band, Living Colour, won in the Hard Rock category. Alannah Myles, Anita Baker and Kathy Mattea won female vocal awards in rock, rhythm-and-blues and country categories, respectively. Blues awards went to B. B. King and to the Vaughan Brothers, who also won in the rock instrumental category; Stevie Ray Vaughan died in a helicopter accident last

## Record industry's honors go both to the present and to the unappreciative.

year. "What a year it's been," said his brother, Jimmie Vaughan, accepting the award.

Many awards were posthumous. Leonard Bernstein dominated the classical category; his performance of Charles Ives's Second Symphony was named best classical album, his interpretation of two Shostakovich symphonies was named best orchestral performance, and his composition "Arias and Barcarolles" was named best contemporary composition. The pianist Vladimir Horowitz was given his 21st award; Roy Orbison won the male pop vocal award.

### Dylan Was, of Course, Dylan

Through the 1980's, the Grammys have been striving for both respectability and hipness. In recent years, Lifetime Achievement Awards have been given to performers who were overlooked in their prime; this year Bob Dylan, who received no awards while he was revolutionizing popular music in the 1960's, was given a lifetime award.

Mr. Dylan made a characteristically enigmatic appearance. He sang an unfamiliar song and then, after being handed an award by Jack Nicholson, Mr. Dylan said his father had told him: "It's possible to be so defiled in this world that even your mother and father won't know you. But God will always believe in your own ability to mend your own ways."



Snapped here at the Grammy awards, the odd brothers JACK NICHOLSON and BOB DYLAN enjoy an apres-show titter concerning Bawb's somewhat yag relationship with Planet Earth onstage earlier that night.

Guffaws Bob: "Gee, Jack, I'm sorry I couldn't remember my name, especially as you'd been neat enough to introduce me an' all."

Replies Jack: "That's OK buddy. I like a guy who can make GEORGE BEST look sober."



## Those Lovable Wilburys

*Traveling Wilburys—Vol. 3*  
(Wilburys)

**T**HEY SAY YOUR PERSPECTIVE changes when you've got a kid, and since little Mikey hit the one-year mark at our house, I've been listening to music for a whole new batch of reasons. Every morning at eight, Mikey goes nuts when he hears the opening theme of "Sesame Street," which, as a music-lovin' dad, makes me happy as a clam. His grandmother just bought him one of those kiddie cassette players for his birthday, so now I'm starting to make him tapes. I just played him an advance of the new Raffi, which is all about the environment, and I'm not sure he liked it that

much—too hard to understand and all.

But I know he's going to love the Wilburys.

"Look out your window," Dylan sings, "The grass ain't green/It's kind of yellow/ See what I mean?/Look up your chimney/ The sky ain't blue/It's kind of yellow/You know it's true." Then the rest of the guys come in for the chorus: "It's so hard to figure what it's all about/When your outside's in (inside out)/And your downside's up (upside down)/Yeah, your upside's right (right-side-up)/Yeah, don't it make you want to twist and shout when you're inside out?"

Sure, I'll tell Mikey that "ain't" ain't in the dictionary and all that, but you think he's not going to have a ball dancing around the house pointing up and down, dealing with colors and things that are hard to figure out? He's going to *dig* it! When it's exercise time, we'll fast forward to the "Wilbury Twist." That's where Tom Petty starts things off with that dance instruction line, "Put your hand on your head/Put your foot in the air/Then you hop around the room/In your underwear." You *know* Mikey's going to be in stitches!

Plus, it's pretty hard for kids to remember names sometimes. That's one reason they like "Sesame Street": Who can forget Big Bird, Elmo and Cookie Monster? So I bet Mike'll especially like the Wilburys' names—Muddy, Boo, Clayton and Spike are a heck of a lot easier to keep track of than Tom, Bob, Jeff and George. But I'll have to be careful

when I play him the first Wilburys record—it'll be a royal bummer explaining how Charlie T. Jnr., Otis Nelson and Lucky Wilbury went away and may come back, but Lefty never will.

I think Mikey's going to like the second Wilburys album a lot more than the first one, though. It's more fun, and pretty easy to understand. Like on "Where Were You Last Night," the guys start out singing, "Where were you last night," then, next verse, "Where were you last week," and finally, "Where were you last year." I figure if Mikey's a stickler for detail—and you should see how he stacks up CDs around the house!—he'll probably want to know why they didn't ask, "Where were you last month," and I'll just ask him to give me a word that rhymes with "month" to shut him up. But he'll like that sequential thing.

Maybe one day Mikey'll ask me what I think of the record, and heck, I'll just tell him I think Muddy, Boo, Clayton and Spike singing together these days is a heck of a lot more fun than Tom, Bob, Jeff and George singing apart; that Boo's "If You Belonged to Me" is better than anything on his *Under the Red Sky* album, even "Wiggle Wiggle"; and that "I guess by now you've got the gist/ Everybody's crazy about the Wilbury Twist" is one of the coolest rhymes in rock 'n' roll. Then we'll go outside, play a little basketball and put on the storm windows or something.—Dave DiMartino



### VOL. 3 The Traveling Wilburys

Imagine it's next January, late on Super Bowl Sunday. You're walking near the game site when you see a few players from the Raiders and the Giants, who hours before had been competing for high stakes, rolling on the ground, laughing as they play a loosey-goosey game of touch football.

That's the kind of slaphappy playfulness evident here. You know the boys are having fun from the goofy lyrics ("She can drive a truck/ She can drive a train/ She can even drive an airplane/ She's so good to look at in the rain") right down to the album jacket, for which they pose in mock homage to one of rock's best-known covers, the Jefferson Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow*.

The jokes pop up everywhere. For *Vol. 3*, the group's second LP, they've even switched their noms de Wilbury. George Harrison is now Spike, Tom Petty is Muddy, Jeff Lynne is Clayton and Bob Dylan is Boo. Despite the loss of Roy Orbison, the music is tighter, less whiffy, less country (with the exception of "Poor House," a cute Ozark pick 'n' grin). In fact, *Vol. 3* is like a sampler of reconstituted vintage rock styles. It even has a solid Top 40 candidate in "She's My Baby," a chugging rocker.

The boys still pass the vocal duties around like a jar of moonshine. Dylan, who sings the lion's share, sounds particularly

sharp and aggressive. A number of these songs ("The Devil's Been Busy," "7 Deadly Sins," "Cool Dry Place") are sloppy throw-aways, but the instrumentation is so strong and Lynne's unmistakable production touch (he co-produced with Harrison) so unerring that even the disposables sound better than they are.

The album's intensity level falls just short of nonchalant. Yet there's a mild but undeniable pleasure in listening to this quartet float up a lazy river without a you know what. (Warner Bros.)—David Hilbrand

**DYLAN  
(NOT  
DYLAN)  
WAS (NOT  
WAS): PRO-  
DUCERS TO  
THE STARS**

There are two ways to approach Bob Dylan: One is to contact his manager, the other is to record a new version of "Maggie's Farm" with Bert Parks on vocals, mail it off to Bob, and wait for the phone to ring.

For faux brothers Don and David Was, the latter approach made sense, especially since they were already playing Bert's backing band in the upcoming film *The Freshman*. Enchanted by the heartfelt tribute (and perhaps slightly influenced by Don's production of Bonnie Raitt's Grammy-winning *Nick of Time*), Dylan is now happily ensconced in the studio with the Brothers Was, laying down a new album's worth of tracks and enduring David's off-the-wall advice. (The Was lyricist was particularly dismayed when, on a song called "Handy Andy," Dylan didn't go for the obvious rhyme: Moe Bandy).

The Was brothers have been working hard to create a relaxed, informal studio atmosphere where Dylan would feel comfortable "spilling his guts." But, between sessions, Don has no problem rhapsodizing about the legend: "He's the real thing, man, and he blows everybody away. He deserves to be Dylan.

It's not some fluke thing, it's not the great man theory, it's not nostalgia for the Sixties. The guy is a pure and amazing artist."

Still, the sessions almost got started on the wrong foot. "When he sang his first vocal," says Don, "I thought, 'Aw, man, he sounds real nasal and it doesn't have that full rich tone that I was hoping for.' Fortunately, before asking him to sing it again, I tried stripping the track down to the rhythm guitar and his vocal. And, voila! It sounded like the same voice that was singing on *Another Side of Bob Dylan*. It wasn't that he hadn't sung well, it was that the snare drum and



the guitar were playing in the same tonal range where the warmth in his voice was. I thought: *That's what's been going on in these records.*"

Wanting to keep the sessions spontaneous and unpredictable, the Was Brothers brought in a different group of musicians every day—from Stevie Ray Vaughan to Sweet Pea Atkinson to Al Kooper to David Lindley to Bruce Hornsby to NRBQ. "It wasn't like a highly prepared album,"

says Don. "I worked for six months with Bonnie Raitt—she came over at least once a week and we went through songs and demoed them. But with Dylan, I could tell it was gonna be on the fly. And I figured, if you're gonna be spontaneous, you shouldn't be 60 percent spontaneous. So we booked bands and didn't tell him who was coming in every day. And then when he finally insisted on knowing, we changed the dates around. So he'd walk through the door and have no idea what was gonna hit him."

While Don kept Dylan in the dark, his own datebook proceeded to fill up for the next 12 months. Having already produced the B-52's and Iggy Pop, he's now scheduled for upcoming projects with Elton John, Bob Seger, Bonnie Raitt and the Knack. In each case, he says, the goal is to create a record that's true to the artist: "It's the same kind of approach we were talking about with Dylan and Bonnie. I don't want some album where it sounds like someone cut a Depeche Mode track and then stuck Iggy Pop's voice on top of it. The first Stooges album had no echo on it at all—you just had this guy right in your face—and hopefully this is more of the same."

And the same goes for Dylan. "I mean, what's important here?" asks Don.

"People aren't buying a Bob Dylan record to hear good guitar licks or a good organ sound or a great snare drum. They're buying it because they want some intimacy with this guy. And that's our goal: if you're riding in the car and playing the cassette, to put him in the passenger seat with you. He's your pal on the freeway."

—B.F.

**ROBERT CHRISTGAU**

Although Neil Young will never have the iconic clout of Bob Dylan, some citizens will tell you he has made better music, and except for the flannel faithful who consider *Heart of Gold* a pinnacle of American culture, most of them are mad for rock and roll. Both singer-songwriters began as folkies strumming acoustics in politically correct cafés. For Dylan, the road from folk to rock led to that vast kingdom called pop music. But once Young learned to play electric guitar, other mortal pursuits moved to the back of the bus.

Since Young's hardest-rocking moments have come with the galumphing, otherwise barely working Crazy Horse, his madder fans consider the new Crazy Horse collaboration, *Ragged Glory* (Reprise), even bigger news than *Freedom*, which in 1989 was the first Young album in ten years to achieve general renown. It certainly has more guitar on it—four of its ten cuts solo for seven, eight, ten minutes, and all are keyed to riffs that grab and hold. Rock and roll! Really. But the lyrics are barely there, and on a disc that's more than an hour long, Young's and Crazy Horse's endearingly foursquare sense of rhythm gets pretty—I believe boring is the term.

Over in the kingdom of pop, meanwhile, Bob Dylan has emitted his latest. Since the coproducer is Don Was, the man behind commercial comebacks by Bonnie Raitt and the B-52's, *Under the Red Sky* (Columbia) is said to be fit for an icon, a claim we've heard frequently over 15 years of dubious product. Thing is, Was may have brought it off—Dylan's music sounds relaxed but not lazy, which is always the trick. And not since *Planet Waves* have his lyrics embraced such simplicity—a simplicity more beguiling because most of these laments for a dying world aren't love songs, except in a cosmic sense that's rarely anything but pretentious in the land of pop.

# Dylan down the decades

**I**N JULY of 1962 the young Bob Dylan, whose first album had sold a mere 5000 copies, signed up with the Witmark publishing company. It was unheard of for a "folk-singer" to be taken on by such a prestigious firm, but Albert Grossman, Dylan's manager, perhaps more convinced of his client's writing talents than of his vocal gifts, was determined to sell the kid as a composer of material for other singers. By the time the contract ended three years later, Witmark had published 237 Dylan compositions.

That's more than half-a-dozen songs a month. The quality hardly matters — though the list includes many lyrics which continue to astonish — but the fecundity, the sense of a boy blown in from nowhere with something so pressing on his mind that he could hardly keep pace with himself, is emblematic.

Thirty years ago Robert Allen Zimmerman, later metamorphosed into Bob Dylan, was making his first appearances in the folk clubs of Greenwich Village. Next month, probably as much to his own amazement as to ours, he will be 50. Over those three decades he has defined a generation, sometimes against its will, and rewritten the rules of popular music. The 237 Witmark songs were a mere preface to the work which followed, the first shots in a creative barrage which blew away every assumption about what popular music was for and what it could be.

If you set out to write about Bob Dylan there's no point in expecting Bob Dylan to help. His character is a chimera, a contrivance so deliberate that its maintenance amounts to a special sort of honesty. It isn't just the rare and famously evasive interviews — "Well, what do you want me to say?" — but also a deep ambivalence towards those who admire him most. Dylan has had the unreasonable expectations of millions heaped on him since his early twenties. Every attempt to explain that he is just a writer, just a singer, or just, as he once insisted, "a song and dance man", has been met with injured incomprehension from those desperate for the visionary or the counter-culture guerrilla hero.

It is a mark, however strange, of how important Dylan has been and continues to be to many people. But for a writer who has moved so many merely by exploring his own psyche, such attention has often been scary. Long before John Lennon was gunned down by a dedicated admirer, Dylan was trying to work in an environment in which obsessive adulation was only inches away from full-blown, devouring, all-American mania.

Who else, for example, could have attracted the attentions of A. J. Weberman, Dylanologist and Minister of Defense of the Dylan Liberation Front, a character whose conviction that his hero had sold out led him to camp on Dylan's doorstep and spend his time hunting through the singer's dustbins in search of

"clues"? It's said that Dylan first tried to talk Weberman out of his fixation but ended up, not unreasonably, punching his head in.

"I'm not a myth to myself," Dylan said 20 years ago. But to many he approaches that condition; a myth of peculiar potency which persuades professors of literature to play hunt-the-symbol, or politicians to turn his verses into clichés, or admirers to spend years assembling illicit collections of every cough and bum note he has ever committed to tape.

The reasons can be sketched: an intelligence so receptive that Dylan often seems more like the canvas than the artist; an ability to invade the imaginative landscape of every popular musical form save jazz; a verbal dexterity verging on genius; an instinctive sense of song structure; a monstrous wit; and a determination to go his own way no matter what.

Some people will tell you, of course, that Dylan can't sing, can't play and can't write a song that is any better than monotonous. The only help you can offer — other than surgery — is to ask what they think the last 30 years of popular culture would have been like without him. It's like asking what painting would have been like without Picasso.

Dylan was born on May 24, 1941, in Duluth, Minnesota. When he was six his parents, Abraham and Beatrice, moved to nearby Hibbing where his father ran a hardware store. Photographs show the classic American main street decked out in Texaco and B. F. Goodrich signs with Buicks and Oldsmobiles cruising the blacktop. Locked away in the "north country" atop the Mesabi Iron Range, it wasn't the most exciting spot on the continent. But its advantage, if so it could be described, was that it was no different from any other small town: the incentive to get out was built in with the bricks.

By the time he was 10, Robert Zimmerman had taught himself a little functional piano and harmonica. With money earned "working on my daddy's truck" he bought himself a Silvertone guitar from Sears and Roebuck. A little later he was a juvenile greaser listening to a DJ called Gatemouth Page broadcasting Howlin' Wolf and Chuck Berry out of Little Rock, Arkansas. Beneath his picture in his high school yearbook he described his ambition succinctly: "To join Little Richard."

In the meantime he was also picking up on country music: Hank Snow, Hank Williams, Pee Wee King and His Golden West Playboys, Jimmy Rogers and the rest. But he was, it seems, picking up on something else too: the standing invitation America offers its young to reinvent themselves at will. One unsatisfactory semester at the University of Minnesota turned him into a folk-singer, a follower of the Beats, and a character called Bob Dylan. "It isn't that incredible," he said in the late seventies. "Many peo-

ple do it. People change their town, change their country. New appearance, new mannerisms."

What was a little incredible was that Dylan — "I didn't create Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan has always been here . . ." — made a habit of those transformations. Not having a trademark became his trademark. Change, he once said gnominically, is the only unchangeable thing.

By January of 1961 he was hitching from Wisconsin to New York; by 1963 his song *Blowing in the Wind* was an international number one; by 1965 he had alienated most of his original following by blasting them at the Newport folk festival with a Fender electric and surrealist songs which didn't seem to "protest" against anything much; later that year he transformed rock and roll with *Like a Rolling Stone*, the first six-minute pop song; in 1966 he forced his few peers to raise their game with *Blonde on Blonde*, an unprecedented double-album with one entire side devoted to a single song. He had just turned 25.

Recordings from that period have never been replicated, by Dylan or anyone else. The unreleased concert album taped at the Royal Albert Hall gives a flavour of the time. Dylan, plainly stoned, sounds like a dog baying at the moon while the audience yelps its disappointment. "Judasi!" shouts one who obviously believed he had bought shares in the singer. Like a *Rolling Stone*, one of the great revenge songs Dylan was composing at the time, comes crashing back as a riposte.

The pressure was telling, however. The crowds wanted the hits, the songs they were comfortable with, and lovable Bobby in his cute denim cap. What they got was a sound born, it seemed, of every piece of music ever to act on the writer's imagination. "a wild mercury sound", and an approach to lyrics which owed more to Andre Breton than Goffin and King. But the combination of creative, personal and professional strains was killing.

Depending on which theory you believe, Dylan ducked out, dried out or tried to kill himself. Officially, he suffered concussion, facial cuts and several broken vertebrae when the back wheel of his Triumph 500 motorbike locked on a road in Woodstock, New York State, in July, 1966. Such mundane horror wasn't enough for those who wanted to love him to death: he was variously reported deceased, paralysed, cryogenically frozen and/or retired.

In reality he was with the Band in a basement studio, working on a series of magnificent songs, including *I Shall Be Released*, which he chose not to release for nine years. Just to confuse the faithful further, and just as the Beatles and the Stones were trying their hands at rock-as-art with Sgt Pepper's and Satanic Majesties, Dylan put out a low-key Nashville album — "about fear of the Devil" — entitled *John Wesley Harding*. He followed it up with a

full-blown country set, *Nashville Skyline*, and the betrayal was complete: Dylan had become a redneck.

"As far as the sixties go," he said a couple of years ago, "it wasn't any big deal." In the seventies Dylan's output swung between the sublime and near-ridiculous. In 1977 his marriage finally collapsed, leaving a brood of children and an emotional mess which, typically, he turned into his best record of the decade, *Blood on the Tracks*.

His recent work has been, to put it mildly, patchy. *Oh Mercy*, released in 1989, was his last record of any real worth but these days he seems to knock out tracks in the midst of incessant touring. The aptly-named *Never-ending Tour* began in 1988 and is still going. Dylan seems now to live on the road, like a hi-tech version of his "first and last hero" Woody Guthrie, not because he needs the money but because that's the way he likes it.

The recent release of *The Bootleg Series, Volumes 1-3*, containing 58 tracks from all parts of his career, was a typical act of ingenious perversity. Here, for the first time, are decent copies of songs which some of us once spent small fortunes acquiring from the bootleggers. Partly it's throwaway stuff, but partly — *Blind Willie McTell* is the obvious example — it's a group of songs as good as anything Dylan has ever done. Yet he chose — couldn't be bothered? — not to release them at the time of recording. It bespeaks a creative confidence, an attitude to his own talent, no different from that of the amazing boy with the Witmark contract.

Dylan occupies an area of American culture which he has made his own. His work is comprehensible in any tradition you care to name. Blues, rock and roll, folk, country — it makes sense in each genre. Having absorbed every aspect of popular music — with a little help from his old friends Rimbaud, Blake, Kerouac, Robert Johnson, Guthrie, Dante and the authors of the Scriptures — he has turned sources into a well-spring.

Don't talk of him in terms of literature. His "poems" aren't poems and his novel, *Tarantula*, would never have been published under the name Zimmerman (the follow-up, *Ho Chi Minh in Harlem*, never did appear.) His achievement is of a different order. It has never been a matter of literature, or politics, or messages. In reinventing himself over and over again — "If I'd paid attention to what others were saying, the heart inside me would have died" — runs the best song not on *Blood on the Tracks* — he reinvented America.

IAN BELL

## Feeling good and feeling funky

A LOT of music-critickin' types seem to be getting jolly steamed up over Bob Dylan's new compilation LP, *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3* (Columbia). "Seminal!" they cry. "Better than Shakespeare and James Joyce! Torch the parking meters! To live outside the law you must be better looking and more enigmatic than Maurice Gibb, honest! And dig the searing fretwork on lead axe, plus those driving bass excursions!"

Us kick-ass rock dudes see it differently, of course.

We're waiting for the definitive collection of work by a historical force who is still directly relevant to the here and now. Next month we will be rewarded with a compilation entitled *Startime*, on Polydor.

Four CDs or four cassettes. Covering nigh on 40 years of feeling good and feeling funky, and getting up and getting on down and getting on the good foot, and saying pleasepleaseplease, and coming out in a cold sweat in hot pants, and making like a sex machine. James Brown versus Bob Dylan: no contest. Unh!



DAVID BELCHER

"BOB DYLAN: he should've died in that motorbike smash he had in 1966. That way, the dude would've lived a lot longer." So opines reader Rameses V. Succotash (presumably a pseudonym). And who am I to argue?

The gnomic Mr Succotash kindly wrote in to support me in my recent assertion that rock-critickin' folk are currently overstating Dylan's case. Me and him are in agreement that yup. His Bobness's new official bootleg album has some nice stuff on it, but nope, the old goat is no longer at the cutting edge. Sure, he introduced allegory to pop, but a moment's reflection and a few plays of *The Original Singles Collection* will prove that Hank Williams was more lastingly innovative.

Moreover, Hank Williams had the will and foresight not to hang around till his muse had gone runny. It's thus my contention that the godfather of American dirty realism remains more relevant now, 40 years on, than Bob Dylan. Anybody out there want to make something of it? There's a prize if you do.

One copy of the aforementioned definitive Williams compilation will be awarded to the writer of the best 20-word argument in support of Hank's enduring ascendancy. Dylan-lovers can of course attempt to make a 20-word case for their hero, but even if they sway me, the prize will remain the same.

Entries, on postcards only, to *David Belcher's Leopardskin Pillbox Stetson*, 195 Albion Street, Glasgow, G1 1QP, by April 30 (NB any entry which quotes Dylan lyrics will automatically be disqualified).

## Not Dylan

April 17.

Sir.— I am writing for two purposes: one of praise and one of condemnation.

First, I am delighted that the Herald has become so readily available in London. It makes exile somewhat easier to bear.

Secondly, though, I am becoming increasingly irritated by David Belcher's repeated reference to Bob Dylan as "Dyl". I thought it was cheap the first time I read it (1989?) and find the repeated use of it most objectionable. One would have thought that Mr Belcher, of all people, would be sensitive to shortened surnames.

Andrew Muir,  
24 Inglethorpe Street,  
Fulham,  
London.

DANG, but this Bob Dylan stuff is getting out of hand. Anonymous loons quoting bits of *Masters Of War* at me over the phone and then comparing Dylan to Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce. Badly written missives from Fife telling me to "wise up and stop messing with the big boys."

And a letter to the Herald's editor, published in this paper on Saturday, from some bloated tax-exile in Fulham — *Third-division Fulham! Pah!* — saying I've got to stop shortening ol' Bob's monicker to Dyl otherwise the same thing'll happen to me. Crivvens, is there anything so very wrong with being called David Bel?

But the big question is this: in the current post-house era who needs to listen to Dyl singing about "wiggling" "it" when we can laud and analyse, as well as dance the alienation waltz to, a musico-literary giant of our own?

Step forward, Mark E. Smith. Smith's band, the Fall, have a new album out on Cog Sinister, called *Shift-Work*. Like the last Fall LP, *Extricate*, it's an essential purchase.

## False trail for Dylan hunters

DYLAN fans en route to the Ice Bowl to see the "grizzled bard" almost caused a pile up outside a Dundonald pub.

Traffic was brought to a standstill at the junction of the Newtownards Road and Comber Road by sharp-eyed Bob-spotters.

For there at the roadside were two huge stretch limousines — complete with New Jersey number plates and darkened windows.

Surely, thought concert-goers, that must be their hero's entourage quaffing a few quick brews before taking the stage.

Indeed several Dylan lovers even got out of their cars and nipped



in to the Elk Inn to check it out for themselves.

They were disappointed.

For there was no sign of "His Bobness" as he is known.

In fact the huge US cars had been driven to the pub by several sons of local book-maker Barney Eastwood.

The brothers had decided to get into the spirit of things for Dylan's first Belfast

concert in more than 25 years.

Elk Inn manager Mark Russell says the stunt certainly turned a few heads on Wednesday night.

"The limos caused a bit of a traffic jam as many people jumped to the conclusion that Dylan had dropped in for a pint," says Mark.

"We've had our fair share of celebrities here in our time, but so far Dylan has not darkened our doors."

## Raise your hats to the remarkable Bob Dylan

"ALLOW me to do this special song for you," growled Bob Dylan, an hour into his show at Dundonald Ice Bowl last night.

The choice was "Tupelo Honey" and, without any dramatic build up, the song's composer, Van Morrison, quietly joined Dylan.

The appearance of Van the Man on Dylan's stage, repeating a teaming up of the two singers at the Slane festival in the mid-80s, had been hinted at.

When it actually happened, it was a remarkable moment in what was, for the most part, quite a remarkable concert.

Around 3,500 were at Dundonald to witness Dylan's first visit here since 1966 and were rewarded with a 100-minute show which was a far travelled excursion through his long career.

It was always going to be impossible to choose a set pleasing all the 20, 30 and 40-somethings there.

(Concert-goers at the foot of the stage constantly shouted out what they wanted to hear, though it's doubtful if "The Sash" was ever among Dylan's repertoire!). But the balance between old and new seemed just right.

Following an acoustic set by Graham Parker, Dylan, wearing his distinctive battered cream hat, kicked off with three standards in a row — "Lay Lady Lay", "All Along The Watchtower" (in an almost U2 fashion) and "Memphis Blues Again".

After furtive gesturing between one of the guitarists and back stage staff, initial sound difficulties were sorted out early.

With an exaggerated removal of his electric guitar, Dylan returned to his acoustic roots with a four-song digression. "A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall" was the best of the bunch (twice Dylan tipped his hat in recognition of the audience's appreciation), though this section became slightly indulgent.

It was back to the electric set with a vengeance with the sharp-edged "Everything Is Broken", off the 1989 album "Oh Mercy".

The singer's tight four-piece band, though consistently strong, were at their best here, lending a dynamic and gutsy R&B feel to the music.

The set, on the whole, was upbeat. Even folksy classics like "Blowin' In The Wind" were strident and punchy and, typically, all the standards, including "Like A Rolling Stone", were reworked.

Dylan took his leave with an excellent "Maggie's Farm". Taking off his harmonica, it was obvious he wasn't going to return for an encore.

**Gwyneth Jones**

## THE TUNES, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

**B**ob Dylan is popping up in the most unlikely places. First he coauthors "The Rest Ain't Important" with pop songwriter **Glenn Ballard**, slated to be cut by **Was (Not Was)** vocalists **Sweet**

**Pea Atkinson** and **Sir Harry Bowens**. Then Dylan's most recent producers, who happen to be **David** and **Don Was**, write a new song with Dylan. "Shirley Tempie Doesn't Live Here Anymore," intended for **Paula Abdul**. (Abdul ended up passing on it.) Dylan then lends his pipes to **Brian Wilson's** upcoming album, joining a backup chorus

that includes **Abdul**, **Belinda Carlisle**, and **Glen Campbell**. Are you still with us? Well, Dylan has also just collaborated with **Michael Bolton** on a tune for the follow-up to Bolton's 1988 multi-platinum *Soul Provider*. Written in two



DYLAN: Bob on the tracks

days at Dylan's California home, "Steel Bars" will appear on Bolton's new LP *Time, Love & Tenderness*. Bolton reports that the pop bard, who called him out of the blue, was an enthusiastic partner. "He just kept coming up with all these great lines," he says. Still to come: Dylan teaming with **Madonna** for "Just Like a Virgin."

—Fred Goodman

HERE IS A BLUEPRINT FOR A REVIEW OF ANY **Bob Dylan** album: If you want to be favorable, say it's the best thing he's done since 1975's *Blood on the Tracks*. If you're trying to be negative, say it's the worst thing he's done since his motorcycle accident or since he started religion-hopping in the late seventies and lost his way.

In the economy of genius, an artist has only so much creative energy to spend over a lifetime. Dylan decided to blow all his pesos early on, and he should be given some credit for that. This is not to say that Dylan deserves a free ride—his trash is as trashy as it gets—but critics have dwelled long enough on his glorious past in these uninspired times.

This time around, with *Under the Red Sky* (Columbia), one of Dylan's producers is Don Was, who delivered Bonnie Raitt's breakthrough *Nick of Time*. But fellow Was (Not Was) member David Was and Jack Frost share production credits, and the album suffers from having too many chiefs *and* too many Indians: The guest artists range from the late Stevie Ray Vaughan to George Harrison, from Slash to Bruce Hornsby—and any time too many notable names sit in, an album ends up all over the place. The title sounds like something U2 would do. The rest is hopelessly cute. Should Dylan be writing or singing songs called "Wiggle Wiggle" and "Handy Dandy"? Should this album be dedicated to Gabby Goo Goo?

The title track has a slight rhythm-and-blues ring to it that would sound good with anything but Dylan's nasal voice. Another problem with "Under the Red Sky" is that its lyrics read like a naïve and treacly fable. "Unbelievable" is straightforward but sloppily written, and Dylan falls back on rhymes like "They said it was the land of milk and honey/ Now they say it's the land of money."

Even the worst Dylan albums—and *Under the Red Sky* is up there—have one perfect, beautiful song to connect with. Here, the closest Dylan gets is "2 x 2," which benefits from David Crosby's harmonies. Maybe *Under the Red Sky* will start to make sense in a few years. Last year's *Oh Mercy* stands as a reminder that Bob Dylan is still capable of coming out with decent albums, but *Under the Red Sky* is not one of them.



DAVID HINCKLEY

## Here's a bootleg tape worthy of Wilburys

**S**OME NICE TOUCHES OF INTRIGUE LURK ON the *Traveling Wilburys* bootleg tape that has been circulating alongside the official "Vol. III" (actually, their second album), which didn't match Vol. I, but also didn't deserve to disappear as fast as it did.

The bootleg primarily features rougher versions of the album tracks, meaning Jeff Lynne's production sheen hasn't been applied. Generally, that helps; the songs have a more acoustic feel and the lyrics, a Wilbury forte, are better emphasized.

The boot also includes "Runaway," issued as a B-side in England and faithful to the original by **Del Shannon**—who, before he died, had been discussed as a possible replacement Wilbury after **Roy Orbison's** death and before his own. Lynne sings and the famous melotron bridge sounds less like whistling.

And then there are two unreleased tracks, a **Bob Dylan** and a **George Harrison**. Dylan has written better, but this one still has the nice lines the Wilburys seem to

bring out of him: "Standing on the White Cliffs of Dover / looking out into space / Have a channel to cross over / another dream to chase."

Harrison's catchy, infectious "Maxine," on the other hand, should have made the record. George's melodic, jangly guitar tunes ("Handle With Care") provided the perfect balance for the first album and



**WE'LL MISS HIM:** The late Bill Haley won't make the reunion tour.

are precisely what is missing from the second, which makes the omission of "Maxine" a real puzzle.

The sound quality on the boot is awful, but it comes with a romantic story: that the Wilburys deliberately leaked it. Well, well.

YELLOW



- BACKSTAGE PASS
- NO ONSTAGE ACCESS
  - NO DRESSING ROOMS UNLESS ESCORTED BY LAMINATE

BAR.

BLACK



WORKING PERSONNEL

- ACCESS AS NECESSARY

11-30



RECD

OPENING ACT.

- OPENING ACT DRESSING ROOM ONLY
- NO ONSTAGE AT ANY TIME



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## What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted?

A 1989 Review Of OH MERCY

By I. G. Roberts

*What next?* That was the question we used to ask ourselves during the sixties. Could Dylan, like The Beatles, continue to raise standards: not just by making better records but by actually extending the boundaries and expectations of popular song? Unflinching, he did, at the same time almost creating the impression that "He was never known to make a foolish move."

In the seventies, with The Beatles gone and the long, swinging summer fading fast into a bleak midwinter of discontent, time passed slowly up there in the mountains while Country Bob watched the river flow. *What next?* We asked, in the hope that there would be at least something, but also with resignation to the feeling that Dylan's best days were probably behind him. Then, half-way through the decade, it started to happen again and between 1974 - 1978 four outstanding albums were delivered. Of these, *Blood On The Tracks* was widely considered - even by listeners who weren't Dylan fans - to be an unqualified masterpiece. *What next?* was again a question to which Dylan provided exciting and unpredictable answers.

However, in the ensuing ten years 1979-89, the answers at first seemed bizarre and, to some, unacceptable. If Dylan's answer was fundamentalist Christianity, then many listeners were not even prepared to ask the question. Although many clues had been signalled down the line, few of even the most devoted Dylan loyalists found it easy to reconcile themselves to that holy-rolling slow train.

*What next?* They asked, with a growing sense of dread as to how they might justify Dylan's next alarming point of departure. But between 1983-85 things started to look up with the release of genuinely strong albums which were relatively unfettered from the religious brand of evangelism. Guarded optimism started to inform that question *What next?* Subsequently, though, there was only the most desultory output from Dylan; giving rise to the sigh of disappointment and the shake of the head: *What next?*

To make matters worse, many of Dylan's aging contemporaries - people like Neil Young, Robbie Robertson, Lou Reed, The Stones, George Harrison, Paul McCartney, Uncle Len Cohen, even Brian Wilson and all - were coming back, or were rumoured to be, with pretty powerful, critically acclaimed works; whilst the likes of Randy Newman, Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello continued to maintain impressively consistent track records. Not to mention the appearance of Tracy Chapman. Whither Dylan?

Well, he was still out "on the road/Headin' for another joint", playing more concerts than all of the above (except Young) put together. The excellent Mr. Bauldie can tell us the exact and extraordinary number. But Dylan's growing compulsion to tour wasn't always matched by an increased sense of what, for want of a better term, could be called 'professionalism'. Audiences who have braved dogmatic, Elmer Gantry-style revivalist concerts have also suffered truncated sets characterized by rushed, cursory renditions of classic songs performed by a distant, irascible Dylan glimpsed through the gloom of darkened stages. Why was he bothering? A million faces at his feet and all he's seeing are dark eyes....

For me, this culminated at the N.E.C., Birmingham in 1987, with one of the worst live performances I've seen by any musician, certainly the most disappointing I've ever witnessed by an artist of Dylan's stature. After Petty and McGuinn had set the stage for a great night, a grim faced Dylan shambled on and off, having, in just about an hour, vandalised his back catalogue in what seemed to me to be a contemptible,

unforgivable manner (and yes, I have read good reviews of this particular date and spoken to people who apparently enjoyed it; but to these ears, only *Tomorrow Is A Long Time* escaped the ransacking). That night on the journey home, my friends and I wondered about those people at Birmingham who'd never seen Dylan before: what must they have gone away thinking?

'Unforgivable', I said, but the combination of a steady flow of good, sometimes great bootleg material, The Wilburys and the Manchester convention in '88 boosted morale. The video footage from Toronto '79 and the Letterman Show '84 made us recall the genius kicking his way through the wreckage of Birmingham '87. But it was still with a sense of trepidation that we returned to the N.E.C. in '89. Judging by John Bauldie's *Telegraph* diary of the latter stages of this tour, we were lucky.

The first half of the set was good, very good. The primal rock & roll attack of the band recalled the Letterman Show and G.E. Smith - all golden locks and blazing chords - added a welcome energy and charisma to the show. Then, a couple of verses into *Mr Tambourine Man*, Dylan appeared to slip into neutral.

At one point, as he wandered to the back of the stage, I thought he might just disappear into the wings, or even collapse. Smith then approached him and seemed to yap something into his ear. Dylan dredged himself through the gears and into overdrive. He played an effective guitar lead part followed by one of the most haunting harmonica solos I've heard from him (very reminiscent of the soaring flurry of notes on the same song way back in '66, Manchester). From that point on, it became a great concert. The songs were pretty much the usual canon, but recharged. *Like A Rolling Stone*, in particular, came back into focus, after so many grudging renditions, as a terrific, vital live number.

Like I say, we were lucky this time. According to Bauldie, the Dylan persona on too many subsequent gigs this year, has been dogged by indifference, unpredictability, eccentricity and downright paranoia. *What next?* It can seem to open up an eerie perspective. In his article *Bob Dylan & Death* in *Telegraph* 31, Paul Williams quotes Dylan's '88 reading of his old *Man Of Constant Sorrow*:

*I'm bound to ride that open highway  
I have no friend to help me now.*

What drives Dylan on? Surely not the money or fame. Perhaps now just a kind of empty restlessness to keep on the move to who knows where.

And so to the new album. After a clutch of fine new songs on the hugely enjoyable Traveling Wilburys project, *Oh Mercy* comes out of the blue - or should we say, out of the blues - a profoundly downbeat record in sharp contrast to the high-octane charge of the best gigs on the tour. Its songs look back from a fractured, dislocated present over an increasingly spectral past, and towards a foreboding future approached more with manifesto than hope. It is regaled by uniformly ecstatic reviews, most of them promoting this new album as Dylan's best for many years, his best since *Blood On The Tracks*.....

Let's see, then, what we're comparing *Oh Mercy* to - in terms of Dylan's last ten years and beyond. "Best album since *Blood On The Tracks*"? For a start, we have to consider the rich melodies, filmic narratives and cohesive musical texture of *Desire*. Then there is the tremendous poetic edifice represented by *Street Legal*, the bridge between Dylan's divorce and his deep Christian baptism. (An album all awash with a "wild mercury sound" and, to my mind, much closer to *Blonde On Blonde* than Dylan's own inscrutable comparison, the lamentable *Shot Of Love*.) There's *Infidels*, featuring the great *Jokerman*, a collection reinforced by a powerful, if rather unadventurous, rock sensibility. Then there is *Slow Train Coming*, a strong album by any standard, albeit confused by its uncompromisingly direct 'biblical message'. And then there is *Saved*,

the most villified of all Dylan's records, but as far as I'm concerned a great gospel album, in the same way that *Nashville Skyline* is a great country album, and dignified by one of Dylan's best-ever recorded performances (*Pressing On*).

But most significantly, in terms of the eighties, perhaps, there's *Empire Burlesque* which, despite its rather glossy production, is a strong, soulful album featuring the sharpest Dylan vocals of the last five years. Shot through with lyrical ambiguity, this collection finds Dylan torn between moving on, regretfully leaving someone or something behind, or staying in limbo of faith-in-crisis. There are tantalising, and, - as it turned out - unfulfilled hints of him getting his act together:

*Look out across the fields, see me returning....*

*(When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky)*

*From now on I'll be busy...I'm tired of this bag of tricks*

*(Seeing The Real You At Last)*

At times, as in *What Was It You Wanted* and *Shooting Star* from the latest album, Dylan seems to be engaged in soliloquies, or rather broken, hidden dialogues with his God (a God which sometimes coalesces with his Goddess figure as on *Street Legal*). Just who is talking to whom, for instance, in *Something's Burning Baby?* And what is burning? One thing is for sure: Dylan still recognises chaos and the questions it hurls at him; he can still *feel it in the wind and it's upside-down*. But the general tone of *Empire Burlesque* is 'up' and active, whereas *Oh Mercy* is dragged down by its all pervasive entropic world-weariness.

At this point I think we need to step to one side and test our sense of perspective by looking not only at what is being called a new Dylan 'classic, but at his less successful output over the last decade.

As I've tried to show above, I believe Dylan has recorded much of real value since *Blood On The Tracks*, but even those of us who would be happy to hear him singing the alphabet must surely attempt to maintain some critical objectivity. We are aware of the tendency in passing Dylan observers to dismiss his eighties' work as a fatal mixture of shallow religiosity and played out 'shadow of his former self' twaddle. We should also be aware of the countervailing tendency of the faithful, who are often capable of constructing double-think apologies to justify what many regard as Dylan's dullest decade.

To my mind, Dylan's output since *Empire Burlesque* - two studio albums and two live sets (one workmanlike, the other a lacklustre collaboration with The Grateful Dead) is an indifferent effort by any rule of thumb; but particularly nondescript in the context of an artist who, in his time, has delivered at least half a dozen cast-iron classics. I regard *Shot Of Love* from 1981 as no better. However, the more zealous of the faithful have bent over backwards in past issues of *The Telegraph* to invest these albums with a significance befitting Dylan's supposedly superhuman status.

It happens with Shakespeare too, of course. Even the silliest comedies, most turgid histories and more forgettable sonnets have their diehard defenders who really can't seem to see the woods for the trees. Cannot we accept that Shakespeare was a monumentally great artist who nonetheless had his off days? For him to be this great, do we have to say that all thirty-nine plays are masterpieces as well as all one hundred

and fifty-odd sonnets? In agreeing that Hamlet is probably the greatest play ever written, do we also have to say that all of it is great: does it not contain great slabs of entangled abstruse digression that most directors judiciously edit out?

So yes, *Knocked Out Loaded* and *Down In The Groove* are quite pleasant collections in the same way that *Self Portrait* and *Dylan* are pleasant. Especially after a few years have elapsed and increased the distance between how we listen to these albums now and how we were let down in our original expectations of them. They deserve to be damned with faint praise.

And, yes, *Brownsville Girl*, is a big song; an attractively elliptical, broken, narrative of Dylan on-the-road. A tale of romance and betrayal, laced with flashes of wit and teasing references to films he's seen, dreamt, actually made or starred in. *Joey* is a big (i.e. long) song too: but does that mean, ipso facto, that we have to mention them in the same breath with the vastly superior epics like *Desolation Row* and *Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands*?

And yes, *Every Grain Of Sand* does have a finely honed lyric and stately harmonica breaks. But does its over sentimental melody, diluted by its tinkling guitar arpeggio and soulless synthesiser, enhance or damage its potential to stand as a great song?

And *Lenny Bruce*? Frankly, it amazes me how so many afficiendoes can rate the plodding, maudlin inanities of this hamfisted eulogy so highly ("never cut off any babies' heads....the brother you never had" Come on, now!)

We should be able to handle the fact of poor Dylan songs and weak Dylan albums safely in the knowledge that there are so few of them.

*Oh Mercy* is certainly not a weak album. I don't know yet whether it is a great one. It probably would be if it included the acoustic version of *Blind Willie Mctell*, the spirit of which seems to hang over the sad, sultry, almost claustrophobic atmosphere of these songs, most notably in *Man In The Long Black Coat*.

(Incidentally, just how Dylan can release inconsequential fillers like *Maybe Someday* and *Had A Dream About You Baby* and yet leave one of his greatest ever songs on the studio shelf is beyond me. But then, this is the man who has strewn the cutting room floor with the likes of *Lay Down Your Weary Tune*, *She's Your Lover Now*, *Abandoned Love*, *Up To Me* and *Caribbean Wind* - to name but five.....)

The euphoric reception of *Oh Mercy* tended to make me suspicious: remember the 'we've got Dylan back' hyperbole that greeted *New Morning* all those years ago? Nevertheless, with so much smoke one has to assume there is a fire. *Oh Mercy*, though, is no brilliant blaze. Rather, it glows and smoulders like the dying embers of some great bonfire....

The first thing to strike me was that I couldn't recall ever hearing such a sad album. Some of Dylan's singing on tracks like *Ring Them Bells* and *What Was It You Wanted?* has about it a pathos even beyond that of *Blood On The Tracks*. He's said that he can't really understand how people can enjoy that album. But *Blood* has its moments of: joy, wit and soaring vocals to leaven its pain and spite. How does one 'enjoy' this latest record? The reviewers, it seemed to me, missed the broken-hearted vacuum at the centre....'just in time for the nineties.....belated classic.....Daniel Lanois this...the Neville Brothers that....blah, blah.'

Several people have said to me that *Oh Mercy* sounds like Dire Straits (which is ironic, as Knopfler isn't actually involved this time). There may be something in that but we should remember that Dire Straits wouldn't sound like Dire Straits but for Bob Dylan. Someone else, listening to *Ring Them Bells*, asked if Dylan had been taking singing lessons from Keith Richards....

The vocal range employed by Dylan - mercifully declining the reinforcement of *The Gospel Girls* - is decidedly low register. Perhaps his range is more limited these days. However, the low-key songs and the subtle production might not have lent themselves to much more than Dylan's basement growl (so "bang the drums slowly and play the fife lowly").

The forward propulsion of guitars and percussion generated by the opening track *Political World* and picked up by the R&B energy of the third, *Everything Is Broken*, is not sustained. In terms of tempo, the album is lop-sided: the only two upbeat songs left behind halfway through side one.

Even the verve of these is belied by their subject matter: both are litanies of a world grinding into entropic decline. The Oxford Dictionary defines entropy as 'the irreversible tendency of a system, including the universe, towards increasing disorder and inertness; also, the final state predictable from this tendency.' Recognition of this process looms large in twentieth century American literature, and I feel it is evident in much of Dylan's work too, never more so than in the exposed, raw heart of *Oh Mercy*. Even its sweetest (and weakest) song, the countrified *Where Teardrops Fall*, runs out of steam, resorting to that most hackneyed of clichés: "Roses are red, violets are blue" before ending significantly with "The time is beginning to crawl".

The hymnal *Ring Them Bells* - for my money one of Dylan's simplest and most beautiful songs in a very long time - has been compared to *Chimes Of Freedom*, but it is also closely related to *Father Of Night* and *When He Returns*. Struggling to reconcile the elements of humanism, a love of God and the dogma variously present in those three songs, *Ring Them Bells* is a poignant testament to a world for which religion may not necessarily be the ultimate consolation.

Dylan still seems to believe in "the few who will judge the many" but there is a lot less conviction and righteousness when he sings that line here. The song is doubly eloquent as a result. Rather than using actual bells, Lanois, here as elsewhere, allows Dylan's piano and the deceptively simple playing and instrumentation to set up its own resonances.

On *Man In The Long Black Coat*, Lanois compliments a Dylan harmonica of yore with an incandescent atmosphere conjured by 6 & 12 string acoustic guitars, dobro, cellos and keyboard. Complete with the sound of crickets and Dylan's best deep south drawl, an indeterminate tropical heat haze forms the backdrop for one of Dylan's most disillusioned, bewildered laments for the woman who left him "without even a note". Dylan himself, of course, has often sported a long black coat, and the troubled ambiguity of this symbolism takes up the previous songs' concern with a world "breaking down the distance between right and wrong". The preacher in *Long Black Coat* warns that:

*Every Man's conscience is vile and depraved  
You cannot depend on it to be your guide  
When it's you who has to keep it satisfied*

This dreadful dilemma that Dylan sees as part of the human condition is a recurrent spectre in his work, sometimes almost bordering on misanthropy:

*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*)

*Power and greed and corruptible seed  
seem to be all that there is*

(*Blind Willie McTell*)

And so side one ends with Dylan gazing at a world in which "People don't live or die/People just float". It's a disturbing image, which the next song, with its slow penumbral swirl of electronics, echoes musically. In *Most Of The Time*, Dylan drags himself back up to the sticking post, chanting a mantra of self-belief:

*I can survive and I can endure  
And I don't even think about her  
....Most Of The Time.....*

That inexorable qualification at the end of each verse invests the song with a transcendent integrity, without which it would merely be a weird, rather magnificent gem. Instead it's the third successive track on the album to merit tentative application of the term 'great'.

Electric guitars clanging like chains in some black attic give way to *What Good Am I?* and acoustic guitars reminiscent of *Blood On The Tracks*. Superficially, however, this song would have more in common with *Saved* but for a more existentialist examination by Dylan of his responsibilities. Framed by steady organ chords cleverly counterpointing his meandering piano, the lyric verges on the self-immolatory but is opened out by a genuine, profoundly troubled sense of doubt:

*If my hands are tied  
Must I not wonder within  
Who tied them and why  
And where must I have been?*

The self absorption of these first two tracks on side two leads Dylan to brake slightly and look out of the window at the "whole lot of people suffering tonight from the disease of conceit". 'Suffering' is the key word here - and not one usually associated with conceited people. Despite this interesting juxtaposition, the lyric isn't quite as concise or pointed as most of the others and, although the music has a brooding resonance, *Disease Of Conceit* is one of the two least effective songs on the collection. (The other is *Where Teardrops Fall*.)

*What Was It You Wanted* has at its core an emptiness that makes me wonder if Dylan will ever record again. The world-weariness is almost overwhelming as the man who has been asked more questions in his time than anyone should have to answer, turns it all back on journalists, traitors, God maybe, and perhaps Sara. So many years after, the divorce still cuts him deep. This is my interpretation and I feel intrusive using the name and mentioning the split, but several of these songs - as well as the Wilburys' *Congratulations* - seem to ache like old scars. The pain hurts hard, although on *Most Of The Time* Dylan is ready to accept his part of the blame:

*....Most of the time...  
I can't even be sure  
If she was ever really with me  
Or I was really with her*

He also reasserts his 'acceptance of chaos' in *Most Of The Time*, stating that he "ain't afraid of confusion no matter how thick". However, on *What Was It You Wanted?* there's a tragic bewilderment underlying the mordant humour: listen to how he sings "Why do you want it?/Who are you anyway? Brilliant, razor-sharp harmonica, a renegade from *John Wesley Harding*, slices through the oppressive pall of enervation and convinces me that this another great track.

The closer is a lovely tune with Dylan's voice almost 'up'. The deceptively optimistic roll of *Shooting Star* seems to save the album from its entropic destiny of 'inertness'. Until, that is, lines about a "last firetruck from hell" and a "last sermon on the mount" and a "last radio playing" start to register. As with *Empire Burlesque*, there's an ambiguity here as to whether the shooting star may be God or Dylan himself. This is no arrogant or blasphemous delusion of grandeur: we are talking of the shooting star

as God's presence in the world, in mankind and in Dylan; and we are talking of the present condition of Dylan's faith in that concept. If this is a signpost-song then it is not easy to see where it is pointing - forwards, backwards, to a crossroads or a dead-end. Other signpost-songs like *It Ain't Me Babe*, *It's All Over Now*, *Baby Blue*, *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight* and *Where Are You Tonight?* offered comparatively clear directions. But *Dark Eyes* for instance, did not signal a return to acoustic guitar and harmonica - let alone a rebirth of creative life. It merely pointed to a long road of uninspired recordings and erratic concerts...

Presumably Dylan embarked on his latest tour after finishing *Oh Mercy*, and by now will probably have seen a million more faces at his feet, their dark eyes straining at his darkened stages. If the rumours of booze and drugs are true, then it can seem as if he's almost hellbent on driving ninety miles an hour down a dead end street.

Someone else's misery, especially if it seems to incorporate a death-wish, can provide a morbid, but glamorously vicarious, thrill to those of us inhabiting our more localised, prosaic struggles through life.

Bob Dylan is now forty eight years old. He's been world-famous for at least half that time. Fame itself is cheap, but Dylan's troubles - and his joys - have not merely been a matter of celebrity. His hundreds of songs have not simply specified his own experience but have universalised our understanding of the human condition. That is what makes for a great artist.

Dylan has lived a unique life, discharging his peculiar artistic responsibilities with more integrity and regularity than most. But *Oh Mercy* does sound like the work of one who has seen it all and probably doesn't want to see it again.

*What next?* Who knows? What does become of the broken-hearted?



Homer, the slut

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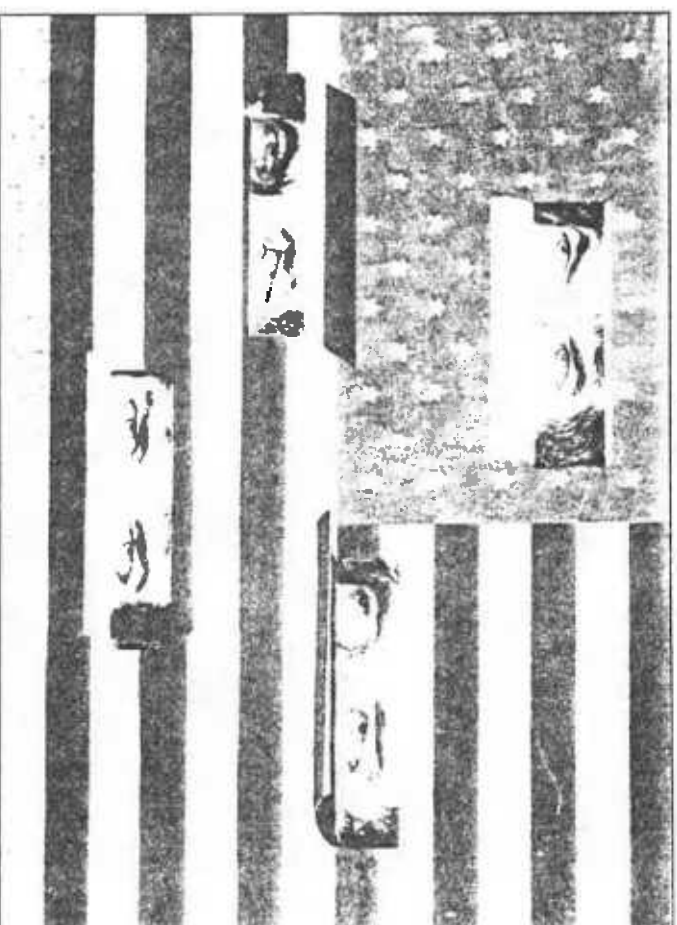
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# MONA LISA MUSTA HAD THE HIGHWAY BLUES . . .

A visual appreciation of Bob Dylan,  
the man and his music



© Ray Keats

## 6th April - 27th April

### STOCKPORT ART GALLERY

Wellington Road South  
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# OH MERCY, BEST EVER ALBUM ?

By Mark Carter

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Interesting to see you pick up on me calling Oh Mercy Dylan's best album. Well, it's been over a year now, and I still haven't changed my opinion.

Why should I consider it his best album? Difficult to explain, really. Certainly there have been better albums lyrically (everything from 1974-78 for a start), but the lyrics on Oh Mercy seem so perfect. Not excessive, but tight and packed with so much imagery. It seems to me that Dylan has condensed each song down from a much longer blueprint, until what we have left is the true essence, where every line has meaning and nothing is superfluous.

Now, whether you consider a line like "roses are red, violets are blue" to be a cop-out or not depends on how you view the album as a whole. Because, looking beyond the lyrics, each song conveys it's own set of images, partly due to the album's whole production, but mainly through the atmosphere of each song. So, for instance, in What Good am I?, I see Dylan alone, brooding, sitting in some desolate place with the black sky (or, maybe red) threatening thunder and/or apocalypse. Also, listen to that dull beat behind the music of that particular track - that's Dylan's heart beating, for sure. And why shouldn't we hear it? On this song, of all songs, Dylan stands exposed, with all defences down, allowing us to see just a little bit of what makes his heart beat.

Remember the '77 Playboy interview when Dylan, bogged down with editing Renaldo And Clara, refers to some footsteps on the soundtrack as Renaldo's heart beating, and goes on to mention Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart? Well, there you go. Twelve years later, his heart is still telling tales on him.

With Man In The Long Black Coat, I see a whole movie going on there, not just in the images Dylan gives us within the lyrics but also what's going on between the verses. The images that Dylan only hints at. The man in the black coat is probably Death, or a servant of Death, at the least. He isn't mentioned as having a white horse, as is Death in the Book Of Revelations, But I'll bet he has. As does Clint Eastwood's murdered Preacher in Pale Rider, who comes back upon a white horse as Death incarnate to take revenge....wearing a long black coat. Don't laugh, not all Clint Eastwood's western movies were of the spaghetti type. In fact, his 1976 movie The Outlaw Josie Wales is considered by many, myself included, to be one of the best Westerns of all time.<sup>1</sup>

While it's difficult to fault the production on the album (particularly on Long Black Coat, What Good Am I?, Disease Of Conceit and Ring Them Bells - another terrific song), the other truly great thing about Oh Mercy, and possibly the one factor that tips the scales in favour of this being my all time classic Dylan album, is Dylan's voice. He's at last lost that whiney quality that has dogged most of his albums since Empire Burlesque, and now sounds exactly how a 49 years old guy who's been everywhere, done everything, taken everything and played several thousand live dates in his life so far should sound. He hinted at this voice on certain cuts on Down In The Groove, most notably Shenandoah, but it was Oh Mercy that really caught his stage voice, as Dylan himself has commented.

It's the same voice that I find somewhat missing on Under The Red Sky, except for certain tracks, and I wish certain producers wouldn't constantly strive to capture that infamous Dylan "nasal whine" all the time, because he doesn't really sing like that at all. Failing that, I wish Dylan would have the guts to stand up to those so-called experts, and stick out for what he wants.

So, there we have it, then. Maybe I've come some way in trying to explain why I consider Oh Mercy to be his greatest album (for me), or maybe I haven't. Maybe I just like it so much because Knocked Out Loaded, the Hearts Of Fire soundtrack and Down In The Groove all hinted that Dylan's genius had left him, and Oh Mercy proved that it most certainly hadn't. Maybe, but I doubt it's that simple.

I doubt he'll ever produce anything better, but I'm always hopeful.

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<sup>1</sup> I wouldn't laugh, Mark. Remember I wrote of Pale Rider in Issue One; in addition I like The Outlaw Josie Wales very much. (Mind you, I like the spaghetti ones too !)

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ROCK/POP RECORDINGS

IF NOT FOR YOU



**Oh Mercy:** Bob Dylan  
**Columbia CK-45281, CD; ADD; 39:00.**  
 Sound: B+ Performance: B+

It's hard to tell: Are the words "Oh Mercy" a world-weary sigh or a plea for forgiveness? I have to lean toward the former, since this is Dylan's darkest, starkest album since back in the days of mono. *Oh Mercy* is so stripped-down it makes *Nebraska* sound like a Phil Spector production. Yet there is indeed a cry for mercy here too—not from his audience, whom Dylan characteristically chides in "What Was It You Wanted," but from God (which I'm pretty sure Dylan spells with a capital G). *Oh Mercy* by no means harks back to Bobby's quasi-Christian stage—there's no proselytizing here—but it clearly declares that everything is pretty screwed up so we

probably shouldn't close off any options, no matter how abstract.

He sums up this latest stance in two songs, "Political World" and "Everything Is Broken." These are cyberpunk-meets-the-blues, stark, *Blade Runner* landscapes where the average person is truly helpless and global power brokers reign. "Political World," with its harsh drumbeats evoking an urban jungle, addresses the endless reach of a world where no matter where we go, we remain "under the microscope" of, presumably, governments and their informal enforcers—banks, the media, credit bureaus. "Everything Is Broken," with its litany of cracked and crushed people and household items ("broken bodies, broken bones, broken voices on broken phones"), heightens this sense of helplessness and (kinda smugly) points out

that no matter how slick the power brokers are, they trip over their own feet as much as anyone

Elsewhere, Dylan invokes gospel music and gospel literature in the lovely "Ring Them Bells," a haunting recitative on acoustic piano, highlighted by a sad, sepulchral organ. He checks back into his old school of cinematic ballads à la "Mozambique" and "Joey" with "Man in the Long Black Coat" a minor-key *film noir*, almost a ghost story, about a woman who takes up with an eerie stranger who could be a preacher, the Devil, or Clint Eastwood in *A Fistful of Dollars*. Turning vaguely autobiographical in "Most of the Time" ("I don't compromise/But I don't pretend") and in the gently musing "What Good Am I?" Dylan unfortunately goes overboard on "Disease of Conceit," an exceedingly, twee, silly song—a pot cutely calling itself black—that points out the virtues of erasable cassettes. (Now that we're on formats, the CD pressing is certainly an improvement over the pop-riddled LP, but the latter is inexplicably fuller-sounding. Maybe the tube-heads are right, after all.)

On each of the songs, skeletal instrumentation accentuates the lyrics, in some cases producing a nearly rap effect that echoes, 30 years on, the beat movement's marriage of poetry and music. A lot of the credit must go to producer Daniel Lanois, who I guess, helped recruit Cyril Neville and Mason Ruffner for the proceedings. The guest guns seem held in check by the deliberately understated charts, but as in a good pointillist painting, the dabs of color that are there satisfy.

Spare as *Oh Mercy* is, its muted *Sturm und Drang* has resulted in Dylan's best studio album since ... geez, has it been 13 years since *Desire*? It's a mocest album in the context of Dylan's oeuvre, but at least it's listenable. Which has rarely been the case for ... geez, 13 years?

Frank Lovece

AUDIO/DECEMBER 1989

By Craig McGregor

The Sun Herald September 30<sup>th</sup> 1990

*Turn your back, wash your hands  
There's always someone who understands  
It don't matter no more what you got to say  
It's unbelievable it would go down this way.....*

In a mass mediaised world, Marshall McLuhan said once, the only prophets are the communicators, and in the protean, insatiable empire of pop music, which today dominates Western culture, the most prophetic voice is that of Bob Dylan.

Of course, it's a role he's been denying all his career:

*I'm not trying to lead any causes for anyone else,*

he said back in the sixties when people were trying to foist on him the mantle of spokesman for The Protest Generation.

When he found God in the 70s he was claimed by half a dozen sects: born again Christian? Born Again Jew? Committed Zionist?

In the 80s he seemed to presage the spirituality of the New Age: secular sermons about capitalism, love, worship, self-denial and a chaotic universe ripped free of any guiding principle poured from the muse of the most important songwriter the 20th Century has known.

Dylan, master of masks, kept himself naked of the guru's robes through sheer selfishness. He wrote only for himself, he said. What the hell did it matter what religion he was: he was a songwriter.

On his last visit to Sydney he adopted the most unconvincing mask of all - that of happy rock 'n' roller, prancing around the Entertainment centre with Tom Petty and pretending to be just another heartbreaker. When he invited Mark Knopfler up on stage I thought it was a symbolic moment: the grand master of Serious Flash passing on to another ambitious, Jewish poor-boy-songsmith, who has himself been deeply influenced by Dylan, the task of keeping it all going.

But Knopfler seems to have been standing still (what's he done in the last year or so?) while Dylan, with all that fecundity and stamina one associates with greatness, has released soundtracks; live albums (with the Grateful Dead); the pop-genre hokum of the Traveling Wilburys with Dylan, George Harrison, and Roy Orbison disguised as Shakespeare's merry minstrels: and his own cry from the heart, **Oh Mercy**.

Now, just a few months away from his 50th birthday, Robert Zimmerman, a nice-but-nasty middle-class white boy from Hibbing, Minnesota, has put out a new album, **Under The Red Sky**, which comes as a blast of prophecy in a post-modern world where the fashionable modes of pastiche, bricolage, schizophrenia and existential nihilism paper over the Death of Meaning in the culture of the megalopolis. It's a shock, like turning a corner in **Darling It Hurts** and being confronted by a hairy wild man, shouting fables:

*The cat's in the well, the gentle lady is asleep  
Cat's in the well, the gentle lady is asleep  
She ain't hearin' a thing, the silence is a-sticking her deep.  
The cat's in the well and grief is showing its face  
The world's being slaughtered and it's such a bloody disgrace.*

In many ways it is a return to Dylan's blues roots: he's surrounded himself by musicians such as the late Stevie Ray Vaughan, David Crosby, Elton John, Bruce Hornsby, George Harrison, Al Kooper, Slash and others who give Dylan the rock-drenched, luxuriant sound he's lacked for years., and the album is produced by Don Was and David Was of Was Not Was, the funk/rap duo whose remake of **Papa Was A Rolling Stone** was a recent chart topper.

The tone is optimistic, light-hearted, playful and brimful of the paradoxical joy and energy which good blues can generate:

*I play de blues to play de blues away*

said Mississippi Fred McDowell.

*Ten thousand women all sweepin' my room  
Ten thousand women all sweepin' my room  
Spillin' my buttermilk, sweepin' it up with a broom...*

But Dylan's lyrics, here and in most of his recent work, are suffused with a searing biblical vision which endows his music with the sort of fundamentalist ferocity one associates with the Old Testament and the lean, puritanical, mystical prophets, yes prophets, who warned **Infidels** (the title of Dylan's last major album) that only the truly moral individual can achieve redemption in an evil world.

*God knows it's a struggle  
God knows it's a crime  
God knows there's gonna be no more water  
But fire next time....*

In the video clip for his latest single, **Unbelievable** Dylan is cast as a black capped chauffeur driving a pig in the back of a limousine while his harsh ultra-gravelly voice declaims:

*It's unbelievable like a lead balloon  
It's so impossible to even learn the tune  
kill that beast and feed that swine.*

And the songs! There are more parables, riddles, allegories and morality tales than songs, suffused with quotes, allusions and jokes:

*Sometimes you gotta do like Elvis and shoot the damn thing out*

and they embody a roll-call of the sources of American popular music: nursery rhymes, ballads, blues, Appalachian love songs, Bible stories, fairy tales, country homilies - the entire panoply of US culture which has given the 20th century its most potent vernacular messages.

OK - but how relevant is this to the post-modern world which, whether we like it or not, has transformed our existence? Isn't it.....old fashioned?

Yes. Prophecy is a discredited mode. If you want a vivid reflection of today's culture you would have to turn to forms like rap, hip hop, house, dance club, the cut-up bricolage of cross-cut contemporaneity. In a mass-mediated pluralist world, with apologies to McLuhan, the prophets are liars. (How do you find the moral way in an amoral universe? Turn left at the gas station.)

But a truly contemporary art is never just a reflexion, a knee-jerk reaction: it also offers a critique. Break the glass, smash the mirror.

Bob Dylan, it seems to me, in his music continues to do just that. Once, faced with the corruption of our inside-out environment, Dylan turned to politics and only an album ago he was writing songs like *Political World*, these days he has turned to a spiritual critique.

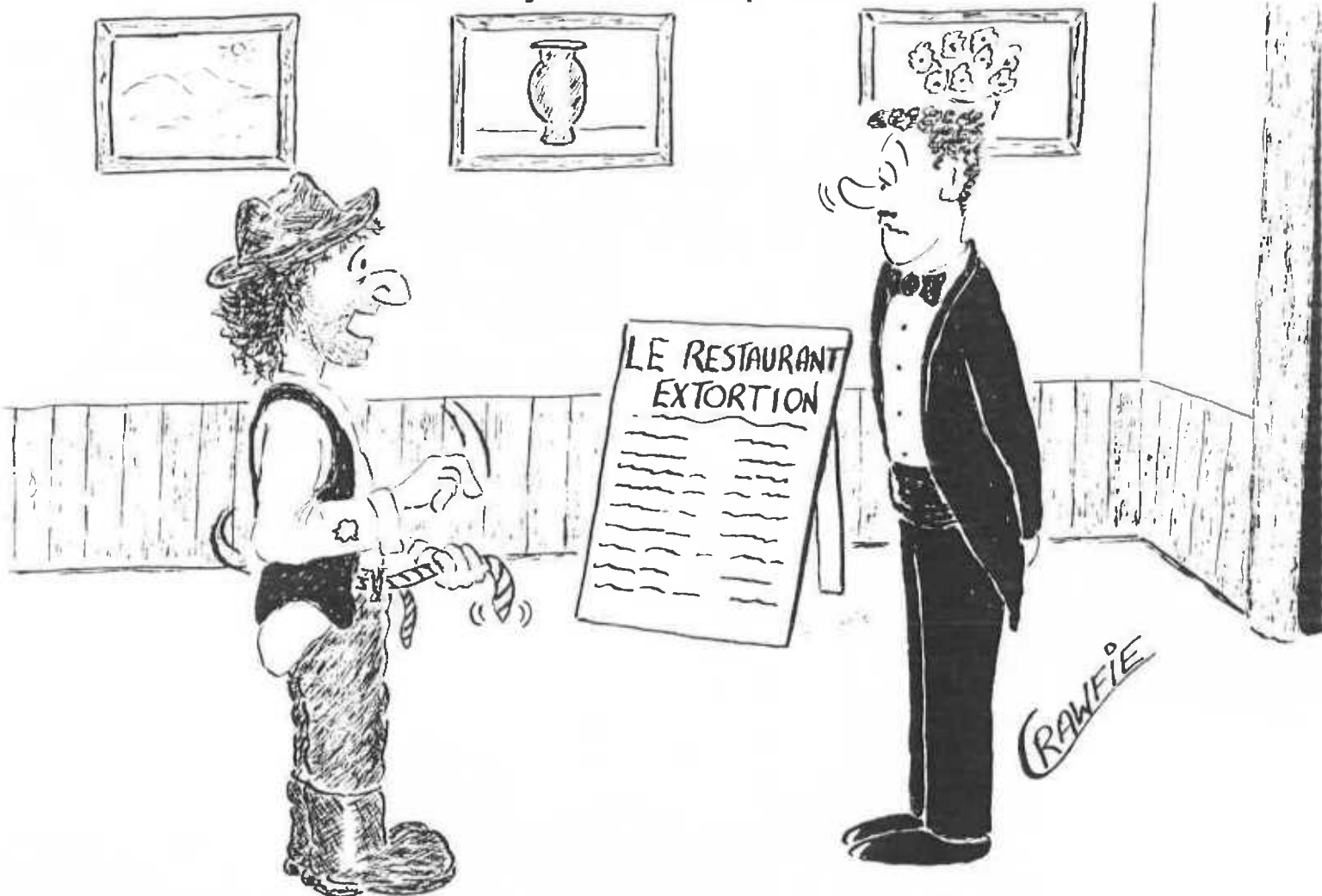
I do not accept his sermons, but I like them. The tension between what he is singing and the shouting, joyful rhythm-and-blues context in which his songs are placed is a fairly appropriate disjunction: it emphasises the continuance of the generative past in the generating present:

*Once there was a man who had no eyes  
Every lady in the land told him lies  
He stood beneath the silver skies  
And his heart began to bleed....*

I don't know if that is Bob Dylan himself; it sounds like it, down to the edge of self pity. It's about what you'd expect from a deeply flawed but deeply creative spinner of myths, fables and metaphors about the everyday world.

Prophets don't foretell the future, they reassemble the past and present. They even remake themselves. It's a truism that Dylan is the most important popular artist of the last half-century. That he is still here among us, pumping out truths, half-truths and lies disguised as pop songs, is little short of a (secular) miracle.

**Crawfie on those 'Dylan-is-a-tramp' stories:**



CHECK IT OUT MAN! A TIE... A USEFUL TIE ... NOW CAN I GO EAT?!

In The Days When Cameras Were Allowed



## The Release, the reviews, Clinton Heylin in The Record Collector

The release of the box set was undoubtedly one of the biggest events in Dylan's career. Even dedicated collectors had something to look forward to, for once Dylan's record company seemed to have done the right thing. I was excited by the pre-release tape - thanks Lambchop - and then excited all over again by the overwhelming clarity of the cds.

And the songs themselves, what wonders to behold. Brand new songs...House Carpenter, Farewell Angelina, Golden Loom, Series Of Dreams etc....great new versions, or as near new as dammit (When The Night Comes Falling) and Bauldie to do the liner notes. All this at a (very) reasonable price.

The press coverage was phenomenal and I decided to produce this Bits & Bobs style cuttings section. It makes this issue of *Homer, the slut* top heavy with cuttings, but I felt it would be nice to get a lot of these together especially as Mark Carter chipped in with his 20 Pounds American cuttings.

Issue Four will have more on the box set, hopefully including: a few unusual items, more reviews from further afield and individual analyses of some of the key songs.

The reviews are, on the whole, very positive, though, not surprisingly, not every reviewer likes every phase of Bob that's represented. I must say, however, that I find it somewhat more than surprising that anyone - see page 16 - can find the final disc: *spotty*.

Most of the derogatory comments are born of ignorance or bad taste rather than reasoned judgement or aesthetic criteria worthy of debate. Clinton Heylin, however, in the most informed and in depth article I've yet seen, stirs up a hornet's nest with a variety of criticisms.<sup>1</sup>

As we're talking here of an acknowledged Dylan "authority" his criticisms are obviously worthy of serious attention. On inspection most of his points seem perfectly valid to me:

- A) The exclusion of the songs from the proposed 4 CD set have undoubtedly left us with an imbalanced collection.
- B) It does seem a bit odd to have one track from the *Blood On The Tracks* out-takes left over to start the final disc.
- C) The jump from '85 to '89 and the exclusion of the NRBQ from *Under The Red Sky* is an unfortunately shallow representation of the last six years.

But, but, but...

Clinton surely overstates his case with this condemnation:

Sadly, this release is the result of some of the most ludicrous and ill-considered thinking that can have been brought to bear on a major artist's work.

In addition there is an unmistakable feeling that he is a bit miffed not to be involved:

CBS have my permission to contact me and have the job done right [sic] next time!

However, the latter could well be a tongue-in-cheek ending as it is followed by a plug for his biography, which I take it you've all got by now. It is also not without the bounds of possibility that Mr Heylin quite enjoys stirring up the afore mentioned hornet's nest amongst fellow Dylan watchers who unanimously acclaimed the release! I just hope he didn't decide a potential buyer that he'd be better advised spending his money elsewhere.

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I AT FIRST I WASN'T GOING TO REPRODUCE THIS ARTICLE DUE TO IT'S LENGTH AND THE FACT THAT YOU SHOULD ALL HAVE IT ANYWAY. AS PIA POINTED OUT, THOUGH, IT WOULD BE ODD TO OMIT THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW. IN ADDITION, THE RECORD COLLECTOR MAY NOT BE TO EASY TO GET ABROAD. IT IS WELL WORTH TRACKING THIS MAGAZINE DOWN EVERY MONTH ANYWAY AND, IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE, I SUGGEST YOU GET YOUR HANDS ON ONE FOR TWO MORE LOVELY ISLE OF WIGHT PHOTOGRAPHS.

My quibble is that I just don't think Clinton gives enough credit to what we have actually been given here, especially given the track record of CBS on Dylan releases. This seems - coincidentally, perhaps - a marvellous new dawn under Sony. It is, when all is said and done, a quite staggering treasure trove on public release for £25:00. Clinton anticipates this objection in his article and dismisses it, but I feel it has a lot of validity.

The really good thing about the review is that *The Record Collector* allows Clinton the space to give a comment on every song. Of course we will all have our personal views and axes to grind here but I find myself in nodding my way through his commentary. I imagine that nearly everyone would agree that Moonshiner is the highlight of the first disc and that absolutely everyone would agree that:

9) Nobody 'Cept You is the long rumoured but previously uncirculated Planet Waves out-take, and proves to be a disappointment after the intensity of the live 1974 versions. A July 1973 demo of this fine song might have been a superior choice.

The final point, had anyone else thought of Seven Days as being anything other than a full blown live track?

### Song Lyrics & A pitch for contributions & The Cuttings' Sources

I've included song lyrics with my best guess at some of the less clear lines, if anyone is confident of the full lyrics to Foot Of Pride please let me know a.s.a.p. - I'm still not 100% on that last line.

Also, of course, anyone wishing to write a piece on a song from the Box Set for inclusion in the next issue please put pen to paper! I'd also appreciate it if you could let me know in advance which song(s) you'll be focussing on.

Page	Source	Author	Date
4&5	NME	Gavin Martin	6/4/91
6	Select Owings Mill Times (Baltimore)	Andrew Perry Geoffrey Himes	May 91 21/2/91
7&8	Q Magazine	David Hepworth	May 91
9&10	The Melody Maker	Allan Jones	6/4/91
10	Sounds	TU	6/4/91
11	Rolling Stone	Anthony DeCurtis	4/4/91
12	Musician	Bill Flanagan	Apr. 91
13	New York Times	Jon Pareles	24/3/91
14	Time Out Entertainer's Weekly	Andrew Bell David Browne	??/91 ??/91
15	New York Post	Lee Jeske	26/3/91
16	Newsday	Wayne Robins	24/3/91
17	Daily News	David Hinckley	24/3/91
18	Weekend Telegraph The Daily Mirror	Charles Shaar Murray A Hack	6/4/91 4/4/91
19ff	The Record Collector	Clinton Heylin	Apr. 91



Like the lion tears the flesh off of a man  
 So can a woman who passes herself off as a male  
 They sang *Danny Boy* at his funeral and the *Lord's Prayer*  
 The preacher talking about Christ's betrayal  
 It's like the earth just opened and swallowed him up  
 He reached too high and was thrown back to the ground  
 You know what they say about being nice to the right people on the way up  
 Sooner or later you're gonna meet them coming down

Yeah, there ain't no going back  
 When your foot of pride come down  
 Ain't no going back

Hear you got a brother named James, don't forget faces and names  
 Sunken cheeks and his blood is mixed  
 He looks straight into the sun and say *Revenge is mine, hon*  
 But he drinks, and drinks can be fixed  
 Sing me one more song about your 'love me to the morning, stranger'  
 And your 'fall-by-the-sword-love-affair' with Erroll Flynn  
 In these times of compassion when conformity's in fashion  
 Say one more stupid thing to me before the final nail is driven in

Well, there ain't no going back  
 When the foot of pride come down  
 Ain't no going back

There's a retired business man named Red  
 Cast down from heaven and he's out of his head  
 He feeds off of everyone that he can touch  
 He said he only deals in cash, would sell tickets to a plane crash [??]  
 Not somebody that you play around with much  
 Miss Dellah is his, a Phillistine is what she is  
 She'll do wonders and works with your fate  
 Gives you coconut bread, spiced buns in bed  
 If you don't mind sleeping with your head face down in a plate

There ain't no going back  
 When the foot of pride come down  
 Ain't no going back

Well, let's choose a man for you to meet tonight  
 You'll play the fool and learn how to walk through doors  
 How to enter into the Gates of Paradise? No!  
 How to carry a burden too heavy to be yours  
 There up on the stage they'll be trying to get water out of rocks  
 A whore will pass the hat, collect a hundred grand and say *Thanks*  
 They like to take all this money from sin  
 Build big universities to study in  
 Sing *Amazing Grace* all the way to the Swiss banks

Well, there ain't no going back  
 When the foot of pride come down  
 Ain't no going back

They got some beautiful people out there, man  
 They can be a terror to your mind and show you how to hold your tongue  
 They got 'mystery' written all over their forehead  
 They kill babies in the crib and say *Only the good die young*  
 They don't believe in mercy  
 Judgement on them is something that you'll never see  
 They can exalt you up or bring you down bankrupt  
 Turn you into anything that they want you to be

Well, there ain't no going back  
 When the foot of pride come down  
 Ain't no going back

Yes, I guess I loved him too. I can still see him in my mind climbing that hill  
 Did he make it to the top? Well, he probably did and dropped  
 Struck down by the strength of the will  
 Ain't nothin' left here partner  
 Just the dust of a plague that has left this stone [?] town afraid  
 From now on this'll be where you're from  
 Let the dead bury the dead, your time will come  
 Bled [?] hot iron glow as you raise the shade

Yeah, there ain't no going back  
 When your foot of pride come down  
 Ain't no going back

Oh! Yeah Oh! Yeah!

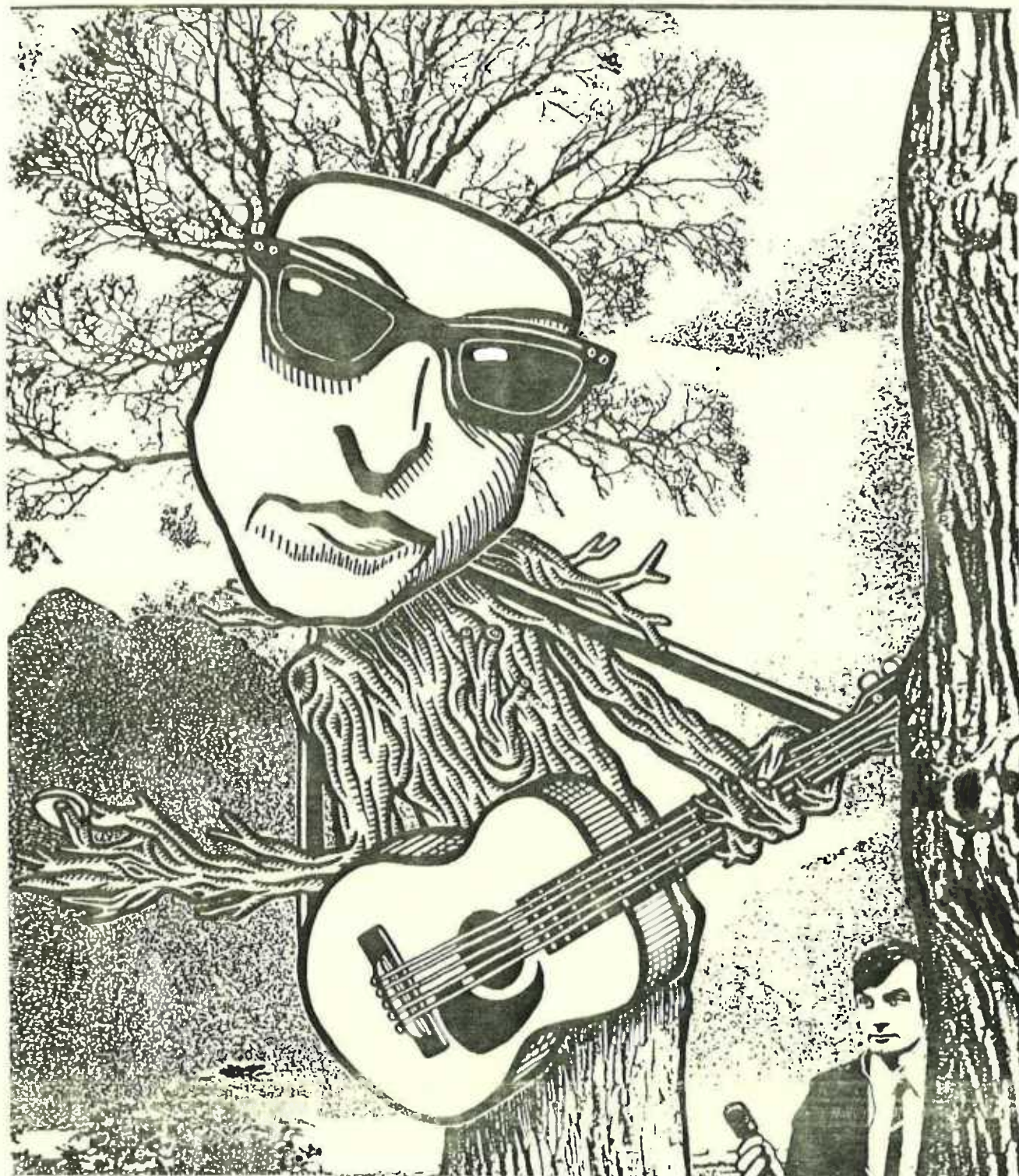


ILLUSTRATION RUN

## BOB DYLAN

**The Bootleg Series Volumes 1–3 Rare And Unreleased 1961–1991 (Columbia/All Formats)**

WHY BOB Dylan? Why should another generation be faced with this ravaged icon, this rock monster, this ongoing freakshow? You might have seen him shambolic at Live Aid or pictured in a tabloid, a court jester shielding himself from the limelight. You might have heard his last recorded joke 'Wiggle Wiggle Wiggle' or caught one of his appallingly erratic rather than impassioned live performances and wondered . . . what the hell is the fuss about? Why, of all rock legends, should Dylan remain pre-eminent?

The 'Bootleg Series' provides answers, answers that might otherwise have gone unheard. Comprising 58 songs – completed studio cuts, frontroom demos, band and solo concert performances and early arrangements of what would become his

most celebrated songs – this is a grandstand look at the parts of his 30-year career that never achieved posterity. Thirty-eight songs here have never been officially released in any form. Some of them are the equal of, if not better than, those on which his reputation is based.

It starts with a callow 20-year-old, acoustic strumming, eager to learn, fresh down from Minneapolis making tentative steps through 'Hard Times In New York'. It ends, after an exhaustive melding of music, literature, religion, justice, love, life and death, down in New Orleans. An explosive, inexplicably unreleased out take from 'Oh Mercy', 'Series Of Dreams' is all galloping, tormented musical fury. The rasping troubadour is nearing 50 now and as the thunder peals he muses "I wasn't making any great connection/Wasn't following any intricate scheme/Nothing that would pass inspection/I was just thinking of a series of dreams."

Dylan's dreams were founded in the shadow of an America that was politically paranoid, in a cultural and emotional straitjacket. Red scares, repression and racism were the order of the day. But Dylan espied another America, buried perhaps, but waiting to be reawakened, an America where democratic ideals, cultural diversity and collisions would thrive.

From the folk ballads of early white settlers and blues of the slaves, he set about giving rein to the voice of the underdog. He was beginning to shape a new land, a dream world and a cultural revolution in which he would remain a dominant force.

He had an ability to take voices from the past, bring them alive and make them his own. Hear the hitherto unreleased gem 'No More Auction Block' where he wrings both pain and dignity from a slave's reaction to emancipation or 'Moonshiner' – a loveless soaring moan, a chilling confession from beyond the grave.

He constructed his voice and raw edge mouth harp style from American ghosts but they easily adapted to the present. Check 'Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues', banned from *The Ed Sullivan Show*, where he gleefully sets about a character's bigotry and fear of the new with a hysterical hick caricature.

Dylan's acoustic material takes up over half this collection. The strength and variety of these sides display his fevered imagination, tireless work rate and complete absorption of influences in a stark light. Even before his 'Judas' electric transformation he was a rock 'n' roll artist. Not just because he was holding notes, bending lines and generally taking chances that would soon outrage one audience and thrill another, but because he realised rock 'n' roll meant more than just the music that came out of the Deep South in the mid '50s.

### **Dylan's genius, and it's a talent that has never left him, is the ability to merge warring opposites, often in one performance.**

Dylan made a series of connections that set music spinning off its axis. To him blues lore, Biblical tales, the surreal humour of Flann O'Brien, Bertolt Brecht's morality plays, Bill Burroughs' cut up rants, Elvis' pelvic intimations and anything else that came to hand were all fuel on the new cultural fire.

From the bizarre Old Testament wrath of 'When My Ship Comes In' (Dylan playing his seldom heard take on Jerry Lee Lewis' Pentecostal Piano style) through the claustrophobic vision of reform school life in 'Walls Of Red Wing' to 'Let Me Die In My Footsteps' a steely taunt at warmongers and the unadorned demo for what would become the electric rap frenzy of 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' Dylan's universe grew in his one man sweatshop.

There were competitive times ahead, new sounds coming across the Atlantic and an upsurge on the West Coast. Dylan delighted in it all, he was faster than anyone, gobbling up literary conceits, new visions, songwriting concepts and spinning them back out through his art.

One of the wildest, most rocking things here doesn't even have acoustic accompaniment. 'Last Thoughts On Woody' recorded live in 1963, is seven minutes of giddy, mind warping words, helter skelter humour and high wire emotion. In his detailed and passionate sleeve notes in the collection's accompanying booklet John Bauldie notes that it is perhaps the only recorded example of Dylan as unaccompanied poet. The momentum and pacing is the key. The way he builds, transforms and even destroys what is delivered in one verse by a successive torrent indicates the way his career would go.

Dylan was to be the most endlessly reactive artist of his generation. For many he reached his molten peak with the metallic core he mined in the mid-'60s, still the most thrilling, nerve jangling rock 'n' roll ever recorded. Future Columbia bootleg compilations will focus on this era in greater detail, especially the legendary 'Live At The Albert Hall' set. But the tracks here, unreleased sides from 'Highway 61' and 'Blonde On Blonde' are nasty, sleek and deliciously violent – words whipped into being by incendiary music and *vice versa*.

The effortless control, the ability to shake and drive bands to new heights, came to him like second nature. The ultra cool minefield of sneering poetry and rampaging imagery he created was almost too good, reaching a frightening peak on the mesmeric 'She's Your Lover Now'.

That song – a hell or high water toxic putdown awash with crazed surreal images – crashes before its conclusion. Its writer followed shortly after. Dylan's story could easily have ended here. Living on a chemical knife edge he could have joined the '60s casualty list along with Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison.

He came back, chastened, but with his powers still intact. 'I Shall Be Released', sung here with The Band's Richard Manuel, restated both his empathy and ability to transform tradition (in this case Gospel) with a song of hope and survival as he recuperated from a scary drug habit and/or a motorcycle crash.

Perhaps his greatest triumphs, certainly his most sustained mature work, were still to come. The story of Dylan's career is as much in what he chose not to release as in what he made public. The original versions of the songs on 'Blood On The Tracks' have long been a Holy Grail and are here revealed as even more intimate and sensitively structured than those he recorded for that landmark album.

As with the collection's earlier take on 'Like A Rolling Stone', the poignant, regret-stained version of 'Blood On The Tracks' epicentre, 'Idiot Wind', is very different to the howling, spite-filled anthem it would become. It underlines the dual impulses that have always inspired him – the need to antagonise and the desire to pacify. His genius, and it's a talent that has never left him, is the ability to merge these and other warring opposites, often in one performance.

It's part of the reason why his music has seldom stood still. From the hot blooded, ramshackle Country slop of 'Catfish' (from the 'Desire' sessions) through to the defiant but radio friendly FM Gospel of 'Ye Shall Be Changed', he's as restless as ever.

Dylan's unyielding evangelical stance caused critical revulsion which probably made him even happier. Not only was he singing better than ever and making peace with his maker, but he was still able to wind people up, and show a vengeful, even cruel, streak.

And then, with the awesome William Blake style hymn 'Every Grain Of Sand' (captured here on demo with accompaniment from Jennifer Warnes and a barking dog), he was inspired like never before. The song was both a statement of spiritual faith and an affirmation of the universality of the art he had been dreaming up all along.

Dylan today may not be on the cutting (rap) edge of music. Unreleased tracks from 'Under The Blood Red Sky' (not included here) would show that he's making steps in that direction. But in the last ten years he hasn't just endured, he has actually grown in stature. Until now the full extent of his reach couldn't be measured but the phantasmagoria word painting that is 'Angelina' (a seven-minute epic where he sounds like a cracked siren and finds "God in the body of a woman") and the penitent 'Blind Willie McTell' are vital additions to his life's work.

The latter, recorded in 1983 and set in the same purgatorial wasteland as 'Man In The Long Black Coat', goes right back to the acoustic roots and might be his greatest, strangest song. The young Dylan would have revelled in his ability to recreate distant times, far off voices, but the older Dylan can only bemoan both the legendary bluesman's passing and his own unworthiness to take his place. The performance is good enough to undermine the latter sentiment, highlighting once again the dual impulse at work in his music.

It doesn't let up. On 'Night Comes Falling From The Sky' he fires on all cylinders using *E Street Band* members and Sly and Robbie to out-Springsteen Mister Springsprong himself. Here he is, a middle-aged man, experiencing once again the thrill of sexual awakening, head over heels with both the prospect and the title refrain – a new catchphrase to stand for a symbol of wild love.

And then at the end 'Series Of Dreams'. Only an album old, it is the work of a wily alchemist (this time Carl Jung meets Phil Spector Beyond Thundardome) and an eerily perceptive writer. Thirty years on and Dylan won't lie down. Oh sure, he loses the plot, tosses out garbage, comes on like a sham and a parody and often keeps the good wine under wraps. But on form he's still creating his dream world in all its fantastic, tormented, savage wonder. That's why another generation should hear him. That's why 'The Bootleg Years' will prove a revelation, both for those that know him and those that don't. (10)

Gavin Martin

# HIGHWAY '61-'91 REVISITED

## BOB DYLAN

The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare And Unreleased 1961-1991)

COLUMBIA 468086/MC/CD

AS AN artist who has regularly committed savage atrocities on his own material onstage, and whose studio work has been, politely put, lopsided since the early '70s, Bob Dylan has been one of the top five most bootlegged acts in popular music — his cast-offs often duplicated many times over on illicit, crackly, shittily recorded pressings.

Bob is 50 on May 24, it's his 30th anniversary in the biz and he's just been bestowed with a Grammy for his 'Lifetime Achievement'. A time for celebration, then. 'The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3' with its unreleased studio out-takes, piano demos, alternate and live versions of old faves is the Dylanologist's wet dream come true.

On five LPs or a triple CD or cassette, there are 58 tracks spanning those three variable decades, from Bob's earliest known recording, live at the Minnesota Hotel in '61, to a reject from 1990's 'Oh Mercy'. With tip-top sound and a 72-page booklet, this package proves that 'official bootlegs' are always the best value.

But if you reckon that Mr Zim only got interesting come '65 and his

conversion to electricity, you'll be bored stiff by the first one and a half volumes of acoustic out-takes and protest fare.

You may also ask why a mere fifth of the material covers Dylan's second 15 years — of course, the choices made were largely due to availability. At least the prolific acoustic phase brings some awesomely vibrant, scathing lyrics.

Most remarkable are 'Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues', live in '63, never recorded in the studio due to its fierce anti-McCarthyite sentiments, and 'Last Thoughts On Woody Guthrie', a razor-edged poem delivered in New York on the death of Dylan's hero and friend.

The pivotal early electric period 1965-'66 yields little, simply because most numbers were released at the time. There are intriguing, but sub-standard, alternate takes, plus three songs understandably discarded.

'Volume 3' hits a downward slide. 'Series Of Dreams', laid down with Daniel Lanois for 'Oh Mercy' in 1990, would have seemed wretchedly weak in the context of that album, and even the outtakes from 1983's superior 'Infidels' LP barely stand up, save for the smouldering, bluesy 'Blind Willie McTell'.

All horrors are atoned for, though, by the four tracks culled from 1974's 'Blood On The Tracks'. There's a chilling take of 'Idiot Wind', with a weary vocal that captures all the song's essence of existential futility.

You might snap up 'Volumes 1-3' on the strength of that one masterpiece. You'd then own more dross than you'd want to inflict on your hi-fi, as well as some previously unexposed moments of a great artist at his best.

In that sense, it's a fitting epitaph to the first 30 years of Bob Dylan's career.

■ ■ ■ □ □ ANDREW PERRY

This week, as part of the 1991 Grammy Awards Show, Bob Dylan and John Lennon are receiving Lifetime Achievement Awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. It's fair to say that these two men have influenced English-language song more than any other songwriters of the past half century.

For all his accomplishments, of course, Bob Dylan is no retiree, and his latest single, "Series of Dreams" (an unreleased original track from the "Oh Mercy" album sessions), comes out this Thursday, Feb. 21. Then Dylan makes his first-ever Baltimore County appearance this Friday, Feb. 22, at Painters Mill.

The biggest Dylan news of all, though, may be the announcement that Columbia Records will release "Bob Dylan: The Bootleg Series, Vols. 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991" in late March. This long-anticipated box set will feature "Series of Dreams" and 57 other previously unreleased songs.

Included will be everything from the legendary 1961 Minnesota hotel tape through the 1966 British tour with the Band; from his early publishing demos through the rest of the "Basement Tapes."

Anyone who has read through Dylan's book of collected verse, "Lyrics," knows that he has written some 60 songs never released on any official albums. Furthermore, his official albums don't necessarily feature the best performances of his songs.

The "Bootleg Series" promises to be a landmark event on a par with last year's release of "The Complete Recordings of Robert Johnson."

In the meantime, a marvelous guide to Dylan's performances — official and unofficial — has just been published, "Performing Arise: The Music of Bob Dylan — Volume One, 1960-1973" (Underwood-Miller) was written by Paul Williams, the pioneering rock critic who founded *Crawdaddy Magazine*. Williams has long been one of Dylan's most astute observers, and he has cut through the 60s mythology and biographical gossip that obscure most studies of the songwriter.

Williams establishes an important principle in his introduction. Dylan was not a literary artist; he was a performing artist. Williams evaluates and

analyzes the success of those performances as total events.

At times Williams falls into the Dylanologist trap of treating the songs as allegories rather than stories, of claiming that "Like a Rolling Stone," for instance, actually addresses Dylan himself rather than the woman referred to in the lyrics.

Most of Williams' observations, however, are right on the mark. His remarks on the way the vocal sadomas on the album version of "Don't Think Twice" mitigates the put-down of the lyric or the way the short bursts of rap-like phrases in "Subterranean Homesick Blues" gather momentum are a delight to read.

Geoffrey Himes

London, April 1965

**BOB DYLAN****The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3**

COLUMBIA 485086

The bootleg business bears witness to two things. One is the inclination of consumers to find under-the-counter goods attractive by definition. Another is the fact that so few artists have generated real interest in this respect and of those none are in the same league as Bob Dylan. That peculiar fascination has been built upon his perceived position as prophet, seer and sage and then fanned by his habit of recording more material than even his release schedule could accommodate. For almost 30 years now Dylan's steps have been dogged by men bearing tape recorders, seeking to illegally appropriate anything, from fragments of conversation to entire studio albums.

Suppressed material always surfaces eventually, even, as was the case with Philip Larkin, if it has to be in direct contravention of the artist's wishes. Dylan demonstrated his willingness to exploit the legend of his samizdat recordings by eventually issuing *The Basement Tapes* in 1975. Ten years later he used some previously unreleased material to pep up the Biograph box set and now, to mark his 50th birthday, allows us the first of a promised series of collections of rare stuff.

Compiled by Dylan archivist Jeff Rosen and accompanied by liner notes from John Bauldie, Dylan scholar and Q regular, this 58-track three-CD box and booklet is as thorough and authoritative a job as the nit-pickingest fan could require. The converted to whom Dylan appears to be happy to preach and who went to every one of his Hammersmith Odeon shows, will rightly consider it indispensable. Such people will not be surprised to find the collection beginning with *Hard Times In New York Town*, recorded in a girlfriend's hotel room in 1961 as he was beginning to make a name in Greenwich Village. It's odd - not to mention eerie - that such a performance has survived, particularly when contrasted with the fact that the BBC (guardians of the nation's culture) have knowingly wiped irreplaceable tapes of entire Dylan concert specials. There are a few other live performances: a startling version of the slave song *No More Auction Block* from a 1962 appearance at *The Gaslight*, *Talking John Birch Paranoid Blues* and *Who Killed Davey Moore?* at Carnegie Hall the following year and *Seven Days* from the 1976 *Rolling Thunder* tour.

There's a sprinkling of publishers' demos, some put down on tape in the mid-'60s in pursuit of manager Albert Grossman's belief that his charge should be marketed as a writer ripe for cover versions. Others, like a slow and over-pitched *Every Grain Of Sand* (complete with dog barking) date from more recent years. All but two of the songs here, the traditional ballads *No More Auction Block* and *Moonshiner*, are Dylan originals, and some will be familiar in versions by other artists. Here is Dylan singing *If You Gotta Go, Go Now* (a hit for Manfred Mann and Fairport Convention), *I Shall Be Released* (with *The Band*), *If Not For You* (a duet with George Harrison who subsequently took the song for *All Things Must Pass*), *Golden Loom* (Roger McGuinn) and *Catfish* (Joe Cocker). The latter pair are lovely *Desire* offcuts but this *I Shall Be Released* is strained and strangely tedious compared to *The Band's* ghostly variation.

The bulk of the tracks were recorded during sessions for particular albums. In the case of 1962's *Freewheelin'*, there are no less than eight songs included here which didn't make it on to the original record, nearly enough to comprise *More Freewheelin'*: for *Shot Of Love* there are three for *Desire* two and for *Infidels* four, including the celebrated Blind Willie McTell. Then there are earlier or alternate takes of familiar material: Like A Rolling Stone done in waltz time, petering out with Dylan complaining that his voice is shot, *Subterranean Homesick Blues* in acoustic form and *Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry* as a clipped boogie.

For students, there are numerous opportunities to compare and contrast. She's Your Lover Now, a Blonde On Blonde outtake, is full of ideas that surfaced in One Of Us Must Know, while Someone's Got A Hold Of My Heart is an early sketch of Empire Burlesque's Tight Connection. The New York version of Idiot Wind (one of three from the original and eventually junked Blood On The Tracks sessions) has the line "from the Grand Coulee Dam to the Mardi Gras" instead of the eventual "Grand Coulee Dam to the Capitol". Does the latter have more grandeur or is that merely an illusion fostered by familiarity? What are we to make of the fact that this time out Every Grain Of Sand has him hanging in the balance of "the perfect finished plan" instead of "the reality of man"? What are we to make of the working practices of a man who cared sufficiently about Blood On The Tracks to ditch a bunch of perfectly acceptable cuts at the very last moment and then go into a studio in Minneapolis with a crew of

**"Dylan is the only artist of his generation whose work never seems to date. Indeed, most of it improves with age."**

unknowns and do it over (a notoriously risky enterprise) and yet has been happy to squirrel away material as strong as Blind Willie McTell and Series Of Dreams (recorded for Oh Mercy) until now? If he had been minded to include the ballad Angelina on Shot Of Love it would no doubt have been seized on by a grateful record company and hyped as "classic Dylan" (ie moody with lots of words in it). Such omissions can't have been decided on purely in order to fool those who would saddle him with their expectations. Every producer who works with Dylan talks of tracks which they wanted on an LP that fell victim at the last moment to his veto. Sometimes he's just plain mistaken. He's always contrary. But maybe it's only that cussedness that has sustained him this long.

The early material (half of this collection dates from the first three years of his recording career) is the easiest to read, untrammelled by the facts and myths of motorcycle crashes, divorces and religious conversions. His 1963 recital of his poem about Woody Guthrie suggests that he was wise not to make this part of his stage act again. But the likes of Who Killed Davey Moore, Eternal Circle and Kingsport Town are dazzling, reverberating with the delight that makes him such an indubitably great singer. If singing is purely a function of pitch and sustain then Sam Cooke would take all crowns but if it's also the logical extension of the music of speech and the manifold subtlety thereof, then Bob Dylan is one of the chosen. When that delight is upon him he can animate and legitimise the crassest material; when it isn't, when he exchanges the extraordinarily soulful delivery of Blind Willie McTell for the shrivelled and monotonous rant of Foot Of Pride, he could sink the best song.

There are few weak links on The Bootleg Series. Mostly what's striking, as was the case with Biograph, is that here is the only artist of his generation whose work never seems to date; indeed, most of it improves with age. His primitive, instant approach to recording has served him well in that respect. No More Auction Block from 1962 can sit quite convincingly next to 1983's Blind Willie McTell. In both cases he manages to sound ageless. The lessons he learned listening to Hank Williams, Leadbelly, Odetta and Robert Johnson were the same ones that his contemporaries were on the receiving end of, but somehow Dylan managed to transcend their influences and incorporate the language of blues, folk and country into his own tongue. Then, as the best of the many fascinating examples here show, he shot it all back with the conviction of someone who must sing or explode. ★ ★ ★

David Hepworth



**"If singing is a logical extension of the music of speech and the manifold subtlety thereof, then Bob Dylan is one of the chosen."**

**BOB DYLAN**  
**THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOLUMES**  
 1-3 (RARE & UNRELEASED)  
 1961-1991  
 (Columbia)

WHAT a vast and fantastic and unforgettable landscape these songs describe. Released in anticipation of Dylan's 50th birthday in May, in all manner of learned tomes, critical reassessments, textual analyses, tributes and retrospectives are likely to descend upon us, "The Bootleg Series" is a handsomely packaged set of 58 songs, available as a three CDs, three cassettes or five album box set, accompanied by a highly-informative 56 page booklet detailing the origins of each track, lucidly presented by John Bauldie, the celebrated Dylan completist and editor of the Dylan fanzine, *The Telegraph*.

It's an awesome collection, a kind of heaven for Dylan fans, that exasperated breed who over the last few years have struggled to come to terms with his fierce unpredictability, the relentless perversity of his often questionable career moves, those people who after the apparent embarrassments of "Knocked Out Loaded" and "Down In The Groove" breathed a collective sigh of relief at the appearance of "Oh Mercy", only to throw up their hands in horror at the much-maligned and unfairly treated "Under The Red Sky".

"The Bootleg Series", however, can surely only increase our regard for Dylan's phenomenal industry, the epic scope of his creative achievements, the riot of his waking mind and subterranean dreams, that simultaneously offers us beguiling insights into the kinetic restlessness of his seemingly inexhaustible imagination.

Unlike the earlier "Biograph" compilation, which similarly collected together a trove of previously unreleased out-takes and rare material, "The Bootleg Series" is ordered chronologically. So we start in 1961 with "Hard Times In New York City", an atmospherically scratchy home recording made in a Minnesota hotel room just after Dylan's first appearances on the Greenwich Village folk scene, the success of which the song wryly celebrates, and end with the magisterial hum of "Series Of Dreams", one of the tracks cut from "Oh Mercy", to the considerable chagrin of Daniel Lanois, that album's influential producer.

In between, there are all manner of

unexpected treasures - among them piano-led publishing demos of "When The Ship Comes In" and "The Times They Are A-Changin'", an acoustic version of "Subterranean Homesick Blues", a rehearsal tape of "Like A Rolling Stone", done in waltz time, the original versions of a clutch of songs from "Blood On The Tracks", and countless out-takes from "Infidels", including the devastating "Blind Willie McTell" - many of which have until now been unavailable to even the most fervent Dylan archivists.

The first 25 tracks here cover the period from 1961-1963, 17 of which are out-takes from Dylan's first three albums (nine from "Freewheelin'" alone). Dylan was almost unbelievably prolific during this time. In 1962, he signed with Witmark Publishing, the prestigious publishing house. When the contract expired three years later, Witmark had published 237 Dylan titles - some going by anyone's standards.

Describing any of the tracks on this collection as merely "out-takes" does them a serious disservice, makes them sound somehow inferior to what has previously been officially released. The fact is that at times Dylan was writing so much, so fast, there often wasn't enough room to accommodate everything he was producing. When you listen to something as phenomenal as, say, "Let Me Die In My Footsteps", you wonder how the f\*\*\* it could've been omitted from "Freewheelin'". Then you discover it was replaced at the last minute by a new Dylan song called "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall", and you gasp a little. You listen similarly to the chilling "Seven Curses", a coolly ferocious indictment of a venal, morally corrupt judicial system (which the Birmingham Six might care now to send to Lord Justice Lane with a request for his comments), and you wonder why it wasn't made available decades earlier. Then you realise a live version was originally intended for the "Bob Dylan In Concert" album that was deleted from Columbia's schedules when Dylan returned from Europe in June, 1964, and in two frantic nights in New York recorded "Another Side..."

One of the rarest tracks included here is a version of a song called "Farewell Angelina", which was originally recorded by Joan Baez in 1965, but had been thought until now never to have been done by Dylan himself. This mesmerisingly poignant performance is indisputably one of the highlights of the collection and an important historical link between Dylan's traditionally-based songwriting and

the delirious, flooding wordplay of "Highway 61" (itself represented here by the curious early take of "Like A Rolling Stone", a pumping version of "It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry" and the brutally hilarious riffing blues improvisations of "Sitting On A Barbed Wire Fence") and "Blonde On Blonde". The out-takes from the latter include a beautiful, ghostly rehearsal take on "I'll Keep It With Mine" (written in 1964, and covered by Nico on "Chelsea Girls") and "She's Your Lover Now" (re-written years later by Elvis Costello as "I Hope You're Happy Now"), which is howlingly splenetic until the cut collapses in some disarray when Dylan fumbles the words to the last caustic verse.

The collection's middle ground is occupied by a variety of out-takes from "New Morning", "The Basement Tapes" and "Planet Waves". In any other circumstances, we could happily spend some time discussing them. But this section of "The Bootleg Series" is dominated by the original versions of four tracks from "Blood On The Tracks".

Dylan completed the first draft of this album in New York in September, 1974. However, listening back to the tapes in Minnesota over Christmas, Dylan became increasingly dissatisfied with what he was listening to and decided to re-work some of the material. The results of his dramatic reassessment of the original album and the revisions he made to it can be heard here for the first time. One of the changes was presumably a straightforward substitution - the scalding "Call Letter Blues" being replaced by the very similar "Meet Me In The Morning".

Other songs, though, were radically re-thought. "If You See Her, Say Hello" survived almost intact, but as you'll hear, both "Tangled Up In Blue" and "Idiot Wind" were drastically re-written. The versions here also have a completely different emotional emphasis. They are almost wistfully resigned, weary and sorrowful, particularly "Idiot Wind". Here, there's little of the seething disgust of "Blood On The Tracks" or the live version on 1976's "Hard Rain", the lumpy belligerence of which is recalled here on the brawling "Seven Days", also recorded during the Rolling Thunder tour, whose exclamatory tone to some extent anticipates the militant evangelism of Dylan's so-called religious trilogy of "Slow Train Coming", "Saved" and "Shot Of Love".

Because he's never much pandered to public expectations, every new

direction Dylan's music has pursued has been contentious, but these albums probably remain the most controversial and misunderstood of his career. Robert Shelton, author of the indispensable Dylan biography 'No Direction Home', thinks they contain some of Dylan's best-ever music, but his has been a lonely supportive voice.

Mostly, these records are dismissed as the apocalyptic rantings of a deluded Christian convert whose soul belongs unconditionally to the Lord. But these were never just simple-minded songs of praise (how could anyone reasonably write off the extraordinary dramatic hyperbole of 'Angelina', a "Shot Of Love" out-take, with such unthinking disdain?). As the desperately moving solo demo of 'Every Grain Of Sand' so heartstoppingly demonstrates, Dylan's faith is tested at every turn by doubts and fears.

Dylan's conception of the Lord is far from benign – witness the agonising dark-night-of-the-soul ruminations of 'Lord Protect My Child', the litany of horrors that make up 'Foot Of Pride' or the unbelievable sense of isolation and inadequacy conveyed by the harrowing 'Blind Willie McTell'. The latter is one of Dylan's greatest ever songs, whose release he has until now mysteriously refused to sanction and it dominates the final third of this set, which ends with the majestic, undefeated glory of 'Series Of Dreams'.

Dylan's sheer recklessness, his seeming inability to recognise or acknowledge what has been his best work over the last decade and maybe more, has meant that his reputation has suffered. Some of these wounds have doubtless been self-inflicted. Others have been the result of misguided prejudice, slack perceptions about the nature of his creative imperatives, what drives him hardest as he struggles with the burden of what the American writer Paul Seydor, writing in an unrelated context about Sam Peckinpah, has described as, "A reputation recklessly made and now courageously sustained, and the weariness of trying to live up to it even as he longs to be rid of it."

For a lot of people, even occasionally his most ardent admirers, Dylan too often during the Seventies and Eighties hit too many wrong notes. But when, as is most often the case on this formidable release, Dylan is on song, he makes every waking moment sing.

Happy birthday, man.  
ALLAN JONES

## BOB DYLAN 'The Bootleg Series Volume 1-III' (Columbia)

.....  
DYLAN'S BIG mistake was not dying in that motorcycle accident; sure, we'd never have heard 'Blood On The Tracks', but it would have spared us shit like 'Hearts Of Fire', 'Renaldo And Clara', 'Under The Red Sky' and his conversion to Christianity.

The downside, of course, is that the so-called 'Dylanologists' (yeuch) of this world would be doubly active and fanatical, since the legend that Dylan was "the spokesman of his generation", "a poet" and "messiah" would have been preserved in stone. Of late, however, he's shown himself to be a total and utter dickcheese, who cares nothing for his fans, even less for his music – so that even the most committed Dylan obsessives have seen that the emperor's new clothes consist entirely of holes.

Of course, let's not forget that he did write the odd classic song or two and at his best – roughly from 'Another Side Of Bob Dylan' to 'Blonde On Blonde' – there was nobody to touch him; not The Stones, not The Beatles, not The Byrds and not The Doors.

This album is a 58 track collection of out-takes and alternative versions, most of which have, at some time or another, turned up on the plethora of Dylan bootlegs that have emerged over the years and been the sole preserve of the Dylanologist. This is hopefully the first three of many such bootlegs made official.

The first album opens with 'Hard Times In New York Town', recorded in 1961 in a hotel room in Minneapolis, following his first visit to New York. It's hardly a hint that this is the same man who'd take the world by storm – indeed apart from its curiosity value it doesn't have much going for it at all.

This collection is by way of a companion piece to the 1985 Dylan collection 'Biograph' and was also compiled by Jeff Rosen. There is also an excellent booklet by John Bauldie, Dylan obsessed editor of fanzine *The Telegraph*, which goes into details about the tracks, their recording and circumstances.

Fifty per cent of this is essential for the committed Dylanologist. There are some incredible out-takes from 'The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan', 'Highway 61 Revisited' and 'Blonde On Blonde' – notably the flawed but otherwise absolutely astonishing out-take 'She's Your Lover Now', recorded with band in 1966 – as well as alternative versions, like the waltz-time rehearsal version of 'Like A Rolling Stone', recorded for the benefit of the musicians who eventually played on it, and an acoustic version of 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'.

Much, however, is unremarkable – particularly the out-takes from 'Blood On The Tracks', suggesting there was potential there for a real duffer of a double LP.

However, the last track ends the collection on a high note. 'Series Of Dreams' dates from the 'Oh Mercy' sessions, which was certainly Dylan's Indian summer LP and possibly due in no small part to Daniel Lanois. An intense, haunting song, it reminds us that the old duffer was capable of greatness, and begs the question – maybe he still is? TU





## RECORDINGS



★★★★½

THE BOOTLEG SERIES  
VOLUMES 1-3  
(RARE AND UNRELEASED)  
1961-1991  
Bob Dylan  
Columbia

# Bob Dylan's Blue Highways

By Anthony  
DeCurtis

**T**HREE CDS, FIFTY-EIGHT tracks, nearly four hours of music – the first three volumes of *The Bootleg Series* stand solidly on their own terms as an essential statement of the breadth of Bob Dylan's artistic achievement. This collection is obviously not where a newcomer to Dylan – whoever such a person might be – should begin. These songs – outtakes from albums, alternative versions of well-known and lesser-known tunes, the occasional live track, demos Dylan recorded for his music publisher so his songs could be transcribed and made available to other artists – are not his

greatest hits or his most influential work. They do not even demonstrate a definite creative progress, as do the songs on *Biograph* – despite the absurdly confused chronology of that earlier collection.

No, the tracks on *The Bootleg Series* document the blue highways of Dylan's imagination, the paths not taken, the back roads that sometimes run parallel to and sometimes veer away from the main road – songs from a planned live album that got scuttled, songs that seemed old-fashioned after fresher impulses gripped Dylan's restless soul, songs too similar to or too different from other songs on a particular album, sketches that never quite assumed full character. With the help of John Bauldie's excellent liner notes – detailed without being obsessive, interpretive without being bullying, appreciative without being fawning – listeners can get a distinct feel from this set for the kinds of decisions that make a song or shape a career.

BUT *The Bootleg Series* by no means requires such specialized interest in exchange for its pleasures. Hearing the songs without any reference to their standing in the Dylan canon is a spell-binding experience. In fact, it could even temporarily diminish one's enjoyment of a song like "Rambling, Gambling Willie" – even as it deepens one's understanding of Dylan – to know that the tune was pulled from *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* so that "Bob Dylan's Dream" could be included on the album. Without question, "Bob Dylan's Dream" – a dark, troubling reflection on innocence forever lost – is the superior song, but nearly thirty years later the comparison is important only to the most dedicated Dylan followers. More casual fans can simply be swept up in the exuberant spirit Dylan brings to the outlaw ballad of "Rambling, Gambling Willie" and enjoy the charming innocence that Dylan, who was all of twenty-one at the time, felt he had outgrown.

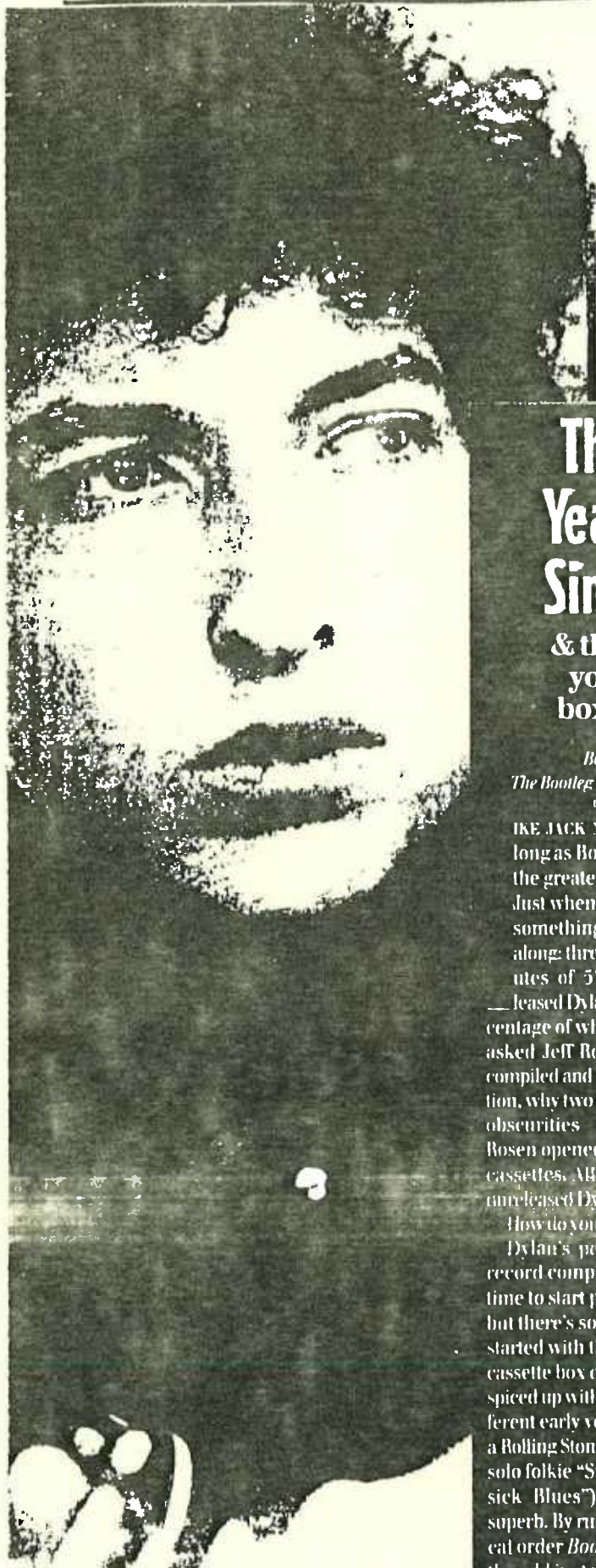
Beyond that, some of the performances on *The Bootleg Series* are just extraordinary, up to the standard of Dylan's most profound moments on record. The contradictory emotions – longing, bitterness, affection, resignation – that inform Dylan's world-weary rendering of "Mama, You Been on My Mind," an outtake from *Bringing It All Back Home*, will be familiar to anyone who has been haunted by a former lover. "I'm just whispering to myself, so I can't pretend that I don't know," he sings, letting his pride slip and his honesty show, his voice lagging dramatically behind his own tempo on acoustic guitar. "Mama, you're on my mind." Another outtake from *Bringing It All Back Home* – the poetic "Farewell, Angelina," a surreal meditation on leaving love behind – is equally transporting. On the arresting "Blind Willie McTell," recorded with Dylan on piano and Mark Knopfler on guitar during the 1983 sessions for *Infidels*, Dylan transforms an oblique celebration of a dead blues master into a stark, existential indictment of the emptiness of life in the modern world.

Dylan's political aspect is also well represented on *The Bootleg Series*. Recorded in 1962, "Let Me Die in My Footsteps," with its sorrowing refrain, "Let me die in my footsteps/Before I go down under the bomb," is a dignified response to the bomb-shelter craze generated by cold-war paranoia. On a similar but lighter note, "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues," recorded live at Carnegie Hall, in New York, in 1963, skewers the lingering vestiges of McCarthyism in America. And Dylan's rendition of the slave spiritual "No More Auction Block," from a 1962 performance at the Gaslight Café, in New York's Greenwich Village, is riveting; he would later adapt the tune's melody for "Blowin' in the Wind." "Man on the Street" and "Only a Hobo," which, in a better world, might merely seem like sentimental holdovers from Dylan's fascination with Depression-era ballads, take on an unsettling contemporary resonance, given the problem of homelessness ravaging this country.

Meanwhile, Dylan the rocker steps forward on a torrid version of "Seven Days," recorded live in Tampa on the 1976 Rolling Thunder tour, as well as on the ardently sensual "Need a Woman," an outtake from *Shot of Love*, and "Foot of Pride," a blistering track left over from *Infidels*. Guitarist Michael Bloomfield tears into a faster alternate version of "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," from the sessions for *Highway 61 Revisited*, while Dylan and the Band, then known as the Hawks, shake up the acerbic "She's Your Lover Now," recorded during the 1966 sessions for *Blonde on Blonde*.

Finally, however, *The Bootleg Series* is not about the rockers, splendid as those tracks are. With two exceptions – one being Dylan's nervous, moving recital of one of his poems, "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," at a 1963 New York concert, the other being a song on which he is joined by a second, unidentified guitarist – the first twenty-eight tracks on the collection feature Dylan performing solo on acoustic guitar or piano, and on many of the other tracks the accompaniment is spare. Indeed, Dylan's vocals often take on the contemplative quality of someone thinking, rather than singing aloud.

These songs, then, are testament to an individual's struggle to bring meaning to experience, to an artist searching for a personal voice that can take the measure of an emotion and a time, to that voice rising to say what it needs to say. Traveling the hidden byways charmed on *The Bootleg Series*, Dylan found his voice, and it's inspiring to hear it ring so true now, in all its starts and hesitations, its yearnings and disappointments – in all its triumphs. ■



## Thirty Years of Singing & they put you in a boxed set

Bob Dylan

*The Bootleg Sessions 1961-1991*  
(Columbia)

LIKE JACK NICHOLSON SAYS, AS long as Bob Dylan's alive he's the greatest living songwriter. Just when you start to forget it something like this comes along: three hours and 50 minutes of 57 previously unreleased Dylan tracks, a high percentage of which are top-notch. I asked Jeff Rosen, the man who compiled and produced this collection, why two of my favorite Dylan obscurities weren't included. Rosen opened a closet filled with cassettes. All the cassettes were unreleased Dylan songs.

How do you like that?

Dylan's people—and Dylan's record company—agree that it's time to start putting this stuff out, but there's so much of it. They've started with this three-CD, three-cassette box of unavailable songs, spiced up with a few drastically different early versions of hits ("Like a Rolling Stone" as a piano waltz, a solo folkie "Subterranean Homesick Blues"). And the stuff is superb. By running in chronological order *Bootleg Sessions* avoids the odd juxtapositions that made listening to *Biograph*, Dylan's pre-

vious box, disconcerting.

A lot of space is given to songs from Dylan's folk period. Dylan made four acoustic albums before switching to rock 'n' roll in 1965, and the 29 acoustic songs here are very nearly the equal of those four LPs. Certainly there is nothing among Dylan's previous recordings of traditional folk songs to equal the beauty of this version of "Moonshiner."

And how come his guitar playing was so much better in his folkie days than it has been since? Just as impressive is Dylan's 1963 concert recitation of his poem "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie." "Moonshiner" shows Dylan doesn't need his lyrics to be great and "Last Thoughts..." shows that, even stripped of music, his poetry has enormous power.

There are four tracks here from the original, unreleased *Blood on the Tracks* sessions, two of which are more emotionally open than anything that ended up on that album. With lines like "The children cry for mother, I tell them mother took a trip," "Call Letter Blues" is like peeking through a keyhole. A stark, acoustic version of "Idiot Wind" puts the familiar one to shame. The *Blood on the Tracks* version was Dylan railing and wailing and we could, in those Watergate/Saigon days, choose to hear it as a general indictment of collapsed obligations. This version offers no such possibility. It is bleak and confessional: "Ladykillers load dice on me while imitators steal me blind... You can have the best there is but it's gonna cost you all you love."

Also remarkable is "Blind Willie McTell," recorded in 1983 and left off *Infidel* to the horror of producer/guitarist Mark Knopfler. The song is haunted—Dylan reinventing the lonely knowledge of the blues in his own mature voice. "Blind Willie McTell" could only have been made by a man who had already mastered the tradition of "Moonshiner," the poetry of "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie" and the bare grief of "Idiot Wind." And who, after all that, had kept going.

There are many here among us, good people and sincere music lovers among them, who would rather pass a kidney stone than listen to four hours of Bob Dylan leftovers. But for the rest of us, the power of Dylan's creations is almost overshadowed by the fierceness of his creativity. The sheer volume of good stuff is staggering. It's like that big Picasso show in New York in 1979. They emptied out the whole Metropolitan museum and filled every room with Picasso paintings. After a few hours your brain was smoking. Of course, there were days when Picasso just scribbled a flower on a napkin, stuck a "P." on it and laughed about how much money that napkin was now worth. Dylan's sold us some doodles, too.

But not too many, and not here. Here Dylan seems, more than ever, like Picasso, like John Coltrane. Like he's operating not so much on a higher level as on a different trajectory than other artists. Like the talent moves faster than the man. Hero worship is for children: Dylan the person is not saint or superman. But music is there for anyone to hear—and for all those music anything less than great is to be about it. —Will Flanagan

# From the Dylan Archives, Rough Drafts, Missing Links

By JON PARELES

**E**VERY MODERN MUSICIAN leaves a trail of tape, most of it the scraps of false starts, missed notes and technical flaws; now and then, a whole song is discarded. Only a few performers have spurred the kind of devotion that would make anyone comb through the detritus, but since the 1960's Bob Dylan has been one of them. His official releases were revelatory, his concerts made the studio recordings seem tame, and especially during the 1960's, his songwriting was so prolific that regular albums couldn't contain all of it. As Mr. Dylan cultivated his enigma, fans wanted more.

Every so often, they get it, either by taking chances on bootlegged recordings or waiting for Columbia Records, which owns Mr. Dylan's entire catalogue, to dip into the archives. In 1975, Columbia finally released "The Basement Tapes," which had been recorded in Saugerties, N.Y., by Mr. Dylan and the Band while he was recovering from his 1966 motorcycle accident; in 1985, it released "Biograph," a thematic five-LP set of hits, live recordings and collectors' items.

Now there's more: "The Bootleg Series, Volumes 1-3" (Columbia 47399; all three formats), a new, roughly chronological selection of songs Mr. Dylan either never released, wrote for others, withdrew or reshaped. It's a grab bag with about one CD's worth of keepers amid the deserved rejects.

"The Bootleg Series" doesn't bring any startling new information to Mr. Dylan's collected works. (Among the official ex-bootlegs, it is dwarfed by the casual, profound riddles of "The Basement Tapes," one of the best rock albums ever made.) "The Bootleg Series" is for obsessive fans; it fills in details, reveals misfires and dead ends, and makes public some missing links in Mr. Dylan's artistic evolution. With liner notes that point out sources and resemblances, "The Bootleg Series" demystifies Mr. Dylan, showing that even a genius borrows a lot and works through rough drafts.

It also points up Mr. Dylan's continuing fascination with vengeance and retribution. From early songs like "Who Killed Davey Moore?" and "Seven Curses" to 1980's Christian pronouncements like "Foot of Pride," he has been more likely to distrust and denounce other people than to sympathize with them. Now and then, he drops the venom for a love song dedicated to women who, somehow, never seem to talk back.

The first volume, from Mr. Dylan's days as a coffeehouse guitar-picker in 1961-63, shows him adapting and personalizing old songs. It's a glimpse of a Greenwich Village, where performers would pass around songs they might have heard on a 1930's country-blues album or picked up from a British folk-song anthology. Amid outtakes from "The Free-wheelin' Bob Dylan" and demo tapes he made for his publishers, the first volume includes the song that gave its opening phrase to the melody of "Blowin' in the Wind": "No More Auction Block," a song of freed slaves. In other songs, Mr. Dylan tries out guitar patterns and vocal inflections that would reappear on his official releases.

Mr. Dylan's own versions of "Quit Your Low Down Ways," "Let Me Die in My Footsteps" and "Walkin' Down the Line" are finally, deservedly, in print. There are also dated lesser efforts, like "Talkin' Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues," a version of "The Times They Are a-Changin'" accompanied on piano instead of guitar, and an anomaly Dylan collectors have long prized: "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," a long, unaccompanied poem, a flood of words, that has as much to do with Mr. Dylan's world-shaking ambitions as with Guthrie.

The selection from the mid-1960's is frustrating. From 1964 to 1966, Mr. Dylan transformed rock with visionary lyrics, corrosive singing and his own kind of electric blues. That brief, revolutionary period, when each line seemed to risk everything, was cut short in 1966 by the motorcycle accident, leaving three albums ("Bringing It All Back Home," "Highway 61 Revisited" and "Blonde on Blonde") and memories of fierce live shows (a few selections appeared on "Biograph").

From Mr. Dylan's best years, "The Bootleg Series" delivers mostly duds: a dull solo version of "Subterranean Homesick Blues," a painful waltz version of "Like a Rolling Stone" and a turgid "I'll Keep It With Mine." "Sitting on a Barbed-Wire Fence" is a promising lyric that was abandoned before it got a melody; the backhanded "She's Your Lover Now" is barely more finished. Only "If You Gotta Go, Go Now," briefly released on a single in 1967, and a wry basement-tapes song, "Santa Fe," live up to their vintage.

In later years, Mr. Dylan could still sling epiphanies now and then, and "The Bootleg Series" brings new ones to light: the jealous "Call Letter Blues," recorded in 1974, the raucous "Seven Days" from 1976 and the affectionate yet patronizing "Angelina"

from 1980. But on most of the songs from the 1970's and 1980's, the recordings grow more professional and the singing becomes more mannered and less expressive as the inspiration thins out. In 1975, Mr. Dylan sounded playful in homey songs like "Golden Loom" and "Catfish."

But with his conversion to Christianity in 1979, his imagery grew holier while his singing began to parody itself. The gentle demo version of "Every Grain of Sand" (with a dog barking in the background) and the galloping "You Changed My Life" suggest the pain and confusion that Mr. Dylan's new faith answered, but the clichés pile up.

Mr. Dylan teased listeners on his 1980's albums, tossing a few good songs amid endless throwaways, and a few of his rejects — like a desolate elegy for "Blind Willie McTell" and "Tell Me," a lighthearted singles-bar conversation — outdo songs he chose to release. But where Mr. Dylan's music had fomented generations of imitators, in the 1980's he was imitating them, in a scrapped version of "When the Night Comes Falling From the Sky" that uses E Street Band members to recreate a Bruce Springsteen crescendo and in the U2-style arrangement that marches behind "Series of Dreams."

"The Bootleg Series" scrapes by with just enough worthwhile rediscoveries to tantalize Dylan fans. One question it raises is whether there's other material in the archives that has more spark but might not meet a CD compiler's standards for sound quality. Until Columbia decides to try another set — how about "Bob Dylan Live: 1961-1991"? — fans can either search through real bootlegs or wonder: Is that all there is? □

## Bob Dylan

'BOOTLEG SERIES VOLS 1-3'  
COLUMBIA

If Bob Dylan's more recently recorded output has prompted the suspicion that his lyrical powers may be on the wane, this astonishing treasure trove of previously unavailable material provides a stunning reminder of the sweep and quality of an unmatched artistic career. The 'Bootleg Series' may not be a bootleg, but nor is it your usual retrospective box-set trawl through the artist's already published work. From top to bottom this 3-CD set, close on four hours of it, comprises previously unissued songs, or unissued (and often startlingly different, revelatory) takes of familiar ones. Much has only previously been available on less than hi-fi quality bootlegs and some songs, wrapped in greatness, sur-



face here for the first time.

At last, for instance, we hear 'Farewell Angelina', a gem hitherto only heard through the medium of his erstwhile consort Joan Baez. There's an acoustic 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', a one-verse piano demo of 'Like A Rolling Stone', the legendary 'She's Your Lover Now', not to mention the sublime and oft called-for (not least in these columns) 'Nobody Can Sing The Blues Like Blind Willie McTell'. And then there's 'When The Night Comes Falling' with Sly and Robbie and members of the E Street Band, the gorgeous 'Angelina' (no relation) and, at long, long last, 'Talkin' John Birch Society Blues', the banning of which prompted Dylan's walkout from the Ed Sullivan Show all those years ago. And there's another 50 or so you've probably never heard before spanning the entire career from 1961 to '89. Simply awesome.

Andrew Bell

# Positively Bootleg

◆ BOB DYLAN'S *The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3 (Rare and Unreleased) 1961-1991* (Columbia; 3 CDs, 3 tapes, or 5 LPs) starts simply. In a Minnesota hotel room in 1961, the 20-year-old Dylan, sounding like one of Woody Guthrie's lost sons, sings a derivative ramblin'-gamblin' folk ballad called "Hard Times in New York Town" in a flat, nasal voice. But over the course of 57 more songs—rare studio and live recordings, all of them previously unissued and many long considered classics among collectors of bootleg tapes—the kid grows up. We hear him gain confidence as a traditional folksinger, write angry topical songs, gingerly branch out into more personal themes, discover the bracing electricity of rock & roll, take it to its neurotic brink, retreat in confusion, renew his sense of purpose, discover the Lord, and spend the past 10 or so years in an often uninspired search for the Muse.

The story has been told on records before, through the career-spanning songs on the 1985 Dylan box *Biograph*. But with its deluge of unheard tracks and alternate versions of old favorites, *The Bootleg Series* freshens the tale. To be sure, the idea of a Dylan rarity doesn't have quite the from-the-mount aura it once did, especially given his erratic output of the past decade. *The Bootleg Series*, though, makes one appreciate this strange, charismatic monument all over again. Gems tumble out one after another, and before you know it you barely remember Dylan's puzzling, in-a-fog cameo at this year's Grammys.

As you might expect, many of the album's stunners come from the early '60s: self-righteous protest songs ("Who Killed Davey Moore?" and "When the Ship Comes In"), irisky white-boy blues ("Quit Your Low Down Ways"), hootenanny humor ("Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues"). What you may *not* expect is the high quality of the outtakes from his controversial 1979-83 born-again phase. On bristling tracks such as the pop-gospel "You Changed My Life" and the raunchy blues "Need a Woman," both from 1981, Dylan holds desperately onto his faded genius with both hands and succeeds, despite a voice that's clearly the worse for wear. The same goes for the *Infidels* outtake "Blind Willie McTell," a spare, apocalyptic chronicle of a decaying planet that reveals Dylan's continued flashes of insight, if not his decision-making skills regarding his own records.



The throbbing heart of this edition of *The Bootleg Series* (future volumes are planned) is its middle third. Spanning 1963 to '74, its 20 songs vividly return you to a time when Dylan walked it like he talked it: cool, distanced, sardonic, yet charged with seething emotions. The gentle acoustic balladeer of "Mama, You Been on My Mind" (1964) gives way to the scathing folk rocker of "She's Your Lover Now," a 1966 *Blonde on Blonde* outtake that captures Dylan in all his snide glory. Finally, there are alternate versions of songs from the 1974 *Blood on the Tracks* sessions. On that album both "Idiot Wind" and "Tangled Up in Blue" are bitter and angry—recorded bile. In these earlier takes the songs about failed relationships sound sad and resigned, yet they're every bit as powerful as the versions we already know. The results are revelatory—like the bulk of *The Bootleg Series* itself. **A**

—David Browne

# Dylan discs for the record

By LEE JESKE

**I**N 1969 — while Bob Dylan, then 28, sat in semi-retirement in Woodstock, N.Y., (recovering, they said, from a 1967 motorcycle accident) — a cheesy-looking double album called "The Great White Wonder" was surreptitiously released.

Sold in the back bins of record shops, available in a blank white sleeve, "The Great White Wonder" was a treasure trove for Dylan fans, whose habits had been unfed since 1966's landmark "Blonde on Blonde."

"The Great White Wonder" contained remarkable recordings of Dylan circa 1962 — singing old folk songs and several fine unreleased originals — and a slab of the rumored "basement tapes," new Dylan songs recorded in Woodstock with a group that was about to make a splash as The Band.

The album created an industry — record bootlegging — and set Dylan fans on the trail of a seemingly endless supply of illicit recordings: more "basement tapes," dozens of unreleased early Dylan originals, and hours of live recordings.

This week, Bob Dylan is bringing those bootlegs all back home.

"Bob Dylan: The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991" — a three-CD, 58-song set — is out on Columbia. It's the third time Dylan has bootlegged the bootleggers: "The Basement Tapes" came out in 1975 and the 1985 career retrospective, "Biograph," included a smattering of rarities.

For Dylan collectors, this new set offers dozens of old friends in the best possible sound; for those new to the material, it adds further proof of Bob Dylan's singular genius, particularly in those five prolific years before his motorcycle went into its skid.

Despite the "1961-1991" in the title, this chronological set doesn't attempt revisionist history, doesn't try to make the case that the Dylan of the past 20 years has often approached the brilliance of the Dylan of the '60s.

The first 34 tracks — 23 unreleased Dylan originals, five alternate takes and six traditional folk songs — were recorded in just over four years, from late '61 to early '66. The final 24 songs — 15 originals and 7 alternates — cover the past 25 years.

There are few surprises here, even for those who don't know the bootlegs: most of the lyrics are in the book "Bob Dylan: Lyrics 1962-1985." But that doesn't make the early material any less vibrant.

Dylan was a great interpreter of folk music in those years, and his own songs sprang naturally from the mix of wit and indignation that informed the songs of his idol, Woody Guthrie.



**WHITE WONDER:** Dylan the folk musician in 1963.

There's the flashing sense of humor (since, apparently, lost) of "Talkin' John Birch Society Blues" and "Rambling, Gambling Willie." There are blood-eyed protest songs, including "Who Killed Davey Moore?" (about a boxer killed in the ring), "The Walls of Red Wing" (about a hellish reform school) and "Let Me Die in My Footsteps."

And there are love songs, among them the sad and beautiful "Mama, You Been on My Mind." There's even a well-turned poem, "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie."

With informative liner notes by Dylan authority John Bauldie — who identifies the traditional folk melodies Dylan appropriated for his original songs — the acoustic material should have been given its own set.

Since plans are for this series to continue (with live material, including the galvanizing 1966 Royal Albert Hall concert with The Band, promised next), it would have made sense to be less wide-ranging here. There are dozens of still-unreleased songs from those early years and this first set would have done well to narrow its scope to early, acoustic Dylan. Ultimately, it's unfocused.

A second set could have covered, say, 1966-1976 (from "Blonde on Blonde" to the "Rolling Thunder Revue"), with a third set devoted to the later material, which does contain a handful of gems, notably the lovely "Blind Willie McTell."

The dozen career-spanning alternate takes here — even the surprising snippet of "Like a Rolling Stone" in waltz-time — are interesting but not terribly revealing; none are as good as the released versions and their appeal is mainly to collectors.

Dylan, always reluctant to look backward, obviously didn't want to concentrate solely on his distant past. Still, the set puts him in the awkward position he's been in for years, having his early work compared to his recent work.

It doesn't hold up *as* in some ways, he was so much older then; he's younger than that now.

# Bob Dylan Revisited: Bootlegs and Out-Takes

A three-volume set makes available dozens of recordings never before formally released

By Wayne Robins  
STAFF WRITER

**F**OR THOSE of us who attended a small upstate college a few miles from where Bob Dylan had retreated after a near-fatal 1966 motorcycle accident, the singer and songwriter cast an almost supernatural presence. The "pump" that didn't work because "the vandals took the handle" from "Subterranean Homesick Blues" was thought to be oh our campus, where there had been said to be intermittent Dylan-sightings in previous years.

A typical smoke-filled, late-night dorm-room hull session might veer off toward metaphysical ruminations about The Dyl. Suppose there were an alternate universe, we wondered, another dimension where everything was similar to ours but not quite the same. Might there be another Dylan, with a whole bunch of Dylan songs we had never heard? (In fact, people were still wondering that last month after Dylan's less-than-lucid performance on the Grammy awards show.)

The release this week of "Bob Dylan: The Bootleg Series (Rare and Unreleased) Volumes 1-3" (Columbia) is in some ways that dorm fantasy come true. The three-CD or three-cassette set covering the entire span of his 30-year career makes legally available for the first time dozens of Dylan recordings that for some reason or another were never formally released. There are out-takes, live performances, song-writing demos, rehearsal tapes and alternative versions of 58 Dylan songs, some well-known, others rarely heard before. Some of them will be familiar to those who've collected black-market Dylan bootleg albums over the years (hence the title). But for those who were not part of the Dylan underground music industry for the past few decades, "The Bootleg Series" is a treasure trove.

The series runs in chronological order, and for me the most alluring recordings are among the earliest. Dylan displays both a scathing wit ("Talkin' Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues") and compassion for the dispossessed that were to be the hallmarks of his best work. "No More Auction Block" (recorded live at Greenwich Village's Gaslight Cafe in 1962) was an adaptation of a 19th-Century Canadian abolitionist song on which Dylan later based the structure of "Blowin' in the Wind." On a southern prison song, "He Was a Friend of Mine," Dylan displayed an innate affinity for rural blues with a simple, supple guitar style and unaffected singing. Years later The Byrds would do their own adaptation of Dylan's version of "He Was a Friend of Mine" and turn it into a



Dylan the Guthrieque troubador in a 1963 performance

tribute to the slain John F. Kennedy.

The most legendary of Dylan's previously hard-to-find early songs may have been "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues." The "talking blues" style was a good fit for Dylan's wry, recitative twang of a voice — in this mode he sounds like Harmonica Frank Floyd, the former carnival barker turned country-blues singer. And it allows the singer (or "talker") to editorialize with sly asides. "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues" mocked the ultra-right wing organization that believed America was "better dead than red" and whose members imagined Communists under every bed. With mocking hyperbole, the Bircher in "Paranoid Blues" is shocked to find that there's red in the American flag, and suggests that even Betsy Ross was a Commie. The version here was recorded live at Carnegie Hall in 1963. (There's also a very brief "Talkin' Hava Negelelah Blues," which may be Dylan's only

early allusion to his Jewish heritage).

Dylan was also scheduled to sing "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues" on the Ed Sullivan show, apparently with Sullivan's encouragement. But a network censor nixed it, and it was also pulled from "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" on which it was once scheduled to appear.

The package does not neglect Dylan's most famous songs. There's a piano version of "The Times They Are A-Changin'" that makes you grateful that Dylan's idol was guitar-strumming Woody Guthrie and not Vladimir Horowitz.

Other familiar songs in alternate versions include an acoustic "Subterranean Homesick Blues," on which Dylan hadn't yet mastered the rapid-fire phrasing of what would become his first great rock-and-roll record, and a short rehearsal rendition of "Like a Rolling Stone." Better: a reckless and rollicking "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry" that cuts the one that made it onto "Highway 61 Revisited." And there's an excellent rocker called "Sitting on a Barbed Wire Fence" from those 1965 "Highway 61" sessions.

There are some out-takes from Dylan's famed 1967 "Basement Tapes" with The Band (including "I Shall Be Released"), though the best of that material has been released on the essential "Basement Tapes" album. (A noteworthy 1966 concert by Dylan with The Band — when they were known as The Hawks — at London's Royal Albert Hall will also be released in this series.)

The final disc is spotty: I don't know many people licking their chops waiting to hear out-takes from "Infidels," though a tribute to blues singer Blind Willie McTell has its modest charm. But there are two great tunes that didn't make the final cut on the 1975

"Desire" album: The mystical "Golden Loom" and the wacky country blues "Catfish," a tribute to the peerless powers of baseball pitcher Catfish Hunter.

**T**HE SET FEATURES a booklet with ample track-by-track information by collector John Bauldie that is useful when it sticks to the facts and sycophantic when it comes to evaluation. The "Bootleg" series shouldn't cause too much revisionism about Dylan. But as a supplement to his dozens of other albums, it should confirm Dylan's stature, especially during his compulsively productive early years. It shows the breadth of his musical development, from Guthrieque troubadour to rock poet to country gentleman to hoary preacher to rock-and-roll elder. And even the secondary songs here seem ripe for covering by a new generation of artists. //

# SOME FRESH TRACKS FOR DYLAN HUNTERS

By **DAVID HINCKLEY**

Daily News Staff Writer

## BOB DYLAN

"The Bootleg Series Vol. 1-3" (CBS)

★★★★

It took CBS Records and maybe Bob Dylan himself a long time to accept the truth, and they still haven't taken it all the way. But the release of these 58 previously unissued tracks suggests someone has finally admitted the vast and long-running underground market in Dylan outtakes, live tapes, unreleased tunes and general noodlings isn't going to go away, because it reflects something

## PLAYTIME

about both Dylan's music and his fans.

It's good and they like it.

In the same way Dylan concerts are often brilliant because they change songs around or pull new songs from left field, these "bootleg" recordings are striking in scope and execution.

If there were any doubt Dylan is the minstrel of this age, these tapes erase it. No living performer begins to approach the range of material Dylan has sung, and if he is not the definitive performer in each genre, he respects all of it. For all the remoteness he may cultivate, he never sings down to the music.

These three CDs are the beginning of a series CBS says will eventually include other material obscure and famous, including the 1966 British concerts with the Band, which remain Dylan's most powerful live work.

This is wonderful news. But it's not being done purely for artistry or altruism. It's being done because much of this stuff is out there already on bootleg albums, tapes and CDs, with increasingly good

sound quality. Of the first 34 songs here, covering 1961-66, 31 are available on the 10-LP bootleg set "10 of Swords," with only slight difference in sound quality.

But then, history isn't the story here. It's the music, which takes Dylan from the breezy early-'60s folk lament "Hard Times in New York Town" up through the strong "Series of Dreams," an outtake from the recent "Oh Mercy" album.

The first half of the tracks are almost all solo acoustic, and lean toward his more melodic work, from the instrumental rag "Cough Song" to '30s-rooted country folk like "Only a Hobo" and "Man on the Street," a reworking of "Tramp on the Street."

As he soaked up folk material, though, he was also starting to work out his own voice — and several of these tunes are so good the listener must wonder why they have remained obscure: the anthemic "Let Me Die in My Footsteps," the desperately bleak "Mama You Been on My Mind," "Farewell Angelina."

"Angelina" is a crown jewel here, a tune previously known only from Joan Baez' version amid rumors Dylan never sung it at all.

Clearly he did, not only with rearranged words, but

with another whole verse. It's a masterful song, kin perhaps to "Don't Think Twice."

There are only a couple of surprises like that — "Wallflower," which sounds much like the Doug Sahm take, is another welcome rarity — and much of the set is comprised of alternate takes or early working versions of tunes like "Idiot Wind" (more pensive lyrics and tone), "When the Ship Comes In" (faster, more country), "Like a Rolling Stone" (much slower) and "Every Grain of Sand." "Sand" is slowly and rightly being recognized as one of Dylan's finest songs, though it committed the sin of being written after 1975.

It will be said that this is a random collection rather than a coherent work, and anything that spans "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues" and the bluesy, reflective "Blind Willie McTell" — a Dylan legend that may be a trifle overrated — clearly covers a lot of ground.

But that's exactly the point — and that's exactly why it does work as a package, and work splendidly. It's not as comprehensive as collectors would like and it may include some tunes Dylan himself would prefer to forget, but whatever the style, whatever the genesis, Dylan himself is the thread that ties everything together.

His use of words, his sense of melody and rhythm, his ability to enhance a song by the way he sings it. Simple, basic stuff he consistently does better than almost anyone. John Bauldie's liner notes are a first-rate complement to first-rate music, which is a must for anyone who likes Dylan and a nice package even for tape and bootleg collectors who will already have almost all of it.

*Simple, basic  
stuff he  
consistently  
does better than  
almost anyone.*

# Back pages in a box

Charles Shaar Murray

**W**HAT IS the ultimate badge of status for the rock star who has everything? Having a guitar named after you helps — at Eric Clapton's recent series of Blues Evenings at the Royal Albert Hall, four of the five featured guitarists (Robert Cray, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy and Clapton himself) had their own "signature model" Fender guitars — but the ultimate Medal Of Honour for long and faithful service is one's very own boxed set.

No matter that three (or even four) compact discs, each containing well over an hour of music, can be squeezed into a simple, unpretentious double jewel-case; no self-respecting wrinkly rocker can be fully accredited as an authentic Great Survivor or Croaked Legend without the massive weight of excess packaging,

complete with mandatory booklet, that makes up one of those LP-shaped boxes.

Bob Dylan deserves this dubious honour rather more than most: massively influenced in his youth by Woody Guthrie's leftist humanism and Arthur Rimbaud's linguistic pyrotechnics, he injected both politics and poetry into the pop/rock mainstream while providing perpetual reassurance for would-be rock singers whose friends had always told them that they couldn't sing.

The present collection compiles 58 of the prolific honker's unreleased recordings, from a living-room tape recorded before his debut album to a remainder from his recent "masterpiece" "Oh Mercy"; much of it compares remarkably well with the real-world equivalents which actually

made it into the marketplace. Predictably, the quality begins to drop after 1975 (the year of the last *real* masterpiece: "Blood On The Tracks"), but even the dreary years provide one astonishing *tour de force* in the form of "Blind Willie McTell", a tribute to the late blues singer which is so rich and affecting that it might even have saved "Infidels", the tepid album for which it was originally recorded.

The brutal fact remains that what Bob Dylan was throwing away in 1966 is more powerful than what he's putting out now; but the scale and nature of Dylan's achievement is such that he could (and probably will) make lousy records for the rest of his life without diminishing the reputation he earned at the height of his powers. He is his own monument.

## THE BOOTLEG SERIES

(Volumes 1-3 Rare and Unreleased) — BOB DYLAN

★ **THESE** days Bob Dylan — in his prime, rock's greatest-ever songwriter — is just a sad, shambling parody of himself.

But now some of his glories can be re-lived on a five-album set made up of rare songs previously unavailable — except on bootleg.

There are 58 songs in all, many of them from his golden days. Among the best are *Mama You've Been On My Mind*, *I'll Keep It With Mine*, *Who Killed Davey Moore* and *Farewell Angelina*.

The bad news is this collection will cost you £42. But it's still a must for any serious fan.





# “The Bootleg Series volumes 1-3”

CLINTON HEYLIN PREVIEWS A REMARKABLE SET OF UNISSUED DYLAN RECORDINGS



Barry Plummer

In November 1985, CBS issued a 5-LP or 3-CD retrospective of Bob Dylan's career entitled "Biograph". It came at a time when Dylan's commercial standing was in marked decline. His June release, "Empire Burlesque", had become only the second Dylan studio album since "Another Side" (1964) to fail to dent the Top 30. "Biograph" was a cornucopia of important unissued songs, plus tired resurrections of official 'classics' spanning Dylan's 25-year career, and the odd smattering of live highlights from the peak tours of 1966, 1975 and 1981.

Wrapped up in a chunky box, complete with Bob's own ruminations on a kaleidoscopic career and even an observation or two on the songs in the package, "Biograph" became only the second such boxed-set to crack the 'Billboard' Top 50 (the other being the 8-LP "Elvis Aron Presley"). Indeed, it peaked at the same position as "Empire Burlesque" (No. 33) and remained on the charts some five weeks longer — an astonishing achievement given the set's relative expense, and the fact that it featured only 16 previously unreleased recordings amongst its 53 cuts.

Though Dylan had been responsible for some of the most important innovations in rock history, never had he so unconsciously inspired a revolution as he did with "Biograph". There had been boxed retrospectives before, though corporate mentality usually required that the artist be dead, but it was this compilation which spawned a flood of similar anthologies which have entailed the complete repackaging of rock's brief history.

"Biograph" was partly a fluke. The fact is that only through a series of miscalculations and poor marketing decisions was the set released at the birth of the CD revolution, which undoubtedly played a large part in its success. On CD, "Biograph" cost only marginally more than the vinyl version.

Ironically, the set was never planned with CD in mind: "Its compiler, Jeff Rosen, had attempted to group material together on LP sides, based on some loose criteria (acoustic, love songs, cranked-up R&R, etc.). This coherence was lost on CD — as were two tracks pulled at the last minute to squeeze the 53 songs onto three CDs ("Medicine Sunday" and "If You Gotta Go Go Now", both included on the new set).

"Biograph" had first been mooted as a possible release as far back as March 1983, when Dave Marsh was commissioned to write sleeve-notes. The finished version, apart from the addition of a demo of "Forever Young" and the two deleted tracks, corresponded exactly to the original track listing. It would have been released in the fall of 1984, before the CD boom, if it hadn't been for the late decision to issue a leaden and shambolic album from Dylan's 1984 European tour instead ("Real Live").

And so to 1990, and Columbia's return to pre-eminence in the boxed-set retrospective stakes. In the interim, other major labels had realised that you could sell repackages by artists not currently enjoying mainstream success: for instance, Atlantic managed to garner considerable plaudits and sales for Rob Bowman's superb three-CD "Otis Redding Story" in 1987 (for which Bowman was nominated for a Grammy). All that was really required

for such a set was a halfway decent span of time (say a decade) when Artist X was a creative force — hence David Bowie ("Sound & Vision"), the Stones (London's shameful "Singles Collection"), Eric Clapton ("Crossroads") and the Band ("To Kingdom Come") have all had retros roll off the presses with encouraging sales.

At this point Columbia/CBS began to upgrade their image in terms of their CD reissues of back catalogue — damaged by such debacles as having to master the most revered album in their archive, "Blonde On Blonde", four times and release it three times before getting the full album on CD, and still using a tape several generations down from either the stereo or mono masters of the original vinyl releases. *ICE* magazine reported in May 1990: "CBS continue to make serious strides in improving its catalog reissue program on CD, which was stung by criticism throughout most of the Eighties for its lack of creativity. Upcoming special projects due later this year include a single-disc Hollies collection, a double-CD retrospective on Poco, a triple-CD ELO package and probably a four-CD Byrds boxed set. Sources promise that each will be special in terms of packaging, sound quality and rare tracks."

It was the four-CD Byrds box and the two-CD Robert Johnson set which really launched Columbia's new image — both packaged in a 12" x 6" box set with the prerequisite booklet containing notes, a discography, and a critical perspective. Columbia ignored the industry ridicule that greeted the concept of the 12" x 6" boxed set, which didn't sit comfortably alongside other LP or CD packages.

### MISUNDERSTANDING

They also showed a worrying misunderstanding of the CD medium with both sets. Robert Johnson only ever recorded at two batches of sessions, and of the 41 songs featured on "The Complete Recordings", 22 were recorded in November 1936, 19 in June 1937. The logical divide between the two CDs would be the obvious one between the two batches of sessions. Instead Columbia simply divided the songs down the middle and devised a 20/21 split, leaving two of the November 1936 cuts on the June 1937 CD.

A far greater disservice was performed on the otherwise exemplary Byrds set. The most welcome inclusions there were the Gran Parsons vocal takes of three songs from the "Sweetheart Of The Rodeo" sessions, long thought destroyed. What with the inclusion of three excellent out-takes from the same sessions, and five of the original album's cuts, it would be fair to imagine that the compilers had intended to present an alternate version of what is often quoted as the first country-rock album. But any sense of this 'concept' has been lost by neatly dividing these 11 products of the "Sweetheart" sessions over two CDs.

Which finally brings us to Columbia's eagerly awaited March 1991 release of Bob Dylan's three-CD boxed set, "The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3", which is entirely composed of previously unreleased material. Sadly, this release is the result of some of the most ludicrous and ill-considered thinking that can have been brought to bear on a major artist's work.

When the possibility of a further Dylan boxed-set was first reported in the premier Dylan fanzine, 'The Telegraph', in May last year, it was suggested that there could be anything up to ten albums' worth of unreleased songs issued and that the set was planned to coincide with Dylan's 50th birthday this May. A 10-CD set was never remotely practical, and it soon devolved into a four-CD boxed set along the lines of the Byrds' box, but still entirely composed of unreleased material.

Now it is inevitable that the record companies will soon have issued chunky retrospectives of all the first-rung artists they

have in mind, so the future for such sets either lies with second-rung artists or second-time-around sets for major artists, those who justify a companion set which caters more for the collector's market. The sets to date have been received as mixed blessings by collectors because they rightly see them as an expensive way of obtaining only a scattering of unissued material, the rest duplicating material they already own.

No serious Bowie fan needs the bulk of the songs on the "Sound & Vision" set, but he has to purchase it to obtain a handful of unissued tracks which might have better used as bonus cuts on Bowie's CD transfers. What collectors crave are sets which collect the best of an artist's unissued work — particularly when, like Dylan and Bruce Springsteen, they are notorious for leaving some of their very best songs off their official albums. So one hoped that the Dylan "Bootleg Series" would offer the collector the sort of set that "Biograph" was never going to be.

Sadly, despite the undoubted worth of much that is included in the final "Bootleg Series", it is not the set it should be. When the tentative track listing filtered out early this year, hardcore Dylan fans were delighted that the bulk of Dylan's worthwhile unissued studio material had been included on the four-CD set. The essential periods in Dylan's unreleased work were all represented — the folk-rock era, the "Blood On The Tracks"/"Desire" return to form, and his early Eighties trio of albums that might have been, "Shot Of Love", "Infidels" and "Empire Burlesque".

The only major omissions were a trio of essential Dylan compositions from his "Basement Tapes" sessions with the Band ("I'm Not There", "Sign On The Cross" and "All You Have To Do Is Dream"), a couple of particularly important 1980 demos (the seven-verse "Yonder Comes Sin" and the original "Caribbean Wind") and the "Empire Burlesque" out-take of "Brownsville Girl", originally entitled "New Danville Girl".

Though there was heavy emphasis in the set on minor songs which had been omitted from Dylan's early albums simply for being inferior to the released songs, the four-CD box seemed manna from heaven, particularly after the way that Columbia and Robbie Robertson had so badly represented the "Basement Tapes" on the 1975 double set, and the lack of adequate unissued songs or alternate live performances of official songs on 1971's "More Greatest Hits" or 1985's "Biograph".

It was not to be. As January became February, each day seemed to bring fresh details of songs being cut, until finally the compiler came clean, "The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-4" was now "Volumes 1-3". The set was also being rush released in early March to coincide with the presentation of a lifetime achievement award to Dylan at the February 20th Grammy Awards ceremony in New York. No longer a celebration of 50 years on this earth or even 30 years on Columbia, though CBS seems to be trying to convince us March 1991 is the anniversary of Dylan's CBS signing even if it was really October when he made his first recordings for them, "The Bootleg Series" is a boxed-set out of time.

Do the marketing minions at Columbia-Sony seriously imagine a casual purchaser seeing Dylan on the Grammy Awards and then convincing himself that he needs a 3-CD set of unreleased songs? Why have the powers-that-be decided to issue a 3-CD set in preference to four? The reason is apparently price. Sony marketing wisdom is that a 3-CD set at just under \$40 rather than a 4-CD set at just over \$50 will sell twice as many copies.

What sort of mentality cannot realise that if you are prepared to buy a 3-CD set of wholly unreleased material by an artist, you are prepared to buy four? The set is meant to represent Dylan's great songs and alternate studio

performances; such a set is entirely geared towards the collector and therefore should retain its internal integrity; and collectors are sick and tired of having people with no credibility as authorities or real fans of the music deciding for them what they can and cannot hear. As Paul Cable wrote back in 1978 about the scale of Dylan bootlegging, "With Dylan it could be argued that a record company which omits 'I Shall Be Released' and 'Mighty Quinn' from 'The Basement Tapes' album deserves anything it gets."

So what have Dylan fans lost with the aborting of "Bootleg Series Volume 4"? Well, to paraphrase Mr Cable, how can one feel towards any record company which omits the exquisite "Dink's Blues" (from the December 1961 hotel tape), "I Heard That Lonesome Whistle" ("Freewheelin'" out-take), "Guess I'm Doing Fine" (Witmark demo, 1964), the alternate "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" (January 1965), a previously uncirculated out-take of "Positively 4th Street", the solo piano version of the sublime "She's Your Lover Now", a "Basement Tapes" out-take called "Silent Weekend", an alternate slower version of "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go", the exuberant "Slow Train Coming" out-take "No Man Righteous (No Not One)", and the Toronto 1980 version of perhaps Dylan's most gorgeous melody this side of "Blood On The Tracks", "Ain't Gonna Go To Hell For Anybody".

Turning to what remains on the set, the early studio out-takes from Dylan's first four acoustic albums, which take up one-and-a-bit CDs, reveal little, and they help to inter Dylan in the early Sixties. Ideally, Dylan's acoustic phase should end at the conclusion of the first CD, as he prepares to record the landmark "Bringing It All Back Home". Instead we have to skip tracks 1-4 to get to the legendary "Farewell Angelina". Similarly, the second CD concludes with the original New York version of "Idiot Wind"; CD No. 3 starts up with another "Blood On The Tracks" out-take. Thought is not the byword for this set.

I am sure that Mr Rosen and the Sony Marketing men will rail at my ingratitude: they issue three CDs of unissued Dylan material, including some of Dylan's greatest ever works (i.e. "Moonshine", "Farewell Angelina", "She's Your Lover Now", "I Shall Be Released", "Angelina", "Blind Willie McTell", "Foot Of Pride" and the original "When The Night Comes Falling"), and all they receive for their troubles is criticism of their efforts. I suspect that this attitude is symptomatic of the problem — the idea that "any scrap thrown to us should be gratefully accepted". Me, I prefer the ethic that goes "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing definitively".

So what are we left with? Well, the breakdown of the 58 songs which make up "The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3" is as follows:

CD #1: (1) "Hard Times In New York Town", from the December 1961 Minneapolis Hotel Tape (actually recorded in Bonnie Beecher's apartment): This is a most baffling intro to the set. An innocuous song based on the traditional "Ketty's Farn", "Hard Times" mines the same vein as "Talkin' New York". Of considerably greater merit from the same 26-song source tape are "Dink's Song" (cut from this set at the last minute), "Baby Please Don't Go", "Wade In The Water", "Black Cross" and one of Dylan's finest early songs, "I Was Young When I Left Home".

(2) "He Was A Friend Of Mine": A "Bob Dylan" out-take, which doubles as a Leeds Music demo, this adaptation of a traditional song has been repeatedly bootlegged, and was later arranged by the Byrds for their 'tribute' to JFK.

(3) "Man On The Street": This is another "Bob Dylan" out-take which, unless it is also a Leeds Music demo, is previously unheard. An early Dylan composition, the theme of this song is better explored in the "Times" out-take "Only A Hobo".

(4) "No More Auction Block": A curious inclusion, wonderful as this performance is, this is the traditional song on which the melody of "Blowin' In The Wind" was based. This version is from the oft-bootlegged second Gaslight tape.

(5) "House Carpenter": a third "Bob Dylan" out-take which again has not circulated among collectors before. This was a traditional song, common fare among Village folksingers at the time.

(6) "Talkin' Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues": A "Freewheelin'" out-take and a regular part of Dylan's 1961 repertoire, this is nonetheless a minor work. Rosen has included three talkin' blues on this first CD.

(7) "Let Me Die In My Footsteps": This was omitted from "Freewheelin'" at the last minute during all the tribulations that surrounded the removal of "Talkin' John Birch". It remains one of Dylan's finest anti-war songs, a plea for sanity in a world full of maniacs burrowing underground.

(8) "Ramblin' Gamblin' Willie": Another of the casualties from the original line-up of the "Freewheelin'" album, this is the first in a long tradition of Dylan songs about outlaws. Though a version with bass accompaniment supposedly exists, this is apparently the much-bootlegged version.

(9) "Talkin' Hava Nageilah Blues": An ultra-brief spoof of folk cruises, this essentially consists of Dylan stretching the words "Hava Nageilah" out to 51 seconds.

(10) "Quit Your Low Down Ways": A marvellously exuberant "Freewheelin'" out-take which has been repeatedly bootlegged, notably on the "Talkin' Bear Mountain" album.

(11) "Worried Blues": Another "Freewheelin'" out-take, and a rather good performance again, at least as worthy of inclusion on the original album as "Down The Highway".

(12) "Kingsport Town": This is a Dylan adaptation of the traditional song claimed by Woody Guthrie, "Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Feet" (recorded by Dylan on the May 1960 St. Paul tape). A quaint enough attempt to write something in a deliberately traditional vein, it can hardly have been under serious consideration for "Freewheelin'".

(13) "Walkin' Down The Lane": This is the first of three recordings from the Witmark Music files. As with the Minneapolis Hotel tape, the choice of Witmark demos leaves a little to be desired. Ignoring the heart-breaking "Tomorrow Is A Long Time" (which has the edge on the "More Greatest Hits" version), the world-weary "Guess I'm Doing Fine" and "Long Time Gone", and the early "Halls Brawn", complete with extra verse, we have this perfectly commendable singalong from March 1963.

(14) "Walls Of Red Wing": This is an early 'protest song' about reform schools. Dylan's exact objections to these institutions are ignored, as he prefers to observe what terrible places they must be. Not a major work, this was recorded at the first of the "Times They Are A-Changin'" sessions.

(15) "Paths Of Victory": Another "Times" out-take, this is one of Dylan's singalong-at-civil-rights-meetings songs, with a healthy dose of "we shall prevail" thrown in for good measure.

(16) "Talkin' John Birch Society Blues": The legendary song which resulted in Dylan stalking off the Ed Sullivan Show and CBS pulling the original "Freewheelin'" (at least so the myth goes!), this is an inevitable choice for this set — albeit not in this version, which is not the studio cut but a live version from the October 1963 Carnegie Hall show.

(17) "Who Killed Davey Moore?": A second cut from the Carnegie Hall, and a lovely performance, but this remains one of Dylan's most trite protest songs. Curiously it was a perennial favourite at concerts throughout 1963 and 1964.

(18) "Only A Hobo": Based on the traditional "Poor Miner's Lament", this is one of Dylan's finer 1963 compositions and this "Times" out-take certainly warrants its place on the set.

(19) "Moonshiner": This is the absolute highlight of the first CD. It's a traditional song, which presumably explains its omission from the "Times" LP, and Dylan assumes a world-weariness which is utterly convincing. As Paul Cable once wrote of this performance, "no-one could say Dylan cannot sing after hearing this".

(20) "When The Ship Comes In": This piano demo recorded for Witmark Music is an early version of the song, patently inferior to either the Carnegie Hall '63 version or the official take. A baffling inclusion.

(21) "The Times They Are A-Changin'": A second Witmark piano demo recorded at the same time as "When The Ship Comes In" (September 1963), and of only marginally greater worth.

(22) "Last Thoughts On Woody Guthrie": As the one and only instance of Dylan reading a poem live, this certainly deserves inclusion on the set, though it is no great shakes performance-wise, coming from the April 1963 New York Town Hall show. This could have concluded a circular journey if CD #1 had opened with Dylan's December 1961 "Black Cross" monologue.

CD # 2: (23) "Seven Curses": CD #2 of a three-CD set, and we are barely two years into Dylan's 30-year recording career! "Seven Curses" is a "Times" out-take, presumably from the August 1963 sessions. Again based on a trad song, possibly entitled "Anathea", this is one of Dylan's finest early works, de-

spite reworking the "judge so cruel" theme of "Percy's Song", which was recorded at the same time and finally issued on "Biograph".

(24) "Eternal Circle": Presumably taped in October 1963 at the last of the "Times" sessions, this represented a new type of Dylan song, heralding the hymnic feel of "Lay Down Your Weary Tune", "Chimes Of Freedom" and "Mr Tambourine Man". Sadly a slightly weary vocal lets this otherwise lovely song down.

(25) "Suze (The Cough Song)": This is perhaps the most baffling inclusion on the entire set. "Suze" has long been rumoured as a CBS out-take, so how disappointing that it should turn out to be what has long been known as "The Cough Song". In fact, this two-minute instrumental is a rendition of Jimmy Tarlton's "Mexican Rag" — and not a very good one at that. There has been considerable debate about which session this comes from, though it sounds like a further "Times" out-take.

(26) "Mama You Been On My Mind" is well-known from Joan Baez's version. Dylan's, needless to say, is superior, and dates from the "Another Side" session in June 1964. Though a piano take exists, Rosen has preferred the guitar version and I cannot argue with his choice. It's a lovely song, and one Dylan has performed in concert as recently as last year.

(27) "Farewell Angelina" is one of the great surprises and delights of the set. Though a Dylan version of one of his classic 1965 compositions had long been rumoured, until now fans have had to resort to playing Baez's version at 33rpm or just imagining how Dylan would perform it. This is an acoustic version, presumably from the "Bringing It All Back Home" sessions, and it is a most welcome addition to Dylan's released catalogue.

(28) "Subterranean Homesick Blues" is another long-rumoured but still surprising inclusion, an acoustic demo of Dylan's first hit single from January 1965. Originally listed by A.J. Weberman as one of two acoustic demos recorded prior to the "Bringing It All Back Home" sessions (the other being "She Belongs To Me"), it was this version from which early Dylan songbooks transcribed the song.

(29) "If You Gotta Go, Go Now": This was originally due for inclusion on "Biograph", while an alternate version was issued in Ban-elux countries as a single in 1967. It derives from the "Bringing It All Back Home" sessions in January 1965.

(30) "Sitting On A Barbed Wire Fence" is an often-bootlegged "Highway 61" out-take. Though Dylan insists it is "just a riff", it conveys the sense of exploration and inspiration that surrounded these historic sessions.

(31) "Like A Rolling Stone": A one-verse, 3/4 time first take of perhaps Dylan's most famous song, this incomplete version is apparently one of three such incomplete takes recorded at the June 15th 1965 session before Dylan and the other musicians recorded just one complete version — the released one. This take was previously not even rumoured to exist.

(32) "It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry": It is well-known that Dylan cut a fast version of this song, under the title "Phantom Engineer", prior to recording the slow version on "Highway 61". This is not the much-bootlegged fast version, however, but a previously uncirculated alternate 'slow' version of the song.

(33) "I'll Keep It With Mine" is as close to a "Blonde On Blonde" out-take as Jeff Rosen could find. It has long been a mystery why this song's lyrics were included in the "Blonde On Blonde" section of Dylan's collected "Writings And Drawings", as the "Biograph" version clearly dated from the "Bringing It All Back Home" sessions.

(34) "She's Your Lover Now": The inclusion of the legendary (and incomplete) electric version of perhaps Dylan's most vitriolic song, again from the January 1966 sessions, presumably once and for all precludes the possibility that a complete electric take exists. (The piano-only complete take was scheduled for the original 4-CD version of this set.)

(35) "I Shall Be Released" is finally released in its original "Basement Tapes" form, after its omission from three earlier opportunities — "More Greatest Hits", "The Basement Tapes" and "Biograph". Sublime and definitive.

(36) "Santa Fe" is one of five uncirculated "Basement Tapes" Dylan songs which were copyrighted in the early Seventies. "Silent Weekend" was dropped from the final line-up of this set; it remains unheard, as do "All-American Boy", "Wild Wolf" and "Bourbon Street".

(37) "If Not For You" is the May 1970 version with George Harrison, pulled from "New Morning" at the last minute, and justifiably replaced by the superior official cut.

(38) "Wallflower" derives from the "George Jackson" session in November 1971 and is a pleasant enough example of Dylan's country period.

(39) "Nobody 'Cept You" is the long-rumoured but previously uncirculated "Planet Waves" out-take, and proves to be a disappointment after the intensity of the live 1974 versions. A July 1973 demo of this fine song might have been a superior choice.

(40) "Tangled Up In Blue" is the original September 1974 version, with some different lyrics to the LP cut and a somewhat more sedate arrangement, but every bit as worthwhile.

(41) "Call Letter Blues" is again a long-rumoured out-take, this time from "Blood On The Tracks". In fact, the remarkably frank words are set to the tune of none other than "Meet Me In The Morning". Nevertheless this typically intense performance is most welcome.

(42) "Idiot Wind" is a totally different experience from the released version. Cut in September 1974, it boasts radically different lyrics, while the backing lacks the intensity of the more familiar cut — though the bile of Dylan's vocal delivery is perhaps even more chilling.

CD #3: (43) "If You See Her Say Hello" is somewhat out of place, separated from its four fellow "Blood On The Tracks" out-takes, but it's certainly a superior vocal take to the released version. This again dates from September 1974.

(44) "Golden Loom" is a previously uncirculated "Desire" out-take of a song recorded in the late 1970s by Roger McGuinn. Dylan's version features the unmistakable Wyeth/Stoner rhythm section, and is a song of subtle merit.

(45) "Catfish" is another "Desire" out-take, fun in the same way "Rita Mae" was, but otherwise no great shakes; this version hasn't been circulated among collectors before.

(46) "Seven Days": A live-ish version, possibly from rehearsals for the 1976 Rolling Thunder Revue, this is a feisty performance from Dylan. Though Ron Wood produced an unnervingly close Dylan facsimile vocal on his released version, Dylan's not surprisingly has the edge.

(47) "Ye Shall Be Changed": Another three-year leap, and we have reached the "Slow Train" sessions. Though "No Man Righteous" was sadly a victim of the last-minute cuts, we have this long-rumoured out-take intact, featuring a powerful vocal but some theologically dodgy lyrics.

(48) "Every Grain Of Sand": This is where the set starts to hit overdrive! A piano demo from the summer of 1980, recorded with Jennifer Warnes, this version may even challenge the studio version for sheer elegaic beauty.

(49) "You Changed My Life": A "Shot Of Love"-sounding cut which was not copyrighted until 1982, this was the first Dylan song to

suggest serious doubts about his own faith. A most unexpected and welcome inclusion.

(50) "Need A Woman": An impressive Dylan vocal, spunky band performance and clever lyrics fail to disguise a song that, if certainly superior to several cuts on "Shot Of Love", is still one of the lesser out-takes from Dylan's 1981 album.

(51) "Angelina" is a 24-carat masterpiece and should unquestionably have made it onto "Shot Of Love". As a counterpoint to the pathetic "Every Grain Of Sand", this unashamedly apocalyptic tale broods with a vengeance irresistible.

(52) "Someone's Got A Hold On My Heart" is the first of five "Infidels" out-takes which should finally establish what an album that could have been. This is not the bootlegged version but an alternate take of the song that Dylan later cut up into the unsatisfactory "Tight Connection To My Heart". In its original form, it stands as one of Dylan's major Eighties compositions.

(53) "Tell Me" has almost a calypso flavour and the lightness of the song's arrangement has perhaps fooled some fans into ignoring the quality of the lyrics. It's an insidious song which deserves serious consideration and should have sat alongside "Don't Fall Apart On Me Tonight" on "Infidels".

(54) "Lord Protect My Child" is a heartfelt gem of a performance from Dylan and the band, with Mick Taylor taking the instrumental honours. Though it was probably never under serious consideration for "Infidels", it's most welcome here.

(55) "Foot Of Pride" is the first of a trio of songs which, on their own, provide proof that Dylan's creativity survived untouched into the

Eighties. This six-minute kick to the midriff features some of Dylan's most disturbing lines and an exhilarating vocal. This cut was originally due for inclusion on "Infidels".

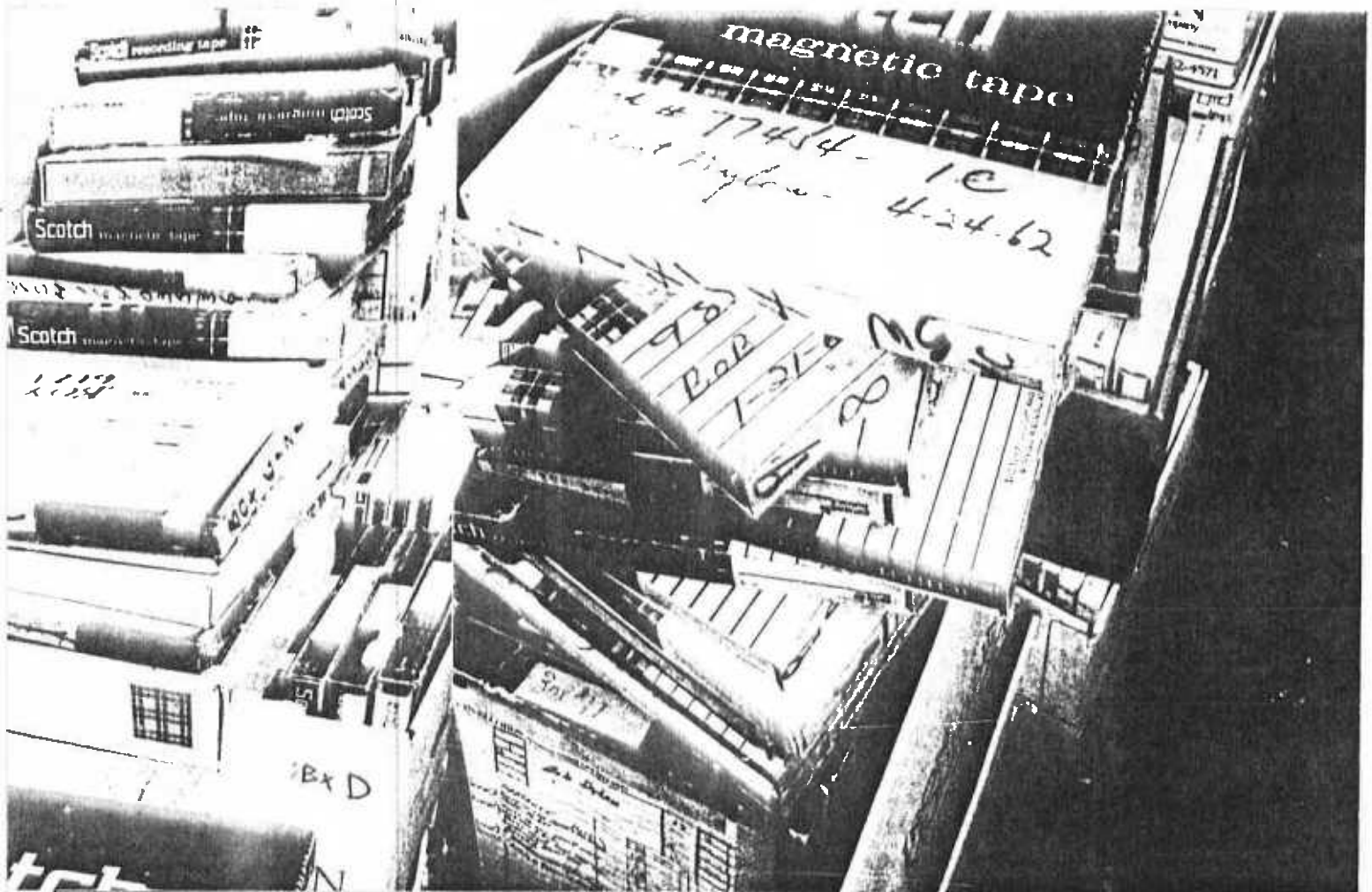
(56) "Blind Willie McTell": The acoustic guitar/piano version of perhaps Dylan's most famous unreleased masterpiece is preferred over the full band version originally scheduled for "Infidels". Suffice to say that whatever superlatives have been lavished on this song, it fully deserves them.

(57) "When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky": The "Empire Burlesque" cut of this song does not in any way prepare the listener for this performance. With a completely different tune, slightly different lyrics, a band featuring the likes of Little Steven providing the backing, and a searing Dylan vocal, this take re-defines this major Dylan composition.

(58) "Series Of Dreams" represents a five-year leap from the heights of 1984's "When The Night . . ." to an "Oh Mercy" out-take, which is also Dylan's new single. A most welcome addition, it is still something of a disappointment that there is so little from the last five years on this set. For starters, where are the four songs recorded with NRBQ for "Under The Red Sky", now presumably consigned to the cutting-room floor?

Finally, to end on an optimistic note, American CD newsletter 'ICE' reports the possibility of a second similar set at some future date, derived entirely from Dylan's live performances. CBS have my permission to contact me and have the job done right this time!

Clinton Heylin's biography of Dylan, "Behind The Shades", is published in May by Viking in England and Summit in the U.S.A. 12.





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Songs Rehearsed In July And August 1990

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ELECTRIC COVERS



EVERYBODY'S ROCKING  
OLD NUMBER NINE  
HIGHSCHOOL HOP  
NOT SUPPOSED TO CARE  
NO MORE ONE MORE TIME  
THIS OLD HOUSE  
HEY LALA  
PEACE IN THE VALLEY  
HOUSE OF GOLD  
ONE IRISH ROVER  
WILLIN  
FRIEND OF THE DEVIL  
PRECIOUS MEMORIES  
FAMILY BIBLE  
LONESOME TOWN  
MAKING BELIEVE  
DON'T PITY ME  
GIVE MY LOVE TO ROSE  
LITTLE QUEEN OF SPADES  
EARLY MORNING RAIN  
CONFIDENTIAL  
WILD WOOD FLOWER  
YOU DON'T KNOW ME  
LEGEND IN MY TIME  
SILVER AND GOLD  
BORDERLINE  
PANCHO AND LEFTY  
LEARN TO LIVE AND LOVE AGAIN  
MOONRIVER  
STAND BY ME  
SOUTHERN MAN  
DOCK OF THE BAY  
WHERE OR WHEN  
THE WATER IS WIDE  
KEY TO THE HIGHWAY  
PEGGY O  
HALLELUJAH

ACOUSTIC COVERS



BARBARA ALLEN  
ON THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN  
WHEN I FIRST CAME TO THIS COUNTRY  
BUFFALO SKINNERS  
DARK AS A DUNGEON  
BOSTON BOY  
RANK STRANGER  
CREOLE GIRL  
EILEEN AROONE  
WAGONEER'S LAD  
WILD MOUNTAIN THYME  
IN THE PINES  
TWO BROTHERS  
MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW  
LONG A GROWIN

ACOUSTIC B.D.



HOLLIS BROWN  
BLOWIN IN THE WIND  
SONG TO WOODY  
TIME'S THEY ARE A CHANGIN  
IT'S ALRIGHT MA  
SHE BELONGS TO ME  
DESOLATION ROW  
LOVE MINUS ZERO  
DON'T THINK TWICE  
MOMMA YOU BEEN ON MY MIND  
BOOTS OF SPANISH LEATHER  
HARD RAIN  
TAMBORINE MAN  
IT AIN'T ME BABE  
TO RAMONA  
GIRL FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY  
HATTIE CAROL  
ONE TOO MANY MORNINGS  
WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE  
GATES OF EDEN  
BABY BLUE

# Songs Rehearsed In July And August 1990

ELECTRIC B.D.

SUBTERRANEAN  
JOHN BROWN  
I'LL REMEMBER YOU  
MEMPHIS  
SIMPLE TWIST OF FATE  
HIGHWAY 61  
SILVIO  
IN THE GARDEN  
ROLLING STONE  
KNOCKING ON HEAVEN'S DOOR  
I SHALL BE RELEASED  
WATCH TOWER  
MAGGIE'S FARM  
SHELTER FROM THE STORM  
JUST LIKE A WOMAN  
MASTER'S OF WAR  
BALLAD OF A THIN MAN  
BIG GIRL NOW  
WHEN DID YOU LEAVE HEAVEN  
SWEET MARIE  
SERVE SOMEBODY  
SHOT OF LOVE  
MAN OF PEACE  
THE MAN IN ME  
ONE MORE CUP OF COFFEE  
JOEY  
I'LL BE YOUR BABY TONIGHT  
THE REAL YOU AT LAST  
A LOT TO LAUGH A TRAIN TO CRY  
I WANT YOU  
TOM THUMB'S BLUES  
QUEEN JANE  
I HAD A DREAM ABOUT YOU BABY  
LEOPARD SKIN PILLBOX HAT  
YOU GO YOUR WAY  
FOURTH TIME AROUND  
SHUT YOUR MOUTH  
TROUBLE  
EVERY GRAIN OF SAND  
TEAR'S OF RAGE  
MAN GAVE NAMES TO ALL THE ANIMALS  
CLEAN CUT KID  
WHAT GOOD AM I?  
DEAD MAN  
EVERYTHING IS BROKEN  
WATCHING THE RIVER FLOW  
RAINY DAY WOMEN  
UNDER THE RED SKY  
LONG BLACK COAT  
T.V. SONG  
WIGGLE WIGGLE  
POSITIVELY FOURTH STREET  
SHOOTING STAR  
I BELIEVE IN YOU

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU  
FOREVER YOUNG  
HEART OF MINE  
TOMMOROW IS A LONG TIME  
NEW MORNING  
IF NOT FOR YOU  
I THREW IT ALL AWAY  
WICKED MESSENGER  
DEAR LANDLORD  
SOMETHING'S BURNING BABY  
SAINT AUGUSTINE  
FRANKIE LEE AND JUDAS PRIEST  
SOONER OR LATER  
SPANISH HARLEM  
MY BACK PAGES  
ETERNAL CIRCLE  
PAINT MY MASTER PIECE  
ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS  
TIGHT CONNECTION  
WATERED DOWN LOVE  
LENNY BRUCE  
WHEN YOU GONNA WAKE UP  
TANGLED UP IN BLUE  
POLITICAL WORLD  
WHAT WAS IT YOU WANTED  
DISEASE OF CONCEIT  
WHEN TEAR DROPS FALL  
RING THEM BELLS  
MOST OF THE TIME  
LAY LADY LAY  
PLEDGING MY TIME  
ONE MORE NIGHT



## FARE THEE WELL

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Even as I get the inserts ready and prepare to post these issues, the Dylan flood continues unabated. Bob is currently touring North America and is about to head for South America and then Europe. Meanwhile the press are gearing up for his 50th birthday. Some, including *The Independent On Sunday* 5/5/91, have celebrated this early. In addition, there are new books and reviews of these are particularly widespread given the attention he is already receiving. On top of all this there is the birthday bash in Leicester.

Therefore there should be plenty for issue four to dwell upon even before the summer begins! As I have not done too well in my predictions for what is in the forthcoming issue so far, I'll remedy that by telling you what will definitely be in Issue Four:

**Handy Dandy: A Game That Anyone Can Play:** An article by JRS. The first of what is hoped to be a permanent column.

**Focus On:** Back by popular demand!

**The Book That Nobody Can Write:** for subscribers only the first instalment in Mark Carter's cartoon history.

**I Read It In A Book:** A new series that was edged out of this issue at the last moment.

**The Box Set Part Two:** More on this landmark release, including detailed looks at individual songs.

**Oh Mercy:** Another in-depth look at this album

Other things that may materialise include a look at the **Oh Mercy** out-takes and a surprise item from the Never Ending Tour. It all depends on what our Bobby gets up to in the next few months, who knows: by September we may be looking at a new album and talking of another UK visit.

There is a short insert with this edition, it is part of an article that will appear in Issue Four. However, since some of the information found its way into the last Isis insert, I thought you'd be as well seeing the lists just now. The exact format of the forthcoming is not known at present as negotiations are at a delicate stage. In the meantime, *The Wicked Messenger* will be commenting on the insert in the near future.

*The Editor*

Andrew Muir  
24a Inglethorpe Street  
Fulham  
London SW6 6NT

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Glasgow Herald  
7th May 1991

## Still Dyl, thank Hank

OUR two most recent competitions prompted floods of entries. The Lanarkshire trio of Gerry Mavs, Mark Hume, and Martin J. Rossi all knew that Teenage Fanclub mainman Norman Blake is also a mainstay of the BMX Bandits: each won a pair of tickets for the Teemes' gig at King Tut's later in the month.

Our other competition sought pithy proof, in 20 words or less, that Hank Williams is better than Bob Dylan. Commendations go to Michael Bruce ("Hank Williams looked better in a white hat (objective criticism or what?)": drifting cowgirl Irene Conway, and Joe Hamilton, who combined the letters of the two artistes' names into a mnemonic that began "Having A Natural Know-How" and ended "Does Youth Listen And Notice".

Fulham expatriate Andrew Muir, who, you might recall, wrote a letter to the Herald's editor asking me to stop calling Dylan Dyl, was one of the rare pro-Dylan voices. It transpires that Andrew runs a Dylan fanzine from his London penthouse. It's called Homer. The Slut. If you're a Dylan completist, you'll like it. You can get the Zimzine from 24a Inglethorpe Street, Fulham, London, SW6 6NT (enclose sae).

An honorable mention, too, for Tommy Riffmaster (surely not, etc, etc) who gave me 20 reasons why Bob Dylan is less good than Hank Williams. These included such facts as Hank being Kenneth Williams' dad; Hank never having had Mick Ronson in his band; and Hank always realising he was in show-business, not philosophy. Tommy also cited Hank's avoidance of an intimate relationship with Joan Baez as evidence of his superior taste.

Yet the winner is Colin MacDonald. His submission ran thusly:

"When the tall pines pine, and the paw-paws paw, you've gotta admit, old Hank said it all."

Hank's collected singles will be in the post sooniest. Colin.

NB: Dylan is still Dyl.



Happy Birthday, Bob