Homer, *the slut*

September 1991 Issue Four

INTRO

Hi, it is approaching the end of September and I'm approaching the end of issue four. It will be a close run thing. I suspect you will receive this in the first week of October. Apologies for the slight tardiness; running the whole thing single-handed is no longer feasible. I've been working on **Homer, *the slut*** flat out since the last issue went out so the only way forward will be for me to call in some of the generous offers of help I've had.

I hope that there is something for everyone in this issue. Mike Wyvill's exemplary **Some Other Kinds Of Songs'** contribution on Miles Davis has become timely for the saddest of reasons. This issue also sees the debut of a regular column, **From Behind A Burning Bush**, which in addition to a high writing standard will provide more than its share of talking points.

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J.R. Stokes and Mark Carter write (& draw!) for **Freewheelin'**, a privately circulated Dylan fanzine.

Production Thanks to: Paul Stevenson for making sure I had no holiday, Soody for Fonts, paper & helping out with **The Wicked Messenger**, Buzby for copying and reassurance, both Buzbies for the back issues, JJ for lots, but especially Emmylou singing **Pancho & Lefty**, Alex and Nadjie for paper, Just Copiers, Pia for letting **Homer, *the slut*** completely take over the flat, and everyone else who helped.

Cuttings and News Thanks to: Mark Carter, Lambchops, John Green, Andy, Mum & Dad, Aunt Nin, Alan Macdonald, Colin Warren, Tim Dunn, Fiona Crawford, Olex and Alive...and everyone else who sent something in. (If it isn't here it is in Issue 5.)

The Warmline

On my home number, 071 385 1114, I update Dylan news and gossip about twice 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, may have a shorter message. However, I try to update mine more often and you can answer back, leaving any info or perhaps a quiz question after my message and the tone. (Hint! Hint!) 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!)

The Editor Andrew Muir, 24a Inglethorpe Street, Fulham, London, U.K., SW6 6NT.

Homer, *the slut* is published four times a year; comprising of three standard issues in January, May, September and a one-off "special", subscriber issue. Issue Five will be the first special – a **BITS & BOBS** extravaganza just in time for Xmas. The media coverage of this year has been overwhelming and there are lots of excellent articles needing a permanent home!

Subscription details are on the inside back cover.

David Pichaske, in his book *The Poetry Of Rock*, categorises it as a "hard-nosed and cold" love song, Dylan is adamant it isn't a love song at all. The third *Focus On* turns the spotlight on perennial concert favourite, **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right.**

Nat Hentoff *Freewheelin'*: Sleeve Notes

Dylan treats **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** differently from most city singers. "A lot of people," he says, "make it sort of a love song – slow and easy-going. But it isn't a love song. It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better. It's as if you were talking to yourself. It's a hard song to sing. I can sing it sometimes, but I ain't that good yet. I don't carry myself yet the way that Big Joe Williams, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to be able to someday, but they're older people. I sometimes am able to do it, but it happens, when it happens, unconsciously. You see, in time, with those older singers, music was a tool – a way to live more, a way to make themselves feel better at certain points. As for me, I can make myself feel better some times, but at other times, it's still hard for me to go to sleep at night." Dylan's accompaniment on this track includes Bruce Langhorne (guitar), George Barnes (bass guitar), Dick Wellstood (piano), Gene Ramey (bass) and Herb Lovelle (drums).

Bob Shelton Bob Dylan: The Charisma Kid Cavalier, July 1965

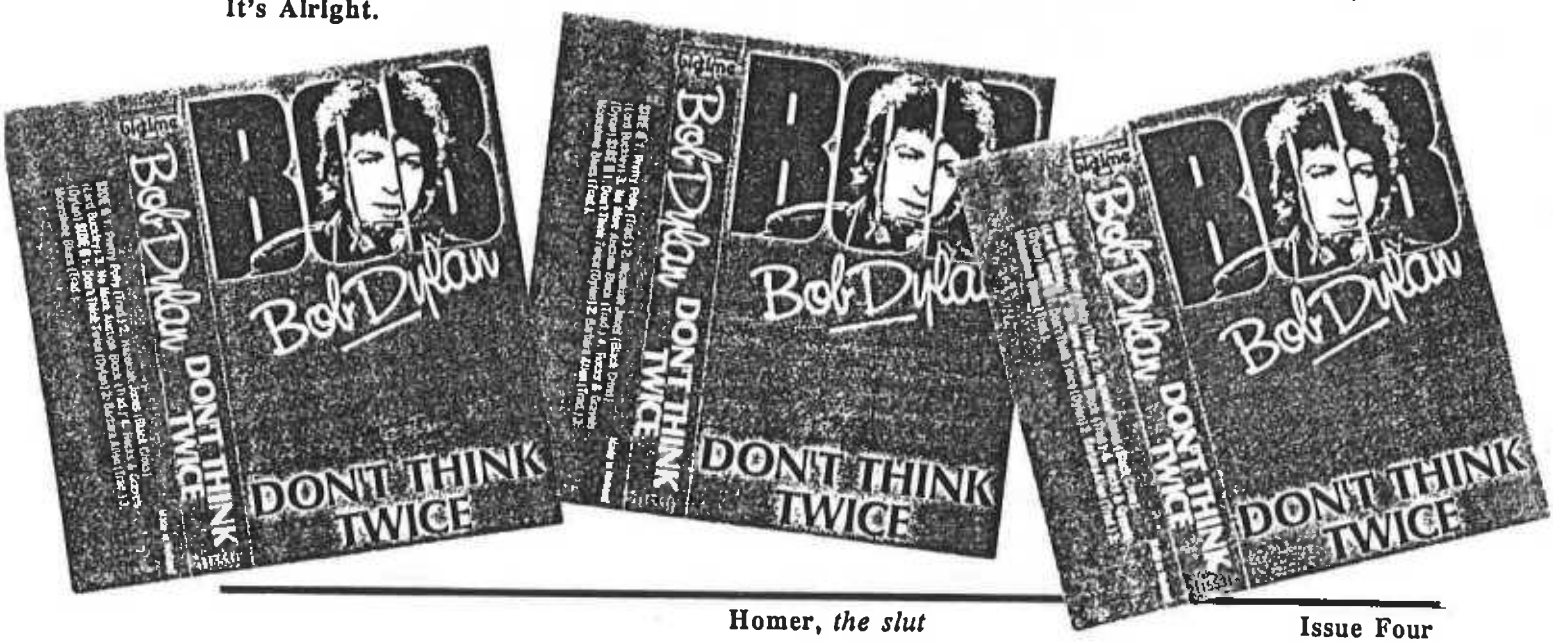
Although Dylan has adapted, borrowed and originated some striking melodies, it is as a lyricist-poet that he bears the most import. Despite many rumours, the only litigation he has gone through was a friendly suit by his close friend and admirer, Paul Clayton, over the melody of **Don't Think Twice, It's Alright**, which Clayton had already adapted from tradition.

Jon Landau John Wesley Harding *Crawdaddy!* 1968

Don't Think Twice, which on the surface seems very like **Masters Of War**, is lyrically really not so different. Dylan casts himself in the same light with reference to his subjects – that is, above them. Also, his lack of sympathy for the girl, the totality of the putdown, the necessity to come right out and say it, the lack of subtlety are all characteristic of Dylan's one-dimensional myth- making. It's just that in **Don't Think Twice**, the beauty of Dylan's vocal-guitar-harmonica performance doesn't really say what the words do and, in fact, really transforms the verbal meaning of the song into something much deeper and much less coarse.

William Bender Bob Dylan: Man & Music New York Herald Tribune 12/12/65

In France, American folk music is catching on big, and Parisian Hugues Aufray has set new sales records with *N'y Pense Plus*, a straight translation of **Don't Think Twice, It's Alright.**



Paul Williams Bob Dylan: Performing Artist Underwood-Miller 1990

Don't Think Twice, It's Alright is a masterpiece . So is **A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall.** Dylan's other masterpieces so far are **Mr Tambourine Man, Like A Rolling Stone,** the movie **Renaldo & Clara,** and **Blind Willie McTell,** an unreleased song from 1983.

Don't Think Twice, is a song about death, the death of a relationship. Dylan is quoted by Nat Hentoff on the back of *Freewheelin'*:

> It isn't a love song. It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better. It's as if you were talking to yourself.

(Shall we take this figuratively – you sing it to yourself to make help you feel better about letting go of this person who's rejected you – or literally – you are singing the song, saying goodbye, to a part of yourself?)

Dylan goes on, making a subtle and fascinating link between **Don't Think Twice** and his experience of himself as a musician, an artist:

> It's a hard song to sing. I can sing it sometimes, but I ain't that good yet. I don't carry myself yet the way that Big Joe Williams, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Lightnin' Hopkins have carried themselves. I hope to be able to someday, but they're older people. I sometimes am able to do it, but it happens, when it happens, unconsciously.

This is an extraordinary quote. It shows that Dylan was aware, at age 21, of the unconscious element in his creative process, and that he had a sense, from observing other musical creators, that this would change, could evolve towards conscious creativity, with age. And he mentions this not in relation to writing, where issues of conscious versus unconscious creation are more commonly recognized, but in relation to his singing.

He goes on to speak of his art as something whose real purpose is extremely personal:

> You see, with those older singers, music was a tool, a way to live more, a way to make themselves feel better at certain points. As for me, I can make myself feel better sometimes, but at other times it's hard to go to sleep at night.

I ain't that good yet. With this Dylan acknowledged that the songs, which he started writing because he was feeling restricted as a performer, are now forcing him to grow as a performer. The writer is pressed and inspired by the need of the singer on stage: and then the singer is forced to grow to become big enough for the greatness of the writer's song.

The greatness of the song has to do with its beauty and its universality. My understanding of art is that it occurs when a human has some success in communicating with other humans in a realm that is apart from and deeper than rational, intellectual communication. To say that this realm is emotional is inadequate; to identify it as the realm where beauty is perceived seems helpful. I believe that all artistic achievement is ultimately mysterious. And as Dylan's comments about **Don't Think Twice** suggest, the purpose of even the most distressing and painful art is in some sense to make the artist, and the person who receives the art, feel better. At its simplest, this involves relieving a fullness, or filling an emptiness, or both. The singer and the listener are incomplete and uncomfortable as they are, and so they grope towards each other in the dark.

Don't Think Twice is about the transmuting of pain into something not only bearable but actually attractive. We could call it "cool" but its a lot deeper than that. The singer of the song conveys a tremendous dignity, and an authentic lightness, even while also communicating pain, bitterness, confusion, and more than a hint that he would get down on his knees and beg if he thought it'd do any good. He also communicates love. There is no "way" to put all this into a simple song, four verses, that can be understood and sung by anyone. Dylan has done it through a combination of luck (you hit on a clever phrase, just like a country music songwriter, and all of a sudden a whole song

drops into your lap), mastery, and conviction. The conviction is evident in the writing, and, particularly, in the performance; Scaduto and Shelton fill in the personal details, making it clear that the song addresses Dylan 's feelings about Suze when she left for Italy and chose not to hurry back to him – the feelings, not the specifics of the situation. There is a special talent in being able to create a fictional story (*look out your window...*) and have it perfectly express feelings that you're experiencing in an entirely different set of circumstances.

I want to stress that there is no mystery about what this song "means." The popularity of Dylan's songs has never been some worship of obscurity; on the contrary, people respond to the songs (including people who've no ideas about Bob Dylan, people who've never heard of him) because the songs speak so directly to and for them. **Don't Think Twice** speaks to and for anyone who's ever come to the end of a love affair, or has let go of a would–be love relationship that isn't working out, or has even imagined themselves in such a situation. It means exactly what the person who's listening to it hears and feels in it.

Difficulties arise when we attempt to express, as in criticism, what we think we heard and felt. A very simple and direct message that is easy to feel may be very hard to restate (particularly when one is taking something like a song or a painting and trying to convey its impact in words). By way of example, Jon Landau, in a well–considered 1968 survey of Dylan's work, says **Don't Think Twice** is an example of Dylan putting himself above his subjects. He adds:

> his lack of sympathy for the girl, the totalness of the putdown....the lack of subtlety are all characteristic of Dylan's one-dimensional myth- making.

Now, when I listen to these songs, or even read the words, I can find no putdown of the woman he's singing to, just dissatisfaction with her actions towards him. I also believe that Landau is mistaken in perceiving "the girl" as the subject of the song; she is being sung to, but the song is clearly about the singer and his feelings. And I'm surprised that someone could apply the term "one–dimensional" in any context to a song that so richly explores layers within layers of human feeling. But Landau goes on to say,

> It's just that In Don't Think Twice the beauty of Dylan's vocal-guitar-harmonica performance.....transforms the verbal meaning of the song into something much deeper and much less coarse.

These words tell me that he is in fact hearing and feeling the same song I'm hearing, and that it probably "means" to him something not too different from what it means to me. And I agree with him that the beauty of the song's performance is of primary importance in its success as a work of art and communication. He only gets into trouble (with me) when he tries to put into words some of what he thinks the words of the song mean. His complaint about Dylan 's "lack of sympathy for the girl" actually sounds like an attempt to reject or criticize politically the feeling the song expresses (the feeling of being a rejected lover) – an attempt to tell Dylan (and, presumably, all the people who identify with the song), "you should have felt something different"

The November 14 session that produced Dylan's exquisite performance of **Don't Think Twice** is supposedly the same session at which Dylan's first rock and roll recording took place – a song called **Mixed Up Confusion...**

A subtheme that I can hear running through some of these performances [*The Gaslight Tapes*] has to do with the difficulty in communicating. Dylan's magnificent interpretation of **Barbara Allen** seems to turn on this point.....The version of **Don't Think Twice** he performs here is different from the studio version – strummed not finger picked , some changes of lyric, and a subtly different mood. The thrust of it seems to be, "That's okay, we don't have to talk about it."

Of all the aspects of art, beauty is the most important and the most difficult to comment on. The essence of beauty is that it pleases, and pleasure defies both analysis and description. One thing that can be said is that beauty is a thing in motion. As beautiful as the *Freewheelin'* version of **Don't Think Twice** is, an exact replica of that performance on the Philharmonic stage (if such a thing were even possible) could not have matched the fresh, edgy, unexpected version of the song that emerged from Dylan in the context of the concert and whatever he was feeling about life and about this song on October 31, 1964, circa 10:00 p.m. This is not a matter of comparison. The point is that a replica would be dead, whereas this performance is utterly alive. It starts from an apparent feeling of belligerence about the "classic" status of the song and uses that feeling as a source of energy with which to explore the incredible plasticity of the song's structure, melody and lyrics, and of Dylan's performance style – his voice goes right off the edge of the melody into screech and instead of backing off he leans into it, makes it work for him, develops it and even echoes it in his harmonica solos. He's out there, creating joyously and extemporaneously even at the very moment he's performing, stomping about in unexplored territory, having so much fun and feeling so good about the song's ability to sustain this experiment that he falls in love with it all over again, rediscovers how much it means to him and how well it's able to speak for him.

Anthony Scaduto Bob Dylan W.H. Allen & Co. 1972

One of the songs on the album, **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** (written while Suze was gone, putting her down because she wasted his *precious time*), created some controversy in folk circles. The melody is based on a song called **Who'll Buy Your Chickens When I'm Gone** discovered by Paul Clayton during a folkloring expedition in Appalachia. Dylan made use of it. Legally he had as much right to the tune as Clayton did, since it was in the public domain. But, most of their friends believed, Dylan had a moral obligation to give Clayton credit for it and make him a co-author, which would mean giving Clayton half the royalties. As one very close friend expressed it:

> Everybody who knew about it felt that Bob was making enough money by the time the album started selling big that he could have given Clayton the tune royalties. We felt that if a guy is making the kind of money that Bob was making and he cops something from a friend - and one who is starving - the least he can do is quietly take care of him. Some of us told Bob how we felt, but we could never get a response out of him. He wouldn't talk about it. Clayton complained, but not to Bobby. He excused Bob, really excused him because he was obsessed by this little kid, Bob Dylan. Everybody else's attitude was that he should have sued the little bastard.

Of course, it is possible that Dylan was quietly taking care of him, for some months later Clayton accompanied Dylan on a cross country tour, all expenses paid. It is not clear, however, whether he was given a salary. Clayton eventually did get "a substantial sum" from the music publisher, Dylan told me.

John Herdman Voice Without Restraint Paul Harris, 1982

Many of the songs which have been described as "put-downs" are really aiming at a mood of emotionalism realism. Jon Landau, after condemning **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** as an unsympathetic, unsubtle and one dimensional put-down is forced to concede that:

> ...the beauty of Dylan's vocal-guitar-harmonica performance doesn't really say what the words do and, in fact, really transforms the verbal meaning of the song into something much deeper and much less coarse.

The point must be repeated that the "meaning" of a Dylan song is *not* necessarily just what the words say (though they may make the predominant contribution), and indeed may depend for its realisation precisely on tensions between the words and the other elements involved; but that apart, it does not seem to me that the words of Don't Think Twice have the unsympathetic qualities which Landau attributes to them. The feeling that is being aimed at is a balanced reconciliation between a sense of hurt and a realistic understanding, and the rather flip tone serves as a defence against the hurt suffered, which is more than hinted at in lines like:

Still I wish there was somethin' you would do or say
To try to make me change my mind and stay,

and

It ain't no use in callin' out my name, gal
Like you never did before

and

I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind
You could have done better but I don't mind.

The attitude of defence is itself, of course, part of the feeling which Dylan is trying to "make real". The effort to sympathise with the girl's point of view is not easy, and in the lines in which he tries hardest to do so – recognising that this woman is emotionally a child – he switches, in order to make objectivity easier, from addressing her as "you" to referring to her in the third person:

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

The return to the direct address in the refrain is in that context a return to outgoing human sympathy, even though a doubt remains as to whether it really is "all right" as he claims. (That doubt is underlined in the *Budokan* version, in which at the end of the song Dylan repeats the phrase again and again in a variety of conflicting intonations, ending with a particularly flat, drawn-out kind of howl.)

Michael Gray Song And Dance Man Hart-Davis, MacGibbon 1972

Dylan's more serious expressions of this compulsion to move on, to not get entangled, are numerous.....When we come to Dylan's more concentrated and sustained expressions of this same theme, of this negative-positive moral, we find, I think, that their plausibility derives from their being always addressed to a particular woman or specific entanglements of which the narrator understands the full worth. It is never, in Dylan's hands, a merely boastful theme – never a Papa Hemingway conceit, an I'm -too-hot-to-hold bravado. The opposite impulse, the desire to stay and be entangled, is always felt to be present, though it cannot (until *Nashville Skyline*) win.

We have this formula in Don't Think Twice, It's All Right from the second Dylan album, a song based, for its tune, on Johnny cash's composition Understand Your Man:

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

..there is a hint of direct reproach, yet the narrator's own doubts give this a redressing balance. The title line is, in that verse of the song, deliberately addressed to the narrator himself.

All this search for the quintessential man comes to into an intelligent concern for salvation, a concern Dylan stands by in much of his work. It is there in **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** in the simple line (it is almost just a passing remark):

Gave her my heart but she wanted my soul

Even where Dylan can be said to use traditional images (and indeed there are a preponderance of them in his early work) he cannot be said to utilise them along traditional lines.

I think, to take a small but telling example, of the traditional rendering of someone's personality or spirit in terms of a "light". Someone thus referred to as giving out light is conventional and unsurprising enough; but the reference is normally indirect. Like this perhaps:

> As Hartley's eyes swept the ballroom, his attention was called back, again and again, to the same animated face. Miss Satterthwaite (for indeed the face was hers) seemed to radiate an ethereal yet energetic light-and it was not long till Mr. Hartley stood breathless in the glow of it.

That, or at least the kind of thing which that tries to emulate, is very elegant and so on, but the image of light is almost asleep; it is a traditional image, traditionally used. Dylan, employing it more causally, rejuvenates it by his non-traditional usage. He takes it from the context of third person narration and plunges it into a direct conversation; and so it emerges with a refreshing kind of bluntness:

It ain't no use in turnin' on your light, babe-
The light I never knowed

And is given an effective extension:

An' it ain't no use in turnin' on your light, babe-
I'm on the dark side of the road

Wilfrid Mellers **A *darker* shade of pale** Faber & Faber, 1984

It is not really surprising that **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** has remained one of the most potent of Dylan's early songs, for it does far more than wave a cheery goodbye to a girl who has proved inadequate. When the rooster crows, he is *travelling on*, not because the woman was particularly *unkind,* but because she *could have done better*, and *kinda wasted my time.* He wanted a relationship which didn't waste time because it was rooted in the truth of feeling, with which, Dylan has said, all his songs are concerned. Having failed to find such a relationship, he does not feel vindictive, but knows he must have the confidence to move on, even to be lonesome a while, if need be. This necessity to be himself is what he learned from Woody Guthrie, and in this song it is the music that offers an affirmation. The tune rocks between minor and major thirds over the vivacious beat, balancing its dominant by a subdominant modulation, and effecting release by a chromatic twist in the return to the tonic. It comes across as a song about dawn and the rooster rather than as a song of farewell. Its re-creativity is inherent in the immediacy of Dylan's vocal inflexions – for instance the open caws on *break* (of dawn) and on *all* in contrast with the decline of pitch and discoloration of tone on *stay.* **Don't Think Twice** is a love song because it is infectiously pro-life.

On the third side of *Before The Flood* Dylan accompanies himself in three numbers merely with his guitar and harmonica. None the less his performances are affected by his collaboration with The Band, for they all speed up the original tempo and give the numbers a cockier resilience. **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** is taken very fast, in high, strained register. The vocal line is on edge and the harmonica whines as Dylan makes his gleeful rejection.

Alan Rinzler Dylan: The Illustrated Record Harmony Books 1978

Don't Think Twice, It's All Right is a charming, nasty number, the first of a succession of songs Dylan's written that say so long to a woman. In this case, it's probably Suze Rotolo he's so upset about. She's grown weary of Dylan's newfound notoriety and rapidly changing persona and, in defiance, sailed off with her mother and her sister to Italy, where she remained out of contact with Dylan for several months. Sung in a wry, humorous style, accompanied by guitar and harmonica, the gentle arrangement belies the cutting edge of the lyrics:

I once loved a woman, a child I am told
I give her my heart but she wanted my soul.....

You could ha' done better but I don't mind
You just kinda wasted my precious time

And the ironic refrain: *Don't think twice, it's all right...* As if to say, "You silly thing, go ahead and forget it, I'll just limp along inflicted with your pain." A little one-sided, you say? A little self-pitying? But what a great put-down, yes? After all, as Dylan himself says on the album's liner notes, "It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better." An interesting self-revelation, since in fact there is a continuing delicate balance in this number between bitterness and a kind of happy-go-lucky, whistle-in-the-dark optimism. And it's precisely the tension of this tight-wire act that gives the song its power. Darkness and light; self-pity versus self-irony; the words versus the music.

Maurice Capel The Blessing of the Damned Jazz Monthly 12/65-1/66[1]

There is a third movement in Dylan's approach: the autobiographical attempt at describing his own identity and the painting of the collective and historical context are brought together in songs of decision-making, of choice and resolve. This last movement inspired **It Ain't Me Babe, It's All Over Now, Baby Blue, Restless Farewell, To Ramona, My Back Pages** and **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right.** The third group is probably the most powerful of Dylan's many-sided output. For, within these songs, the individual faces head-on the tragic ambiguity of human relationships, the existential knot to be cut if freedom is to be saved. **It Ain't Me Babe** casts away an over-possessive woman; **It's All Over Now, Baby Blue** rejects another with a ferociously revengeful and almost exultant feeling of violent liberation; **Restless Farewell** and **To Ramona** are imperative statements of individual choice beyond any self-imposed or social limitations. Dylan is always on the look-out for the alienating powers of society. To behave as he is expected to, even in the privacy of an affair, is for him the beginning of bourgeois enslavement and the germ of all potential crimes. The supreme betrayal is the betrayal against the individual, who must never be taken for granted. "Neither slave nor master" could be Dylan's motto: better one's own chaos than anyone else's order. Fear of becoming a square is at the heart of **It Ain't Me Babe** and **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** . Torn between sensual raptures and his passion to be free, Dylan's impact in these songs is made by the necessity of choosing the next step. Freedom has to win, to ensure the possibility of the next rapture.

1 Reprinted in *The Dylan Companion*, edited by Elizabeth Thomson and David Guttman Macmillan 1990.

NO
PARKING

Andrew Muir Shine Your Light On Me Homer, the slut Issue 4 !

INSPIRATION: Understand Your Man

When Dylan wrote this song, articulating feelings most would ascribe to his personal relationship with Suze Rotolo at that time, he would appear to have been inspired to take his melody and themes from Paul Clayton's **Gotta Travel On** and Johnny Cash's **Understand Your Man.**

The former song's influence was the subject of a good deal of controversy which Dylan confounded by including it on his *Self Portrait* album. It's influence has maybe been over–emphasised, but it is there; especially in the refrain. As a point of interest, Harry Belafonte included a version of it on *Midnight Special*, the album on which Dylan made his professional debut. I'm presuming enough has been made of this song's influence to obviate reiteration from me.

Understand Your Man provides a fascinating comparison with Dylan's song. Cash performs it with his trademark voice, conjuring up a John Wayne, square–jaw approach to life. I think one of the main things to come out of his duets with Dylan is how affecting and sensitive Dylan's vocals are in comparison. However, the tough–man stance is apt, as the singer of Cash's song has some harsh things to say, such as:

Lay there in your bed and keep your mouth shut
Till I'm gone

Understand Your Man paints a very unsympathetic portrait of the woman: "cryin', cuss & moan" / "bad mouthin'". We presume that when she does understand her man – and it is clear that this enlightened state will only be reached when he's gone, she was too dumb to appreciate the treasure she had when he was there – she'll be very sorry.

It is condescending and chauvinistically one–sided in the extreme.

However this is a scene, a vignette from the country song life cycle: it is an episode in the life of a man who has had a harsh but warm upbringing in rural America. A man who will go on to marry his childhood sweetheart but whose initially ideal marriage will be rocked by affairs and heavy drinking. The downward side will be accentuated when first their dog and then their favourite daughter are killed in freak, easily avoidable accidents. Many traumas later the bottle will let them down & the old rugged cross will give them something everlasting to hold on to.

Does it sound like I'm just poking fun? Well maybe, maybe not. It is just that the tradition, the conventions of white folk–country at this time are so very different from the way we apprehend Dylan singing **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right.** These situations I've jestingly described above are cliches, scenes from a stereotypical life. What is a cliche, though, but a universal truth frozen in time? What is country music doing with these banal cliches? Sometimes – mostly – making banal songs, but at others touching on the universal truth behind the cliche. As Allen Jones said on the *Arena* special on the making of Elvis Costello's country album, *Almost Blue*:

> ...although the popular conception of country music condemns it as being sentimental, bland and lachrymose, the best of it contains a real soul and depth of feeling that people don't often recognise. George Jones or Hank Williams, say, could take what appears to be a trite lyric and turn it into something really quite monumentally moving.

This transformation from banal cliche to "something really quite monumentally moving...." will almost certainly have happened due to the performance of the song – or of a new song using conventional country musical and verbal structures and images – rather than anything transcendentally different in the music or lyrics. I could take a number of Dylan performances of recent years as proof of this, without even listing a few country greats. However, to stay out of "country singers" and pick a surprising example, I refer you to Nick Cave singing **By The Time I Get To Phoenix** on his

Understand Your Man

Don't call my name out your window, I'm leavin'
I won't even turn my head,
Don't send your kin-folks to give me no talkin'
Ah'll be gone, like I said.

You'd say the same old thing
That you been sayin' all along
Lay there in your bed and keep your mouth shut
Till I'm gone
Don't give me that old familiar cryin', cuss and moan

Understand your man
- (I'm tired of your bad mouthin')
Understand your man.

You can give my other suit to the Salvation Army
And everything else I leave behind
I ain't takin' nothin' that'll slow down my travellin'
While I'm untang-el-ing my mind
I ain't gonna repeat what I said anymore
While I'm breathin' air that ain't been breathed before.
I'll be as gone as a wild goose in winter

Then you'll understand your man
- (meditate on it)
Understand your man
- (you hear me talkin' honey
Understand your man
- (remember what I told you)
Understand your man
Understand your man.

Freewheelin'

Well, it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe
If n' you don't know by now.
And it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe
It'll never do somehow
When your rooster crows at the break o' dawn
Look out your window and I'll be gone
You're the reason I'm a-trav'lin' on
But don't think twice, it's all right.

And it ain't no use in a-turnin' on your light, babe
The light I never knowed
And it ain't no use in turnin' on your light, babe
I'm on the dark side of the road
But I wish there was somethin' you would do or say
To try to make me change my mind and stay,
But we never did too much talkin' anyway
But, don't think twice, it's all right.

So it ain't no use in callin' out my name, gal
Like you never done before
And it ain't no use in callin' out my name, gal
I can't hear you any more
I'm a-thinkin' and a-wonderin', walkin' down the road
I once loved a woman, a child I am told
I give her my heart but she wanted my soul
But don't think twice, it's all right.

So long honey babe
Where I'm bound I can't tell
Goodbye is too good a word, babe
So I'll just say fare thee well
I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind
You could ha' done better but I don't mind
You just kinda wasted my precious time
But don't think twice, it's all right.

The Gaslight Tapes

Well, it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe
mmmmm mmmmm
And it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe
If you don't know by now.
When the rooster crows at the break o' dawn
Look out your window and I'll be travellin' on
You're the reason I'll be gone
Don't think twice, 'cos it's all right.

Well, ain't no use in callin' out my name, girl
I aa -aa have before
And it ain't no use in callin' out my name, girl
I can't hear you anymore.
I wish there was something you would do or say
- try to make me change my mind and stay,
But we never did too much talkin' anyway
But don't think twice, 'cos it's all right.

Well, it ain't no use in turnin' on your lights, babe
Lights I never knowed
And it ain't no use in burnin' your lamp, babe
I'm on the dark side of the road.
Well, it's lonesome travellin' down the lonesome road
I once loved a woman, a child I'm told
I give her my heart but she wanted my soul
But don't think twice, 'cos it's all right.

So, I'm ramblin' all by myself, babe
This time..mmm..{heavy load???}
I can you know what eh else, babe
Where you came before.
I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind
You could ha' done better but I don't mind
Ah, you just wasted my precious time
Don't think twice, 'cos it's all right.

Writings And Drawings

It ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe
It don't matter, anyhow.
An' it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe
If you don't know by now.
When your rooster crows at the break of dawn
Look out your window and I'll be gone
You're the reason I'm trav'lin' on
Don't think twice, it's all right.

It ain't no use in turnin' on your light, babe
That light I never knowed
An' it ain't no use in turnin' on your light, babe
I'm on the dark side of the road
Still I wish there was something you would do or say
To try to make me change my mind and stay,
We never did too much talkin' anyway
So don't think twice, it's all right.

So it ain't no use in callin' out my name, gal
Like you never did before
It ain't no use in callin' out my name, gal
I can't hear you any more
I'm a-thinkin' and a-wonderin' all the way down the road
I once loved a woman, a child I'm told
I give her my heart but she wanted my soul
But don't think twice, it's all right.

I'm walkin' down that long, lonesome road, babe
Where I'm bound I can't tell
But goodbye's too good a word, gal
So I'll just say fare thee well
I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind
You could have done better but I don't mind
You just kinda wasted my precious time
But don't think twice, it's all right.

Kicking Against The Pricks album. Again a one-sided situation - (the dumb broad is gonna realise that he's really left now & again she'll be sorry) - and a song that has been played as cheaply and banally as almost any that spring to mind. Here it is transformed by Cave's devastating delivery into "something really quite monumentally moving....."[2] We gather from his performance of the song that he's not only sorry not to be there - it is driving him mad. The emotion conveyed is much more complex than the words alone suggest.

The songs mentioned above are the property of any singer, they are stylized scenes, impersonal to the performer except as a test of his ability to perform them. (Unless he lives the song as he performs it and thereby imbues it with personal meaning.) Cash threatens to do this only once - listen to how he breathes the word "breathed" in:

While I'm breathin' air that ain't been breathed before.

(There's a hint here of how Bobby might have sung this, had he not used it as a starting point for his own song.)

The rest of the time, though, Cash is playing the wise, tough man-of-the world. He even stresses that he is playing the part in a stock scene from this cliched life-film. The pronunciation of "I'll" as "Ah'll" in line 4 is a bit over exaggerated, the jaunty playing in the "hoe down" interlude that splits the song in two, but most of all the laughter while singing the title line after his first aside

Understand your man
- (I'm tired of your bad mouthin')
Understand your man.

All of these emphasise that he is just a singer singing a stock song. This is the convention. But not only was it the convention of country music then, it was the given situation. This is pre-Dylan, this is still the hey day of Tin Pan Alley, writers didn't write from the heart, performers weren't communicating with their audience on a personal basis.

No-one listening to **Understand Your Man** can feel that the song means anything specifically personal to Cash. Although he happened to write it, it may as well be what we'd now call a cover, and one picked with no particular relevance to the singer; no-one listening to Dylan singing **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** can feel that the song is anything other than the result of an intensely heartfelt and personal experience for Bob Dylan. It is a startling reminder of the changes he was making to the course of popular music even at this early stage.

I'm quite well aware that there were more covers of **Don't Think Twice, It's All Right** than any Johnny Cash song - indeed there was an immediate glut of them - but I don't feel that this invalidates my point. With Dylan there was this new difference between a "cover" and the "real thing". With **Understand Your Man** most listeners probably didn't know or *care* who had written it.

2 Note for Dylan starved people here: Cave was an infamous DJ in Berlin - he played the gloomier of Dylan's religious compositions - in the eighties.

CREATION: The Freewheelin' Don't Think Twice, It's All Right

There is a feeling of wistful regret in Dylan's song that isn't evident in Cash's song. A feeling that found expression in the beautiful **One Too Many Mornings**.

Cash's **Understand Your Man** would never have the following lines:

But I wish there was something you would do or say
To try to make me change my mind and stay,

But the next line

But we never did too much talkin' anyway

hints at similar problems of non-communication, though here the blame seems mutual, or the situation almost inevitable rather than the fault of the caricatured cussin', moanin' and bad mouthin' woman of the previous song.

This line can of course be sung in a totally different, non-regretful way. As he has shown in many live performances, Dylan can use it to point the finger of blame in almost crude, but invigoratingly gleeful -and still intensely personal - rejections. The title line itself allows of a double reading: "Don't think twice, you heartless bitch I'll survive without you" or "Don't think twice, we're doing the right thing, we're just one too many mornings..." The enduring magic of this and most other Dylan performances of the song is that both are present simultaneously, just as they are in the real life experience.

Rejection is always there, of course, she is after all "the reason he's travelin' on", she has "wasted his precious time": this is what the song is about. But this surely is just a statement of a feeling and situation that everyone experiences, not (here) a vindictive put-down or crowing celebration of feeling. He has to go on and put it down to experience to continue to grow as a person. There is no doubt - as the earlier quote demonstrates - that if things had worked out he would have been happy; or at least part of him would have, the part that would be back with her like a shot now if she would only try and make him stay . There is a double edged truth to the "precious time" line, Dylan gives that ever so delicate and deliberate pause before emphasising the word "precious". The result is slightly self mocking, and the harmonica confirms that the time with the girl is what comes across as precious, regardless of the literal meaning of the words.

Perhaps the strongest <u>verbal</u> evidence that Dylan provides that underneath the brash movin' on down the road he is hurt and regretful, comes when he throws away a great line of rejection and replaces it with a very forced term of endearment. The line from *Lyrics*:

I'm walkin' down that long, lonesome road, babe

which in the Gaslight tapes (earlier) version was:

So, I'm ramblin' all by myself, babe

is here rendered-and it is no mean vocal feat as it takes up the same musical interval-

So long, honey babe

Dylan is softening all the other uses of "babe" in the song but is doing so at the expense of a line that encapsulated perfectly the feeling he'd been searching for a few weeks earlier while singing the Gaslight version.[3]

3 Would you have believed that this line wasn't on the original LP without checking? I was astonished.

The woman addressed here may not have the devastating effect on recall that the woman of **Most Of The Time** has, but she'll cause more than a few wistful moments in our hero's life, further down the road.

There are complicated shifts of mood in situations like these, shifting from blame ("like you never done before"), self-justification, regret, wishing it didn't have to be this way and back again. This version of Don't Think Twice, It's All Right encompasses all of these in the lyrics and the music both.

As a performance it is a tour-de-force, with Dylan's young-yet-old voice phrasing perfectly - and check out the enunciation of "heart" in the famous penultimate 3rd verse line - and his harmonica playing evoking <u>everything</u> the song has attempted to capture in words.

DEVIATION: A footnote

This is a song, like others from *Freewheelin'*, of enduring value and appeal. He has played it so often that I would like to comment on the various versions we have on official release, far less the myriad of unofficial taped performances. (Berlin 1990 would be a nice example.) However, perhaps I've gone on for too long already and, after all some crucial variations have already been commented on - but others are worth noting as you listen to the song being performed down the years.

I would like to add one last point in relation to the earlier performance we have from *The Gaslight Tapes*. Most of the main lines and images are in place, though the refrain line itself is changed, there is one major change that illuminates the care with which the young Dylan crafted his songs and his unerring artistry.

The passage in *The Gaslight Tapes'* version that runs:

Well, it ain't no use in turnin' on your lights, babe
Lights I never knowed
And it ain't no use in burnin' your lamp, babe
I'm on the dark side of the road.

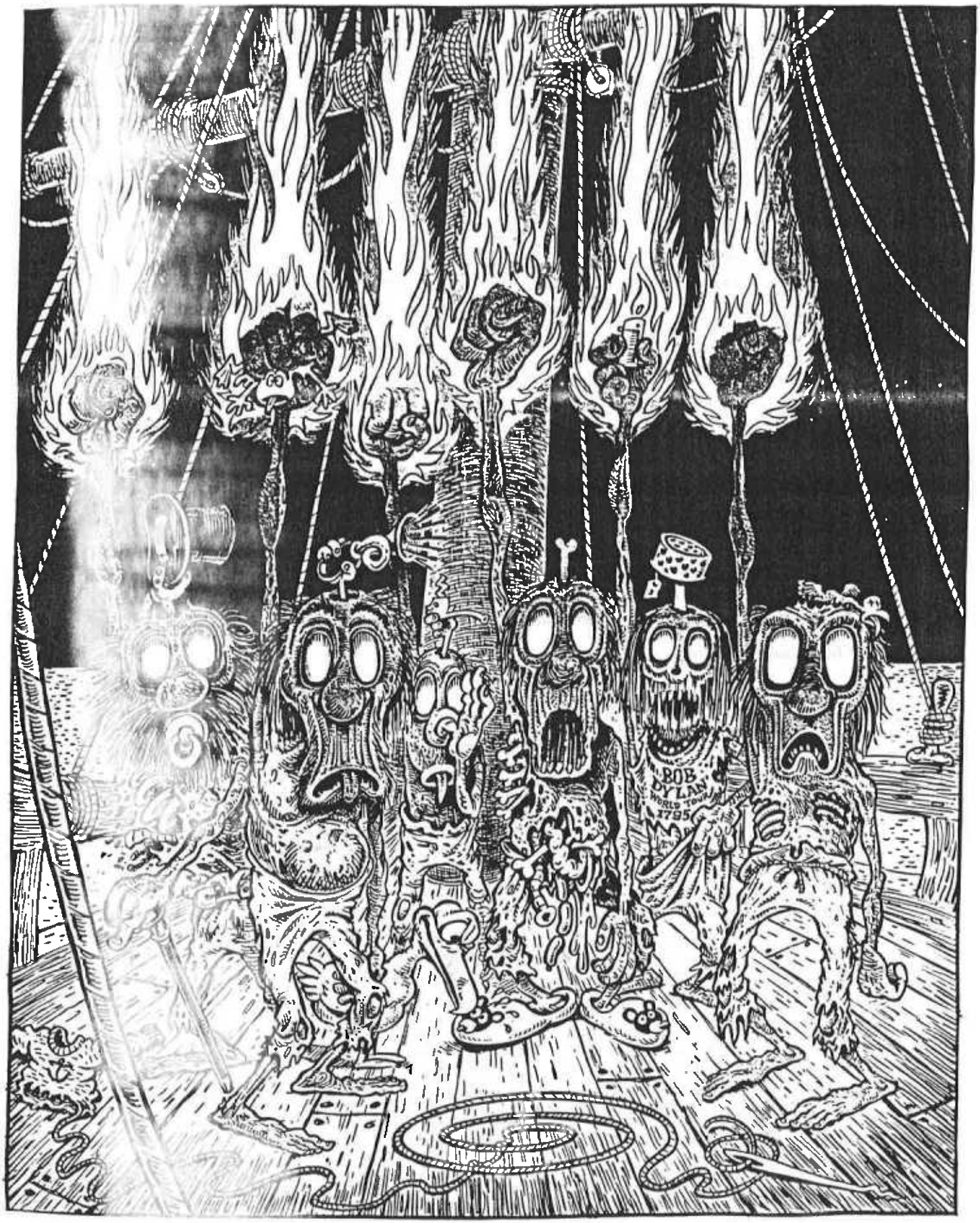
becomes the following on *Freewheelin'*

And it ain't no use in a-turnin' on your light, babe
The light I never knowed
And it ain't no use in turnin' on your light, babe
I'm on the dark side of the road

There is nothing "wrong" or clumsy with the earlier version, indeed the "burning the lamp" image is excellent. It does, however, disrupt the structure of the song because the third line is everywhere else a re-iteration of the first. So Dylan has to choose between *turnin' on your lights* and *burnin' your lamp*. They are quite different, though both compelling, images. "Burning" leads to ashes, burns out suggests a forlornish hope while *turnin' on your light* is more like *strike another match* - active, dynamic, starting afresh, enlightenment. The light image, therefore, is preferable to the "lamp". I have, however, slipped in a crucial alteration, that of "lights" to "light". It's interesting to speculate that it might only have been at the late stage of deciding between the "lights" and "lamp" images that Dylan realised the rich double meaning in *turning on the light* in the singular, the physical light and the spiritual light, the woman's inner essence. The same double meaning that leads Shakespeare's Othello to exclaim:

Put out the light, and then put out the light;

Act V Scene i


BOB
DYLAN
WORLD TOUR
1795

Continuing the cuttings from the last issue and giving individual essays on various of the songs from *The Bootleg Series*. I had hoped to collect all the cuttings in Homer's 3 & 4, but they are still coming in! I'm afraid the completists among you will have to get issue five too. It puzzles me that Bob garnered so many positive reviews Stateside but still sold disappointingly. It would be convenient to say that his sales in the States have never recovered from his fire and brimstone dates – they have enough rent-a-nutters every day on the T.V. – but I suspect that this is not the whole story. (Neither *Street Legal* nor *Planet Waves* selling nearly as well as they should have.)

As for the individual views of various songs; this was a rather grand project of mine that hasn't covered quite as many songs as I'd hoped for. There are some omissions, most notably Foot Of Pride. The reasons behind its non-inclusion would involve introducing you to Paul Wright as a concept and I don't have the space or the stomach for that at the moment. Suffice to write that all will be forgiven when Paul hitches a ride on reality and delivers any three of the articles he has so far promised!

Page	THE CUTTINGS		
2	The Washington Post	Mike Joyce	24/3/91
3	The Sunday Times	Robert Sandall	14/4/91
4	Rolling Stone	David Fricke	21/5/91
5	Liverpool Daily Post Time Out Tracks	Tony Kenwright Graham Craveney ???	20/4/91 16/5/91 Apr 91
6	Guitar Extra!	Bruce Pollock	Spring 91
7	??? (USA)	Ron Sirak	6/6//91
8	The Guardian The Independent On Sunday	Adam Sweeting Richard Williams	??/4/91 31/3/91
9	?????????????? Insight	?????? Max Bell	???? April 91
10	Record Collector		May 91
11	USA Today	Edna Gundersen	?????
12	The Boston Daily Globe	Steve Morse	24/3/91
13	??? (USA)	Dave Hiltbrand	April 91

Bob Dylan's 'Bootleg': 30 Years of the Voice of the '60s

By Mike Joyce
Special to The Washington Post

On the eve of his 50th birthday, Bob Dylan has ignored his own advice and decided to look back. He's given his blessings to "The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3 (Rare and Unreleased) 1961-1991," a three-CD box set commemorating his 30th anniversary of signing with Columbia Records.

The 58-song anthology, also available on records and cassettes, is being trumpeted by Columbia as "The Greatest Music You've Never Heard." Yet for a lot of Dylan fans, including British Dylanologist John Bauldie, the author of the album's detailed 72-page booklet and discography, much of this music has been essential listening over the years, enjoyed for the most part on poorly produced, clandestinely distributed and much-coveted underground recordings.

At the heart of the collection are 38 songs that have never been released on authorized albums, and all of the material is drawn from home tapings, demos, studio sessions and live concert recordings. Jeff Rosen, who produced the 1985 Dylan retrospective "Biograph," a surprising bestseller, is again in charge, though Dylan reportedly oversaw the project and approved all of the selections.

Unlike "Biograph," however, Dylan doesn't contribute to the liner notes, and thus leaves one big question unanswered: Why weren't some of these recordings, especially the studio sessions, released in the first place? Some of them, after all, clearly dwarf what Dylan was putting out at the time. (Witness "Blind Willie McTell," a haunting outtake from the 1983 "Infidels" album, or the feverishly surreal 1981 ballad "Angelina.") Bauldie offers some clues (and old Dylan quotes), but the question is never satisfactorily resolved. Of course, given the quality of the songs, it's quite possible that not even Dylan could mount much of a defense for their omission.

One thing, though, is clear. If the times were a-changin' over the past 30 years, so was Dylan. We first meet up with him in a Minneapolis hotel room in January 1961. He's 20 years old and fresh back from New York, where he met the ailing Woody Guthrie, impressed the critics and landed a recording contract.

Listening to the album's opening cut, "Hard Times in New York City," it's impossible to mistake Guthrie's influence on Dylan, as both a singer and a songwriter. They share a love for wordplay, topicality and equipping old tunes with new lyrics. Fittingly, the first 21 songs on the anthology, which include stirring acoustic versions of "He Was a Friend of Mine," "Who Killed Davey Moore?" and "Walls of Red Wing"—as well the lighthearted barb "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues"—culminate with "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," the only poem Dylan has ever recited in concert. Several pages long and patterned after Guthrie's rushing, stream-of-consciousness prose, it's more than an appreciation of a mentor and hero, it's a mesmerizing illustration of Dylan's early promise and an unmistakable harbinger of things to come.

Dylan goes electric about halfway through this compilation, though the era is presaged by one of the album's many gems—an acoustic version of "Subterranean Homesick Blues." Guitarist Mike Bloomfield and keyboardist Al Kooper, two of Dylan's key sidemen in the '60s, then pop up on the disposable blues riff "Sitting on a Barbed Wired Fence," followed by an early version of "Like a Rolling Stone" (in waltz time, no less) and a raucous, rough-edged take of "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry." Just as the accompaniment has changed and become more edgy, so has Dylan's delivery. His voice is becoming more of a snarl now, his phrasing more exaggerated and unpredictable. In short, more Dylanesque.

The real electric treats, however, come when the Hawks (later known as the Band) make their debut, backing Dylan on a 1966 version of "She's Your Lover Now" that's still compelling despite a mangled ending. Surrounded by Robbie Robertson, Garth Hudson, Richard Manuel, Rick Danko and Levon Helm, Dylan would never assemble a better band, a fact brilliantly underscored by "I Shall Be Released" (from the "Basement Tapes") and even the comparatively negligible ballad "Nobody 'Cept You."

A lot of people, of course, look down on Dylan's post-'60s recordings, and no doubt his colossally incoherent version of "Masters of War" on the recent Grammy telecast only reaffirmed their belief that he's long past his prime. Even so, the faithful won't have to search long and hard here for assurances to the contrary. As uneven as Dylan's albums have been over the past 20 years, he's never stopped writing (and often rewriting) remarkable songs, including "Tangled Up in Blue," "If You See Her, Say Hello" and "Every Grain of Sand." What's more, the versions of those songs and others included here are often as good, if not better, than the initial releases, even if they sometimes were recorded under peculiar circumstances. (A dog barking in the distance on one track is a case in point.)

As for less familiar highlights, the "Infidels" sessions alone yield a bumper crop. Besides "Blind Willie McTell," arguably the best ballad Dylan wrote in the '80s, there's "Lord Protect My Child" and "Foot of Pride," a pair of passionate themes that reveal Dylan's religious conviction far more successfully than most. Aptly enough, the album closes with another curiously discarded gem, the newly overdubbed "Series of Dreams," an atmospheric outtake from the justly acclaimed 1989 album "Oh Mercy."

Of course, there's a lot more where this came from. Columbia plans to expand the series, focusing more on live material in the future, including the legendary bootleg recording of Dylan's 1966 Royal Albert Hall concert. And why not? If you can't beat 'em, as they say, join 'em.

Bob Dylan.

Keeping tracks of time

ROBERT SANDALL hears old, new and blue songs on Bob Dylan's Bootleg Series

Bob Dylan: releasing more hidden tapes from the basement

Bob Dylan has done it again. With all the critical brickbats and career obits garnered by his recent British tour still fresh in the mind, Dylan's mercurial, not to say slippery, reputation is on the up once more.

The cause for rejoicing comes, typically, in the form of a complete surprise. In prospect, **Bob Dylan: The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (rare and unreleased) 1961-1991** (Columbia 468086, all formats), sounds unpromisingly like fan-fodder. Fifty-eight tracks lasting four hours, culled from studio out-takes, rough demos and live recordings, and retailing at about £24 have clearly not been packaged with casual or impulse buyers in mind.

Judged harshly, much of the music here qualifies as damaged goods. Songs stop and start unpredictably; a stray dog barks during one, Dylan's cuff-buttons rattle distractingly against his guitar on another. Coughs, giggles, the comments of studio technicians and the strains of out-of-tune instruments are prominently featured. Many of the songs, and some of the lyrics, are already available on other Dylan albums.

For all that, though, the Bootleg Series is an authentic revelation. The perverse gearing towards his early output – there are eight out-takes alone from 1962's The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan – provides a startling reminder that the youthful Dylan's rapid ascent to sage-like status depended in part upon an extraordinary vocal technique which basically lied about his age. Never before or since has a 20-year-old pop icon sounded so cunningly and impressively wizened. Which is not to say, as many now do, that Dylan could never sing. He was trying to redefine the distance between the sung and the spoken word, inverting pop's normal priorities by forcibly restraining the melody from interfering with the message.

Moonshiner, a hillbilly ballad he decided not to include on The Times They Are A-Changin' in 1963, is one of the most delicate and dramatic examples of what Dylan termed his "tonal breath control". Right through to the deep meditative murmuring he puts up on the last track, Series of Dreams – a non-runner in 1989's Oh Mercy – these bootlegs all confirm that while Dylan might be an indifferent guitar-player and an unreliable harmonica-blower, he has always had a uniquely, if obliquely, musical way with words.

Equally radical is his provisional approach to the styling and arrangement of his songs. Dylan, to paraphrase himself, never thinks twice it's all right: many of the most vivid bootlegged moments here show just how fast – and how far – he can change his mind. Earlier in the afternoon that he recorded Like a Rolling Stone, Dylan played it as a lurching honky-tonk waltz in 3/4 time – a reading which, when you hear it, rather suits the song's sarcastic mockery of polite mores. A matter of hours later, it was down on tape again, this time as the stirring, organ-driven anthem, squared off into 4/4, with which Dylan still winds up all his concerts.

Some of these alternative versions – notably four original takes of songs which finally appeared on Dylan's last undisputed classic, 1974's Blood on the Tracks – provide important clues as to what might have been cramping his style for much of the past 17 years. Following the breakup of his first marriage, chronicled on Blood on the Tracks, Dylan claimed to be "fighting sentimentality all the way". The evidence here, though, suggests that he was simply trying to hide or disguise his real feelings. The initial New York recordings, included here, of Idiot Wind and Call Letter Blues sound bleaker and more deeply heartfelt than the angry, highly polished accounts which Dylan eventually put out. He had learned to jibe, cajole and entreat in song, but he felt uncomfortable, exposed and deeply uncool grieving.

A similar inhibition might, I suspect, have prevented Dylan from releasing many of the truly great recordings of his notoriously lean period in the 1980s. Blind Willie McTell, addressed to his old country blues hero and inexplicably banished from 1983's Infidels, is the most intensely moving and desolate lament for our times Dylan ever wrote. The joyous elation captured in the original version of When the Night Comes Falling From the Sky portrays a far more abandoned Dylan than the one featured elsewhere on Empire Burlesque (1985).

Ultimately, the Bootleg Series maintains, rather than explains, the enigma. That the final quarter of this four-hour set makes up the finest, most irresistible collection of new songs and recordings Dylan has released for nearly 20 years is not something many will bother to argue about. Just why we haven't heard them before, however, should keep us guessing for a good while yet. □

Bob Dylan Dips Into His Archives

The Bootleg Series' includes fifty-eight previously unreleased gems; additional discs are promised

By David Fricke

BOB DYLAN, WHOSE ENORMOUS archive of unreleased studio and concert recordings has been the bread and butter of the bootleg record industry for more than two decades, will finally release his own official "bootleg" March 26th on Columbia Records. Entitled *Bob Dylan, The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare and Unreleased) 1961-1991*, the fifty-eight-track, deluxe box set was produced and compiled by Jeff Rosen, who did the honors on the best-selling 1985 Dylan retrospective, *Biograph*. It will be available as three compact discs, three cassettes or five LPs and is composed entirely of previously unissued studio outtakes, demo recordings and live performances covering Dylan's entire career. The set includes a seventy-two-page booklet with historic photos, recording-session details and an extensive critical essay by John Bauldie, a noted British Dylanologist and the editor and publisher of the acclaimed Dylan fanzine *The Telegraph*.

The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3, which has been in the works for about a year, is the first in a projected collection of Columbia releases devoted exclusively to the hidden treasures in Dylan's huge tape stash. Though much of the material included on *Volumes 1-3* has been heard, and loved, by Dylan bootleg collectors for years, *The Bootleg Series* represents the first official, systematic mining of Dylan's mother lode of previously unreleased recordings. And even hard-core Dylan nuts will flip over such newly discovered gems as the heretofore unknown studio recording of "Farewell, Angelina," a Dylan original made famous by Joan Baez, and the brief studio rehearsal version of "Like a Rolling Stone" performed as it was originally written – in waltz time!

In the first installment of *The Bootleg Series*, the focus is on Dylan's prodigious growth and extraordinary productivity as a songwriter, beginning with his ingenious adaptations and bold transformations of traditional folk and blues source material in the early Sixties. The set then traces Dylan's postprotest odyssey through electric folk rock, the rootsy lyricism and country-blues introspection of his Woodstock years and his stunning return to form in the mid-Seventies with *Blood on the Tracks* and the Rolling Thunder Revue. The set climaxes with a dozen dramatic examples of the sacred-secular tug of war that characterized his controversial studio work during the late Seventies and Eighties. The final track in the set, "Series of Dreams," is a lyrically and rhythmically dynamic Dylan original cut surprisingly left off his acclaimed 1989 LP *Oh Mercy*.

The Bootleg Series opens appropriately with the wryly semi-autobiographical "Hard Times in New York Town," from the fabled December 1961 tape recorded in Minnesota after Dylan's first visit to New York, during which he was discovered and signed by Columbia's John Hammond. It's followed by two outtakes from Dylan's Columbia debut album, "Man on the Street" and a superlative reworking of the traditional "He Was a Friend of Mine." The next twenty-two tracks cover Dylan's accelerated maturation during 1962 and '63 into a brilliant folk stylist and prolific, visionary songwriter. There are nine outtakes from *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and six from *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, as well as a publishing demo of the latter's title anthem performed by Dylan at the piano. There are also three songs from Dylan's triumphant 1963 shows at Town Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York, both of which were recorded for a prospective but subsequently scrapped live album. Dylan's breathless recitation of the poem "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie" at Town Hall marked the first and last time he ever read his own verse in concert.

The electric phase of Dylan's career kicks off here, ironically with an acoustic demo of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (complete with producer Tom Wilson's spoken intro, "Quiet on the set . . . take 1"). "If You Gotta Go, Go Now (or Else You Gotta Stay All Night)," a playful pillow-talk romp briefly available as a European single in late 1967, makes its belated stateside debut, followed by a galloping *Highway 61 Revisited* outtake called "Sitting on a Barbed Wire Fence," which is distinguished by Dylan's incomparably dry wit ("She's making me into an old man, and man I'm not even 25") and Mike Bloomfield's stinging lead guitar. "She's Your Lover Now," a 1966 studio recording with the Hawks (a.k.a. the Band) long revered by Dylan collectors, epitomizes the spirit of epic poesy and gritty roadhouse locomotion of *Blonde on Blonde*, even though the track breaks down when Dylan flubs the words near the end. (Bauldie kindly includes the missing lyrics in his commentary.)

Several Dylan classics are presented in alternate, sometimes radically reworked versions. They include "If Not for You" (with George Harrison on guitar) and "Tangled Up in Blue" and "Idiot Wind" from *Blood on the Tracks*, heard as they were first recorded in New York in September 1974, before Dylan recut (and in the case of "Idiot Wind," rewrote) them in Minneapolis shortly before the album's release four months later.

But more than half of the songs – thirty-eight to be exact – are original compositions that Dylan wrote and either recorded or performed but otherwise chose not to release. These include the immortal "I Shall Be Released" from the 1967 *Basement Tapes*; "Seven Days," a song that he only performed five times on the Rolling Thunder tour (the recording is from one of those shows); and "Blind Willie McTell," a jewel from the 1983 *Infidels* sessions that has long been overdue for official release. As Bauldie writes, "In attempting to express feelings of his own inadequacy as a blues singer and in confessing the oppression of his knowledge, Bob Dylan sings the blues indeed, a soul-rending blues that puts him on a par with any of the old bluesmen – Blind Willie McTell, Robert Johnson included."

In his liner notes, Bauldie promises that future volumes of *The Bootleg Series* will feature classic concert material, including Dylan's epochal 1966 performance with the Hawks at London's Royal Albert Hall. Certainly, the consistent brilliance and revelatory quality of the music on *Volumes 1-3* ensures that, as Bauldie puts it, "whatever reputation Bob Dylan has enjoyed as a writer and performer in his 30-year recording career will inevitably have to be reviewed in the light of this historic collection." ♫

Bootleg treat for Dylan fans

JUST occasionally record companies get it right. The newly released Bob Dylan collection is one of those rare examples.

What do you do to celebrate the 50th birthday of unquestionably the greatest recording artist in the medium's history?

Given normal corporate greed as the yardstick you'd expect them to raid the vaults for a few unreleased gems, package them together with a few greatest hits and call it The Definitive Collection or some such rubbish.

All credit to Columbia. They've raided the vaults all right but they've put together a splendidly cohesive and chronological selection of 58 songs that have never appeared before on any official album. On top of that they've packaged it in a boxed set with a great booklet containing many previously unseen pictures of Dylan together with detailed notes about the songs written by John Bauldie who runs the quarterly Bob Dylan publication, The Telegraph.

Not only that, they've priced it, for both the five album or three CD versions, at a reasonable £27.

Of course, because Dylan was the artist unintentionally responsible for the birth of bootlegging many of the songs have been heard before by serious collectors.

Given the nature of the beast those versions were mainly scratchy, muffled twenty-eighth generation copies. Here in all their original pristine glory the casual listener can join the committed Dylanophiles in appreciating the awesome talent that forever changed the course of popular music.

If any other artist had released only these songs in their whole career, critics would eulogise about their genius. With almost perverse logic Dylan chose to leave them on the shelf until now.

Dylan has never been a good judge of his own music. How for instance did Blind Willie McTell remain unreleased during his most artistically barren period?

How come Angelina was so carelessly discarded? And why did the mid-Sixties rocker She's Your Lover Now never make its way onto vinyl until now?

They're just three of the gems featured here, but in many ways it's the early versions of songs that give the greatest insight into Dylan's creative process.

The acoustic renditions of Tangled Up In Blue and Idiot Wind, which were superceded by band versions for the album Blood On The Tracks, must have left Dylan feeling he was revealing too much of himself here because lines like "He thought they were successful, She thought that they were blessed / He had wealth and material things, but I never was too impressed", never made it onto the official album.

The Bootleg Series, Volumes 1-3 (Rare and unreleased 1961-1991) covers the complete career of this remarkable individual.

It takes us from the earliest days in Greenwich Village where he soaked up influences like a sponge, through the transitional period when he was shaking off the folk-protest tag and entering his "wild mercury" rock phase, past the motorcycle crash to the country tinged ballads, onwards towards the wondrous wordplay of the mid-Seventies, beyond that into the religion period and ending up with the dark reflection of his latest works.

It may be 3½ hours worth of out-takes but The Bootleg Sessions is a perfect tribute to Bob Dylan, and an absolute treat for his fans. Well done Columbia.

BOB DYLAN – a 50th birthday celebration

TONY KENWRIGHT

Rock

● BOB DYLAN: THE BOOTLEG SERIES 1 - 3 (Columbia)
The irony of an official Dylan bootleg would not be lost on the man himself. For he has spent the majority of his career frustrating the diehards, covering his tracks, abandoning his followers only to accumulate more. He is the iconoclast turned icon, the elusive enigma forever in the spotlight. This five-record set chronicles his many changing faces, from the protest poet of Greenwich Village *Who Killed Davey Moore?* through the electric bluesman with The Band in Woodstock *She's Your Lover Now* to the bitter Romantic of his '70s exile *Idiot Wind*. We get the curios *Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues* banned from the Ed Sullivan show alongside the classics *Like a Rolling Stone*, outakes, live footage and alternative versions. The sheer scope of the album – nearly 60 tracks in all – allows us to glimpse Dylan in all of his personas, yet confines him to none of them.
This is Dylan Re-Discovered, his craftsmanship and lyricism unleashed outside of the public smokescreen of evasive mutterings and teasing reticence. Behind those shades lies a breath-taking talent. Here's listening to you, Jokerman. GRAHAM CRAVENEY

● BOB DYLAN
The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991
(Columbia)
Released in time to celebrate Bob Dylan's 50th dream birthday, 'The Bootleg Series' makes official that which was previously heard under dim lights on poor quality lo-fi wind-up gramophones. Stretching back to the earliest folk days in the Village, the hobo drifting blues and live shows in smoky clubs, graduating to the prototype acid guitar electric folk, into the huge personal fifth dimension of 'Blood On The Tracks' and the religious spectaculars, this set outstrips 'Biograph' for ambition and achievement. It's a Cecil B. DeMille amongst rock artefacts, incorporating outtakes a-plenty from 'Blonde On Blonde', 'Highway 61 Revisited', 'Bringing It All Back Home', 'Infidels', etc, etc. Dylan's rejects would turn whole nations of other artists green. Impossible to objectively break down for immediate digestion, it's a question of whetting the appetite for glorious first time never to be repeated beauties like 'It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry' and 'Sitting On A Barbed Wire Fence', the 'Blonde On Blonde' outtake 'She's Your Lover Now', the 'Tracks' alternates of 'Idiot Wind', 'If You See Her Say Hello', 'Tangled Up In Blue' . . . but this isn't a list record, it's a lifetime achievement. And there'll be more soon? Dylan fans must feel like they died and woke up in Bob's dustbin.

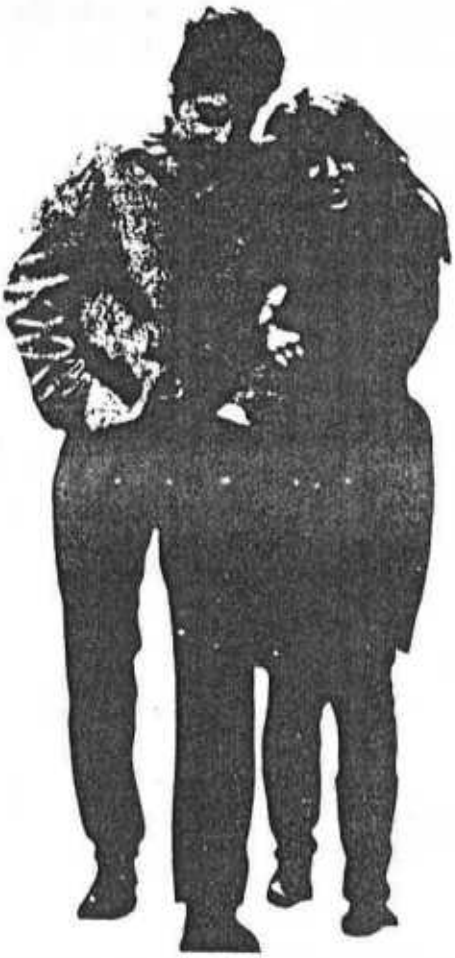
BOB DYLAN REDUX

By Bruce Pollock

When Dylanographers, critics, fans and disinterested spectators alike were galvanized recently by Bob Dylan's latest appearance on TV, accepting his lifetime achievement award from the good folks over at the Grammys with some oblique and ominious ramblings of the sort rarely heard on *Thirtysomething*, it evoked among the faithful wonderful memories of his legendary appearance on *The Les Crane Show*, debating Tommy Sands in 1964. As willfully oblique then as he was on Grammy night, Dylan established a cryptic legacy that would remain intact for nearly thirty years.

Musically, his legacy has been just as cryptic and probably twice as galvanizing; its current impact, however, has been subject to much question, even among various strains of the faithful. The recent release of *The Bootleg Series, Volumes 1-3 (Rare and Unreleased) 1961-1991*, will hardly resolve the issue. Purportedly a chronological catalogue of some of Dylan's finest unrecorded moments, at times the ghost of A.J. Weberman howls through the bones of this work with a necrophiliac's glee that is positively Hendrixian. For those of us who cling to the belief that there is in the universe some lost Dylan masterpiece that could, if discovered, redeem not only his fading legend but the unreleased hopes of an aging generation for a social and artistic order where 'the losers now will be later to win,' this overview does succeed in answering several pressing questions: 1) He lost something after the motorcycle accident; 2)We changed, he didn't; 3)Every so often since then he has written a masterpiece, a few of which had remained undiscovered until now; 4)But so what; 5) Nothing he says or does these days is apt to change the world as it did back then, although it might cause a stir for a day or two; 6) He was definitely worthy of our adulation, though. He was all that we thought he was; he's more than we think he is now.

The kid who recorded "Hard Times in New York Town" in a Minnesota hotel room, with his cap pulled low and his coat collar high, was no hoax. Just listen to "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," the dazzling 194 line tone poem from a Town Hall concert in 1963 that closes Volume 1, probably the most amazing performance of his career. This comes right after an absolutely authentic rendition of the traditional "Moonshiner," and two stunning piano demos of "The Times They Are a-Changin'" and "When the Ship Comes In," the four song block illuminating a profound moment in the history of popular music, when the old order met the new at a heartstopping crossroads, the world on the edge of those prophetic changes, the man on the stage who would lead the way.



Volume 2 takes us past the crack-up, when Dylan was coming under the influence of amplified instruments like a writer going from a manual to an electric typewriter, writing as fast as he could to keep up with the whirring of his thoughts. But, just as he is in concert, the tunes are bent and mangled here, with the much-anticipated "Farewell Angelina" too slow and "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry" too fast, "Like a Rolling Stone" a one-verse tease, "Subterranean Homesick Blues" missing some crucial words, and "She's Your Lover Now" missing the last verse. And as great as that last song may be in this context, I still wouldn't trade it for "Sooner or Later One of Us Must Know" or "Please Crawl out Your Window." Or, for that matter, "Spanish Harlem Incident."

Anyone who marked the approximate termination of Dylan's artistic impact right around the same time as he found God and country music, not necessarily in that order, isn't about to be persuaded to revisionism by the remainder of Volumes 2 and 3. Though tunes like "Catfish," the majestic "Every Grain of Sand" and, especially the "St. James Infirmary" like dirge, "Blind Willie McTell," indicate that masterworks do still occur, for the most part, as much as we may have wanted him to be as confessional as Joni Mitchell, as precise as Paul Simon, as visceral as Bruce Springsteen, the later, more personal Dylan is a lot less interesting than the many-masked creature of the '60s. Like an actor only as great as his roles, in person he seems but a shell of that persona, his tunes as much a mystery to him as to us.

Nevertheless, at fifty, who among the greats of rock 'n' roll is as productive and challenging—let alone still alive—as Dylan? If the *Bootleg Series* often has the feel of eleven or fifty-eight outlined epitaphs, Dylan himself remains larger than life, as feisty and uncivilized as ever. Just don't ask him to trade quips with Arsenio. ■

"Where have you been my blue-eyed son?

"Where have you been my darling young one?"

By RON SIRAK
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Bob Dylan always has been a measuring stick. A standard of concern and conceit, brilliance and belligerence, innovation and implausible arrangements.

And he's a milepost in the passing of time.

"Blowing in the Wind" ... "Mr. Tambourine Man" ... Going electric ... The motorcycle crash ... "Nashville Skyline" (and where DID that voice come from?) ... "Blood on the Tracks."

Born Again. Lost Again. Born Again again.

Like a first kiss or last look at a childhood home, his songs provoke the kinds of memories that remind us exactly where we were and what was going on in our lives when Dylan did whatever it was he was doing.

It was 30 years ago that Dylan captured the New York City folk scene and kept it in his thrall for decades. On May 24, it will be 50 years since he was born in Duluth, Minn., as Robert Allen Zimmerman.

Now comes a remarkable three-volume collection of outtakes, rehearsal cuts, demos and concert recordings packaged as "The Bootleg Series," which reminds us of just how much time has passed.

It also reminds us how truly staggering Dylan's work has been, and how astonishing that these 58 cuts would go unpublished for as long as they did. Everything in the set is worth listening to. Even the bad cuts provide valuable insight into the evolution and choices of a major artist.

"I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it."

He was raised in Hibbing, Minn., the son of a Jewish hardware merchant in a town of 17,000 mostly Catholic miners. He started playing the piano at age 8 and the guitar and harmonica at about 10. His heroes were Hank Williams and James Dean, Leadbelly and Little Richard. And, of course, Woody Guthrie. He migrated to New York in part to visit a dying and hospitalized Guthrie.

Dylan is remembered by childhood friends as a loner who didn't seem to mind that almost no one seemed to understand, or like, his music.

Out of it all came the music of America — blues and country and folk — filtered through a blue-eyed, skinny college dropout determined to be noticed.

And noticed he was.

He hit New York City for the first time in January 1961, and right away everyone saw there was something different about him. He was unique. He hadn't yet emerged as a writer (he wasn't quite 20) but the voice that seemed to search for notes, the pounding guitar, the wailing harmonica and uncanny sense of timing and phrasing produced a package perfect for the words he was singing.

That later became even more true when he was singing his own words. The desperate, on-the-edge sound was perfect for the scolding condemnations of injustice or the nightmarish visions of insanity and destruction he put into words.

"I don't write about things," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I write from inside of something, and I sing and play the same way. It's never about that 'something,' hoping to touch it. It's rather from the inside of it reaching out."

America was on the verge of tumbling madly into something that would later be known as The '60s. Dylan was a step or two ahead of everyone, dragging as many as he could with him.

"I heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter."

In 1961, after rave reviews on the New York coffee house circuit, Dylan signed a three-year deal with Witmark & Sons to publish his songs. It might have been the most creative period for any writer in American music. In three years, Dylan wrote 237 songs for Witmark.

It was the period in which he wrote "Blowin' in the Wind," "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall," "Masters of War," "With God on Our Side," "It Ain't Me Babe," "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," "Only a Pawn in Their Game" and "Mr. Tambourine Man."

Says Dylan: "When I'm singin' my songs, it never occurs to me that I wrote them.

"If I didn't have a song like 'Masters of War,' I'd find a song like 'Masters of War' to sing. Same thing with "Times They Are A-Changin'.' If I didn't have a song like that, I'd go out and look around and I'd search around until I found one like that, you know?"

It was a shocking, stunning burst of creativity by an artist in his early 20s that produced what would be Dylan's biggest burden for the rest of his career: Everything he would ever do again would be compared to that remarkable time.

"The Bootleg Series" documents this period, and much, much more. It takes us on a trip not just through recent history but through the life of one of the most powerful interpreters of that history.

All of the Dylan Eras are represented in the set: The acoustic folk-protest of the first five albums; the surrealistic and shockingly electric albums "Highway 61 Revisited" and "Blonde on Blonde"; the playful, post-motorcycle mellow of the late '60s and early '70s; the regained passion of "Blood on the Tracks" and "Desire"; and finally the Born Again and post-Born Again period with "Saved" and "Slow Train Coming."

The earliest cuts in this collection come from late 1961. The most recent from 1989.

And while Dylan's style and his specific concerns have changed many times, his substance has remained the same.

Throughout "The Bootleg Series" we hear the anger that is as much Dylan as anything — anger at a lover, at God, at the powers that be, at who knows. Sometimes just a shouting anger such as in "Idiot Wind": "You hurt the ones that I love best, cover up the truth with lies"; or in "Let Me Die in My Footstep": "There's always been people that have to cause fear."

But mixed in with the anger is humor, and occassionally hope. There is the determination of the Civil Rights Movement and the fear of a child growing up in the shadow of the atomic bomb, as he sings in "Masters of War." And yet Dylan, who is divorced, has five children.

Dylan's Bootleg Series is a comprehensive, if slightly harrowing portrait of the Bard

Bob on the track

Adam Sweeting

BOB DYLAN: The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Columbia)

THE very scope and quality of Columbia's splendid new Dylan compilation, The Bootleg Series, gives pause for thought. Wasn't it more fun when Dylan's rarities were only available on hissing vinyl from temporary mail-order addresses and furtive market stallholders? Now it's all been assembled, cleaned and packaged on CD for your comfort and safety — a career embalmed.

What a career though. The 58 tracks here, painstakingly annotated by John Bauldie, follow the trail of the Duluth Dynamo from his nouveau-Woody Guthrie days in New York (track 1 — Hard Times In New York Town) through his fantastic electric rebirth, to the Basement Tapes, to the Rolling Thunder period, to Born Again Bob and the abyss of uncertainty which latterly seems to have imperilled his very survival.

Dylan's folkish beginnings didn't last long, but he put down deep roots in blues, mountain ballads, country music and the Bible.

The talking blues phase — epitomised by the uproariously droll Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues — evolved into the proto-rap of Subterranean Homesick Blues (sung here with acoustic guitar), Dylan leaping across the syllables like a mountain-goat laureate.

Gems from the golden early-electric period include She's Your Lover Now, which resembles a splice-up of One Of Us Must Know and Like A Rolling Stone with virtually self-parodying lyrics ("her picture-books of the pyramid and her postcards of Billy the Kid"), and the Basement sessions yield a version of I Shall Be Released, plus the lesser-known Santa Fe.

In the mid-seventies, paranoia and loss of direction begin to beleaguer the Bard. "I been double-crossed too much, at times I think I've almost lost my mind," he wails in the hitherto unreleased take of Idiot Wind included here. "Lady-killers load dice on me behind my back while imitators steal me blind." In its rewritten version on Blood On The Tracks, the song was explosively rancorous, but designed for public consumption. Here, behind his melodramatic delivery, Dylan sounds desperate.

Henceforth, he grabs frantically at God, women or mythology in a quest for bearings, the tone of the music sometimes wildly at odds with the words. 1975's Golden Loom is a fiddle-driven country stroll, yet is riddled with ritualistic and symbolic imagery, while for the threatening Armageddon-style lyric of Ye Shall Be Changed, Bob supplied a tune bouncing with gospel-ish bonhomie.

His judgment of his own best work has grown erratic, too. Someone's Got A Hold Of My Heart is an early version of Empire Burlesque's Tight Connection To My Heart, but is a far warmer, more involving piece, and the phantasmagoric Angelina could only have improved several of his dire eighties records.

The best of the later discoveries are from the Infidels album. Foot Of Pride simmers with righteous wrath while Blind Willie McTell is the blues, as forlorn as you'll ever hear. This package is a harrowing portrait of a man whose career was built on an otherness which may now be throttling him.

Subterranean blues exhumed

Richard Williams on legal bootleg Dylan

ROCK

PEOPLE have been saying for years that a song called "Blind Willie McTell" is probably the best thing Bob Dylan has ever done. The trouble was that Dylan himself never let us hear it.

But we did, anyway — at least those of us obsessed enough to part with significant sums of money for albums dressed in plain white cardboard, pressed on dodgy vinyl at factories that didn't ask questions, and sold at the kind of market stalls that might not be there next Saturday. Dylan's business people told us that the bootleg industry constituted a form of theft and anyway, violated the artist's right to edit his own output. But from the moment a double-album called *Great White Wonder* appeared in 1969, we had formed the view that what Dylan wasn't letting out might just be more interesting than the stuff he wanted us to hear.

Now, at last, he seems to think that it won't do us any harm to hear these half-buried treasures. In the three-and-a-half hours of unreleased material included in *The Bootleg Series, Volumes 1-3*, anyone who took Dylan's lawyers seriously and avoided the bootlegged releases can now get a good look at what they were missing. From "Hard Times in New York Town", informally taped in a Minnesota hotel room in 1961, to "Series of Dreams", a dense and disturbing out-take from the *Oh Mercy* sessions in 1989, we are led on a well-researched and carefully compiled journey through his extraordinary career.

There are 58 songs here, many of them exceptional. The material from the folk-club years, including out-takes from *Freewheelin'* and *The Times They Are a-Changin'*, contains some fine performances. Most people, though, will probably head straight for what we still think of as his "middle period" — the time from *Bringing It All Back Home* in 1965 to *Blonde on Blonde* in 1966, when he was at his most mysterious and beautiful and influential. There we find a completely unexpected vocal-and-acoustic guitar treatment of "Subterranean Homesick Blues", the song with which he breached the walls of rock 'n' roll, and an equally startling embryonic version of "Like a Rolling Stone", arranged as, of all things, a stately minuet. And here, too, is the legendary "She's Your Lover Now", seven minutes of bitter revenge on some girlfriend or other, spluttering to a halt midway through its final verse. (It never did get finished: in 1966, Dylan was moving too fast to look back.)

Even the later work is often magnificent, and "Blind Willie McTell" turns out to be everything they said it was. In this passionately introspective song, Dylan uses the exemplary figure of McTell, a Georgia blues singer who died in 1959, as a yardstick against which to measure his own failings in a world gone to hell. Dylan's piano and Mark Knopfler's acoustic guitar are the only instruments, and as he summons up scenes from American history in a voice that is low and soft and seems full of ghosts, the composer has never sounded closer to his core. Why he kept us waiting eight years to hear it may be — like his motorcycle crash, like his flirtations with Zionism and Christianity, like what he really meant by "jewels and binoculars / hang from the head of a mule" — best kept a mystery.

Fascinated with bootleg

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A record company offering a "bootleg" album for public sale is a little like Pepsi Cola handing out free samples of Diet Coke.

Yet two of rock 'n' roll's biggest names have released albums this spring with the word "bootleg" in the title. On "The Bootleg Series," Columbia Records has opened its vaults of Bob Dylan outtakes, shelved songs and live material.

And Paul McCartney, betting on beating the bootleggers to the market, is releasing a disc of his MTV "Unplugged" performance in May.

The releases are vivid testimony to the public's enduring fascination — and the music business' annoyance — with the unauthorized recordings of a musician's work. Bootlegs have entered the compact disc era on the fringes of respectability.

The 58-song Dylan box contains live recordings from a 1963 Carnegie Hall show, early versions of "Tangled Up in Blue" and "Idiot Wind" that later appeared radically reworked and many discarded outtakes.

Despite the music industry's best efforts, bootlegs remain a thriving subculture. The popularity of boxed sets — spurred largely by Dylan's own 1985 "Biograph" set — have persuaded record companies to release some material that's always been bootleg fodder.

In fact, dedicated Dylan fans probably already have heard about half of "The Bootleg Series," said Todd Rosenstock, a Pennsylvania writer who monitors bootlegs.

Among many fanatics of the Grateful Dead and Bruce Springsteen, live bootlegs are prized more than the artists' legitimate recordings. The dozens of Springsteen bootlegs include one 10-record set, Rosenstock said.

Reviewed by Max Bell

The music business likes a birthday party as much as anybody, also, and when it's **BOB DYLAN**'s big 5-0 we're talking about the celebrations are likely to last quite a while. Dylan scratches up his half century May 24, when he seems to be more prolific than ever. You can't escape Dylan CD reissues, the droves of new books and the biggest event of all, namely **'BOB DYLAN THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOLUME 1-3 (RARE AND UNRELEASED) 1961-1991'** (COLUMBIA, ALL FORMATS).

Available as three CDs and cassettes and five albums, all in a 12"x12" box, the 58 tracks within offer a cornucopia of delights for Dylan treasure-seekers as they scan the man's very first work, incorporating live performances from poky Greenwich Village clubs to the more upmarket Carnegie Hall, then zip into the electric period, the 70s rebirth (artistic and religious) and the 80s sage.

Like 'The Basement Tapes' and 'Biograph' before it, 'The Bootleg Series' is a musical monument, rock'n'roll's equivalent of bringing the tablets down from the mountain. Just when you thought you were getting to grips with Bob's current output along comes this monster, casting fresh light on old recordings and throwing familiar masterpieces into the shadows.

For a start, there's an awful lot of it to digest, nine outtakes from 'The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan' for example, six from 'The Times They Are A-Changin'', three from 'Bringing It All Back Home', four from 'Blood On The Tracks' and so on.

The earlier stuff is folk song pure and simple, Dylan's mountain music, full of tall tales about drunks and hobos and washed up boxers with a touch of social outrage to heavy up the load. Songs like 'Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues' — a nods under the bed spook — are inevitably dated but still crystallise a period in a way no other folk singer could do. 'No More Auction Block' could be a demo for 'The Times They Are A-Changin'' itself, while the poem 'Last Thoughts On Woody Guthrie' is a piece of glorious shuffling verse that snakes along like a river in a canyon.

Those brought up on noisier fare are well served in the selections utilising Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper, Dylan's first electric band. The peach here is an alternate version of 'It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry', whose warped blues treatment ushered in the whole West Coast explosion. The 'Blood On The Tracks' section is equally powerful. The original attempts at 'Tangled Up In Blue', 'Idiot Wind' and 'If You See Her, Say Hello' — where Dylan anticipated his divorce from Sara Lownds — are impossibly moving and sound far different to the more embittered existing versions.

By contrast the unreleased 'Blood' song 'Call Letter Blues' is a savage scream for help, so personal it hurts. Small wonder that Dylan found refuge in religion and Rolling Thunder thereafter, though his natural I for an I philosophy is rooted in the Old Testament orthodoxy, apparent here in 'Ye Shall Be Changed' and 'Every Grain Of Sand'. 'It'll take months to come to terms with this, by when they'll have dug another chunk out of Dylan's past. Strange to have your life on permanent rerun.

ALBUM REVIEWS

A ROUND-UP OF RECENT REISSUES & COMPILATIONS ON COMPACT DISC AND VINYL LP

Figures in brackets after the catalogue number refer to the length of each CD

BOB DYLAN: "The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3" (CBS 468086 2; 3-CD box,also on LP)(77.10)(76.48)(77.00)

In the final end, as Bob would say, it's impossible to complain. You can nitpick and qualify your superlatives, but the fact remains that this is the most important archive release we've ever reviewed in Record Collector. Album of the year? It seems certain. Any takers for the best compilation of all time?

The history of "The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3" was traced by Clinton Heylin in last month's issue, explaining how CBS eventually trimmed one of the original four CDs from the box to help its commercial prospects. Well, most Dylan fans would happily have bought forty CDs of unissued Bob, never mind four, but the three discs which have survived offer us a goldmine of rare and unreleased tracks, the like of which few of us can ever have hoped to see on an official release.

As the title of this set admits, CBS realise that much of this material is freely available on bootleg, though rarely in the sound quality offered here. Having heard, at a guess, three-quarters of the contents of this box on tapes and albums of varying quality over the last twenty years, I envy those who are coming to it cold. The chance to hear performances like "She's Your Lover Now", the original "Tangled Up In Blue", "Angelina" or "Blind Willie McTell" for the first time is something to be savoured. I remember the thrill of discovering "She's Your Lover Now" — the realisation that, yes, the performance really did live up to those remarkable lyrics published in Dylan's "Writings And Drawings", that this was as brilliant as anything Dylan had ever released. Well, the excitement remains when "She's Your Lover Now" emerges from the CD player in perfect sound quality — and that's just one out of 58 performances that, at their best, force us to revise any impressions of Bob Dylan which are based solely on the work he has released in the past.

Beginning at the Minnesota Hotel in Minneapolis, three days short of Christmas 1961, and ending at the sessions for "Oh Mercy" twenty-seven years later, "The Bootleg Series" brings together the best of hundreds of unreleased Dylan performances that have either circulated on tape among collectors, or else have remained a guarded secret in the CBS vaults. Spread across three CDs and cassettes, or five LPs, it represents the most substantial archive exploration ever allowed by a major artist — stunning testament to the fertility of Dylan's muse since the birth of the Sixties.

Nearly half of the set pre-dates Dylan's gleeful adoption of electric rock music in 1965, a fact which may daunt those who find Dylan's acoustic albums like "The Times They Are A-Changin' " and "Another Side" to be full of great songs, but oppressively lacking in variation of tone. But what's evident on this set, and not always on Dylan's early albums, is the breadth of styles and moods which marked his acoustic work. Here are lonesome blues laments that sound like the work of sharecroppers or miners just weeks from the grave; Guthrie-style talkin' blues executed with child-like enthusiasm; reworkings of traditional ballads that hum with the hard profits of experience; and the familiar voice of the protest singer, investigating the morals of the boxing ring or the nuclear race. As Dylan approaches the transformation from folksinger to poet, after late 1963, his work takes on transcendental themes; and songs like "Eternal Circle" and (a real discovery, this, as no-one realised Dylan had taped the song) "Farewell Angelina" are full of the dense imagery that marked released songs like "Chimes Of Freedom" and "Mr Tambourine Man".

But it's the surge of electricity in 1965 that strikes a fresh tone into Dylan's work. "Subterranean Homesick Blues", a relentless flurry of words based loosely on Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey Business" always sounded like the ultimate rock'n'roll song; but here's an acoustic run-through which loses none of its power. Then there's the legendary "If You Gotta Go, Go Now", receiving its first official release since it crept out as a single in Holland 24 years ago, and the familiar (from bootlegs) "Highway 61" out-takes of "Sitting On A Barbed Wire Fence" and "It Takes A Lot To Laugh". What no-one except the original musicians has heard before, however, is a first run-through of "Like A Rolling Stone" in waltz-tempo, Kooper and Bloomfield just starting to pick up the song as Dylan calls a halt after a verse and a chorus. Likewise, we've heard the solo piano rendition of "I'll Keep It With Mine"; "The Bootleg Series" has a previously unknown out-take from the "Blonde On Blonde" sessions, with Robbie Robertson and Al Kooper gradually feeling their way towards the meaning of the song — too slowly, obviously, for Dylan, who dropped it and moved on to something else.

But the pinnacle of Dylan's electric era remains "She's Your Lover Now", taped in Nashville in January 1966 with Dylan supported by the Band (drummer Sandy Kornikoff sitting in for Levon Helm). It's nothing more than a run-through of a song which Dylan had also taped for reference on the piano. But it's as breathtaking as any Dylan performance on record — the Band setting up an icy tension, while Bob leans and breathes his way through a set of lyrics that finger some complex set of personal relationships about to collapse under the strain. His control is amazing — the way he phrases every line to perfection, rushing through some lines, dragging out others with contempt — and the music more than matches it.

Sadly, there are no other "Blonde On Blonde" out-takes to savour here; in one of the compilers' few misjudgements, the early versions of "Visions Of Johanna" which have been circulating among collectors for years aren't included. Instead we jump to the Basement Tapes, and the long overdue official release of the original "I Shall Be Released", plus the first public airing of "Santa Fe", rescued from a tape owned by Band organist Garth Hudson. It's a shame there isn't more from this source — "I'm Not There", perhaps, or "All You Have To Do Is Dream" — as the discovery five years or so back of another two hours' of unissued Basement material has raised expectations that still more tracks may exist.

As if to reinforce Clinton Heylin's account, in the Dylan biography reviewed elsewhere this month, of the paucity of Dylan's output in the late Sixties, the set moves on to 1970, and a rather insignificant alternate version of "If Not For You". Dylan's career was by now operating at walking pace: his version of "Wallflower" from his 1971 sessions with Leon Russell reflects the lazy, country feel of his early Seventies work.

If the studio version of "Nobody 'Cept You" from the 1973 "Planet Waves" sessions is something of a disappointment, then there should have been few qualms about the staggering original versions of "Tangled Up In Blue", "Idiot Wind" and "If You See Her, Say Hello", removed from "Blood On The Tracks" and substituted by fuller band renditions just before the album was released. Whether it's deliberate or not, however, the version of "Idiot Wind" included on "The Bootleg Series" isn't the one that's been out on bootleg since the mid-Seventies, but a slightly inferior alternate take, lacking the commitment and certainty of the original. Any new Dylan discovery is of interest, of course, but this is one occasion where familiarity would have bred contentment.

The concentration on Dylan's powers as a lyricist and singer has obscured the most pressing problem that's affected his work over the last fifteen years — the physical sound of his music. Dylan himself harks back to "that thin, wild, mercury sound" of "Blonde On Blonde" as the perfect setting for his work; the substitution of five of the "Blood On The Tracks" performances was an attempt to find an accompaniment that would match and support the force of his lyrics. On tour with both halves of the Rolling Thunder Revue, Dylan found a gypsy orchestra wild enough to capture the exhilaration of his songs, and the erratic nature of his timing; though in the studio with the same musicians, "Desire" came out subdued and reserved. You can hear the difference here between the studio take, "Golden Loom", and the uproarious live cut of "Seven Days", with the Rolling Thunderers galloping off without a thought of where they would finish up.

Dylan has achieved that liberation onstage since 1976 — sometimes with Tom Petty, sometimes with the 'born-again' band, but mostly with G.E. Smith on the Never-Ending Tour; but in the studio it has escaped him. The final twelve tracks of "The Bootleg Series" cover the decade between "Slow Train Coming" and "Oh Mercy", and include some absolutely magnificent Dylan performances. But too many of them suffer from the sheer conventionality of his musicians, who treat Dylan like any other civilised and conservative singer-songwriter, and trap him within tired and stultifying ideas of production and arrangement. "Ye Shall Be Changed", "You Changed My Life", "Need A Woman", "Foot Of Pride" — fine songs, every one, but all caught up in that peculiarly stodgy interpretation of British R&B which has been Dylan's achilles heel in the Eighties. When he escapes, with the sparse accompaniment of "Blind Willie McTell" or the sinuous textures of "Angelina", Dylan is free to give two of his finest songs performances which pierce straight to his soul. Elsewhere, he is too busy trying to find his way out of the music to concentrate on the words. That said, all twelve of these latter-day out-takes help deflate the myth that Dylan died in that 1966 bike crash, and — like everyone else — I can't understand why some of them, at least, had to wait for a catch-all compilation to be given an official release.

So "The Official Bootleg" isn't the greatest Bob Dylan album, after all — a collection of out-takes shouldn't be. But it is a more than worthy successor to "Biograph", a magnificent collection of long-awaited songs, and the ultimate proof of Dylan's unrivalled stature as an artist. Best of all, it's a gesture of goodwill towards the fans who have maintained the faith through a decade when it was, quite frankly, easier not to be a Bob Dylan fan. I only hope that Dylan himself, who had little to do with the compilation of this set, appreciates the strength of what he has done, and doesn't feel that the combing of the vaults which produced it has stripped a little more of the privacy from his soul.

Long live Dylan's genius

By Edna Gundersen
USA TODAY

The Bootleg Series, Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991, out Monday, offers indisputable proof of Bob Dylan's pop-era supremacy as a singer, songwriter and visionary.

It's positively first-rate.

The wealth of rarities travels the back roads of Dylan's career, providing a thorough and intimate document of his evolution as an artist.

The box set (three CDs or cassettes, $45.98) spans the 30 years since Dylan signed with Columbia. Many of the 58 previously unreleased tracks, which include alternate versions of hits and 38 songs never issued before, have been available on illegal bootlegs. But even scrupulous collectors will be surprised by the unsuspected gems here: a moving demo of *I Shall Be Released*; a gorgeous *Farewell, Angelina*, long ago co-opted by Joan Baez; and an early take of *Like a Rolling Stone* — cast in *waltz* time.

Dylan's breadth of emotions and styles is staggering. He upbraids evildoers in a razor-sharp rant one minute, painfully explores the shards of shattered romance the next.

Whether he's tackling angry protest songs, tortured ballads, seething folk and blues narratives or soaring hymns, Dylan commands awe. He's equally at home with the sparest acoustic accompaniment or the full-throttle rock of The Band.

Against today's obsessive technical perfection, *The Bootleg Series* seems starkly simple, loose and conversational, as if recorded surreptitiously. Dylan's cough abruptly ends one song, and as he wobbles from sturdy faith to scary doubt in *Every Grain of Sand*, a dog barks in the background.

Produced by Jeff Rosen, who also assembled 1985's *Biograph* retrospective, the set unwinds chronologically and fittingly kicks off with *Hard Times in New York Town*, recorded in a Minneapolis hotel room shortly after Dylan's virgin trek to New York City and his sobering visit with ailing mentor Woody Guthrie. Dylan, then 20, recounts the experience in a flat ramble.

Elsewhere, Dylan readily masters Guthrie's "talking blues" technique, especially in the hootenanny hilarity of *Talkin' Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues*.

USA TODAY

DYLAN: 'Bootleg' includes 38 songs never issued before

Though completists will instantly and joyously recognize the value of this stunning collection, *The Bootleg Series* is not for Dylan scholars alone. Anyone who appreciates emotionally potent music stripped of tinsel and studio shrink wrap will find much to love in *The Bootleg Series*. While not a greatest hits package, many tunes hold their own against Dylan's biggest singles. And there is no higher standard.

Best of the 'Bootleg Series'

Bob Dylan's *Bootleg Series* box set is crammed with long-buried treasures. After painful consideration, my favorites:

▶ ***Blind Willie McTell.*** On this top-notch outtake from 1983's *Infidels*, Dylan bemoans the absence of blues greats like McTell who could do justice to songs about an increasingly bleak world. Ironically, Dylan's performance is sheer blues brilliance.

▶ ***Tangled Up in Blue.*** This lovely, mournful take was prematurely sent to some radio stations before a dissatisfied Dylan re-recorded it and other songs for *Blood on the Tracks*. Both approaches are sublime.

▶ ***She's Your Lover Now.*** Dylan recorded this rocking *Blonde on Blonde* outtake, a complex look at a love triangle, in January 1966 with The Band (then the Hawks). The intricate, dizzying lyrics — with shifting pronouns blurring the point of view — are among his finest and most challenging. Even a clumsy ending can't damage its charm.

▶ ***Mama, You Been on My Mind.*** Early in his career, Dylan sang this frequently as a comic, hammy duet with Joan Baez. Here, it's accorded a sweetness and vulnerability that lend depth and grace.

▶ ***Subterranean Homesick Blues.*** Dylan blazed many trails, but was he the original rapper? Listen to the torrential talk-singing on this intriguing acoustic rendition and ask yourself: Who today can touch this?

▶ ***Idiot Wind.*** The familiar interpretation is taunting and caustic. Here, Dylan plays it haunted, tender and desperate. Either way, it's chillingly fascinating.

▶ ***Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues.*** Dylan recorded this witty and snide anti-McCarthyism narrative at Carnegie Hall in 1963, five months after CBS refused to let him perform it on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (despite Sullivan's support).

▶ ***Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie.*** A mesmerizing, galloping ode to the folk singer, this is the only time Dylan recited one of his poems in concert. It's eerily musical.

▶ ***I Shall Be Released.*** The 50-plus singers, from Bette Midler to Sting, who have covered this classic can't match the marrow-baring emotion of Dylan's 1967 demo.

PHOTO / DON HUNSTEIN

By Steve Morse
GLOBE STAFF

Record review

Finally, some cheerful Bob Dylan news. There hasn't been much since his disheveled, laughing-stock appearance at the recent Grammy awards, where he sang "Masters of War" in a tongue so foreign that even ardent Dylanologists scratched their heads in confusion.

The good news is this Tuesday's release of a superlative boxed set, "The Bootleg Series: Volumes 1-3 (Rare and Unreleased) 1961-1991," which serves as a vital transfusion for the ailing Dylan image.

You'll recall that Dylan started the boxed-set craze with 1985's "Biograph," which contained 18 previously unreleased tracks mixed among his hits. But "The Bootleg Series," available as three CDs, three cassettes or five albums, goes much further.

It peppers the consumer with 38 previously unreleased Dylan songs, spanning leftover album tracks (many so strong as to defy explanation for leaving them out the first time), demos, live recordings and the only poem he ever read on stage. Titled "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie," the poem is a surreal epic saying you can't look for answers in "50-star generals and flipped-out phonies." Dylan recites it at New York's Town Hall in 1963, only two years after he came to Greenwich Village in search of his idol, Guthrie, who was then in a New Jersey hospital with the degenerative muscle disease that eventually killed him.

The box contains some tracks well-known to Dylan bootleg collectors, especially outtakes from "The Basement Tapes" recorded in upstate New York with the Band in the late '60s. But even fanatics will perk up at the newly discovered "Farewell Angelina" (a melodic precursor to "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue") and at several rehearsal tracks, including "Like a Rolling Stone," done in genteel waltz time before it was transformed into a countercultural rock standard.

Other alternate takes show Dylan's evolving creative process. A piano demo of "The Times They Are A-Changin' " is less rancorous than the finished version. A solo acoustic "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (with the famous line "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows") is also less harsh than the official release. An acoustic "Idiot Wind" expresses sorrow toward a failed relationship, not the anger of the final release. And an alternate take of "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," with Mike Bloomfield blazing on guitar, is a lot hotter than the album version. Dylan's chameleon ways – and the nasal inflections of his voice (he once described his songs as "exercises in tonal breath control") are never more evident.

Sparkling gems

A few tracks are included for novelty purposes. Dylan proves he's human by forgetting the words to "She's Your Lover Now" (an outtake from the "Blonde on Blonde" album sessions), then cuts short a raspy take of "Like a Rolling Stone," telling the producer, "My voice is gone, man. Let's try it again."

The bulk of the nearly four-hour set consists of sparkling gems the casual Dylan fan has never heard before. These include nine outtakes from his second album, "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan," led by "Let Me Die in My Footsteps" (rather than in underground bomb shelters, which the song assails) and the picaresque "Rambling, Gambling Willie," in which Dylan's irreverent wordplay is already in full flower: "Well, he gambled in the White House and in the railway yards/ Wherever there were people, there was Willie and his cards."

Folk-music fans will revel in the 28 tracks with just guitar and harmonica (from traditional folk songs to ribald talking blues), reaffirming Dylan's role as acoustic patriarch. Several songs, such as "Worried Blues," contain a fingerpicking style that he stopped using after 1964. Still others were released only under the pseudonym of Blind Boy Grunt, for anthologies issued by "Broadside" magazine in the early '60s. (So prolific was Dylan back then that he turned out 237 songs in three years for the publishing firm of M. Witmark & Sons. Figure it out – that's more than 80 a year, or one every four to five days. Not bad for a coffeehouse-groomed kid from Hibbing, Minn., who was still only in his early 20s.)

The "Bootleg Series" is top-heavy on the '60s and '70s, but nearly every Dylan era is represented. There's a soaring outtake, "Golden Loom," from 1976's "Desire" album with singer Emmylou Harris and violinist Scarlet Rivera. There are a few hit-or-miss outtakes from his Christian rock days in the late '70s and '80s, with Mark Knopfler on guitar. And the set is capped by five outtakes from 1983's "Infidels" album, among them the fervent ballad "Lord, Protect My Child" ("No matter what happens to me ... protect my child") and the antigreed "Fool of Pride," about hypocrites who "take money from sin ... and sing 'Amazing Grace' all the way to Swiss banks."

Ending the set is the playful "Series of Dreams," a 1989 outtake just released as a single. It's climbing the charts faster than any of his solo tunes in years – and proves that Dylan fans are still out there, no matter what he does to bewilder them.

▲ BOB DYLAN Putting an often fascinating collection of off-the-record odds and ends into the mainstream

song

THE BOOTLEG SERIES: VOLS. 1–3

Bob Dylan

It would seem that every time in the last 30 years Dylan sang into a microphone, a tape was smuggled out, copied and passed through an underground of fans. With this 58-track, boxed set of demos, alternate takes, rehearsals and concert recordings, average civilians can get in on both the ephemera and the classic moments.

In its off-the-cuff way, *The Bootleg Series* is as important as the guitar-plunking poet's 1985 retrospective of authorized recordings, *Biograph*. (Producer Jeff Rosen compiled both collections.) The sound quality is vastly better than that on any of the estimated 1,200 unauthorized records.

The stark Volume 1, with Dylan backing himself on guitar and harmonica, is the most intriguing. It's a coffeehouse sampler that begins with "Hard Times in New York Town," sung at a Minneapolis hotel just after Dylan's first trip to New York City in 1961, when he signed with Columbia Records.

Also strong is "House Carpenter," a traditional ballad cut from *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. Oddities range from a yodeling "Talkin' Hava Negeilah Blues" to a 1963 Carnegie Hall performance of "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues." In a useful 68-page booklet included in this set, Dylan expert John Bauldie notes that Dylan had been barred from singing the Birch song, a funny anti–anti-Communist manifesto, on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Dylan was always an original. But his borrowings in those early days—from Woody Guthrie, for instance—are obvious. By Volume 2, his artistry is assured, his presentation articulate and evocative. This album contains surprising versions of some compositions, including an acoustic version of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and a fragment of "Like a Rolling Stone" in a fractured waltz tempo. There's also a haunting "I Shall Be Released" done with the Band after Dylan's 1966 motorcycle accident; the keening harmonies of the late Richard Manuel sound like the voice of an anguished angel.

Volume 3 (1974–1989) is the least satisfying, dominated by clumsy if fervent songs growing out of Dylan's conversion to Christianity. Among the exceptions: a tribute to an old blues singer, "Blind Willie McTell."

If you're still disturbed by Dylan's appearance on the Grammy Awards, fidgeting with his hat and croaking about God knows what, browse in this collection. Listen, say, to "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie." Its pell-mell poetry is a vivid reminder of how much Dylan has had to say, and of the often remarkable ways he found to say it. (Columbia) ■ DAVID HILTBRAND

IT TAKES A LOT TO LAUGH

House Carpenter By Debbie Sims

"Here's a story about a ghost that came back from out of the sea, came back to take his bride away from the House Carpenter."

This is apparently a very old song, dating from "at least 1685" according the notes. It is a song of lost love, false promises and foolish hopes. It is a moral tale of what happens to those who think the grass is greener on the other side and about the importance of marital fidelity.

The "ghost" who comes back is an adventurer who has seemingly been away for some considerable length of time and, it is suggested, has not been entirely faithful to his old love, he could have married a king's daughter. His former lover meanwhile, has married a boring but stable and reliable man, yes she's sure he is "a fine young man". However, she has not forgotten the exciting man who returns from the sea, and she is easily persuaded to accompany him to the shores of sunny Italy where the greener grass apparently grows.

After only two weeks sailing their relationship is beginning to hit the rocks and the House Carpenter's wife is weeping belatedly for her children. She seems to imagine her daughter pleading with her to return home, but of course it is too late. There follows a series of dreams or premonitions of their destiny. The white hills of heaven they will not know and the dark hills of the hellfire which will unite them. Soon after this her fears are realised, the boat springs a leak and drifts to the bottom of the sea. This is a permanent stop, there is, unusually for Dylan, no moralising or explaining, nor does he return to the fate of the House Carpenter, after whom the song is named.

The pace of the song is fast and furious, suggesting that the course of events takes place in a very short time period overwhelming main protagonists, and preventing them from considering the likely consequences of their actions.

Let Me Die In My Footsteps I. G. Roberts

This seems to be the earliest real diamond that Dylan cast almost casually into the woodpile. It's the sort of song that could easily have been a standout item in the repertoire of many an artist, and furthermore, at the time he tossed it aside, it was still what most performers would have considered to be brand new material. But the songs had already begun to pour out of Dylan with a prodigious flow – and it would be another four years before he would invent the rock double-album.

Let Me Die In My Footsteps can be taken as an anthem. Dylan has admitted that, in the early 1960s he was, amongst other things, out to write anthems. This one didn't appear on the *Freewheelin'* album because **A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall** did, and so did something called **Blowin' In The Wind.** Neither did it make it aboard *The Times They Are A Changin'* because by then he'd got *When The Ship Comes In*, **With God On Our Side** and the title track itself: and three anthemic songs on one album, he figured, was probably plenty.

All of these preferred songs were wider and wordier in their scope than **Let Me Die In My Footsteps** and by 1964, only two years on, remember, the anthems on *Another Side Of Bob Dylan* would be negative assertions of positive self-expression; personal denials of the public role that had – unsurprisingly – come to be expected of him. **All I Really Want To Do** and **It Ain't Me Babe** were songs cunningly addressed not to the older generation or to politicians or to the Folk-faithful but to the World as Woman (a technique to which he has returned time and again over the years).

There would be yet more anthems – songs that we could sing together – but when joining in the choruses of tours-de-force like **Mr Tambourine Man** and, most anthemic of all, **Like A Rolling Stone**, Dylan's audience would be celebrating – consciously or otherwise – the very paradox that he himself was hurtling ever faster towards: "the acceptance of chaos". Incidentally, **Mr Tambourine Man** is very much a song of praise and is therefore truer to the root definition of an anthemic song, whereas **Like A Rolling Stone** achieves its anthemic effect through its sheer musical and vocal drive. Stripped of nationalist or royalist connotations, an anthem can be a song which gathers voices and rises to a crescendo, and, in its modern rock idiom, it tends to be rather loosely applied as a term to describe a crowd pleaser, a "showstopper" or signature tune. **Like A Rolling Stone** quickly became such a song but Dylan's crowing *celebration* of confusion and alienation still seems a pretty strange song for us all to sing together, no?

Walkin' Down The Line — By Debbie Sims

Mr Bauldie's otherwise excellent sleeve notes add little by way of detail to this song, merely indicating that it dates from November 1962. The song is jaunty and up-beat, Dylan is indeed walkin' down the line and occasionally hoppin', slippin' and jumpin' down it. The illustration in *Lyrics 1962-85* shows a be-hatted figure, possibly Dylan himself, balanced precariously on the receiver of a telephone. Walkin' down a telephone line? Walkin' a thin line? Walkin' a line that has been laid out for him by someone else? God knows.

Despite this jolly optimism there are a few clouds on the horizon. A "heavy-headed girl" for example, perhaps she has a headache? Is there a suggestion of sexual frustration here? Or maybe she is heavy in that she is becoming too serious about the relationship, whilst Dylan only wants to be "Walkin' down the line". There is also the familiar problem of money coming and going and, as usual, going rather more often than coming. Finally the singer tells us that he has a troubled mind. Heralding the trouble he had in mind in 1979? Interestingly the lyrics as sung – as opposed to the Lyric as written – emphasise the word "Lord", and turn the song into something of a prayer for release.

There is no explanation in the lyrics as to why his feet are flying to tell of his trouble in mind. Is he already running away from an existing situation, "Walkin' a road other men have gone down"? Maybe Dylan is already committed to joining the roller-coaster that took him through the early sixties? The jaunty, happy-go-lucky, melody of this song tends to belie the deeper darker problems Dylan is suggesting. He is already walklin' down the line, he's got his walkin' shoes, and is ready to go anywhere.

Seven Curses — By Debbie Sims

An old traditional story given some new and interesting Dylan twists. The tale is told in the past tense but still retains its reality. The dialogue in verses three, four, and five is beautifully understated and simply laid out.

The song begins with Old Reilly's crime which is seemingly condoned in the line

but they caught him

Reilly's daughter comes in the hope of bribing the judge:

with gold and silver in her hand

However the judge has other ideas and his lust is described in the lines

His old eyes deepened in his head

and

The price, my dear, is you instead

Reilly tries in vain to persuade her to go but she decides to try to save her father even in the most certain knowledge that she will fail.

The payment of the price demanded is suggested in the most impressive verse of the song,

The gallows shadows shook the evening
In the night a hound dog bayed
In the night the grounds was groaning
In the night the price was paid."

The shadows build to the betrayal, the dog heralds it and the ground groans and mourns it. The price is paid for a deed not done, a price which cannot be repaid.

Dylan's judgment on the Judge is the Seven Curses of the title, each building on the former. Personally I find these curses rather tame and unsatisfying, they do not adequately reflect the awfulness of the judge's crime. Dylan describes the judge as "cruel", as if he had merely seduced or tricked the girl and not forced her into an impossible choice between her morality and her father Dylan expresses little sympathy with the victim and seems more intent on finishing the song in a neat, calculating way. The performance is controlled, restrained and never really spills over with the venom of which Dylan is so eminently capable. A disappointing song in some ways, but a moving and distressing story.

Moonshiner By Debbie Sims

I've been a moonshiner
For seventeen long years
I've spent all my money
On whisky and beer
I go to some hollow
And set up my still
An' if whisky don't kill me
Then I don't know what will.

I go to some bar room
And drink with my friends
Where the women can't follow
And see what I spend
God bless them pretty women
I wish they was mine
Their breath is as sweet as
The dew on the vine

For "Moonshiner" read "alcoholic" because, although romantically put and sweetly sung, this is a song about a man whose whole life has been dominated by drinking and being drunk. It is a tale of lost opportunity and wasted promise. It is a simple and extraordinary performance by Dylan who puts generations of experience and heartbreak into the song, although amazingly he was only 22 years old when it was recorded. Basic needs are all that the Moonshiner can now ask for, his death is looming ever near and he has accepted the inevitability of it. His whole world is a bottle, his life reduced to the next drink, and if the liquor runs out so does his reason for living.

Women are beyond him now but perhaps he still yearns for them and their charms. He describes their breath as being as sweet as the dew on the vine – a likely metaphor for a wino, and presumably one which contrasts with his own ? Dylan's harmonica echoes the bitter–sweet words of the singer with a haunting, fading sound that quietly drifts off into its own reverie.

The song could easily, in the hands or voice of another artist, become a moral tale, but with Dylan singing it does not. For it is "so personal a tale" that we are not led to feel contemptuous or to judge, Just to listen in wonder at this young genius singing with the voice of the world–weary Moonshiner.

IT TAKES A LOT TO LAUGH

Farewell Angelina

Andrew Muir

No-one who 'phoned the "warmline" when the pre-release tape reached Inglethorpe Street could have failed to note my enthusiasm for this song. Pia has still to recover from the amount of times she heard the new verse; it was quite some time before I could bring myself to take it of the answering message. I know of at least one caller who 'phoned five times in rapid succession just to hear that snippet. All of this will come as no surprise, for years this track was the Holy Grail for Dylan afficionados. "It doesn't exist" "It does exist, a cousin of a friend of mine heard Stephen Pickering's version" "Baez says he never recorded it". How many of you reading this bought Baez's single? How many more bought the album of that title? How many really did play the single at the wrong speed? How many others – and I stand excused – bought yet another Joker album with **Farewell** on it because the covers claimed **Farewell Angelina** and this one might just mean it? And here it was, all these years later, "really real".

It certainly doesn't disappoint, even in the face of these seemingly overpowering expectations. In fact, within the opening few lines, it feels exactly as I'd always imagined it would. There is even a gorgeous little laugh while singing "erupting" at the end of the penultimate line to conjure up images of the just-about-to-be-rock-star-with-a-band, totally compelling and in-control solo Dylan we can glimpse in **Don't Look Back.**

What I wasn't expecting, though, was a brand new verse; I also had to adjust to the many changes of lyric from the version I'd carried all this time in my head.

Given the special nature of this release I make no apologies for spending this review in a detailed comparison of the long expected and the actual. In addition, since he performs it exactly as you've always thought he would, it will be an examination concentrating on the lyrical differences. Through this comparative examination I'm hoping to shed light on some of the meaning in this performance. (Of course, if time and space allowed, it would be lovely to examine every aspect of the performance, to look for example at the onomatopoeia of his singing of "flooding over" and "flutters from fear"...)

In stanza one we have only three alterations between what is sung and the lyrics printed in *Writings And Drawings.* In that collection the last five lines appear as:

The triangle tingles
And the trumpets play slow
Farewell Angelina
The sky is on fire
And I must go.

What he actually sings is:

The triangle tingles
The music plays slow
But farewell Angelina
The night is on fire
And I must go.

The dropping of the "And" preceding the fourth last line is a common alteration, indeed it only remains where the word is actually doing something. This attention to detail continues throughout the recorded version, a great deal of thought appears to have been given to the use of "linking" words such as "and" and "but".

In that altered line we lose the sound of "trumpets" which had followed on so sweetly from "The triangle tingles". I must admit that I prefer the alliterative "trumpets" version although "music" is perhaps more literally what Dylan had in mind.

The addition of "But" before the conclusion to the verse is deliberate and effective. It occurs in all but one of the stanzas from the written version and would have been inappropriate in the new verse. The purpose of the "but" is, of course, to separate the narrator's actions from the scenes he is depicting; but, as I hope to demonstrate later, the more crucial function it performs is to polarise the scenario and the sky.

Which brings me to the last difference, because we have no "sky" in the performed song's first verse! This is surely just a simple transposition in Dylan's mind of an apocalyptic image. I can't discern any change in meaning or emphasis here, perhaps he even meant to sing "sky". If that were true, it is an interesting "slip" in the light of such later songs as **Under The Red Sky** and **When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky.**

The second verse contains some major changes: the written version goes like this:

There's no need for anger
There's no need for blame
There's nothing to prove
Ev'rything's still the same
Just a table standing empty
By the edge of the sea
Farewell Angelina
The sky is trembling
And I must leave.

What he sings is:

There is no use in talking
And there's no need for blame
There is nothing to prove
Ev'rything still is the same
A table stands empty
By the edge of the stream
But farewell Angelina
The sky's changing colors
And I must leave.

The meaning of the first four lines is not much altered, they contain standard nuggets of Dylan wisdom of the time – compare with **All I Really Want To Do, One Too Many Mornings** etc. – but in the performed version they have been shaped to maximum effect. The use of the full "is" links lines one and three very forcefully, while the change in line four – accentuated very strongly in Dylan's delivery – throws the emphasis on the word "is". This stress could not have come at a more critical time as it directly precedes a major lyrical line change.

The fifth and sixth lines make up what was surely the most oft quoted Dylan couplet that had never been heard from him. When we finally get a take of him singing the song, it is radically altered. This is initially a shock both in itself and in as much as the visual image is not as arresting. There is a very good reason for this: The written version stands perfectly as an isolated image; the sung version is stylistically and meaningfully integrated into the song as a whole. Gone, then, is the "just" that isolates the image. The most crucial change of all is from "standing" to "stands", herein lies the key to the way the song works and the reason behind most of the sung alterations.

The move away from the "ing" endings here and with the cross-eyed pirates (*sitting* to *sit*) makes for a much better contrast with the changing sky. (Flooding, erupting, etc). In each stanza Dylan presents us with a snapshot scene behind, or over, which the sky is threateningly

evolving and forcing the narrator to move on before it is too late, before he is frozen into the tableaux forever. A classic Dylan nightmare. As mentioned previously, the "buts" that are added in the sung version underline the contrast.[1]

The change from "the sea" to "the stream" lessens the scope of the image, makes it less dramatic. The image in isolation loses out but by this alteration Dylan improves the verse as a whole, while integrating it within the overall song. Perhaps he felt that, for the verse, "The sea" was too much the equal of the threatening sky and that the stream would seem more vulnerable. More importantly in terms of the whole performance, imagine the fixed scene with the "sky changing colours" if there were "the sea" it too would change colours; there would be no contrast. Indeed the image would run counter to the whole song.

(As will be clear from later remarks it is stylistically surprising that he chose the definite article here, "a stream" seeming the more apt.)

The third verse has fewer discrepancies. In the second line "Have forsaked" becomes "They forsake" which is in keeping with the simple present tense state of the scenario that I've been at pains to stress. The guards become singular, a better image; while the change in the last line from "in a while" to "after a while" facilitates the performance without any change of meaning or emphasis. It is almost as if Dylan has forced himself to use the two syllabled "after" by the omission – for the only time in the song – of "and" as the first word in the stanza's last line.

If you'll permit me to step out of my self imposed brief of comparative study, I'd like to make a couple of points about this verse. Although Dylan is here in the midst of his most Romantic phase of writing, this verse contains a perfect Classical image of the modern degeneration of the Golden Age; all cards are now the same, there is no longer an ace. However he presents the image in a Romantic light with that image of freedom in "ran wild". (Dylan's use of language here is breathtaking in its economy, note the oppositional "file past") The idea of the cards all being the same ties in with the first verse's "bells' of the crown/Are being stolen by bandits"; although the "Royal" cards aren't directly mentioned, these mutually supportive images bring them to our minds.

The only difference in the opening four lines of stanza 4 is the already noted "pirates sitting" to "pirates sit". It is worth observing that Dylan opens this verse with "See" thereby strengthening my idea of "snapshots" or, given the surrealist images he presents, perhaps "paintings" would be even closer to the mark. The other changes occur in the final five lines, from:

And the neighbors they clap
And they cheer with each blast
Farewell Angelina
The sky's changing color
And I must leave fast.

To:

And the corporals and neighbours
Clap and cheer with each blast
But farewell Angelina
The sky it is trembling
And I must leave fast

1 Interestingly enough the only "ing" that remains in the sung version is in the opening stanza where the bells "are being" stolen, interesting because, although the grammatical form used here doesn't contradict my point, the sky here is "night" and is "on fire" not "burning" or some such word.

The sung description of the sky is very different – the previous verse having already used "changing colors" – it is also ambiguous. Are we to take it that the "blasts" are making the sky tremble with fear and apprehension or, as would match the rest of the song, that the sky is trembling with rage?

The introduction of *corporals* forces a restructuring of the first two lines above, beneficially, as the "And they" before "cheer" was merely filling the line out. It also introduces a set of characters at home both in the song and in Dylan's sixties work. ("Corporals and Neighbours" would be a good title for a *Freewheelin'* to *The Basement Tapes* compilation.)

In the next stanza we have three changes. Firstly "on the rooftops" becomes "in the rooftops" which better fits the way I've always visualised King Kong and the little elves. Secondly instead of:

While the make-up man's hands
Shut the eyes of the dead

we get:

While the hero's clean hands
Shut the eyes of the dead

There's not much in it here, both have the necessary cinematic connotations for the stanza, though the use of "clean" makes the latter a more complex image.

Lastly, the beautiful "the sky is embarrassed" is dropped in favour of "the sky's flooding over"; presumably because of the use of embarrass only two lines previously. It is a great pity as the sky's reaction in being "embarrassed" would have cast great aspersions on the cleanliness of the hero's hands: giving us an obverse use of the same cliche to Lay Lady Lay's:

His clothes are dirty
But his hands are clean

Unfortunately also, the next verse repeats the use of "flooding over" to describe the sky.

Which brings us to that verse, the "new" verse and one that faces head on the concerns of this particular song and the central concerns Dylan explored in his great "classic" years of the early to mid sixties.

The camouflaged parrot
He flutters from fear
When something he doesn't know about
Suddenly appears
What cannot be imitated
Perfect must die
Farewell Angelina
The sky is flooding over
I must go where it is dry

What an extraordinary verse this is, opening with "The camouflaged parrot". How are we to take this? A parrot is a bird known – in some varieties – for its spectacular plumage, plumage that in its natural habitat is for camouflage. Yet here there is something very dubious about the camouflage, I almost hear it as meaning the parrot is camouflaged as something else. A parrot is also – indeed primarily – renowned for its ability to imitate other sounds; coming hard on the heels of the Hollywood images, we link the parrot with major questions of art imitating life – and popular art at that; just what has been the purpose of the tableaux Dylan has provided us with? What is he telling us now?

Well, we know that the parrot is frightened, thanks to that lovely, alliterative, description: "flutters from fear" and we are told it is frightened of anything new or unknown The parrot seems, therefore, to symbolize the merely imitative, the frozen anti-life of the still painting scenarios, an anti-creative force; anathema to the artist, a breed to which Dylan belongs.

But, and you knew a "but" was coming, the carpet is pulled from this comforting conclusion with:

What cannot be imitated
Perfect must die

Your senses do somersaults here; if something can't be imitated it is inviolate from the anti-life, anti-art parrot, but because then it is in this way "perfect" it will inevitably die. Why? Because perfection petrifies, it is no place for the human. It is "the diamond sky" of **Mr Tambourine Man**, it is behind the **Gates Of Eden** from where no sound ever comes. (Both songs appear on the album from which this song is an outtake.) What escapes this parrot belongs in a place that Christopher Ricks has called "hell for Bob Dylan", a place of perfection and therefore stasis, eternal and unchanging – nothing left for the artist to create, nowhere for the human to move onto; the times they have stopped a-changin'.

So is this parrot – timid and imitative though it is – extraordinarily and paradoxically a force for art and human values? Is it the parrot's sound that Dylan must follow in the first verse? Well, yes and no; but remember his **Advice to Geraldine:**

do Not create anything, it will be
misinterpreted. it will not change

Now you see it, now you don't, a well camouflaged parrot indeed.

All of this has happened in the lines where Dylan has been painting his picture underneath the threatening sky, so perhaps the parrot who flutters is merely part of another scene? If so, a particularly telling tableaux and one that is not separated from the concluding lines with a "But" before "Farewell Angelina". (The new verse ironically using the written version's structure.)

We then have a great ending of "flooding over.....where it is dry" (the effect of which is unfortunately diluted by the use of "flooding over" in the previous stanza). Since there is no divisive "But", Dylan could have used a simple present, as in "on fire" here, but the contrast he gives is an irresistible conclusion to this pivotal passage.

The final verse has a number of variations. The preliminary two lines have the word "the" dropped from its opening position. This is perfectly in fitting with the indeterminate surrealism of the whole piece and is why I mentioned the expectation of "a stream" in the second verse. "Machine guns" link with "corporals" and the pirates who shoot, and the pirates themselves link back to the bandits who steal the bells of the crown at the song's beginning. Puppets – because of the shared perspective of height – irresistibly associate in our minds with "the little elves dancing in the rooftops".

The following lines:

The fiends nail time bombs
To the hands of the clocks

becomes:

At misunderstood visions
And at the faces of clocks

The misunderstood visions are the works of an artist[2], the works Geraldine is advised not to create. If she does, they will be misinterpreted, they will also never change no matter how many rocks are heaved at the faces of clocks. They will outlast even the museums where infinity goes up on trial, but they will be dead.

However are not all artists constantly striving to create this very perfection, a vision that "cannot be imitated" and therefore "never will change", "perfect must die"? Is not the song we are listening to such a work? And is not the singer and the song's creator, Bob Dylan, falling into the trap, ignoring his own warnings? But, wait a minute, isn't Bob Dylan actually Robert Allen Zimmerman in camouflage? There is a wry little chuckle as he finishes singing:

Call me any name you like
I will never deny it
But farewell Angelina
The sky is erupting
An' I must go where it is quiet.

"I must follow the sound" to "I must go where it is quiet". Quite some journey Bob, thanks for the ride.

As you can see I felt the wait well worth it. However, despite all the above, I wouldn't have it replace any song from the second side of *Bringing It All Back Home.* A more eloquent tribute to the quality and quantity of his output at that time is beyond my imagination.

2 These lines also have a precise meaning for Dylan as artist at this stage of his career. It is a powerful image apparently damning the robot-like nature of the so-called "radical left", America's folk equivalent of a "oh so liberal, trendy leftie". Certainly the line "Puppets heave rocks/At misunderstood visions" is about as economic and accurate a summation of what Dylan was suffering - and from what kind of people - for repudiating "finger pointin'" songs as could ever be imagined.

She's Your Lover Now By I.G. Roberts

I shall try here not to duplicate the views of either John Bauldie, who calls She's Your Lover Now "a dramatised scene for three players, but only one speaker" (Box Set Booklet), or Paul Williams who, in his *Performing Artist Volume One*, effuses at considerable length and with great charm about the song's "felt truth" and uncontainable "expression".

Like almost all of us, I've been in awe of this song since first hearing it a few years ago. Looking back to *Blonde On Blonde*, I can appreciate the daring decision to devote the whole of its fourth side to Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands, but I've long been nagged by a feeling that this left a kind of void which might have been memorably filled by two of the songs Dylan could have included on the album. One of these is **Positively 4th Street**, which did at least appear as a single, and the other is, of course, **She's Your Lover Now**, which was left to gather dust and mystique in the hidden assets vault....

Both songs feature a quality not conspicuous on the album: a bitterness almost terrible in its acidity. In fact, they are amongst the most dramatic examples of Dylan conveying contempt through music to a degree of which only he is capable. It is an attitude which very few popular singers have expressed effectively (one thinks of Lennon, Jagger and Lydon as exceptions). Both songs could be criticised on the grounds of their being excessively negative. This, I feel, may be what precluded them from *Blonde On Blonde*, with its sophisticated polish of emotional control. But because of the mangled pain in Dylan's voice, **She's Your Lover Now** is the more redeemable song. The howls of anguish that break out every time he hits the rhyme on the title-line save the song from being merely a tirade.

She's Your Lover Now would evolve, in refined form, disentangled from its maelstrom of moods, into One Of Us Must Know (Sooner Or Later): a better song and one more in tune with the album. The lines from She's Your Lover Now which show this most clearly in terms of both sentiment and delivery are:

Oh, why was it so hard for you
If you didn't want to be with me just to leave?

She's Your Lover Now is not a great song, but as Paul Williams maintains, it is undoubtedly a great performance. Now, your passing Dylan fancier will ramble something along the lines of "Well, with Dylan, it's the words, ain't it." What they mean by this, of course, is that the words have to be *listened* to – *not read* as poetry. Very few Dylan lyrics work independently of the music and his voice in the one-dimensional format of the printed page, and She's Your Lover Now is no real exception.

Let us look, for instance, at the following lines:

She'll be standin' on the bar soon
With a fish-head and a harpoon
And a fake beard plastered on her brow

Well, this is the sort of likeable surrealistic gibberish that Dylan can write in his sleep. The song was still in its preparatory form and the false image has patently been struck to contrive the title rhyme. But, oh, listen to how he sings it!

But such flaws are what we see, not what we hear. What fascinates the listener is the growth of the song before our very ears, the vitality of the musicians gathering around the twisted heart of the lyric's rhythm (especially Robbie Robertson, Dylan's most empathetic guitarist), and the virtuosity of the singing.

What intrigues us most of all though, is our glimpse of the situation through the song's kaleidoscope of words. Given that She's Your Lover Now is something of a psychodrama all happening inside Dylan's head, we cannot help but feel it to be based on an actual meeting of the sort many of us will also have experienced:

And you, you just sit around and ask for ashtrays, can't you reach!
I see you kiss he on the cheek everytime she gives a speech.

The searingly realistic delivery of this couplet has the resonance of enactment. There is a violence in the band version of the song which is not so evident in the solo piano out-take (which comes complete with the terrific last verse missing from our Box Set take). The solo version has about it a quieter air of desperation; Dylan starts to fume half-way through, but by the end the passion deflates and the silence which follows his final address to the rival is bereft. It's an eloquent performance.

In his Box Set Booklet, John Bauldie has recommended **Moonshiner** as the song most likely to convince doubters that Bob Dylan really can sing. And I know exactly what he means. But the band version of **She's Your Lover Now** is also an extraordinary vocal achievement. By the mid 1960s, Dylan had perfected his style: as David Hepworth, in his *Q* review of the Box Set, remarks:

> If singing is a logical extension of the music of speech and the manifold subtlety thereof, then Bob Dylan is one of the chosen.

Few singers can ever have so thoroughly fulfilled the potential of their voices as has Dylan. The effect created by a voice at once emotional and intellectual when it is holding notes, stretching vowels (and often consonants), and taking chances that had never been risked before, can be literally breath-taking.

And by 1966, Dylan knew this, knew exactly how to sing:

My voice is really warm, it's just that it's got no form
But it's just like a dead man's last pistol-shot, Baby

Dylan admits that his voice has *no form* – in the terms of traditional technique, but he also knows that traditional technique is *a dead man*. I feel sure that, at this time, Dylan knew very clearly the nature of his invention. And having *no form*, of course, also means to be without precedent.....

YOUR LATEST SONG REFERS TO "THIS OLD MAN,".. IS THAT AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SONG NOW YOU'VE TURNED 50 MR DYLAN?

Idiot Wind By Alex Hill

We have all had *The Bootleg Series* in our grubby paws now for a few months and no doubt miles and miles of print have been produced in appreciation or condemnation. Whoops, there goes another few acres of rain forest. For this reason, and many others, I don't intend anything like a comprehensive review. I simply want to talk about two versions of the same song, **Idiot Wind** as it is on *Blood On The Tracks* and the same song as you will find it on *The Bootleg Series.*

As with *Biograph* et al, I suppose many articles will directly compare and contrast in the manner of a high school essay two or more versions of the same song. I do not believe this to be an efficacious approach. In general I find comparisons of this type unilluminating. The almost infantile "This one is better than that one" adds nothing to our understanding of Dylan's work, particularly if the various versions are purposefully different. Also, matters of taste do not make for constructive discussion or argument.

What I hope to do in this article is take a brief look at *Blood On The Tracks*, highlighting some of the songs, then take **Idiot Wind** in both its manifestations and place them in the context of the album. Hopefully this will illuminate *The Bootleg Series'* **Idiot Wind** and by the end I can come to some conclusion as to which is the most fitting.

In the WESTWOOD ONE interview with ELIOT MINTZ, Dylan says "All the songs I wrote are love songs". Like everything he says you have to take this with a pinch of salt. Nevertheless, if you said of Dylan that most of his songs are about love you would not be far off the mark. Indeed, love in all its manifestations, spiritual, religious, altruistic, sexual, love of country etc, is what much of Dylan's finest work explores. Nowhere is this more evident than in the album *Blood On The Tracks.* Here we have love in all it's glory and despair, a few of its joys and much of it's heartbreak, a rather jaundiced view, but love – warts and all. An album of apocalyptic love stories. Each song taking different but often overlapping stories emphasizing the impermanent, often ephemeral, nature of love.

The album opens with **Tangled Up In Blue**, the tale of an abandoned love affair. The fated meeting later when the lady's understanding of the singer manifests itself in poetry. The singer's realisation of what he has lost and why. And all the journeys in between the two meetings – he merely strolls along desert dry blind alleys, obsessive roads to nowhere.

Simple Twist Of Fate follows on, a dreamlike, poignant, remembrance of a brief encounter. Love gained and lost in a few lonely verses quietly, mournfully rendered. There's a yearning here for lost beginnings –

She was born in spring,
But I was born too late

– that is heartbreaking in it's intensity. Even the possibility of redemption through love has been lost, *Blame it on a simple twist of fate.*

You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go, the lover, aware that he may soon be abandoned, pleads never to be left alone. A delicate, half–jocular, pleading that leaves you unconvinced of the plaintiff's success.

If You See Her, Say Hello, is one of the two mainstays of the album, the other being **Idiot Wind.** With orchestrated acoustic guitars and little percussion in the background, this is an intimate, subtly understated, song. The singer trying with all his might to hide the agony of separation. This is a failed attempt at a shrug of the shoulders. Here Dylan has a go at cauterizing the wound caused by the split from his wife. Saying that he is *Alright though* things *get kind of slow*, just a lovers tiff *We had a falling out like lovers often will.* He just wants her to be *Happy.* However, he can't hold it in throughout the song. The third verse gives just a hint of the pain with the stinging –

I've never gotten used to it, I've just learned to turn it off

– you can almost hear the tears. Lastly, even all the reminiscences of the last verse can provide no surcease from sorrow, only little stabs of bitterness and recrimination.

Idiot Wind

ALBUM VERSION

This bitterness is just the last dregs of the bile which surfaces in **Idiot Wind.**

Throughout this ranting, cathartic, explosion of vengeful spite Dylan spits out his anger,

One day you'll be in the ditch flies buzzin' around your eyes.

His feeling, not just of loss but of betrayal, provokes a rage unsurpassed in modern music. There is a manic spitefulness in,

I can't even touch the books you've read

But the sense of betrayal stretches beyond the purely personal. The whole song could be taken as a vitriolic tirade against what is seen as a betrayal of American dreams both personal and national.

Brief glimpses of "Distorted facts", "Idiot winds", "covering up the truth with lies", what is seen as "good" is in reality "Bad" and vice versa.

The song could be a kind of extreme metaphor for the corruption seen as endemic in the upper echelons of American society. The fetid breath of decay blowing from the "Grand Coulee Dam to the Capitol" where Nixon sits like some degenerate Bhudda atop a pile of horse shit.

A place where there is no "Peace and quiet". A place where love for country is twisted into jingoistic patriotism and used to justify all sorts of prurient behaviour. As Robert Shelton wrote in *No Direction Home*:

The idiot wind blows a hard rain down Desolation Row.

BOOTLEG VERSION

The whole atmosphere of *Blood On The Tracks* is one of loss, bewilderment, betrayal and a pessimistic, fatalistic view of love. Nowhere is this fatalism more evident than in **Idiot Wind.** In this slow plaintive song, in every word, every note, every chord disillusionment abounds. Disillusionment with love, trust, politics and country. No matter what you try you are doomed to failure, the lasting effects of original sin are still with us.

A chilling paranoia, evident from the first line *Someone's got it in for me* to the last verse's *Ladykillers load dice on me behind my back*, runs like an icy backbone through the song. Another relationship started in love and hope only to end in betrayal and failure. Even worse it was all preordained,

I threw the I-Ching yesterday, it said there'd be thunder in the well.

Like the tale told in **Simple Twist Of Fate**, it was written in the stars, failure was inevitable,

It was gravity which pulled us down, and destiny which broke us apart.
(my emphasis).

What is left of a hint of free will in the line *We pushed each other a little too far* is soon overwhelmed by the hounds baying in the distance, so, *Why go on, what's the use ?*

The last Trumpet has sounded and the priest just *Waltzed around while the building burned.* There is no point in talking, words no longer convey meaning or truth, the "Idiot wind" blows *Every time you move your teeth.*

The "raging storm", the relationship, burned with such an intensity that it seemed like "Living Hell". The bewildering speed of the breakup, the instant transition from Spring to Autumn, has left the singer dazed and uncomprehending.

Dylan also uses the song to get in a few digs at the wider world. The press gets a pasting in the first verse, bootleggers and copycats are "imitators" who steal him blind. And perhaps the lines

You can have the best there is but it's gonna cost you all your love. You wont get it for money

are a premonition of a divorce settlement.

So there you have it, two very different songs. Different not simply lyrically but in the music and mood. The first a blistering condemnation growing from the original haunting melody. It seems to me that the calmer, more introspective *The Bootleg Series'* **Idiot Wind** is rather more in keeping with the sombre mood and sound of the album. It effectively pulls together the themes of loss, abandonment, bitterness, fate, and loss of faith, in a dramatic but understated upwelling of emotion. That is not to invalidate the album version of the song. It very obviously grew out of an increasingly vengeful attitude, culminating in the splenetic **Idiot Wind** in the *Hard Rain* collection.

Standing on their own, both the *Blood On The Tracks* and *Hard Rain* versions have a power and an intensity rarely even approached by any other artists. However in the context of the album, I have my doubts. So, before you send the brick-bats, try this: Play *Blood On The Tracks* in its entirety, but substitute *The Bootleg Series* **Idiot Wind** version.

Angelina

Well, it's always been my nature to take chances
My right hand drawing back while my left hand advances
Where the current is strong and the monkey dances
To the tune of a concertina

Blood dryin' in my yellow hair as I go from shore to shore
I know what it is that has drawn me to your door
But whatever could it be, makes you think you've seen me before?
Angelina

Oh Angelina Oh Angelina

His eyes were two slits, make any snake proud
With a face that any painter would paint as he walked through the crowd
Worshipping a god with the body of a woman well endowed
And the head of a hyena

Do I need your permission to turn the other cheek?
If you can read my mind, why must I speak?
No, I have heard nothing about the man that you seek,
Angelina

Oh Angelina Oh Angelina

In the valley of the giants where the stars and stripes explode
The peaches they were sweet and the milk and honey flowed
I was only following instructions when the judge sent me down the road
With your subpoena

When you cease to exist, then who will you blame?
I've tried my best to love you but I cannot play this game
Your best friend and my worst enemy is one and the same,
Angelina

Oh Angelina Oh Angelina

There's a black Mercedes rollin' through the combat zone
Your servants are half dead, you're down to the bone
Tell me, tall men, where would you like to be overthrown,
In Jerusalem or Argentina?

She was stolen from her mother when she was three days old
Now her vengeance has been satisfied and her possessions have been sold
He's surrounded by God's angels and she's wearin' a blindfold,
But so are you, Angelina

Oh Angelina Oh Angelina

I see pieces of men marching, trying to take heaven by force
I can see the unknown rider, I can see the pale white horse
In God's truth, name, tell me what you want and you'll have it of course
Just step into the arena

Beat a path of retreat up them spiral staircases
Past the tree of smoke, past the angel with four faces
Begging God for mercy and weeping in unholy places,
Angelina

Oh Angelina Oh Angelina

Angelina

Mark Carter

The first words Dylan sings in **Angelina** are:

Well, it's always been my nature to take chances

and yet some people will tell you that Dylan isn't taking chances with this song. He has been accused of writing a "Dylanesque" song, of "writing by numbers." Utter bullshit, of course, but it is an accusation that has dogged nearly every great song Dylan has written since *Street Legal*, especially those songs that have been fired with stunning imagery and symbolism.

Angelina, coming so soon after *Saved*, seems not to have come from the same pen as the one that wrote **Are You Ready?, Solid Rock** and **Pressing On** until you remember that the man who wields the pen is Bob Dylan and for every song like **Country Pie** there was always a **Tangled Up In Blue** waiting just up the road a ways. Angelina, along with **Every Grain Of Sand**, proved that Dylan's literary skills did not desert him after he got "religion". **Every Grain Of Sand** tells me more of what Christ and Christianity means to Dylan, with all the doubts as well as all the euphoria, than everything on the albums between 1979–81, with the possible exception of **I Believe In You. Angelina**, though, is a different kettle of fish altogether.

It's a difficult song to pin down, there's about ten different movies going on in there. Much of it seems drawn from *The Book Of Revelations*, a pointer to where Dylan would find the inspiration to write several of the songs for *Infidels*. Even more, there are images and hints of apocalypse that would reappear on *Oh Mercy* and *Under The Red Sky*.

I can see the unknown rider, I can see the pale white horse

Dylan sings, alluding to one of the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and Death upon a pale while horse, an image that Dylan would return to some eight years later in **Man In The Long Black Coat**. Similarily, the line:

I see pieces of men marching, trying to take heaven by force

brings to my mind a similar image as that contained in **10,000 Men.** "Pieces of men" may be meant to signify soldiers as chess pieces – mere pawns in a game, or it could mean "Pieces of men" as in incomplete men. Men who are inadequate, with no soul and no faith trying to storm or buy their way into heaven

If you open your Bible to the Old Testament and find Ezekiel Chapter 1 verses 1 to 28, you'll see that the prophet had an amazing vision at around 593 BC.

> As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of man, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings.

This would appear to prove that Dylan was beginning to draw on both the Old and New Testaments by late 1980/early 1981 and finding inspiration from some vivid chapters, fusing some of the rich imagery in much of the Bible with his own still-functioning lyrical genius.

Several of the images seem to be inserted into the song rather randomly, so that we sometimes jump from Biblical illusion to 20th century real life. For instance, we jump from a valley where the *peaches were sweet and the milk and honey flowed* straight to the more mundane image of Dylan heading down the road, searching for Angelina with a subpoena in his hand, presumably to satisfy some trifling man-made law. It all seems to paint as wide a picture, though rather less defined, as the one Dylan consciously conjured up in **Tangled Up In Blue.**

Indeed, throughout much of the song, Dylan appears to be searching for the mysterious Angelina, going from shore to shore, being inexplicably drawn towards her door, only to act surprised that she should recognize him. Later on he tells her that he cannot love her the way she wants him to, and the way he knows he should do, however much he tries: *I cannot play this game.*

One theory I've toyed with is that Angelina could represent purity and organised religion – specifically Christianity – which drew Dylan in very deeply for a while, but proved to be too stifling and overbearing to allow him the freedom he sought to marry his newly restored faith to his old ideals and beliefs, and also to his artistic needs. Consider the line:

My right hand drawing back while my left hand advances

This suggest to me that, while Dylan is not afraid to take chances – he'll reach out and grab whatever he needs or wants (in this case, Christ) – part of him will always withdraw or hesitate, so that, as he told Craig McGregor in 1978, he's always got his "isolated existence" to fall back on.

After one album of "repent or be damned" material and another album of celebratory gospel music, Dylan at last began to explore the ideas in the Bible rather than the message. **Angelina, Caribbean Wind** and **Every Grain Of Sand**, to name but three, were the first batch of songs in one of the amazing periods of creativity for Dylan during the Eighties (1983 and 1988/9 being the others) as the initial euphoria of finding Christ (or allowing Christ to find him) gave way to doubts, fears, desires (**Need A Woman**) and the overriding knowledge that there was somebody out there, and that this life was merely a stepping stone to a greater adventure beyond. So long as you don't let the Beast get you first.

Ultimately, then, whatever you make of the song, to leave it off of *Shot Of Love* in favour of say, **Trouble**, was nothing short of criminal. That it gets its official reason some ten years later proves that there definitely is a God. And if the devil really does get all the best tunes, then here's one the old sod missed.

Ye Shall Be Changed And You Changed My Life

Joe McShane

Nine years ago *The Telegraph* carried its first readers' poll. In the section *Questions You'd Most Like To Ask Bob Dylan*, alongside "Will you marry me?" and "Who's round is it?" many asked "Why did you never release.....?" In 1991 the list of songs that question could be applied to is still growing. From **Let Me Die In My Footsteps** not making it on to the final version of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* to **Dignity**'s non-appearance on *Oh Mercy*, fans bemoan the officially overlooked songs.

Nocturnal debates of this nature were further heightened by *The Bootleg Series* retrospective of "rare and unreleased songs".

"How could he drop **Ye Shall Be Changed** from an album that contains **Man Gave Names To All The Animals?**"

I have never accepted the widely held opinion that Dylan does not control the contents of his original albums. In the overwhelming majority of cases his value judgement proves sound. **Caribbean Wind** is for the most part strong lyrically yet its potential remains unrealized. The comparatively miniature canvas on which he paints WDL is, however, more complete and controlled. Similarly **Ye Shall Be Changed** does contain vivid narrative:

Everything you've gotten
You've gotten by sweat, blood and muscle
From early in the morning till way past dark
All you ever do is a-hustle
All your loved ones have walked out of the door
You're not even sure about your wife and kids no more

The occasional strong line is in evidence:

But the future's like a roulette wheel spinning

And at the risk of echoing a pompous previous "monograph" – sorry, Bert – Dylan's writing is certainly benefiting from immersion in *Revelations* (Chapters 9 to 11 are again plundered). He sings well. The accompaniment and melody are strong, if a touch syrupy. So why was it originally passed over?

A comparison with the way Dylan handles the song's theme some two years later, in **Dead Man, Dead Man**, goes some way to explain:

The glamour and the bright lights and the politics of sin
The ghetto that you build for me is the one you're livin' in
The race for the engine that overwhelms your heart...

Line for line, image for image the later song is superior. Then again, Dylan was certainly writing with more self assurance by the time he came to pen the songs for *Shot Of Love*:

Talk about salvation, people suddenly get tired
They've got a million things to do, they're all so inspired
They do the work of the devil, they've got a million friends
They'll be there when you got somethin, they'll take it <u>all</u> in the end

With greater depth:

Well the nature of man is to beg and to steal
I do it myself that's not so unreal

And bite (excuse the pun)

I was eating with the pigs off a fancy tray
I was told I was "looking good" and "Have a nice day"

A breathtaking image or two:

(They)..want me to fly like an eagle
While bein' chained to the floor

The phrasing, vocal and instrumentation on **You Changed My Life** are all excellent. All the elements that go to make a real classic are in evidence. So we ask again: "why dump it?"

On the original album releases, Dylan can seldom be accused of obvious or corny rhyming. The following couplets wound for all the wrong reasons:

In hunger and need
You made my heart bleed

I was under the
[illegible]
But I'm back in
the sun

I hope I misheard that one

You came down the line
Gave me a new mind

And, worst of all, the fatal:

You changed my life
Came along in a time of
strife

Back to the drawing board, Bob. **You Changed My Life** is a song that reaches [illegible] but laughable lows. For the record, though, I'd sell my Granny for either song. So shall it be, forever and ever, Amen.

Homer, *the slut*

Blind Willie McTell

I. G. Roberts

And here we go again. How, we ask ourselves, can Dylan have chosen not to release this song, of all his songs! From what we hear and read, **Blind Willie McTell** is not only considered one of his greatest out-takes but one of his greatest songs per se. There can be very few instances in any field of the arts where such consensus gathers around a work rejected by its creator. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* springs to mind – published some twenty years after being written, and then only at the instigation of Byron – but I can think of no comparable example from popular music.

We are inevitably led, therefore, alongside considering the song's *greatness*, to speculate as to why Dylan chose to omit it from his official catalogue (always bearing in mind that it is now available eight years on: not such a long time after). Dylan's own explanation as to its rejection is too brief and vague to be of much use: he never "recorded it right" and "it never got developed"...

But first let us commend the compilers of The Box Set on selecting the acoustic as opposed to the electric, full-band take. The version we have here is an immeasurably more soulful realization of the song: the sparser the instrumentation the fuller the sound.

A lone note on piano is heard before a word is sung and this aptly evokes the observations of a "land condemned" which will follow. We have perhaps Dylan's best recorded piano playing here. It seems more worked-at and more worked-out than usual. Apart from Mark Knopfler's Romanyesque guitar, which every step of the way complements Dylan's voice and piano, the only sound we hear is the muffled beat of a bootheel keeping time. The song needs no more: piano and guitar set up their own resonances, allowing the spaces left to be painted in by the vivid imagery of the works and the soundscape which echoes out of them: the hootowl singin', the crackin' of the whip, the tribes a-moanin', the undertaker's bell and the rebels' yell. Dylan's singing is understated; his formidable box of vocal tricks is left aside this time: he relies purely on the innate quality of his unique voice. The combination of all these factors is mesmeric.

We have barely mentioned the lyric as a whole and its "meaning". Again, what we have is a song that is nothing very special viewed simply as print on paper. And the words are more than merely animated by performance: it is the words, voice, guitar, piano and yes, that bootheel of this particular performance which make up the intrinsic elements of a cohesive and eloquent whole. An added ingredient is *soul*, a loose and – in rock music – misused term much in need of redefinition (if Dylan is not a soul-singer, then no one is) In that it is ostensibly about a blues-singer, and in so far as it is a lament, **Blind Willie McTell** also qualifies as a blues song. This is pigeon-holing, of course, and we could in addition state quite firmly that the song is a dirge for the dispossessed blacks transported from Africa into American slavery. But for all this, the range of the song is much wider than its superficial *Gone With The Wind* landscape,

In the first verse, for instance, we are alerted to a macrocosmic sweep of territories:-

See the arrow on the doorpost says that this is a lamb's house
All the way from New Orleans to Jerusalem

We know that Dylan loves exotic place-names but we also know that, in this composer's mind, New Orleans and Jerusalem are seminal locations for music and religion – crucial driving forces in his art, especially when we recall that these cities are, more specifically, homes of black music and Judaeo-Christianity.

Incidentally, in terms of its musical atmosphere, **Blind Willie McTell** reminds me of the more recent **Man In The Long Black Coat** (and wouldn't that sinister image of "beatin' on a dead horse" fit into **Blind Willie McTell?**>, but it is more directly reminiscent of an earlier song, **Senor**, the opening lines of which suggest a similar, though more plainly apocalyptic scope:-

Senor, Senor, can you tell me where we're headin'
Lincoln County Road or Armageddon?

And then that "arrow on the doorpost" clearly recalls The Passover in Egypt and the Exodus of the Israelites to The Promised Land. Just three lines into this Jewish-American's song and already we find ourselves in a rich and diverse realm of meaning. Further references to "martyrs", "chain-gangs", "rebels" and particularly "tribes" serve to dignify the plight and fight of the oppressed Negroes, as well as allying them (as does Rastafarianism) to the other great victim-nation of Israel.

If this was all it would be plenty as far as concepts and imagery go, but we have yet to consider Dylan's verbal skills, his concern with the cause of music in the scheme of things, the presence of his God, and his own historical role in the whole context.

Let us first examine the paradox around which the song turns - especially appealing to Dylan fans and scholars - contained in the chorus:-

And I know no one can sing the blues like Blind Willie McTell

...No one, that is, except one R. Dylan, and here he is doing what he says cannot be done but then, in the last line of **Something's Burning, Baby** he will, two years later, sing

I believe in the impossible, you know that I do

And why is it Blind Willie McTell, in particular, whose spirit is invoked? Why not Robert Johnson or, for that matter, Blind Lemon Jefferson? Well at the risk of sounding philistine, I would suggest that Dylan simply liked the potential for strong, full chorus-rhymes afforded by the second syllable of *McTell*: In mechanical terms, most Dylan songs tend to pivot around rhymes, and this one is no exception. Dylan is a master rhymester but because he works in song rather than poetry his rhyming can often be either functional or even cavalier. Blind Willie McTell however, utilises felicitous rhyming without the employment of an absolutely strict scheme. Thus we find the songwriter's stock-in-trade of the half-feminine verb-rhyme: burnin'/bloomin'/moanin'; we also find masculine rhyme:

the crackin' of the whip/ the ghosts of slavery ships

(highly effective as image and rhyme, though not inspired); there's internal rhyme - a marked facility of Dylan's

But power and greed and corruptible seed seem to be all that there is

but we should also notice the invention of: doorpost/East Texas which is achieved by consonance and inflexion

All of which is noteworthy from a technical angle - as is Dylan's use of colloquial forms: "them tribes"; "them rebels" etc. (has Dylan ever used the grammatically correct "those"? But **Ring Those Bells** just wouldn't be the same, would it? And this, I'm sure, is no stubborn affectation but a recognition of slang's muscularity. When all is said and done though, those skills are only the nuts and bolts which help provide a structure for the soul of the song.

In returning to the paradox of the chorus and the question of why Dylan originally shelved the song, I think we must recall that **Blind Willie McTell** comes from a time in Dylan's life immediately following a period of intense religious conversion. The "trilogy of Christian albums" were now behind him, but it may be that he was troubled by his identification of himself with a singer from the secular-sacrosanct tradition of the original blues recording artists. Perhaps more significantly, the possible casting of McTell as a Christ-figure oppressed Dylan, because - albeit at a remove - Dylan was thereby identifying himself with the very deity that he had begun to worship in earnest some five years before.

I do not think this is too energetic a conjecture. I feel there to be a number of songs within Dylan's official 1980's output which seem to reflect a disturbed identification with what might, for want of a better phrase, be called The Holy Spirit. I'm not talking here of the "Christian trilogy", but of songs much more cryptic and ambiguous in their approach (and therefore less personally threatening to the orthodoxy of Dylan's religious position). And no, I'm not suggesting Dylan sees himself as a messiah, or that I see him as one. Far from it. However, I have no problem with a great artist aligning himself with some kind of creative "holy" spirit - but I can see why Dylan would have a problem. This, though, is a subject I want to explore more fully in another essay at another time.

For now, allow me to advance Blind Willie McTell as a personification of The Blues Singer. Not a redeemer but a bringer of redemption-songs. And as such, singing through the catalyst of "Bob Dylan" - another mythical figure. ("Who is this character anyway?", As Mr. Zimmerman's friend and erstwhile collaborator, Sam Shepard asks in his *Rolling Thunder Logbook*.)

But what kind of redemption is brought by this song? The last two verses are pressed on by an increasingly urgent and rhythmic piano which leads the lyric out of relatively specific geography into a far wider realm. Memorable glimpses of Americanised corruption:-

Them charcoal gypsy maidens can strut their feathers well

and:

the ghost of slavery ships

and:

..a woman by the river with some fine young handsome man
Who's dressed up like a squire, bootleg whiskey in his hand

All come to bear with devastating effect in the last verse:-

Well, God is in his heaven and we all want what's his
But power and greed and corruptible seed seem to be all that there is

Cold comfort indeed. This brings back to mind the global reach of the opening verse. It is not merely "this land" which is "condemned". It is this world.

Then, in that understated, almost prosaic final verse, its low-key words belied by the momentum of the music, the narrator appears, far below God in his heaven, "gazing out the window" of a hotel, his song all but finished. This narrator, a "shooting star" himself, perhaps uneasy with the doctrine he has embraced, is still aiming for a salvation he has maybe come to fear is unattainable. Dylan's piano coda, with Knopfler's guitar subtly fading, is at once noble and forlorn.

The abiding impression of this song, ultimately shaped by its final verse, is of isolation. Let us go back to the second verse:

Well, I heard that hootowl singin, as they were takin' down the tents
The stars above the barren trees was his only audience.
Them charcoal gypsy maidens can strut their feathers well
But nobody can sing the blues like Blind Willie McTell

The image of a prophet in the wilderness is inescapable. That "hootowl": wasn't Dylan's singing dismissed in the early days as being like a "coyote"? "Them charcoal gypsy maidens": are they not redolent of the colourful gospel girls who accompanied Dylan's performances through most of the 1980's? But maybe we extrapolate too much.

Since Blind Willie McTell was produced, Dylan has embarked on what has become known as The Never-Ending Tour. The outreach of so many journeys and performances has, perversely, resulted in Dylan appearing to become more and more remote. Nine Years before, in yet another remarkable song originally deemed by its author as unfit for popular consumption, Dylan had concluded:-

No one else could play that tune
You know it was up to me

(Up To Me, 1974)

I think the apprehension that underlies **Up To Me** and **Blind Willie McTell** to be too *obscure, too profound and too pure* for Dylan to come to terms with *to live it you have to explode*' **Where Are You Tonight? (Journey Through Dark Heat)** (1978)

But then critics can be 'stupid jerks', can't they?

Ye Shall Be Changed

You harbor resentment
You know that ain't too much of a thrill
You wish for contentment
But you got an emptiness that can't be filled
You've had enough of hatred
Your bones are breaking
Can't find nothing sacred
Ye shall be changed, ye shall be changed

In the twinkling of an eye
When the last trumpet blows
The dead will arise and burst out of your clothes
And ye shall be changed

Everything you've gotten
You've gotten by sweat, blood and muscle
From early in the morning till way past dark
All you ever do is a-hustle
All your loved ones have walked out of the door
You're not even sure about your wife and kids no more
But ye shall be changed, ye shall be changed

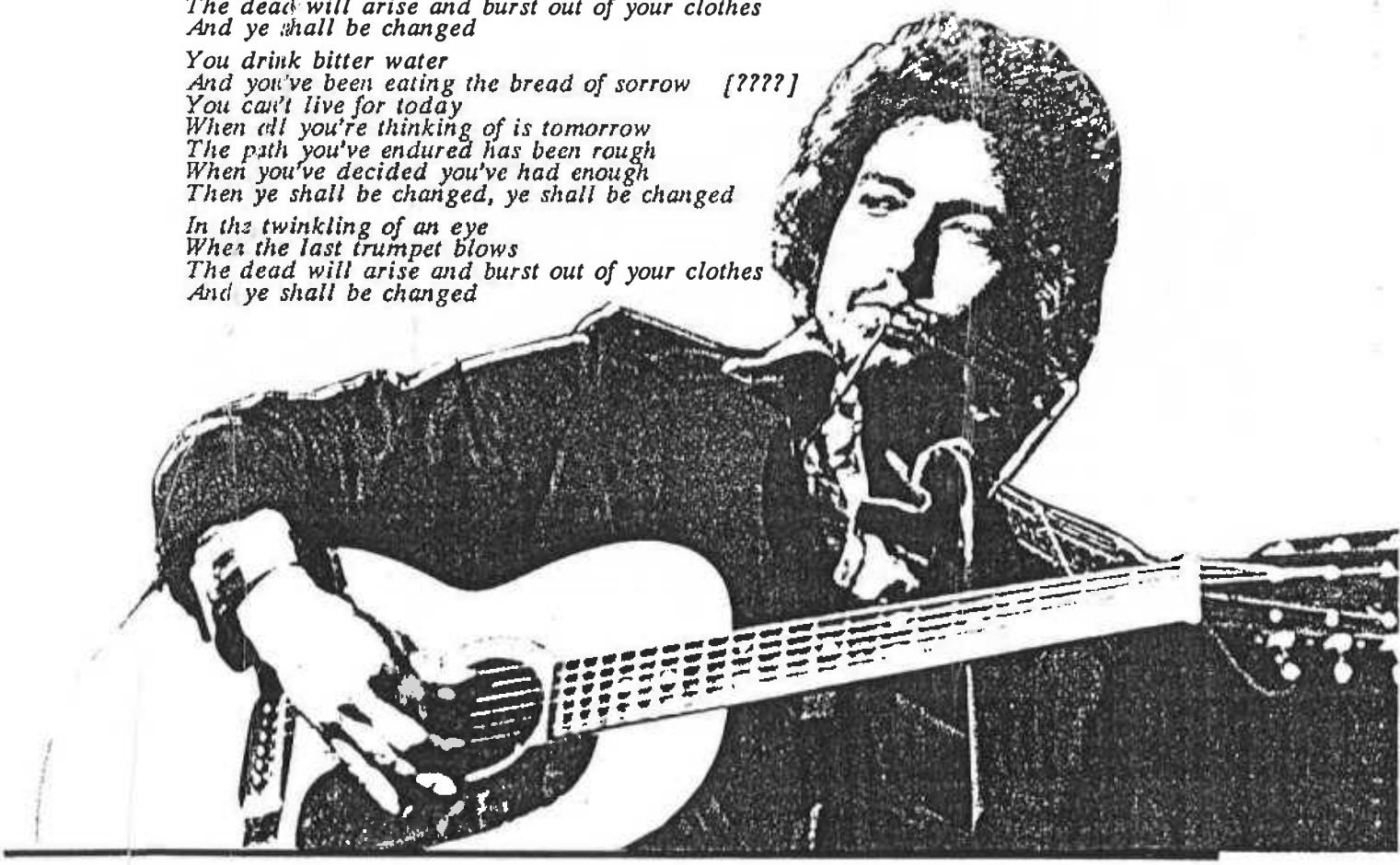
In the twinkling of an eye
When the last trumpet blows
The dead will arise and burst out of your clothes
And ye shall be changed

Now the past don't control you
But the future's like a roulette wheel spinning
Deep down inside
You know you need a whole new beginning
Don't have to go to Russia or Iran
Just surrender to God
He'll move you where you stand
And ye shall be changed, ye shall be changed

In the twinkling of an eye
When the last trumpet blows
The dead will arise and burst out of your clothes
And ye shall be changed

You drink bitter water
And you've been eating the bread of sorrow [????]
You can't live for today
When all you're thinking of is tomorrow
The path you've endured has been rough
When you've decided you've had enough
Then ye shall be changed, ye shall be changed

In the twinkling of an eye
When the last trumpet blows
The dead will arise and burst out of your clothes
And ye shall be changed



Series Of Dreams

By I.G. Roberts

The 58th and final gem in The Treasure Chest. Of all the songs, this was the one that gripped me most after bringing it all back home from shop to stereo. Like another great *Oh Mercy* out-take – **Dignity** – I could see why a song like this was left off the album. Not because they weren't good enough (!), but because they didn't quite blend with the musical ambience or lyrical feel of the album. Encouraging I thought, to see Dylan exercising an acute editorial control of the sort none too evident on his previous two albums. Remarkable though, that he seems content to just put such songs to one side, resisting the temptation to include them on his next album.[1] Or maybe he's always thought in terms of "Rare & Unreleased" box sets...

As regards production, **Series Of Dreams** is quite unlike anything else on *Oh Mercy*. U2 and Joy Division and The Velvet Underground with Phil Spector at the desk was how it immediately struck me. Dylan's voice, a little blurry behind the mix at first, clarified with subsequent listenings, bringing the lyric into focus. The out-take is excellent in itself and benefits considerably from these extra and/or alternative lines (from the 'original' second verse):

Thinkin' of a series of dreams
Where the middle and the bottom drops out
And you're walkin' out of the darkness
And into the shadows of doubt
Wasn't goin' to any great trouble
Keep believin' it's whatever it seems
Nothin' too heavy to burst a bubble
Just thinkin' of a series of dreams

And these words, different to the start of the 'official' 2nd verse:

Thinkin' of a series of dreams
When the time and the tempo drag
Suddenly the gate is thrown open
And you're left there holdin' a bag

But one has to admire the final version featuring a very rich Lanois production complete with enhancing overdubs (added a year later).

At the 50th birthday knees-up here in my old hometown, I saw, for the first time, the **Series Of Dreams** video. a very superior example of that tawdry medium it is too: a fast-moving montage of sensitively selected images which relevantly recall the flow of scenes in the song itself.

Musically, the track emerges ominously out of the cacophony at the end of the brilliantly realized **When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky** – a take jacked up by some of Springsteen's sidemen, and much more vital than its *Empire Burlesque* incarnation. The urgent throbbing of bass and drums on **Series Of Dreams** instantly evokes the quickened heartbeat and rapid eye movement of dreamsleep (also tellingly reflected in the video).

With most "pop songs", one only becomes really aware of the words when the chorus comes around, but Dylan is a master of the arresting first verse. Here, the opening lines are very strange and memorable:

1 Er, I think that you're forgetting about Death Is Not The End, Clean Cut Kid, Born In Time and God Knows here, Ian. - Ed

I was thinkin' of a series of dreams
Where nothin' comes up to the top
Everythin' stays down where it's wounded
And comes to a permanent stop

Dylan's low-register delivery burns the words into the brain. That fourth line there, as sung, is a remarkable moment of music (and Christopher Ricks will, no doubt, note the characteristic eschatology of this line: yet another "finishing end at hand").

Balanced against the song's series of fairly familiar dream-images is a list of disclaimers which, on first hearings, appear to be Dylan discouraging us from looking too deeply for meanings. That is as maybe, but I've come to see in the song an insight of the creative process.

Dylan is not the first artist to say, when asked where the inspiration comes from, that he doesn't always know. As with so much of his work, one is tempted, rather romantically, to regard **Series Of Dreams** more in the light of a vision than merely a song. A visit from the muse, if you will. Critically, of course, such notions find one on very thin ice, but Dylan's constant disclaimers:

Wasn't goin' to any great trouble.....

Wasn't makin' any great connections....etc.

do, nonetheless, convince me that this song did simply arrive without any real effort or motivation on his part. The surging music, too - aptly described by producer Lanois as *turbulent* - reinforces this impression.

Paul Williams, writing about Dylan's **Highway 61 Revisited** album, puts it this way:

> The creative artist is an explorer who penetrates an unknown realm, and brings back more than what he knew he was looking for[2]

A quarter of a century after that album, Dylan has proved that he can still bring back more than he was looking for, and more than we, who expect so much from him, could have reasonably hoped for.

The *distance* that Dylan has *already gone* is not merely the distance represented by a Schubertian back-catalogue of hundreds and hundreds of songs stretching back over thirty years. It is the mystical distance between artistic potential and that spark at the moment of artistic creation. And that is why **Series Of Dreams** is the perfect conclusion to the tremendous collection of material only now generally available on the Box Set.

Roger Wass

2 Performing Artist, Volume One

Steve Wicks	May 5th

Many thanks for **Homer,** *the slut* 2, a pretty impressive start.

From personal experience I know very well the drive needed to start, and commitment needed to sustain, a fan/magazine of any size or scale. I am enclosing a copy of *ZIP CODE #2* which may be of some interest as it contains a couple of Dylan reviews from a couple of years ago. I was co-editor and main writer for *ZIP CODE* which folded after five issues: time and money pressures grew too large. We did achieve some minor progress within the chosen sphere and thoroughly enjoyed the almost-a-year it lasted.

So, I can only wish you good luck and hope your determination to continue can be allied to sufficient time and money to maintain a long and healthy life. As for comments on Issue 2: I never read the long, boring analyses of Dylan's songs in *The Telegraph*, so for me you can omit suchlike from **Homer**. What and where each word or phrase comes from or means is irrelevant to me. I am impressed by the whole artist and his work and I feel that the music is so vital to the feel that to examine the words alone is tedious and pointless.

My over-riding impression of recent Dylan shows, made even more solid this year, is of his `Chaplinesque' style. I would in fact prefer the metaphor `Keatonesque' as I prefer Buster to Charlie.

To sum up: keep it lively, newsy, funny and entertaining: Dylan's no intellectual, nor are most of his followers.

Thanks, Steve. I suspect that much of this issue will only be glanced through by you. Dylan certainly has no need of being an intellectual but I can't see the fault in conveying one's impressions of his performances in an intellectual manner, as long as it isn't intellectual posturing. "Analytical but Understandable": Homer's motto for probing articles! I trust there is enough of a mix to keep you interested.

Mark Booth	May 91

Thanks for sending me issue 3 which I received today. I have been reading it all day and really enjoying it! Obviously a lot of time and effort have gone into it – well done!

Ken Parsons	17/5/91

I really enjoyed no 3 (and the first two as well) which seems to fall between *Isis* and *The Telegraph*. I also tend to agree with the points raised by Jeff Stevens in his letter regarding the contents of **Homer,** *the slut*. However, I also like the reprints of articles, clips from papers, reviews and such like, because, no matter how hard you look, you can't seem to get them all! I look forward to receiving issue 4 as and when. All the best for future issues, and thanks for the three so far.

Roger Wass	June 91

Yes, alright, you've convinced me...very weird name, but I don't suppose I'm the first one to make that observation.

I was VERY impressed with the way you have put it all together, the colour and the standard of printing is most commendable. Well done...keep up the excellent standard.

Roy Gimbrett	May 91

I'm writing rather belatedly to thank you for issue two....I think the **Focus On** a single song is a good idea – maybe you should suggest a song and invite readers to send in their views and thoughts about it to contrast with the published critics.

Like many other listeners, my initial reaction to **Under The Red Sky** was that it was the worst album Dylan had ever made, but gradually it crept into my head and before long I found myself loving it. Shame he isn't playing **Handy Dandy** live yet.

Congratulations on a most enterprising magazine, looking forward to the next one.

Thanks to all of you for your kind remarks. The clippings section attracted overwhelming support. Roy's reaction is certainly a typical one to Under The Red Sky, however when I tried to explain this to one of my more sceptical readers, Nick Simons, he equated it with self hypnosis...

Robert (not Bob) Robertson 29/4/91

I have just been forwarded a copy of your Dylan fanzine. I found it just like his records – I didn't enjoy it at the first glance and despite repeated perusal still don't.

I am however a great Dylan fan, despite the fact that I don't like him or his music. Indeed I am a confidant of his and, for the benefit of your other readers, would like to list the following things which they would like to know about him.

1 Dylan is a believer in reincarnation. In a previous life he was a dentist's drill. If you listen closely to his records you will find echoes of his past life.

2 Dylan can see into the future and is indeed a prophet. He wrote **Maggie's Farm** which – as anyone who has really listened to the lyrics will tell appreciate – is a critique of Thatcher's Britain. Dylan's genius is illustrated by the fact that he manages to convey his condemnation of Thatcher without mentioning her, politics or Britain.

3 **Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands** is an account of his torrid affair with Dutch starlet Tulip Van Der Valk.

4 **Lay Lady Lay** is now the theme tune of the confederation of anxious egg eaters.

5 **A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall** A critique of Scottish weather past, present and to come.

6 **One More Cup Of Coffee**: written during the black days of Dylan's struggle to overcome his caffeine addiction. Thankfully he was successful and we have been spared his tribute to the Betty Ford clinic.

7 Bob likes close friends and associates to call him Dyl. This fact is known only to myself and a feature writer in a reputable Scottish newspaper.

8 Traveling Wilburys: Dylan conceived the idea of this group during his Christian period (To Misquote: 'Once a Christian, always a Christian'). If you add up the ages of the individual members of the group, at the date of formation, divide it by their dates of birth, and multiply the answer by one million you would get the date of Armageddon. (Albeit on the Chinese calendar.) However, Roy Orbison inconveniently died and you are now unlikely to be asked this question at trivial pursuits.

I could go on all day but you'll just have to let the above whet your appetite.

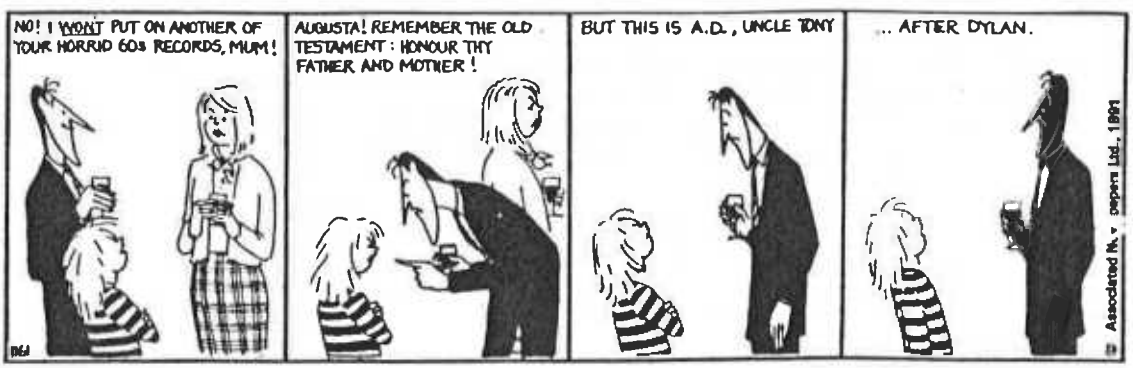
I have a suggestion to make for future issues of the magazine. You should include competitions. I will start the ball rolling. I am at present thinking of a line from a Dylan Song: "_____" Any real Dylan fan would have picked up my E.S.P. transmission and, even as I write, should be putting pen to postcard. Replies to the editor please as, in the unlikely event that he was not listening, I have beamed him the answer while posting this letter.

I must go now as I have missed the old electric shock therapy for the last three weeks or is it years, days, minutes....?

P.S. Ed – is it true that Dylan is singing the Norwegian entry in the Eurovision song contest?

One of the great difficulties I have in believing in many of the world's main religions is clearly illustrated here: who could ever have faith in a being perverse enough to create someone so utterly lacking in both taste and humour as this sorry specimen?

Even his "P.S." is hopelessly out of date since everyone knows Bob sang it at the Grammys.



Tim Dunn May 25th

The day prior to Dylan's birthday **Homer,** *the slut* 3 arrived in my box. Its size astounded me! Three days and still plenty to read! Some items were not to my taste. But I can say that about the newly "upmarket" magazine I co-edit, as well as the other 2 "fanzines" we all subscribe to. Most, though, are at least interesting if not downright essential. My one concern about **Homer** is that you may burn out as it is obvious that the workload is staggering. If you can maintain the enthusiasm and energy I suggest you market whatever potion you use!

..... The Dylan news just keeps on coming! The benefit LP with Dylan doing **This Old Man,** the Michael Bolton LP, The touring, the books etc. I don't know about you, but my wallet could use a break. Of all, though, *The Bootleg Series* is the best. There always are those unhappy with such things (why not 4 cds, what's not on the set, what is on the set, and on and on) but, if it is a bone at least it has lots of meat on it! A few more tossed my way won' t be rejected....Keep up the good work.

Thanks Tim, "upmarket" was meant as a compliment of course but you didn't have to go to the lengths of Look Back 28 to further impress. An excellent issue. As to my wallet using a break - yep it would be nice but I've just moved work to a place within lunchtime walking of HMV/VIRGIN/TOWER megastores and various "specialist" record shops so I'm not holding my breath. (Nor is Pia!). We are, as you'll have gathered, in complete agreement on The Bootleg Series. The only bit of your letter I couldn't relate to was the mysterious reference to two other fanzines.....(only joking !!!!)

Sandy Hamblett May 25th

Well, I love to hear everyone's different views on all things Dylan – bit of intelligent fun. So here's mine – I had a ball at the Hammersmith '91 shows – I felt a genuine warmth between the audience and Bob. This was probably enhanced by a lucky ticket at the front for the best show of all – 16th February. I felt he did wonderful renditions that night: **Stuck Inside Of Mobile (With The Memphis Blues Again), Wiggle Wiggle,** the acoustic set, a wonderful **God Knows** and an eerie **Blowin' In The Wind.** And I was guilty of shouting and generally exhibiting fan behaviour! At one point I nearly lost my head and shouted: "I love you Bob", but I stopped myself just in time. Ha ha....

I look forward to all the next issues and keep up the good work.

Thanks, Sandy. Well at the risk of continuing the Hammersmith '91 debate, I'd like to know who actually plays them now ? There are considerably better tapes from this year alone far less straying back to 90, 89 or 88 far less '75 or '66. It's always great to see him at the time of course, but they don't really stand up now do they ???

Mike Wyvill May 25th

I've just finished reading the first three issues of **Homer,** *the slut* which were loaned to me by a friend. I must commend you upon getting thus far particularly when much of the material has come from yourself. As other correspondents have suggested, you will need to continue to increase the contributions of others if you are to have any time left to pursue your life outside the mag! Once that happens, of course, you may be forced to exercise more editorial control which might prove painful (to you and your contributors). It is laudable that you regularly seek the views of your readership regarding content and style of the magazine but you will never please everyone.

Nevertheless, the welter of positive feedback and the lack of major criticism underlines the fund of goodwill that obviously exists towards your venture. May I add my encouragement to that of others?

Turning now to the content of the magazine: I would suggest that you've got it about right. The **Focus On** section should remain though it need not appear as a regular feature. We are all surely aware that Dylan fans span a wide age-range and many people, younger ones in particular, may not have access to the material from which you glean the accounts and criticisms for this feature.

In any case it is useful to have such material gathered in one place but one must be careful about lifting other people's opinions out of context. I am not terribly fond of 'serious' literary critiques of Dylan's work but I feel that you provide a good mix of such pieces with more down to earth and homespun passages. **Some Other Kinds Of Songs** is another valuable section and is an area not really covered in *The Telegraph* or

Isis. There is a plethora of artists who are worthy of closer scrutiny and, as a start, I suggest Jimi Hendrix, Richard Thompson, Roy Harper, the Jam and John Coltrane. Miles Davis would be a perfect subject.

The collection of newspaper cuttings which you provide are potentially most useful. Frankly, I think we'd all agree that it is mind-numbing to read them all through in one sitting but their inclusion provides an important archival function. What with Dylan articles appearing in such diverse publications as *Hello*, *Mirabella* and *The Bookseller* it is difficult for anyone to find them all. What is not feasible is for you to reproduce every single one, you should continue to include as comprehensive and varied a selection as is possible.

The February tour material was quite acceptable though the concept of having a variety of first-hand reports by readers has been implemented by *Look Back*. The accounts you printed contained a fair bit of humour which made them more entertaining. On the subject of concerts, or should I say concert-goers, I have never understood why some people roar approval after every song rergardless of how bad a version they've just witnessed. Seems like all Bob has to do is blow a few notes on the harmonica and the place goes berserk. (Check Paul Gambaccini's views re the 1981 tour).

The letters section makes for good reading but you will have to guard against printing letters from the same cadre of correspondents in successive issues.

Some comments on *Under The Red Sky*. Musically it is very satisfying. Most of the songs reveal excellent playing and there are some lovely melodies such as **Born In Time** and **2X2**. In fact **Born In Time** is as good as anything on *Oh Mercy* (ouch!) which is where it came from anyway, and is such an atmospheric piece it grabs me every time. The whole album is easy to listen to provided that the lyrics don't get in the way on songs like **Wiggle Wiggle**, **10,000 Men** and **Cat's In The Well** which are pretty standard blues/boogie workouts.

It has been common practice for Dylan to include a straight 12 bar blues on each album (**Outlaw Blues**, **One More Weekend**, **Down Along The Cove**, **Meet Me In The Morning**, **You Wanna Ramble** etc) but here we have two, both with lightweight lyrics, which is a little lightweight. This from the man who left **Blind Willie McTell** and **Dignity** on the shelf! However, I think the positive features of the album are predominant and I guess that's why I continue to play it.

Incidentally, if you make the magazine any thicker you'll have to consider re-cycled paper! Watch out because the lumberjacks are coming.

Thanks, Mike for a very detailed letter. Well, you've raised so many good points I'll just answer them in order.

You are right about others' contributions and you'll notice that this issue shows me moving that way. I've no idea what you mean by "life outside the mag", though, unless you're referring to the few hours of sleep! I think both Focus On and the cuttings part of Bits & Bobs serve a useful archival purpose, what to leave out of the cuttings is the problem. There are a lot of completists out there you know! However, I'm not actually containing all of them even with the forthcoming special issue due to poor reproduction or sheer space restriction.

Your ideas on Some Other Kinds Of Songs were immediately put into effect as everyone reading this issue's contribution from your good self can see!

Bob has asked similar questions re concert goers (of which you and I are two). I don't know, perhaps a lot of the cheering is just a "thank you" for all he has given us throughout our lives and not necessarily a reflection on the night in question. Thus the cheers are for all the harmonica breaks that have wormed inside your soul and grabbed your heart rather than some of the strange sounds we've heard recently?

Finally - hey, I like 12 bar blues, y'know!

Ged Kelty	July

Thanks for the copy of **Homer**, *the slut* #3. As you probably know, many Dylan collectors based in the North East have been meeting regularly for several years now; we've often discussed setting up a magazine of some sort but the idea has gone no further, so it's heartening to see someone like yourself with the wherewithal to actually produce something new and worthwhile.

Perusing issue three, it is good to see so many of the recent media articles on Dylan collected together, many of which I hadn't previously read. However it did make me wonder just how valuable it was re-printing such nonsense as Andrew Perry's **Highway 61-91 Revisited** review of *The Bootleg Series*, claiming **Series Of Dreams** to be "wretchedly weak" and suggesting **Foot Of Pride** and **Tell Me** "barely stand up". Nor can I see the point of giving space to an article by James Delingpole **The Sad Truth About Dylan** who has nothing of merit or interest or truth to say on the subject.

Praise is certainly due for your effort at transcribing **Foot Of Pride**. For what it's worth, I'd offer these alternatives of some of the lines:

Verse 3 line 7	*She'll do wondrous works with your fate*
Verse 4 lines 3/4	*How to enter the Gates of Paradise and know* *How to carry a burden too heavy to be yours*
Verse 6 line 5	*The dust of a plague that has left the whole town afraid*
Verse 6 last line	*Let hot iron flow as you race for shade*

I have to disagree with Hazel Hogg's account of the first Saturday night at Hammersmith this year. I travelled 300 miles through snow which was indeed "outrageous" for that show and frankly thought it was so poor I gave my ticket away for the Sunday night. Comparing that show to the numerous times I've seen Dylan in action since 1981 that was by far the worst. But I'll be back for more next time, I guess.

Enclosed is...the sort of article which should not be found in a Dylan personalzine...Notting Hill Billies indeed!

Congratulations on #3, thanks again for the copy and best wishes for #4.

Thanks for the encouragement, the lyric suggestions and the clipping, Ged. Despite your admonishment I've included the last herein! I don't think it is such a bad mistake to make - The Traveling Wilburies/The Notting Hill Billies - bit of superstar AORing about...

But, seriously, I thought long and hard before including Delingpole's disgusting piece in the last issue. The reason I decided to do so was, simply, that, given that I intend the cuttings to be a reference point for readers to return to in the future, I can't really omit articles from the national press, however distasteful. The same goes for reviews of album releases with the additional factor that I'd be reluctant to omit reviews just because I disagreed with them. (I know that isn't quite what you're suggesting but where would I draw the line?)

You could have missed the greatest concert of all time on the Sunday you know - weren't you nervous? I too think Hazel was generous towards Bob but, since she had the misfortune to have to review the final night, this was her only chance to be positive!

John Thorndike	26th May

Thanks very much for # 3, quite easily the best yet. I particularly enjoyed the concert reviews, even though I don't really agree with them. I got to the 8th, 9th and 10th and thought, bar the acoustic sets and the occasional electric highlight he was very weak. The tapes of the other nights (bar Glasgow 3rd - which I do enjoy!) seem to me to back this up. Never mind, a good weekend!

Indeed, enough said.

Alan MacDonald	6th June

Many thanks for the third issue of **Homer**, *the slut*. It goes from strength to strength. I notice in issue 2 some diverse opinion regarding the cuttings in the **Bits N' Bobs** section and I'm glad that the consensus (and most importantly, yourself) seems to favour its retention. Although it may duplicate some of the good work of *Isis* I do believe it is a worthwhile exercise, not just in collecting in one source cuttings of particular events, but also in disseminating articles which may otherwise have slipped some of us by. Such is the plethora of publications today that it is often not possible to capture everything no matter how assiduously one may try. Consequently, I think there is value in having some sort of central source to which cuttings can be sent and from which they can be reproduced for the benefit of all.

Having said that, you probably already have a proverbial mountain of copies of the cuttings I have enclosed, but I shall operate on the premise that it is better to have overlaps than gaps. I have included the **Guardian** article from which you lost the bottom part but have not included the piece from the **NME** (25 May) as I assume you will have them. The eulogistic "editorial" in the **NME** (p20) proves that someone on the rag still has some grey matter...

Sorry for cutting your letter off in mid-flow Alan, but the clippings you go on to talk about won't be included until the next issue. Many thanks for the clippings you sent and I can't stress enough how important it is that you - and everyone reading this - stick to the premise you've outlined. Nearly every clipping I'm sent is prefaced with, "You've probably got this already but...." Not only is it surprising how many I don't already have, but often I receive the same clipping in far better quality. (You'd all be surprised at the number of cuttings - copies of copies - that I've been unable to reproduce this year.)

I was very pleased with the NME's tribute, I've bought the paper religiously since the mid seventies and badly needed a reminder why! It certainly dealt better with Bob's 50th birthday than The Monotony Maker which is supposedly more sympathetic to Bob.

Claudio Pantonin — July

Thanks for sending me issue three of your magazine which I think is really excellent. I would willingly send you all the Italian articles which have come out lately about Dylan's Italian shows and fiftieth birthday, but you are probably not interested in having them. Anyway let me know if you are.

As regards the shows that I saw during this tour: I liked **Bologna, Munich** and **Bad Morgantine**. The Milan show was exceptional due to the hearty reception from the crowd and their protracted great enthusiasm throughout the show. I also saw Innsbrück and Linz. The best songs I heard? **A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall** in Bologna, **I Believe In You** in Munich and **Just Like A Woman** in Milan.

Interested? Of course I'm interested in having any and every clipping about Bob especially from abroad. There has been a sudden rush of subscribers from Italy and Germany - perhaps due to a mention in ROLLING THUNDER - and I'd love you all to send clippings. (And football news if you like football too; I'll not tell you who I support in each country in case it puts you off).

Thanks for your impressions of the tour, which also remind me to ask the world in general: "Where the hell is the tape from Linz?"

Albert Williams — 24th July

First things first; your magazine concentrates on reader's letters more than your competitors. I enjoyed the reviews of the February shows. Retrospectively, the 1991 shows pale into insignificance alongside Paris and London 1990. OK, Bob was clowning more, was responding to the audience. Was this beer talking?

Anyway my favourite show was 9/2/91 – the tape I have seems to have some girl giving birth next to the hard working taper. My favourite five shows of the Never-ending tour? Mountain View '88, Birmingham '89, New York 12/10/89, Montreal '90, Paris 30/1/91 and London 8/2/90. Yes, I know this is six shows!

Keep up the fantastic standard: what about a survey of readers' fave shows?

Ah, a chance to say that I have no competitors. There is surely room for all fanzines in the Dylan world, personally I'd like to see more! I've got that tape of the 9th that you mention; in fact I thought I'd put it on the other day but it was only Bob attempting Homeward Bound at Nashua.

Interesting top 5 from the Never-ending Tour; those six would be among my top five too! I'm not sure about a survey of favourite shows but what would be great would be readers writing in with pieces on their favourite shows down the years particularly the non-ultra-famous ones. (Are you reading this Andy??)

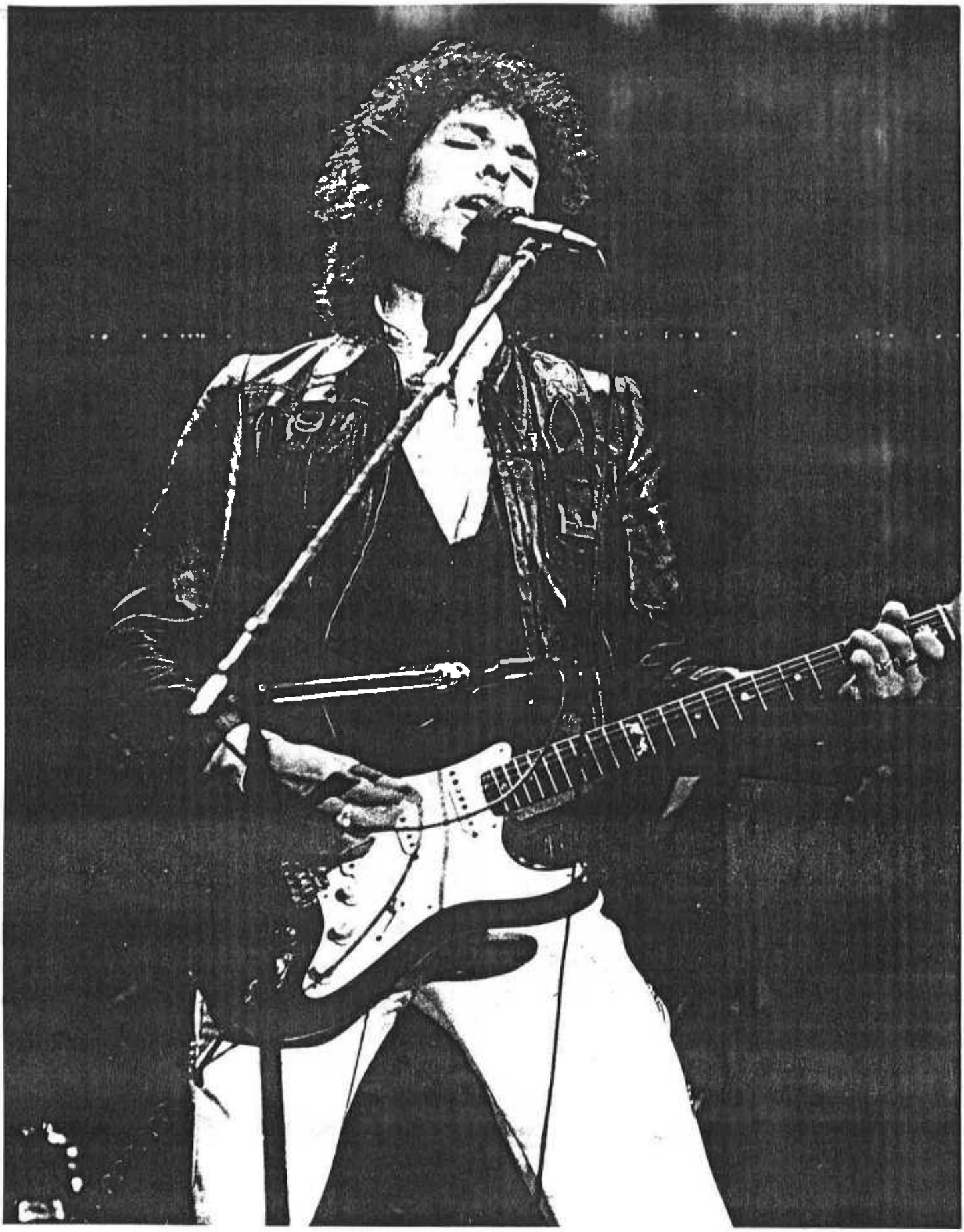
Caroline Mair and General Round Up.

Lars Anderson, 29/5/91, led many, particularly foreign, subscribers in a cry of: "Thanks a lot for issue three...can't get enough of those cuttings!" Just wait till the first special issues chaps and chapesses, you'll love it. I may have omitted some letters from this issue – if so **massive apologies** – since I can't lay my hands on a missive from **Caroline Mair** which raised two very important points.

Firstly, after reading Steve Hussey's piece on The Pixies in **Some Other Kinds Of Songs**, she "couldn't help feeling we're being preached at" and stated it was everyone's own right/business if they were interested/obsessed only in/by Dylan. (Obviously Caroline put it better than that, I'm trying to remember the exact words.) Of course it is everyone's right and I certainly don't want anyone to feel preached at. **Homer,** ***the slut*** is for fun and intellectual stimulation. Steve's introduction to his piece read to me more like an explanation as to how he found himself writing an article in the first place and, as I said in that issue, he had divined my intentions precisely. With the sheer amount of Dylan material available it is difficult to listen to other artists and, given that most people only like a small percentage of everything produced, it is easy to miss out on acts that one might enjoy. Given that we all share a liking for Dylan there is a chance we may share a liking for other artists too and **Some Other Kinds Of Songs** provides a forum for introducing readers to people they may enjoy listening to. (I tend to read books that other Dylan fans recommend to me too.) There are an awful lot of Dylan fans who automatically buy the new Springsteen/Morrison/Young releases and who place Joni Mitchell way ahead of any other female artist. However, to keep everyone happy **Some Other Kinds Of Songs** will contain in the future certain artists with very strong Dylan ties. (Some who influenced him, others who were greeted as "new Dylans.")

Caroline's other point was a plea for overall page numbering in **Homer,** ***the slut***. Quite right too, says I; it is something that annoys me as much as it annoys anyone else. At the moment, with all the editing, typing and production done by yours truly, I haven't been able to devise a means of doing this. By the time you read this I'll be typing up articles for **Homer,** ***the slut's*** January issue and I'll have no idea what overall page number I am on. I'll start printing parts of the January issue as early as November. However, a way round this problem may have been found by then, fingers crossed.

The First Now Shall Later Be Last .....



MILES DAVIS - The Prince Of Darkness

by Mike Wyvill

Miles has been making music for the past 45 years. For the vast majority of that time his work has been innovative, challenging and often exquisite. He has been responsible for advancing the frontiers of music (not just Jazz, a term which he does not recognize) many times and his artistic development, rather like Bob Dylan's, has been marked by a restlessness, a turbulence which continues to drive him on whilst others follow. Indeed, there are a startling number of parallels between the careers of Davis and Dylan which you may identify as you read this piece.

With well in excess of 100 official albums to select from, the task of describing just one is impossible and meaningless. What I have attempted to do is provide a potted Davis history concentrating upon his most important musical contributions. It is certainly my view that Davis is almost as important to the development of music in his field as Dylan has been in "rock". So, having said that, read on....

In 1944 the young Miles left his middle-class home in East St. Louis to enrol as a student at the Juilliard music school in New York City. What he really wanted to do was seek out the phenomenal, charismatic and eventually self-destructive alto saxophonist, Charlie Parker. Parker, together with Dizzy Gillespie, had spearheaded the radical bebop movement and was the most incandescent talent within it. Within a short space of time Davis was gigging regularly as a member of Parker's group on 52nd street. The recordings made with Parker during the mid-1940's reveal a hesitant Davis clearly living in the shadow of the trumpet supremo, Dizzy Gillespie. The rhythmical complexities of bebop and the small group format placed heavy demands on the improvisational skills of the players and Miles needed time to learn. However, the recordings made for Savoy over this period clearly trace Miles' growing confidence and the tentative formulation of his own unique style which relied upon the use of space within the music. Whereas bebop was distinguished by its staccato runs and flurries of notes, Davis had begun to believe that his trumpet could say more by saying less. Thus, he was able to introduce a more subtle form of tension, a quieter drama to the music which began to sound very different to bebop. Such music retained it's bright vibrancy but it also began to assume a shimmering mystique.

Inevitably Miles grew less interested in bebop and in 1948 against all trends, he formed a nonet which recorded one great album, ***The Birth Of The Cool***, and started a new movement, namely Cool. (The cuts laid down for this album were released as singles and it wasn't until 1957 that they were issued in LP form). Though the few gigs which the band played were not well received the album still sounds wonderfully fresh today. Containing many memorable tunes the music is rich and lush, the instrumentation of the nonet allowing the creation of considerable variety in the musical texture. The music is at once understated yet exhilarating. Check out the tracks **Godchild**, **Jeru**, **Venus de Milo** and **Boplicity**.

Typically Miles immediately dismissed himself as high priest of Cool. Others were only beginning to assimilate Cool but he was ready to move on. However, he suffered a major setback when he slid into heroin addiction at the start of the 50's. It took four years for Miles to rehabilitate himself during which time he made a number of variable-quality recordings for Prestige but when he finally emerged in 1954 he recorded his next great album, ***Walkin'***. This was the start of a very creative and successful period for him; he became a group leader par excellence and led a number of quartets/quintets which re-defined jazz music both in the studio and on stage. The ***Walkin'*** album was based upon two long blues, **Walkin'** and **Blue 'N' Boogie**. What distinguished this album was the confidence of the playing and the sheer improvisational skill of the band, particularly Miles.

In 1955 Davis appeared at Newport and was a big hit. Interest in his music had begun to grow and he decided to form a steady, working quintet which reached its peak with the arrival of John Coltrane. Coltrane, of course, went on to create some of the most spiritual, intense and difficult music ever played in his own right but here in the quintet he was still searching for his own musical grail. His prolific use of notes, incendiary soloing and duller, flatter tone were the perfect foil for Davis' space-sensitive, evocative sound. Coltrane was later to call this effect "sheets of sound" which is exactly what it was.

In this most potent line-up there was developed a sixth sense between Miles and the rhythm section such that Davis was free to explore the central theme of a piece taking unexpected turns always confident that the bass and drums would follow and support him. Towards the end of 1956 the quintet went into the studios to record material as a contract-filler for Prestige. Miles wanted to sign for Columbia, indeed he had already recorded for them, and so this session could have produced uninspired music. As it happened the band recorded enough material for four superb albums, ***Workin'***, ***Steamin'***, ***Cookin'*** and ***Relaxin'*** which were a fitting tribute to the collective creative talent of the band. The sessions were done almost as a live gig and hence display a freshness and spontaneity which imbues the music with power and urgency.

The culmination of the Coltrane/Davis collaboration came in 1959 when the sextet (Cannonball Adderly's alto sax had been added to the line-up) recorded ***A Kind Of Blue***. This is simply one of the best albums in any field of music and certainly one of the most influential in jazz. Davis came to the sessions with rough sketches for pieces which the band had never played before. These pieces were examples of modal music which relied less heavily on chordal progressions and more upon melodic phrasing and improvisation. The results of the groups efforts were stunning. There is a homogeneity, a tension, a warmth and a timelessness evident on the album which rewards repeated playing. The band manage to blend simplicity of arrangement with solos of infinite variety which cannot be ignored. Every track is excellent but my favourites are **So What** and **All Blues**, both long, atmospheric cuts. The former is urgent and brooding, the latter sublime and insidious. I cannot conceive of anyone not enjoying **All Blues** - it is utter perfection.

Miles' Columbia albums of the late-50's and 60's are many and varied. Almost all of them are worthy of attention, notably his orchestral collaborations with his favourite arranger, Gil Evans, (***Miles Ahead***, ***Porgy And Bess*** and ***Sketches Of Spain***) and the work with the legendary quintet of the mid-sixties. This quintet broke new ground with each recording and as a live outfit pushed small-band performing to the limit playing inspirational hour-long seamless sets with an uncanny understanding between the players. A driving factor in the unit was the 19-year old drummer, Tony Williams. Immensely talented he gave the band a singular drive with his busy approach and introduced considerable flexibility into the rhythm section. Any album by this band is worth having but try ***Nefertiti***, ***Sorcerer*** or ***ESP*** to start with.

Towards the end of the 60's Miles began experimenting with electric instruments and recorded tracks with electric piano, organ and guitar. With the release of ***In A Silent Way*** (1969) he committed himself more firmly to electric music to the absolute horror of the jazz world. This album contains expertly crafted compositions which feature John McLaughlin's beautiful guitar work and Joe Zawinul's delicate keyboards all melding perfectly with Davis' trumpet. The intricacies of the playing and the interplay between the instruments is quite astounding and, although the music is subdued and understated, it is incredibly hypnotic. This album took "jazz" into a different orbit, a higher plane.

Any hope that the critics might have had for a return to something more recognisable were killed with the release in 1970 of the double set ***Bitches Brew***. Just as ***Blonde On Blonde*** had captured a sound of its own (mercury?, bright metallic?, now who said that?) so ***Bitches Brew*** defined a whole new sound, creating an uncharted aural landscape to become an all-time indispensable album. The weird, echoing call-and-response trumpet intro to the title track still sends shivers down my spine as does the tranquil beauty of **Sanctuary**. The album gave birth to a new musical form, Fusion, and inspired a generation of fusion groups none of whom have ever captured the essence of its controlled dynamism. This music came from some other dimension and Miles had found the motherlode.

After **Bitches Brew** Miles released album upon album (usually double sets) and the critics became harsher and shriller. Some of the criticism was justified since a number of the live albums were indulgent and excessive but there were gems every year. I would single out ***Live-Evil*** as an example of Miles' electric Wah-Wah trumpet playing which sounds uncannily like an electric guitar and adds a strange menace to the overall sound.

By the mid-70's Miles well documented health problems forced him into hospitilisation and he retired from music and became a recluse for the next five years in his New York brownstone. There are some very weird stories about his behaviour during this time. He emerged from this self-imposed exile in 1980 to resume his recording and touring career. It would have been easy for him to rest on his laurels and tour as the grand old master but, Miles being Miles, he began another fertile period when he teamed up with bassist and arranger/producer Marcus Miller. Together they have produced "electro funk" based upon the electronic washes of Miller with Miles' trumpet weaving its way through the soundscape clear and true. His recent Warner Bros. album ***Amandla*** is a perfect example of this lively and engaging music.

So there we have Miles.

He has been, and remains, uncompromising self-assured even arrogant, proud of being black, suspicious of almost everyone, supremely intelligent about music and a pioneer still.

I hope you might just go out and listen to some of his stuff but you'll never find one album that says it all.

The Best Waltz

The recent marriage of cousin Andy (**Homer**'s *passim*) to the lovely Cath made me think that Dylan loving couples have it easy come the wedding reception nowadays. The waltz tune can now be one of Dylan's greatest ever songs and its one and a half minutes are over before anyone recovers sufficiently to notice you can't dance the waltz for toffee. **Winterlude** seemed longer than **Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands** to Pia & I.

Lacklustre! Throwaway! Meritless!

Hey it's Bob's big five-0 birthday, there must be great books out to celebrate. There are! John Bauldie's half of one and Clinton's the other. Can't wait to start reading them. Let's begin with **Oh No! Not Another Bob Dylan** book: brilliant pictures but shit, Bauldie's doing a chronology and Patrick Humphries is doing the rest. Never mind, I'll read **Behind The Shades** first.

Mmm, Clinton doesn't like those that have gone before him. Mmm, Shelton and Spitz sure made a lot of mistakes. Mmmm, Clinton doesn't like Spitz at all...Hey, I'll try Humphries again.

Displaying all the insight of his performance at Leicester, Mr Humphries informs us that **I Want You** is "throwaway" and **Meet Me In The Morning** and **Isis** are "lacklustre".

Hello again, Clinton, you're using a strange thesaurus, or using a thesaurus strangely, but it is good to be back. All these interview quotations in order, no more flicking through back issues of *The Telegraph* – "and don't break the spine!" – looking for these references. Lets dip in a bit later, *Graceland*: "shallow"; that's the stuff. Lets go back a bit to *Infidels*, yeah, oh sugar: **Licence To Kill** described as "meritless".

Patrick, how nice to be back with you. I see you don't like Bob in 1979 or 1980, or 81,82,83 though Costello and Springsteen get good write ups...lets jump forward to *Oh Mercy*, you've got to like that. You do! Mmm, oh-oh what's this? *Oh Mercy* compared unfavourably with Paul Simon's *Graceland*, "the sublime *Graceland*"!!!

Forgive me Clinton, I'm back again. Where was I? *Infidels*, must be *Empire Burlesque* next. **Dark Eyes**.."is a hollow shell compared to **Wedding Song**. Dylan sounds as if he were the worse for drink when he recorded the track...in Sydney in February 1986, he could no longer play the ridiculous, droning melody and wisely abandoned the attempt."

I'm goin' back to re-read Williams, I do believe I've had enough.

Chimes Of Freedom Everywhere?

Is it just me or are there echoes in **Chimes Of Freedom** in a few recent songs? I've heard about four but the only two I can think of just now are **The Days That Used To Be** by Neil Young and one country/rock track on a tape Jim Brady (a.k.a. "Jim The Post-'78 Scorner", see previous **Homers**) made up for me. Maybe I'm imagining it, or maybe it is a knock-on effect from the Amnesty tour and whatsissname's version.

Bob's Bathtime Listening?

Another *dramatis personae* to introduce you to is my new boss, who will be referred to variously as "the rockabilly/Liverpool FC nutter" or "the man with the DAT recorder"[1]. Anyway I've started amassing tapes from his absurdly extensive record collection and one of these by Gram Parsons and The International Submarine Band contains a number of Dylan related tracks including **Folsom Prison Blues**. Perhaps Bob was inspired to include it after listening to this recent cd reissue? If so the track **Luxury Liner** would have led him to replay Emmylou Harris's LP of that title which includes a seriously gorgeous version of **Pancho And Lefty**. When recording **Unbelievable** he may have supplemented this with North And South's *Bait In The Fish's Mouth*.

1 I've just discovered that if you own certain Gene Vincent or Johnny Burnette Trio collections you may have come across him as "Jailhouse John". I'm not sure of the reasons behind this monicker, yet, but it is the one I'll stick to from now-on.

The Steve Allen Show

"Watch this space"; since you can't watch the video unless you know the secret handshake.

Westwood One Interview:

This was a terrible disappointment: a 3 hour programme of music we've all got, adverts, good Bob quotes from old interviews & current Bob mumbling to little effect. It was all put together exactly the underhand way that Bob decries in the "same interview"! However. I found Bob's point re the fans & reaction to his shows very interesting as it tied in with what quite a few of you have been saying and writing to me.

Video Mentioned The Radio Star parts 349ff.

I.G. Roberts wrote – and Andy later called – to tell of the Jeff Healey Band performing a fine version of **When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky** at the end of *Roadhouse* (starring Patrick Swayze). A word of warning here, though, it is at the end; even speeding through with fast forward couldn't disguise the numbing stupidity of the film itself.

My family then went into overdrive: Aunt Nin 'phoned in a report on a Sky weekly sit com based on children-of-the-sixties' parents & their kids (title unknown). My mum then called to say a similar thing happened in a repeated Kate & Allie show. I'd caught this one; all about a 90s student protest evoking memories of the sixties. Album titles and "guess the artists(s)" from that Golden (blah, blah) era were used throughout. **The Times They Are A Changin'** is used as the last line of the show as an everyday phrase, followed by those immortal words: "Bob Dylan".

"Bobby" from Dallas used the same line in a threatening manner on Sky as I desperately tried to find the A.C. Milan match. Just to show how ~~well-trained~~ on the ball my family are, Alex 'phoned up with that one! Apparently young James had been watching Dallas!)

My dad chipped in with a scene from a film, *Caught In A Train* (?), shown as a tribute to the late Peggy Ashcroft which included Dylan fans singing **A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall** at Frankfurt station. (In 1978?)

The Cuttings

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11	Times Educatiomal Supplement New York Times	Michael Horovitz Tom Piazza	17/8/90 26/5/91
12	Billboard	???	25/5/91
13	The Guardian	Sean O'Hagan et al	23/5/91
14&15	The Independent On Sunday	Compiled by Steve Turner	5/5/91
16	The Socialist Worker No. 143	Pat Stack	June 1991

Remember that the next issue is a subscriber-only Cuttings from 1991 special.

BOOKS

Dylan as Town Crier and Chronic Confessor

PERFORMING ARTIST: THE MUSIC OF BOB DYLAN, VOLUME ONE, 1960-1973
By Paul Williams
Underwood-Miller;
$39.95 clothbound,
$19.95 softcover

AMBITIOUS IN SCOPE, RICH in historical minutiae and contagious in its enthusiastic tone, *Performing Artist* is that rarest of Dylan books, a substantial, compelling study of the bard not as a mythic folk poet or a shadowy pop superman but as a musician. In his introduction, Paul Williams notes that even artists as notoriously elusive as Bob Dylan "always give themselves away at the moment they perform before an audience." Williams then combs the wealth of available Dylan studio and stage recordings, including illicit tapes as well as official releases, digging for those clues and collating them into an evolving portrait of the artist as town crier and chronic confessor.

It could have been just another obsessive exercise in dead-end Dylanology. But *Performing Artist* is actually a voyage of rediscovery, thanks to the admittedly partisan relish and the sense of renewed wonder that Williams, the founder of *Crawdaddy* magazine and a longtime Dylan observer, brings to the task. He addresses overanalyzed jewels like "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" and "Chimes of Freedom" as if he were hearing them for the first time and exults in the often-revelatory differences between the well-known album versions of Dylan's greatest hits and the alternate studio takes and bootlegged live recordings. At one point, he suggests releasing a minialbum made up of four different versions of "Visions of Johanna." "If you think you love Dylan saying, 'Ain't it just like the night?' on *Blonde on Blonde*," he writes, "wait till you hear him say, 'Jewels and binoculars' on the rock version [or] the hypnotic 'Sad-Eyed Lady'-like rhythmic wash of the other early version. . . . You'll be hooked. You'll want more."

Williams's prose sometimes verges on the overly rhapsodic. But his rapture is genuine, and it's infectious enough to make you go back to the source to double-check your own pet loves and peeves. Hardened Dylanheads will envy Williams's ear for detail; he'll have 'em digging out their tapes of Dylan's set at the Carnegie Hall Hootenanny in September 1962 to hear the version of "Highway 51" in which, Williams says, the guitar riff "is starting to sound a lot like the brilliant, ominous guitar figure that runs through 'It's Alright, Ma.' "

Volume Two, which covers 1974 to the present and is promised for early next year, should be even more interesting.

What will Williams make of such bones of critical contention as *Street Legal* and *Empire Burlesque*? And how many bootleg tapes from the 1974 tour can one man stand? Stay tuned. – DAVID FRICKE

To order 'Performing Artist,' write Underwood-Miller, 708 Westover Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601.

BOB DYLAN: PERFORMIN G ARTIST

Paul Williams
(Xanadu, £14.99)

'This man is the stuff of legends, the man for whom the now clichéd (a id, indeed, situation vacan() term 'spokesman fo : a generation' was coined. B it just how good is Bob D ylan? What precisely was it that made everyone loo. . to him for the answers (ansv ers he ultimately couldn't give)? And can he still cut the mustard?

Paul Williams' book covers just the first, if most significant, part of Dylan's career, from 1960 to 1973, before he got that old time religion. He makes the point that he isn't overly concerned with the biographical details of his subject's life, rather "with the performances that took place during each period", and that's probably the best way to look at someone of Dylan's stature. The trouble with legends is that, as time goes on, they become increasingly inaccessible - coming at Dylan from the '90s is a whole lot more difficult than having grown through the years with him. As a result, any information on why he is what he is casts much needed light on the man.

He was a bit of a childhood prodigy, not so much in that he sang for his family from the age of three but in that, when he did, he stamped his foot and demanded absolute attention. Even then he knew he had something worth saying. From there it was a stream of bands, totally dominated by Dylan who saw them as backing musicians. On to the University of Minnesota (which he rarely attended) and the discovery of folk music in all its glory, and the rest is history.

His songs have been covered by everybody from The Byrds to Thunderclap Newman, his influence has been so profound as to kick song-writing into a whole new world, and affect everyone from Lennon to Springsteen. And Williams addresses it all with a refreshing sense of honest criticism.

This is an excellent book, if at times a little hagiographical, and a touch too forensic. It pin-points what drives Dylan and what made him what he is today. It's accessible for Dylanophiles and just the general reader, though the more intimate the acquaintance you have with the man the more satisfying it will be. And if you really want to know about one of the greats that made rock 'n' roll tick, you really should read it.

The thing about Dylan is that he's just as confused as the rest of us. Changing his name from Zimmerman, both to shed his background and ape his hero, Dylan Thomas (or even, according to Williams, to pun on Matt Dillon, TV sheriff off *Gunsmoke*), he's struggled ever since to find out just who the hell he really is. The trouble is, he's had to do it in public, laying bare his emotions and motivations for all to see and judge - we don't allow human fallibility in our heros. The greater the quality of the hero, the more austere our judgement. And this man is the stuff of legends. *Paul Honeyford*

Time fails to dim the Dylan mystique

BOB DYLAN
Behind The Shades
BY CLINTON HEYLIN
General, 448 pages, $34.95

REVIEW BY SETH FELDMAN

SITTING down to write a quickie biography for Bob Dylan's 50th birthday, Clinton Heylin must have known that page one would need just the right quote. But selecting that quote would be no small matter. Dylan's 30-year legacy fills several corridors of the One-Liner Hall of Fame. Like Andy Warhol, Marshall McLuhan, Abbie Hoffman and all the sloganeers of the sixties, Dylan, who turned 50 yesterday, was prolifically succinct. He always knew that pop culture truths last longer without the burden of context.

"How to begin?" thinks Heylin, having spent the better part of his young life providing unwanted context to a pop culture phenomenon. He is, his book jacket reveals, co-founder of Wanted Mann, a coterie dedicated to the study of Dylan's career. Heylin's time and fortune is expended attending Dylan concerts in every corner of the globe. The book jacket photo reveals an open, friendly and not unintelligent face. Absent is the caption: "Get a life."

Mind you, if Heylin and his brother groupies could get a life, Dylan's would be the life to get. The object of *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades* helped touch off the sixties when he blew in from the dying, now immortalized, mining town of Hibbing, Minn. His fingers had already learned a history of American music from the birth of the blues to Elvis. The beat poets tutored him in the lineage of modernist verse. By the time he was 25, Dylan was both the poet laureate of social protest and the new Rimbaud. He had also bedded a succession of dark-eyed mystery women, walked out on Ed Sullivan and signed a lucrative contract with that artist-run revolutionary collective, CBS.

Heylin assembles this familiar tale under chapter headings gleaned from Dylan's early lyrics: In My Younger Days, Hard Times in New York Town, The Ghost of Electricity. Beneath these titles, there is a text of sorts, linking snippets of other peoples' interviews with Dylan and his confidants. Most of Heylin's contribution is detailed chronology punctuated by pseudo-Dylanesque insight:

"Crossman was working on building Dylan's career on a solid bedrock of mystery."

"In the true tradition of the beats, he had decided to go On the Road, to explore America and find a way to bring out those chains of flashing images."

"It would take an altogether different flirtation with death itself to bring him around and make him realize that it was his own dark self he had to come to terms with."

Heylin does have a thesis. The aforementioned "flirtation with death" is the 1966 motorcycle accident that neatly bisects Dylan's 50 years. The uninitiated trace a decline that began with the mishap. Heylin demurs. His will be the first work to demonstrate the importance of Dylan's second quarter-century.

ANTHONY JENKINS/The Globe and Mail

Heylin's thesis may be valid, but in a way that entirely eludes him. True, the Dylan of the seventies was still a formidable force in popular music. His albums *Blood on the Tracks* and *Desire* are monuments in a otherwise lacklustre decade. In the eighties, his career was marked by minor comebacks with The Travelling Wilburys group and his album *Oh Mercy*.

But Dylan's mature achievement has less to do with his music than with his persistence. He made a string of genuinely godawful movies. He never wrote the book he wanted to write. Nor could he cope any better than other men when women got bored with being mysterious.

Reduced to small items on the entertainment page, Dylan still maintains an importance in the communal psyche. His generation may think itself too hip to quote him out loud, yet it follows the buzz of his career. He has even penned a one-liner to describe himself approaching 50:

"I'm only Bob Dylan when I have to be."

Good quote, that, Mr. Zimmerman. It is reminiscent of the aging Picasso lamenting the fact he has been reduced to manufacturing phony Picassos — or an old Karl Marx wondering if he is still a Marxist.

"Eureka," shouts Heylin. He puts the quote on page one of *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades* and refers to it in his penultimate paragraph. Then Heylin misses the points entirely by concluding his book with the sentence: "And though the worn lines and scruffy beard suggests (sic) he is unlikely to stay forever young, long may he endeavor to paint his masterpiece."

Heylin foots Wanted Man's files to provide a valuable "Sessionography" of Dylan's recordings. The book contains a somewhat more arbitrary annotated list of "Dramatis Personae" in Dylan's life. What it lacks is an understanding that the artist has lost interest in staying forever young and has transcended the pursuit of "his masterpiece."

"I'm only Bob Dylan when I have to be." Yeah, well, aren't we all?

Seth Feldman is Associate Dean of Fine Arts at York University.

Between Beethoven and Fred Astaire

DAVID SEXTON

Clinton Heylin
DYLAN: Behind the shades
528pp. Viking. £16.99.
0 670 83602 8

Paul Williams
BOB DYLAN: Performing Artist: Book One
1960–1973
310pp. Xanadu. £14.99.
1 854800 39 6

"When people know where he is, his garbage is sifted and examined regularly; groups appear in front of his house on his birthday. Fans constantly try to reach him to talk to him, to touch him and to see him. Recently, the Sheriff had to be called to remove a girl from the driveway of his home; afterwards she sprayed black paint over his windows . . . As a result of this and much, much more, Mr Dylan has been required to engage twenty-four-hour guards about his property to prevent trespassers and protect the privacy of himself and his family . . . In my twenty-two years' experience of representing famous personages no other personality has attracted such attention, nor created such a demand for information about his personal affairs." So Bob Dylan's lawyer deposed in 1977, asking that the records of his divorce case be sealed.

Four biographers have so far attempted to meet this demand for information about Bob Dylan's personal affairs: Anthony Scaduto, Robert Shelton, Bob Spitz and now, at the end of the queue, Clinton Heylin. Heylin is aware of his belatedness and reacts by energetically trying to do away with his predecessors. At times his book reads like a mixture between a review and a synoptic gospel, rather than a biography. "Whatever the truth, of the three Dylan biographies to date, only Scaduto's 1971 study correctly places him in Denver in the summer of 1960; Shelton placing him there, totally implausibly, in the summer of 1959 and Spitz placing him there in the fall of 1960 before he headed to New York," he adjudicates. Then "Scaduto is the only biographer to chronicle Dylan's trip from Minneapolis to New York accurately. Both Shelton and Spitz are widely inaccurate . . . " And so on. Attention flags. Happily this bizarre manner of narration falls off as the story progresses, and Heylin begins to give his own account without having to hack away at the others.

The prime attraction of his version is that it gives, for the first time, equal emphasis to the second half of Bob Dylan's career. Twenty years younger than his subject, Heylin's interest is in Dylan in particular, not the Sixties in general. "What will readily be apparent from the book", he says, "is that I believe that Dylan is (not 'was') an artistic genius." This is a creed, not an argument. Take it or leave it, he doesn't care, provided you admire his own fervour. "Though a reader who does not share my appraisal of Dylan will still find his story a fascinating one, he will find it hard not to notice an abiding faith in the quality of Dylan's work," he says – a revealingly inapposite "though". The furthest he goes in providing a measure for Dylan's achievement is to assert that popular art can produce geniuses and then serve up a personal list of them – "my own selection, in case you may be curious", he says loftily, "totals only four: Fred Astaire, Orson Welles, Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix." This failure to present Dylan's achievement in a way that might persuade the unconvinced is the book's major fault.

Otherwise *Behind the Shades* is well-organized, informative, thorough and apparently accurate. Heylin's previous study of Dylan, *Stolen Moments: The ultimate Dylan reference book*, was an unadorned chronology and he has made this the chassis of his biography, loading it with extended quotations from interviewees. He has had access to the vast archive of interviews with people who have come into contact with Dylan assembled by the Bob Dylan research organization, "Wanted Man", and has gone halfway to turning the book into an "oral biography", collaging together disparate voices, on the model of Peter Manso's study of Norman Mailer.

All this material, neatly set out, allows the reader to get a good sense of where Dylan was and what he was doing at any particular time, but Heylin doesn't offer much in the way of interpretation. Primarily he is a collector or spotter, keen to make internal distinctions – he is good on Dylan's growing inability to tell which songs should best go into an album – but sometimes seeming unable, or even positively reluctant, to explain his enthusiasm to outsiders. And the central difficulty any biographer of a creative artist faces – determining the relation between the life and the work – is crashingly dealt with: "How much do the works reflect the man? That was the question I constantly asked myself while writing this book. Of course if the works do not reflect the man, then the story still needed to be told but from a different viewpoint: Why are the works so different from the man? In Dylan's case, though, his works reflect his state of mind." Easy-peasy.

Perhaps it is because such a literal equation of state of mind with work of art has been made that Heylin sometimes becomes so familiarly censorious. Bob Dylan, we're repeatedly told, *drinks too much* – "In London Dylan himself generally seemed to be consuming more than enough drink" is a typical observation – and also *he sleeps with too many women* – "In fact, Dylan now seemed to be spending his time with a lot of unusual women. As so often in his life, his unhappiness seemed to have a direct effect on his libido." Moreover, complains Heylin, Dylan doesn't take kindly to being bootlegged, even "meticulously", enterprisingly, bootlegged. "The more meticulously thorough his fans who seek to document his performances become, the more Dylan seems to resent their enterprise rather than embrace them . . ." Why should Dylan embrace trespassers?

Why, on the other hand, trespassers might believe that they should be embraced by Dylan is revealed by Paul Williams. "Dylan", says Williams, "does share himself very intimately in his performances (almost always) and his lyrics (often). This can leave people confused about who they are to 1986, commented to *Rolling Stone*, 'I saw people who were genuinely moved, who felt they had to make some connection with him . . . They forget one important thing: Bob doesn't know them; they just know him.'"

Paul Williams's book, remarkably, does connect with Dylan. A chronological study of Dylan's recorded *performances*, rather than just his music or lyrics, it convincingly argues that this is where his true genius lies. "Throughout Dylan's career we will find", he says, "that although he has a reputation as a master of words, his mastery is more specifically of performed language – separated from his performance, his words can lose their power and even their meaning."

In the sleeve notes to *Highway 61 Revisited*, Dylan says "the songs on this specific record are not so much songs but rather exercises in tonal breath control". Williams comments: "That's a sort of joke, but the sort that's funny because it's actually true." Dylan has said similar things less jokily. In a 1984 interview: "When I do whatever it is I am doing, there is rhythm involved and there is phrasing involved. And that's where it all balances out . . . It's not in the lyrics. It's in the phrasing and the dynamics and the rhythm."

Williams manages to describe these qualities in Dylan's work without resort to jargon. He shows too how they have been communicated to the musicians he has worked with. Of the tremendous 1966 live performances with the Band, he says: "He has a gift of receptivity that allows him to open himself to the feelings of the group as a whole, so that this collective feeling comes through in his voice as well as in all the music as they perform together on stage."

Williams argues that Dylan's phrasings and rhythms both represented and changed his audience. "*Bringing It All Back Home* had a substantial effect on the language of a generation (if we recognize that language is made of phrases as well as words, and that a phrase that is repeated often in conversation and written communication will influence us not only by its content but by its form and style, the way it puts words together; this is so basic to the thought process that a handful of powerful phrases can actually affect the way people think . . .)." Anybody who has Dylan's songs in her head will recognize that this does describe one way in which they exert their influence. It's a much more plausible account of what is essential to Dylan's art than the search for the "meaning" of the words that has dogged most Dylan criticism. Williams confirms his point nicely by referring to the song "I'm Not There", an unreleased track from the Basement Tapes, which has "lyrics which can't be described because they don't really exist: Dylan makes slurred noises that only sound like words, like the dummy copy in a rough of an advertisement that only looks like text". Yet, he notes, "we can feel with great intensity what the singer is talking about, because of the expressiveness of his voice".

If Williams's attempts to suggest Dylan's artistic stature are almost as awkward as Heylin's – "this is a book about great art", he says, comparing Dylan to "Shakespeare, Picasso, Beethoven, Duke Ellington, James Joyce" – he nonetheless has provided here the most infectiously enthusiastic introduction to Dylan yet.

Stephen Logan

THE DYLAN COMPANION
edited by
Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman
Macmillan £10 99

OH NO! NOT ANOTHER BOB DYLAN BOOK
by Patrick Humphries and John Bauldie
Square 1 £14 95

DYLAN BEHIND THE SHADES
The Biography
by Clinton Heylin
Viking £16.99

BOB DYLAN is not a poet, except in the etymological sense. Neither is he, primarily, a musician and yet he is, many believe, the pre-eminent artist in words and music of our times. The failure to recognise this paradoxical identity is at the troubled heart of Dylan's critical reception. It explains why Robert Shelton, one of his biographers, was incensed when the host of *Bookshelf* denied Dylan poetic status. It also explains why, speaking more for the opposition, the poet Jon Ciardi (quoted in *The Dylan Companion)* was anxious to affirm that Dylan 'knows nothing about poetry'. And it explains why, although Dylan's admirers continue to produce books about him, each is likely to be only a new kind of failure.

A. J. Weberman, infamous for his siftings of Dylan's household refuse, describes him as 'the guy that wrote all that great poetry'. What lends a mere assertion some grudging force is that, in describing how Dylan vengefully attacked him in the street, Weberman recalls saying 'Oh God what's happening here' and thus calls up the very song in which Dylan took a more lethal revenge: 'There's something happening here, and you don't know what it is, / Do you, Mr Jones?'

Musically, Dylan's importance is difficult to gauge from arrangements which often seem too simple to stand comparison even with those of, say, The Beatles. Not many of his critics, moreover, possess the technical knowledge needed to make a fair job of musical analysis. Attention therefore shifts to the words which, it is still assumed, can be discussed without any expertise.

Clinton Heylin knows that the fascination of the songs lies in the chemistry, the interaction between words, voice and instruments. He comments on, but has difficulties with, all three. He is understandably indignant at Jerry Fielding's view that 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door' is 'shit'. But to retort that the song is 'one of Dylan's most evocative' is a flimsy defence. From a musical standpoint, the song is almost indecently simple. Fielding's mistake is to judge it merely as a sequence of three chord-changes. Heylin's comments on the voice are not illuminating. To be told the singing is 'warm' or 'raucous', is unhelpful unless you know the performances. If you do know them, but disagree, these terms provide no basis for further discussion.

Though Dylan cannot live by words or music alone, the words are, as Heylin shows, increasingly what he starts with and his critics should do the same. Thanks to Heylin's practice of interlarding his biography with unedited quotations (hardly ever from the songs), the casual inventiveness of Dylan's way with words is liberally displayed. A heckler taunts the Christian Dylan with a line from an unregenerate song, 'Everybody must get stoned', and Dylan responds: 'You're gonna need something very solid to hang onto', perhaps prompted by 'stoned' to think of his song 'Solid Rock'.

In an essay, collected in the *Companion*, Frank Kermode notes the 'suggestiveness' of 'His clothes are dirty / But his hands are clean'. What seems a simple antithesis suddenly yields its second meaning — a cliché: clean hands equal innocence. Christopher Ricks is the critic who has done most to demonstrate that Dylan never lets a sleeping metaphor lie. Hence 'Like Cain, I now behold this chain of events / That I must break', where our bondage to custom is expressed in the liberation of another cliché.

Dylan's lack of formal learning is his greatest literary asset, forcing him to think out his subtleties within the constraints of a popular idiom. Apart from Ricks and Kermode, the only critic in this batch who has the right blend of sympathy and detachment to explain such effects is Allen Ginsberg. Dylan is a maverick — it takes one to explain one.

Heylin is excellent on Dylan's 'cinematic imagination', though he limits the discussion to Dylan's films. He provides the least patronising account so far of the Christian conversion and provides a detailed insight into Dylan's recording techniques. If you're a fan, buy this book. If you're not, watch Dylan's biographers press lovingly forward in one of the higher, if most elusive, callings of current biography.

Heylin, Clinton. Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades: A Biography. May 1991. 478p. Index. Illus. Summit, $22.95 (0-671-73354-1). Galley

781.66[B] Dylan| Rock musicians — Biography[Bio]

Professional Dylan groupie Heylin has stitched together snippets from interviews with his god and those who crossed paths with him and manufactured something resembling a biography. Hardened Dylan fans will probably wolf it down. Many whose youth coincided with Dylan's first, folkic efflorescence or his second coming as a rock 'n' roller will eyeball it pretty heavily. But those searching for clues about the songwriter's enduring appeal - never mind what makes him tick - will be disappointed. Heylin, a poor writer who seems not to understand some of the words he uses, hasn't the psychological, literary, or musical skills to penetrate either Dylan the man or his songs. His book is perfectly described by one word: superficial. Fortunately for sales, what is superficial about his subject is still pretty compelling - not quite as grabby as that of the Beatles or Elvis, but darn near.-*Ray Olson*

Clinton Heylin. DYLAN: BEHIND THE SHADES. Viking. £16.99 (pp 528).

THIS is the fourth major stab at a biography of the man whose 50th birthday fell yesterday. It relies for much of its material on access to the archive of interviews with Dylan contemporaries and former associates held by The Telegraph, the journal of Wanted Man, the self-styled Dylan Information Office.

Heylin is not the first to cull from this source. His co-founder of Telegraph, John Bauldie, has already published two separate books using transcripts from the interviews. But his books were compilations, rather than attempts to present the life.

Heylin, therefore, follows Tony Scaduto (1971), Robert Shelton (1986) and the unfairly maligned Bob Spitz (1989) into the biographical ring, and he almost immediately defers to them. He seems to accept that there is little he can add about the early life of Robert Zimmerman in Hibbing, Minnesota, the Minneapolis college boy, Dylan in the Village, early recordings, first fame, the tours, the amphetamine years of near self-destruction up to the Woodstock motor-cycle accident.

The accident is the point at which other biographies have begun to wind down. Heylin virtually treats it as the starting point for unloading original material. In this sense, his biography might be seen as complementary to the earlier ones. He puts it first, he reaches the accident at page 174, Shelton hits it at page 371 (of his 500-page text), Spitz at page 368 (of his 550-page text).

Since the incident marks the halfway point in Dylan's life when he was 25, and since he had already achieved icon status by that stage in his career, the balance seems to favour Shelton and Spitz. Heylin is correct to dispute any suggestion of a decline in Dylan's career after July 29, 1966. But after the 1975 album *Blood On The Tracks*? Almost half of Heylin's book has still to run from this high point.

Therefore, there are two factors about the book which mark it out. By relying so much on interviews, quoting regularly and at length, Heylin's book seems the sum total of its sources. It is less an interpretative account than a documentary narrative with voices, and his sources are not often very interesting speakers. Transcripts of what they had to say about Dylan do not make for very exciting prose. Heylin is a little optimistic when he suggests in his introduction: "The reader will feel a sense of Dylan's many-sided self through his verbatim recollections and the recollections of those around him." At a reading level this is possibly the dullest of the Dylan biographies.

But in that very dullness may lie a virtue, if you accept the authenticity of the sources, and I have no reason to challenge this. But are his sources comprehensive? There is still nothing from Dylan's wife Sara, or his former manager Albert Grossman, or close associates of the early days like Bobby Neuwirth. And, of course, Dylan's only contribution is through notoriously unreliable interviews he has given over the years (more often than not exercises in send-up or deliberate obfuscation), and recourse to the bio-poems and song lyrics for autobiographical gleanings. Obviously, the value of such sources is a matter of speculation.

The other aspect is Heylin's judgment. Having a vested interest in the latter part of the career it is understandable that he should try to argue a case for work during this period. Not many would go along with this. Heylin believes Dylan is one of four geniuses of popular art forms in the 60 years of mass communications. The other three: Fred Astaire, Orson Welles and Jimi Hendrix.

Genius, is it? I have a growing antipathy to people of limited credentials according genius. Who is Heylin to review 60 years of popular arts and tell us, no matter how obsequiously (in a parenthesis, as it happens), who the geniuses are. I don't think the label is necessary to any discussion, not even helpful. If he feels a need to list his personal favourites in the popular arts he should leave it at that without introducing genius. We all like to indulge ourselves with such lists. Here's mine: Lenny Bruce, Fats Waller, Bob Dylan and Billie Holiday. And you have yours.

Dylan is the most improbable 50-year-old in the world today. How he made it is one of the more interesting aspects of a biography of this scale. But it also demonstrates something a little disappointing, if inevitable. The longer Dylan goes on the more banal his gift is revealed to be.

JOHN LINKLATER

ROLLING ON: An in-depth look at Bob Dylan

Beating drum for Tambourine Man

THERE'S a double birthday treat for Bob Dylan fans this month with two books published to coincide with the wizened troubador's half-century celebrations on the 24th.

DYLAN – BEHIND THE SHADES by Clin-

years and the mid-Sixties period when he left the limelight following a motorbike accident.

There are contributions from the great man, ex-lovers, wife plus big rock names.

Dylanologists will love it, others can skip-read for the juicier bits.

Much more fun is THE DYLAN COMPANION, edited by Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman (MacMillan, £10.99). This a collection of articles, essays and writings about the singer by the famous and not so famous.

Wight Festival and John Peel grumbling about a lacklustre Wembley concert in '87.

The highlight for me, however, is a bitter diatribe from Dylan's one-time paramour Joan Baez on the pair's meetings during a European tour. Scorching stuff.

DAVY MACDONALD

Other rock legends have sold millions more records and, nowadays at least, most can command far larger concert audiences; none of them, though, has reaped such a consistently vast and varied harvest of commentary as Bob Dylan. If it is true that rock stars weather into institutions, then Dylan has started now to resemble the Church of England: the dwindling popularity of his product cannot diminish the intensity of the arguments among his congregation. And with the approach of his 50th birthday, on Friday, Dylan's capacity to arouse writers and publishers seems remarkably unimpaired.

Again, like the C of E, the believers of today – and in **Dylan: Behind the Shades** (Viking £16.99), his newest biographer Clinton Heylin is a good example – come across as a slightly crankier and less intellectually revved-up crowd than the ones who turned out for him in the past. In the 1960s and 1970s, Dylan was feted by a huge contingent of literati types, media highbrows and academics. Philip Larkin, then jazz critic of the Daily Telegraph, favourably reviewed the "cawing, derisive voice" of Highway 61 Revisited. Kenneth Allsop wrote enthusiatically of "that young American who looks like Dame Edith Sitwell in a Davy Crockett cap". Eric Hobsbawm claimed Dylan for the Marxist left, while Christopher Ricks, Frank Kermode, Stephen Spender and many other swinging university teachers co-opted him into modern literature.

His appeal to all these elderly heavyweights derived in part from the fashionable anxiety to listen to the voice of youth. Bob Dylan's was the first that made any serious sense to them. By 1964, Elvis Presley, and The Beatles had sung only of teenage romance. Little Richard's famous utterance, "Awopbopaloobop Alopbamboom" carried worryingly nonsensical overtones. Here at last was a 23-year-old who openly acknowledged T S Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Rimbaud, who deliberately employed some of the more baffling techniques of literary composition in his song lyrics and at the same time appeared to be taking a principled stand on the political issue of the time, the Vietnam war.

It was an irresistible package with endless opportunities for learned elucidation. Stephen Spender wrote excitedly that "Youth has become a Cause" and ponderously explained that "this kind of singing with the singer accompanying himself on his guitar seems to happen, more or less spontaneously, when there is a strong sense of community and perhaps also of social crisis". Frank Kermode praised Subterranean Homesick Blues as "modern Skeltonics delivered with great pace and verve" and Christopher Ricks also awarded Dylan the title of poet: "The best American poets convey the poignancy of there being nothing final. Bob Dylan for instance."

Interestingly enough, the younger writers, though they all loved the music, were a lot less convinced than their clamorous elders by this idea of Dylan the socio-poetical genius. Robert Christgau, the American rock critic, reviewing Dylan's novel Tarantula in 1971, compared the author to "a word-drunk undergraduate . . . his only tradition the jumbled culture of the war baby". Three years later, Clive James wrote that Dylan "can't distinguish between the idea that is resonant and the idea that postures towards significance". Firmly consigning him to the fringes of Pseud's Corner, James concluded: "the long receptivity which uncritically appreciated everything Dylan did was admiring the cancer as part of the body".

James was being more than a little harsh. Indeed, much of what has been written over the years has stemmed from fierce arguments over the nature of Dylan's talent. While many of his woolly-jumpered contemporaries were still applauding, Ewan MacColl, the English folk revivalist, said he was "unable to see [in Dylan] anything other than a youth of mediocre talent".

The electrification of Dylan's music in 1964 stimulated the first of many rows. With every subsequent change of direction – from the sudden adoption of a more mellow country styling on his 1968 album John Wesley Harding, through to his evangelical Christian phase in the early 1980s – he has been called traitor, or worse. Dylan the Great Disappointment has become a reviewers' cliché: "a star only in name," Christopher Logue reported from the Isle of Wight festival in 1969: "No presence. No message. No soul."

The squabbling goes on with the recent publication of a fourth "major" (that is, long and heavily researched) biography. You can tell from its size and rather gauche subtitle, Behind the Shades, that Clinton Heylin's book is going to be a hard slog, of interest more to professional Dylanologists and other obsessives than to the general reader. Now that most of the record-buyers have defected, Dylan's commentators are condemned to address each other. A career which began in a storm of cultural hyperbole is currently the subject of much scholarly niggling.

To this end Heylin casts himself here in the role of referee, officiously adjudicating between conflicting accounts offered in the three other biographical works of Antony Scaduto (1971), Robert Shelton (1986) and Bob Spitz (1988). He maps his chosen ground thoroughly, not neglecting – as he ticks off his predecessors for having done – the Dylan of the 1980s. He keeps an impressively close eye too on his man's hyperactive sex life.

What Heylin doesn't do though, in common with nearly all of Dylan's commentators, is provide much insight into the motivation of this famously enigmatic character. Plainly, never having met his subject didn't help, but neither can it excuse the lameness of some of Heylin's deductions: after quoting Dylan's friend Phil Ochs's account of getting thrown out of the star's limo for expressing a dislike of his latest single, the author trundles along behind with "his response suggests that (Dylan) did not take criticism well". There are several other dull stretches in Behind the Shades where biography has to take a back seat to Heylin's passion for discography.

The Dylan Companion, edited by Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman (Papermac £10.99) is a compilation of 50-odd articles and extracts by various hands over the period from 1962 to 1989 – and offers a sketchier but far more entertaining review of Dylan's life, times and general impact. While plenty more words will undoubtedly be directed his way in the future, the standard of the writing, as of his music, will probably never reach these heights of quality and freshness again.

The fool who needs a friend

THIS bulky Bob Dylan biography (unauthorised) raises one important question — why doesn't anyone ever take Dylan to one side and tell him he's behaving like a prat?

The overwhelming evidence amassed by Clinton Heylin suggests that his hero (and mine) has been behaving foolishly ever since 1962 when he changed his name from Robert Zimmerman and sprang fully fledged from his own head.

The songs may be works of poetic genius (opinions differ, despite, Cambridge Professor Christopher Ricks likening Dylan's work to Shakespeare's), but Dylan's despotism and apocalyptic arrogance indicate someone who needs best friends to tell him. Recently, for instance, his paranoia about being photographed has reached such extremes that he performs on stage in total darkness, or with a hood over his head. All you see of Dylan in public these days is his nose poking out from sunglasses and hood.

This year, Dylan is 50. Heylin, using material from 200 Dylan interviews, concert patter and bio-poems, celebrates with a book claiming to offer 'a complete picture of a genius who has never lost the ability to re-invent himself.'

Dylan: Behind The Shades by Clinton Heylin (Viking, £16.99)

by VAL HENNESSY

The book is in two sections, the familiar 'blowin' his lungs out for a dollar a day years, the rise of the nasal wail and off-key harmonica, dossing on floors, chemical consumption, weakness for 'plump, large-breasted women,' posturings with the media (Heylin sees these as examples of Dylan's 'razor wit'; I see them as hugely embarrassing), and the masterpiece album, Blonde On Blonde.

Section two encompasses Dylan's post-accident career, or as Heylin puts it: 'It is 25 years since he fell off his motorbike. Yet the history of these 25 years remains untold.'

This history includes Dylan's born-again phase (Dylan: 'The glory of the Lord knocked me down and picked me up'), wife-beating, more troubled relationships with women, the acclaimed album Blood On The Tracks, and various triumphant comeback tours, including the sensational Earls Court 1978. Headlined by one critic as 'The Greatest Concert I have ever seen,' and where, I'm happy to admit, we 17,000 fans had tears running down our cheeks as we chorused along to a strangled, jangled, electronic version of It's All Right Ma, I'm Only Bleeding. Phew! The very thought of it gives me goose-pimples.

On the other hand, Dylan himself insisted: 'No revolution ever came about because of songs,' this being one of his few lucid statements included in Heylin's book. Heylin, a man rather short on humour, is excellent on Dylan's development as musician/poet but reveals little about the private man.

When he concedes that the phenomenally priapic Dylan needs a good woman to help him 'enjoy the delights of the hearth, rather than playing the perpetual troubadour', I feel compelled to announce that here I am, ready and willing. Maybe I could sort the tormented, moody, king of folk-rock out with a few candlelit spag bols, Mozart on the CD player and a bottle or two of Chardonnay.

Heylin's book is essential reading for anyone who has ever held their flickering cigarette lighter above their head at a Dylan gig and joined in the maudlin choruses of Forever Young. For anyone else the book will read like total gibberish.

The last word must go to Dylan: 'It's very tiring having other people telling you how much they dig you if you yourself don't dig you.' Yes, well, your heart goes out to him.

Yet another side of Bob Dylan...

Dylan: Behind The Shade, by Clinton Heylin (Viking, £16.99)

Oh No! Not Another Bob Dylan Book, by Patrick Humphries and John Bauldie (Square One, £14.95)

AS he approaches his 50th birthday, Bob Dylan must be bracing himself for another pummelling in print.

It's not that anyone particularly dislikes him, it's just that the singer/poet/enigma inspires a rabid need to know.

Dylan's teasing evasiveness over the years has only added to the frenzy.

Clinton Heylin is a serious Dylan buff.

If you need to be sure which stripper, which town, and how many bottles of Beaujolais on August 6 1960, then Heylin is your man.

As the author points out, his is a serious study and those in search of cheap thrills will be disappointed. Heylin has gathered testimony from many of those who have worked with Dylan, and also has access to original interview material from the man himself.

Despite this, there are no genuinely original insights, just further touching up of an already luxuriant background picture.

But if you're merely interested in the man, rather than excavating the myth, you can relax into Oh No! Not Another ... which has lots of colour pics, a couple of jokes and does fine as a bluffer's guide.

Pete Clark

Dylan facts fail to nudge mask

BOB DYLAN: Behind the Shades. By Clinton Heylin. Summit, 478 pp., $22.95.

By PHILIP HERTER

It's been said that Elvis Presley freed our bodies to rock and roll, and Bob Dylan, with his literary allusions and mysterious lyrics, freed our minds. Clinton Heylin tries to explain how Dylan did it in an up-to-date biography of America's premier pop poet, released in conjunction with the recent 50th birthday of the singer and songwriter.

Heylin, co-founder of a Dylan fan club in Great Britain, really knows his subject and his music. As he examines each year of Dylan's career, backlit with the highs and lows of his private life, he leaves no doubt about his deep admiration for Dylan.

In his preface, Heylin contends that other Dylan biographies (namely, "No Direction Home" by Robert Shelton and "Dylan: A Biography" by Bob Spitz) don't do justice to the mystery man. He insists there is more to the Dylan legend than a lot of people imagine.

"Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades" focuses on Dylan's ability, through the years, to transform the events in his personal life into great songs. Any dissection of the creative process is a tricky operation, and Heylin attacks the subject with the precision of a dump truck. Instead of analysis, he offers a data base.

For nearly 500 pages, Heylin piles up interviews with bandmates, producers and friends of the man who once went by the name of Bobby Zimmerman. Complete with notes on sources, a selected bibliography, a

BOB DYLAN: He didn't win any prizes at the Hibbing (Minn.) Junior College Capers.

dramatis personae, and "sessionography," the result is an almost day-by-day history of each time Bob Dylan picked up a guitar. As Heylin examines his subject's life in microscopic detail, the book's pace falters under the weight of its own comprehensiveness. "Bob Dylan" is so loaded with minutiae it reads more like the Warren Commission Report than a biography.

Digging in Dylan's private life, Clinton Heylin searches for clues to the evolution in his persona. Just how did he go from antiwar folkie to enigma, to born-again Christian and beyond? Your guess is as good as Heylin's, because his pop pathology doesn't commit to any conclusion. Hint as the biographer might at deeper mystery, he leads you to believe that Dylan, though a man of many masks, is a fairly regular Joe, as far as rock stars go.

Heylin's writing style doesn't shed much light either. Using highly edited bites of interviews with celebrities such as palimony lawyer Marvin Mitchelson and singer-composer Kris Kristofferson, "Bob Dylan" often reads like a script from a documentary movie.

Heylin even extinguishes interest in his subject's romantic life. Although it seems Heylin names every woman Dylan has been associated with for the past 30 years, don't look for any fire. "Bob Dylan" has too much reverence to expose anything racy.

If Bob Dylan's 50th birthday makes you wonder just who Dylan is (and who he has been), study "Bob Dylan" and draw your own conclusions. If it interests you to learn that the former Bobby Zimmerman's second band, the Shadow Blasters, didn't win prizes at the Hibbing (Minn.) Junior College Capers, you might find some use for the sheer volume of information offered here.

For those less willing to dither in Dylania, the best references to developments in the life and poetry of Bob Dylan are still his recordings, maybe "John Wesley Harding" and "Blood on the Tracks," a good jukebox and a bottle of beaujolais, once Bobby's beverage of choice.

Herter is a poet, critic and former singer in a rock and roll band.

BOOK REVIEW
'BOB DYLAN: BEHIND THE SHADES'

Dylan: Behind the Shades. By Clinton Heylin.
Viking £16.99. 0670 83602 8.

How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man? Just turned 50, Bob Dylan continues to excite the same mixture of awe and derision as he did when he was 20, but with a rather lower profile. Like Greta Garbo, Bob Dylan has consistently evaded inquiries into his private life, declaring that the "greatest gift anyone has is obscurity". Like John Lennon, he has consistently evaded hysterical demands from fans that he tell them the secret of life – "Always carry a lightbulb" is his most famous reply. Yet what other popular musician has been reviled in a national newspaper (*Independent on Sunday*) for taking no stand on the Gulf war? And here is the third biography in three years offering to Reveal All.

Or does it? After all, Clinton Heylin ends his painstakingly documented chronicle disclaiming any understanding of his subject, whom he has never met. "A painfully shy but wry and witty man who genuinely craves sincere input and expression," he sums up. Tantalisingly for us more sordid souls, he barely sketches in a life full of wine, women and song, not to mention sailing boats, motorbikes, a big Jewish family, many faithful friends, a farm, horses, a passion for painting and a working knowledge of quite a bit of world literature. He even misses out one Dylan child, Sam, in his account of mystical marriage and savage divorce.

Mr Heylin is noted in fanzine circles for owning and documenting the most exhaustive collection of playlists and bootleg tapes from Dylan concerts – probably 100,000 hours of listening. Serious reverence. In similar fashion, collating the texts of numerous interviews with acquaintances and hangers-on, he has listed the events of a life which has produced The Work. Like all lists, the story remains not so much behind the shades as between the lines. And for £10 more you can buy the excellent new bootleg series issued by CBS.

Victoria Neumark

The Dylan Companion. Edited by Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman. Macmillan £15.95. 0 333 53583 9.

Ever since his electrified emergence from the Greenwich Village beat, blues and radical folk scene of the early Sixties, Bob Dylan's voice and words have elicited a massive amount of extrapolation, despite the anti-interpretative signals songs such as "Gates of Eden" were at pains to flash out from the first: "At dawn my lover comes to me/And tells me of her dreams/With no attempts to shovel the glimpse/Into the ditch of what each one means. . . ."

More would-be rock-crit than not is regarded by its subjects as irredeemable garbage. The editors of *The Dylan Companion* have trawled through clippings from three decades of popular, highbrow and musical media of the UK and US, and deserve thanks for services to ditch clearing – though with Dylan's progress so global, it seems a pity their net wasn't cast around other countries, or over a larger expanse of less than flattering waters.

The exceptions to this are among the most interesting catches. "Amazing Chutzpah" is an amusingly ruthless (but unmalicious) excoriation of the 1979 Brother Bob phase by Greil Marcus. Of the few poems in the *Companion*, three matey homages from Ginsberg look rather soft next to the straight-talking verses of Dylan's fellow songsmith Fran Landesman. These neatly re-run some of the wit and wisdom of his own pre-reborn anti-clerical lyrics: "I'm sorry for you, Bobby and I know what you've been through/As a rock star and a legend and a lover and a Jew/But don't preach to me that God is love and joy/And tell me I should try to do His bidding/'cause He told Abraham to kill his little boy/And then He said 'Na, I was only kidding'.//I hear you singing Bobby of this God you gotta serve/And the record's really selling but I think you've lost your nerve. . . ."

It was probably inevitable that once he rocketed from the smaller world of

folk into a mass-cult figure, the sharp bite and bile of earlier routines would fade. Lines like "It's easy to see without lookin' too far/Not much is really sacred" and "even the President of the United States/sometimes must have/to stand naked" came to be revived in a spirit of nostalgia, or deference to his sixties following, not as taproots of a continuing stance. After apprenticeship years of identifying with long-suffering black barks and dustbowl-parched Okie croaks, Dylan metamorphosed into an almost parodically orthodox full-throated cantor, and again, to a straight-up commercial hillbilly out-country-yawping Johnny Cash: "I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now."

Though some of the stodgier dollops of fan-fare rehashed here slurp indigestibly over the top, the diversity of the symposium's sources bears witness to Dylan's uniquely prodigious range and power as a public artist, if not as an entirely trustworthy-seeming intellect or human being.

There are a number of hiccups and contradictions, as is only natural in a compilation of subjective views on the constitutionally fleeting artefacts of pop. Thus Simon Winchester recalls the 1969 Isle of Wight festival as "an utter disaster", whereas other reporters (along with several hippies of my acquaintance) had the weekend of their lives.

The book is worthwhile for the reminiscences and exegeses by Richard Farina, Ken Kesey, Kenneth Allsop, Philip Saville, Charles Nicholl, Adam Lively, Geoff Dyer, Ed Vulliamy, Wilfrid Mellers, Spender, Ricks and Kermode, if like these writers you believe in Dylan as a more or less perpetually inspired poet who successfully revolutionized popular music.

The last word should probably go to Bruce Springsteen, as the next-generation rocker most widely acknowledged to be carrying on the 49-year-old troubadour's mission: "Wherever great rock music is made, there is the shadow of Bob Dylan. His own modern work has gone unjustly under-appreciated because it's had to stand in that shadow. If there was a young guy out there writing the *Empire Burlesque* album, writing 'Every grain of sand', they'd be calling him the new Bob Dylan."

Michael Horovitz

BOB DYLAN
Behind the Shades: A Biography.
By Clinton Heylin.
Summit, $24.95.

The myth of Bob Dylan — the kid who came to New York City from the country's heartland with nothing but his guitar and went on to recast popular music — has never entirely released its hold on the public's imagination. "Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades," by Clinton Heylin, a British writer and a co-founder of Wanted Man, a Dylan research group, attempts to bring the singer-songwriter's story up to date in time for his 50th birthday on May 24. Despite much new information, particularly about Mr. Dylan in the 1980's, this is in some ways the least satisfactory biography to date. Readers who are not already familiar with the characters and events alluded to will find themselves confused, readers who know the scenery will be bored. The author's instincts for how to use

Bob Dylan in 1975.

interview material (almost all of which has been previously published) are rarely sharp; he tends to paraphrase where a direct quote would have been more flavorful and to quote directly where a summing-up would have made things clearer. Worse, Mr. Heylin seems to feel himself in competition with his subject, making gratuitous and unsupported ex cathedra pronouncements on the relative merits of Mr. Dylan's songs, career choices and romantic involvements. These seem designed, finally, to leave us with the impression that Mr. Dylan's life and career would have gone much better if he had only let Mr. Heylin run it for him.

TOM PIAZZA

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU, MR. DYLAN

Bob Dylan celebrates his 50th birthday on May 24. To help commemorate the day, Billboard asked many of the artists who have been associated with or influenced by Dylan to share their thoughts about this unique artist. Here is a sampling of their replies:

ERIC ANDERSEN:
First it was by word of mouth. Then by record turntable and Newport Folk Festival. Later I met him in the flesh. Bob was a man cut from the same cloth. He was one of my teachers (and draft counselor). He showed me the *possibilities* of how far a song could go. He expanded the horizons. He unified the words, music, dance and streets. He threw his light on our path and led the way in changing the face of pop music forever.

Eric Andersen

JOAN BAEZ:
Not one of the dreamers, the rainbow poets, the well intentioned, the ambitious, the gifted, the insightful, the inspired, their notepads filled with every word trick learned, copied, or invented, ever gave us another "Blowin' In The Wind" or "Hard Rain" or "God On My Side" or "Like A Rolling Stone."
Thanks, Bob.

Joan Baez

HUEY LEWIS:
Bob Dylan is the reason why I started playing music.

ROGER MCGUINN:
From the early days at Gerde's and the old Gaslight Cafe
With the sound of thumb nails clicking just to keep the cops away
The peals of Rolling Thunder and those flashing starry eyes
When that band of rag-tag Gypsies took the Pilgrims by surprise

You've walked the paths of victory and traveled with your friends
Their names are always changing but the party never ends
When lesser men sought solitude you stayed and did your job
Thanks for thirty years of poetry, have a happy birthday Bob!

Roger McGuinn

JUDY COLLINS:
Dear Bob,
The first time was Gerde's and then I wrote you my first fan letter. "Blowin' In The Wind" still makes me cry. You are the best.
Happy birthday
Love,

JOHN MELLENCAMP:
In 1989, Dylan asked me to direct his video for "Political World" and he came out here to Indiana so we could shoot it. From the minute he walked into my house, I realized he was the most detail-oriented person I ever met. Not in the way he appears or dresses, but in the way he investigates things. Within two hours, he had looked at every one of my paintings, picked up every ashtray, peeked under every plate in the place! He left no single thing unturned—and I mean it.
The best thing about Dylan is that he doesn't know any boundaries. Which is why "Like A Rolling Stone" is the greatest song ever written in the history of popular music. I love playing that song live, because it's just a boundless statement. It's great rock music, great pop music, great folk music, great blues, great philosophy, and a great passionate human reaction. It speaks to you historically, emotionally, intellectually, and personally. And just like Dylan, it recognizes no boundaries whatsoever.

Bob Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival, 1965. (Photo: David Gahr)

KEITH RICHARDS:
The first thing Bob said to me was "I could have written 'Satisfaction'—but you couldn't have written 'Desolation Row'." That's Bob.

EMMYLOU HARRIS:
I look back on singing with Dylan and it's almost like a dream.

MICHAEL BOLTON:
A long time ago while reading his lyrics, I sat in awe of his power, depth, and eloquence. Over 20 years later, I had the opportunity to write with him. (He doesn't know how far I would have traveled *just* to meet him.) I'm still in awe and I have nothing but admiration and respect for Bob Dylan.

BILLY JOEL:
Dear Bob:
I'm glad you were born. Love,

BOB SEGER:
I was a kid in Ann Arbor, following the local college folk scene, when I heard Bob Dylan for the first time. A radio station played Dylan's version of "Blowin' In The Wind" instead of the Peter, Paul & Mary rendition, and the raw intensity of it just knocked me down. I ran out and got his first album and the "Freewheelin' " record and I got hooked on them both. The lyrics were extraordinarily vivid, the singing was just plain wild, and his use of irony was something so new that it was riveting. But the main appeal was his melodic sense, which he never seems to get enough credit for.
The first time I met him was in Pine Knob, Mich., in 1986 when he came through town on his joint show with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers. I got up on stage to sing "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" with Bob and Tom, and afterwards Bob told me he'd played "Fire Down Below" with Petty during the Australian leg of their tour, which was a huge kick to hear. Dylan took me back into his dressing room and we hung out talking about songwriting for quite a while. I was really struck by how friendly and open he was—especially because the entire conversation took place while he held onto the leash of this snarling 200-pound bull mastiff who was acting as a kind of guard dog!
So I'd just like Bob to know how much his music means to me, how inspiring I've always found it, and how glad I am that he kept a firm grip on that bulldog. Happy Birthday Bob. You've never let me down.

Bob Seger

DON & DAVID WAS:
בוב !
מַאַח אֶת הָאַנְטֶנָּה עַד הַסּוֹף
לְךָ-נָה מוּשְׁלָמוֹת

Don Was David Was

IAN HUNTER:
Happy Birthday Mr. Dylan, the best, simply the best ever.

Ian Hunter

AL KOOPER:
Dear Bob,
I'm certainly glad it's you that's turning 50 and not me!! I should have listened to my mother when she told me to "turn that off ... it sounds like fingernails on a blackboard." But being that I did NOT turn it (your album) off, I guess I'm stuck in a 26-year-old friendship which is older, in fact, than my son's! Keep up the good work, but don't you think you're taking this touring thing a little too seriously???? Your friends miss ya ... take a break ... write a song ... make an album!!!
Anyway, all the best and I can't believe either of us has lived THIS long!!!!!!
Your ~~infernal~~ eternal keyboard player,

Al K

THE BAND:
Dear Bob:
Here's looking forward to 50 more sensational years!!
P.S. Thanks for Carnegie Hall!!

Levon Helm
Rick Danko
Garth Hudson

TOSHI & PETE SEEGER:
Dear Bob:
You've written some of the world's best songs. If there's a human race still around 500 years from now, people will still be singing 'em.
Happy birthday. Stay well. Love,

Toshi + Pete Seeger

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN': The fresh-faced 23-year-old in 1962 (left); at the Isle of Wight in 1969 (above); and the grand old man of rock in 1990

Like a rolling stone

Sean O'Hagan on Bono and Bob

BORN Robert Allen Zimmerman in Duluth Minnesota at 9.05pm, May 24th, 1941, Bob Dylan celebrates his 50th birthday tomorrow. The occasion has already prompted enough accolades and overviews to fill yet another Bob Dylan book but the poem is a different kind of birthday present — a homage from a fellow songwriter and friend to the man who remains the most influential figure in contemporary music.

Bono, U2's lead singer, was born May 10, 1960 when the 19-year-old Bob Dylan had a residency at The Purple Onion Pizza Parlour in St Paul. In fact, the first extant recording of Dylan, by a friend, Karen Wallace, was made in early May 1960.

Back then, Dylan was a Woodie Guthrie fanatic, and included the latter's spiritual protest song, Jesus Christ, in his repertoire. A U2 version would surface three decades later on a Woody Guthrie tribute album which also featured Dylan singing Pretty Boy Floyd.

In July 1984, Dylan topped the bill at an Irish outdoor festival at Slane Castle. Before appearing on stage he was interviewed by Bono for the Irish pop magazine Hot Press.

During an extended encore, he performed It's All Over Now Baby Blue with Van Morrison and Blowin' In The Wind with Bono who forgot the words, improvised a new verse and, later, apologised to a non-plussed Dylan who claimed he often forgot the words too. U2 later performed Dylan's Maggie's Farm at a Dublin concert for the unemployed.

In 1987, Dylan arrived in Memphis at the legendary Sun recording studios where U2 were recording with erstwhile Elvis producer, Sam Phillips. He co-wrote a song with Bono called Love Rescue Me which later appeared on U2's 1988 album, Rattle & Hum, and also contibuted Hammond organ to another song, Hawkmoon 269.

That same album includes a live U2 version of Dylan's All Along The Watchtower.

FIFTY REASONS WHY I LOVE BOB DYLAN AS HE TURNS 50

By Bono

He is not dead.
He looks his age.
He sings like a swarm of bees.
He is interested in the names God gave to animals.
He plays guitar like James Joyce.
He wore hoods before anyone else.
He wrote Tangled Up In Blue.
He wrote Senor Senor.
He is not a slave trader.
He is not impressionable.
He knows irony doesn't have to be the enemy of soul.
Blonde on Blonde beats acid by about a year.
He writes two songs: one for her and one for HIM.
He mixes God and women up.
He has in the recent past rhymed "rolling Hoop" with "bowl of soup."
Allen Ginsberg loves him.
Walt Whitman would love him now.
He wrote The Ballad Of Hollis Brown.
He is coming to your town soon.
He's very nice to me.
His best ever songs were not written in the 60s.
He is not living on the edge for us Chickens man!
He is not pseudo religious.
He didn't die on a cross at 33.
T Bone Burnett likes him.
He's Jewish.
He's a good story teller.
He's singing better than ever.
He wears sensible shoes.
Rock 'n' roll's supposed to be smart.
He didn't die stupid.
He smiles like he's had a good time (most of the time).
He wrote Every Grain Of Sand.
He turned the Beatles on.
Country rock is better than jazz rock (just).
Roy Orbison was a friend of his.
He's funny.
He thinks Liam Clancy is the greatest ballad singer ever.
He didn't hold our version of All Along The Watchtower against us.
He has a lot more than three chords and the truth.
He knows some words are dangerous.
He looks great in a hat.
He wrote Visions Of Joanna.
He wrote Idiot Wind.
He wrote Brownsville Girl with Sam Shepard.
His kids turned out great and they think he did.
He is not Elvis.
He is not Jimi Hendrix.
He is not Jim Morrison.
He is not dead.

WHAT Bob Dylan song means the most to you — or stirs special memories? Here is how some distinguished pop artists answered the question:

■ **Joni Mitchell:** Positively Fourth Street

"I CAN'T really pick just one because I like too many, but the Dylan song that really grabbed me was Positively Fourth Street and the reason for that was the subject matter seemed at the time so unique.

"What it said to me, not only is this a good song, but it means that we can now sing about any kind of emotion. I don't think there was a song before that that defined the kind of hurt expressed in that song. It widened the scope of possibilities for songwriters."

Robbie Robertson (formerly lead guitarist with The Band and long-time collaborator with Dylan): Just Like A Woman

"WHEN we recorded Just Like a Woman (during the Blonde on Blonde sessions, where Robertson played guitar), I thought, the song had this real universal thing . . . It was something anybody could sing. Albert Grossman (Dylan's manager at the time) said he thought we should give the song to Frank Sinatra, but I thought that was a ridiculous idea.

"I suggested Otis Redding and he recorded it, but he never released his version because he couldn't get past the line, 'with her fog, her amphetamine and her pearls.' And I liked Otis even more because he couldn't be dishonest and just put out the song anyway if he couldn't find himself in the song personally."

■ **Tom Waits:** Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands

"ALL of Bob Dylan's songs are carved from the bones of ghosts and have myth and vision . . . Desolation Row, From A Buick 6, Ballad In Plain D, Restless Farewell, Visions Of Johanna, Boots of Spanish Leather, Dark Eyes. For me, Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands is a grand song. It is like Beowulf and it 'takes me out to the meadow.'

"This song can make you leave home, work on the railroad or marry a Gypsy. I think of a drifter around a fire with a tin cup under a bridge remembering a woman's hair. The song is a dream, a riddle and a prayer."

■ **Sinead O'Connor** I Want You

"IT'D have to be I Want You. When I first heard it on Blonde on Blonde, the version was so fast that I didn't notice how beautiful it was until I heard it again live on the Budokan album. That's when I could see the sadness and beauty of it."

Stevie Wonder Blowin' In The Wind

"IT'S a toss-up between Like A Rolling Stone, Blowin' In The Wind and Mr Tambourine Man. I think I'd go with Blowin in the Wind . . . the simplicity of the lyric, yet it is so strong . . . it says so much."

Bonos I Believe In You

"DYLAN writes songs about God and women . . . I like it best when he mixes them up."

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FIFTY AT 50

Unlike James Dean or Buddy Holly, Bob Dylan lived to grow up. On 24 May, the spokesman for his generation, still a mysterious character, celebrates his 50th birthday. Steve Turner invited a selection of interested parties — Dylan's friends, lovers, fellow conspirators, admirers and imitators — to volunteer their choice of a suitable gift

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
Singer and friend

"A brand new leopardskin pillbox hat."

JIM COLLINS
Mayor of Hibbing, Minnesota, Dylan's home town

"A copy of his high-school yearbook, a picture of the house he was raised in and maybe a little note from those of his classmates who still live in the area, because Bob has never been to any of the class reunions."

BILLY BRAGG
Politically inspired singer and songwriter

"Something to believe in. He seems to have lost his way and so that would be the most useful thing I could give him."

WILLIAM BURROUGHS
Poet and friend

"A shaman's drum."

D A PENNEBAKER
Documentary film-maker; director of *Don't Look Back* (1965) and unreleased film of 1966 tour

"An old piano. Because when we were re-editing *Don't Look Back* for video, Bob wanted me to change the end because he's never liked it. I didn't think we should and so, to distract him, I asked him if he'd like this old piano with candelabra I had in storage. To my surprise, he said he would — and because he spent time looking it over, he forgot his argument about the changes and the video went out the way I wanted it. Fortunately he forgot about the piano, too, because it was destroyed in a fire."

DAVE VAN RONK
Folk-singer and friend from the Greenwich Village days

"Anonymity. I last saw Bob six years ago. He rang the doorbell of my home in Greenwich Village and my wife let him in because I was in a supermarket. When I came back he was sitting there and he said: 'I wish I could do that.' The poor man can't walk into a supermarket and buy a six-pack."

MARYLOU PATUREL
Former owner of the Café Expresso in Woodstock, New York State

"I started weaving at about the same time Bob came to stay in our home, where he wrote many of the songs on his albums *Another Side of Bob Dylan* and *Bringing It All Back Home*, so I thought that I might send him a hand-woven scarf because my memories of weaving are so closely bound up with my memories of Bob and his music."

SUZE ROTOLO
Dylan's girlfriend 1961-64; cover star of *Freewheelin'* album (1963); subject of various songs, including "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" and "Ballad in Plain D"

"I'd like to wish him truth and beauty — but since truth is a casualty, I wish him youth and beauty and no more biographies. As a footnote I would say that should it bother him about turning 50, he should bear in mind that it's only for one year."

BOB GELDOF
Singer and songwriter; former rock critic

"That polka-dot shirt he wore in 1965 that John Cooper Clarke obviously bought in a pawn shop. It's time it was returned to its rightful owner."

FRANÇOISE HARDY
Singer and actress; met Dylan during his European tours of the mid-Sixties

"I would offer him all the records of Arnaud [a Belgian Dylan soundalike] and the records of all people who think they are Bob Dylan."

ROBERT SHELTON
Author of Dylan's first positive review (in *The New York Times*, 1961) and of *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* (1986)

"I would give him some film footage of how he looked 30 years ago when he hopped off a subway train in Greenwich Village after travelling in from the Midwest. It might make him smile again."

BOBBY NEUWIRTH
Painter and songwriter, friend and confidant since the early Sixties

"Anonymity."

DANA GILLESPIE
Actress and singer, accompanied Dylan on his 1965 UK tour

"I've only seen him once since he took me with him on the *Don't Look Back* tour in 1965, so I think I'd give him an airline ticket to a place I know in India where no one would know him. I'd lock him up with me for a week and give him a good time. He never looks happy these days."

GERARD MALANGA
Poet, artist and former Warhol acolyte, now teaching in Massachusetts

"A Harley Davidson."

ARLO GUTHRIE
Folk singer and songwriter, son of Woody Guthrie, whose ballads inspired Dylan

"A sense of humour."

SUZANNE VEGA
Folk-influenced singer and songwriter

"A painting by Francis Bacon."

JUDY COLLINS
Folk singer and friend

"A pair of sneakers."

DONOVAN
Singer and friend who came to fame as "the British Bob Dylan" in 1965

"I've already given my present to him. I met up with him in Dublin during his recent tour and bought him a copy of the complete works of Yeats."

PROF WILFRID MELLERS
Music critic and author of *A Darker Shade Of Pale: A Backdrop to Bob Dylan*

"I would like to give him two CDs of operas by Janacek, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Katya Kabanova*. I don't know whether he knows them but I think they might trigger something off because they're about going back to beginnings — which, in a different context, is what Dylan is about."

PETE SEEGER
Folk singer and early champion

"A little peace and quiet and an invisible cloak that would enable him to go wherever he wanted without being hassled."

NOEL PAUL STOOKEY
of Peter, Paul and Mary

"I'd give Bobby a copy of C S Lewis's book *The Great Divorce*, because when an artist pushes at the envelope of experience it's important to know there's a post office."

PETER YARROW
of Peter, Paul and Mary

"The piano on which he composed many songs such as 'Only A Pawn in the Game' and 'Masters of War'. He stayed in my cabin as my guest and wrote a great deal on my piano. I would, and am, giving him this piano as his 50th birthday gift."

PAUL JONES
Singer, actor and disc-jockey whose Sixties hits with Manfred Mann included Dylan's "If You Gotta Go"

"A book which has just been published by Charles Musselwhite on how to play the harmonica."

MARIA McKEE
Singer and songwriter, recently at No 1 with "Show Me a Heaven"

"I'd cook him a meal."

CATHY McGOWAN
Presenter of *Ready, Steady, Go*

"The French and Saunders video. I'd like him to watch it just before he went on stage and just before his next album cover shoot, because we're now in the 1990s and I think it's time he gave us a smile."

ALAN BLEASDALE
Author of *The Boys from the Blackstuff*

"The collected latter works of William Wordsworth."

DAVE STEWART
Musician and producer, one half of the Eurythmics

"I wouldn't want to give him anything. I once gave him an antique Gibson acoustic guitar in immaculate condition, and he lost it."

KEITH RICHARDS
Guitarist and songwriter; accompanied Dylan at Live Aid in 1985

"I'm having something special made up for him, so if you want to know what it is you'll have to ask him after he's got it."

MICK JAGGER
Singer and friend

"After seeing him on the Grammy awards, I'd get him a new hat and a good song."

LITTLE RICHARD
Rock 'n' roll singer whose piano-playing impressed the young Dylan

"Longevity both as a person and as an artist. I would also buy more paper for him to write more great poetry."

BILL GRAHAM
US rock impresario who promoted Dylan's "comeback" tour in 1974

"For his body of work – a Nobel Prize for Literature."

PETER BLAKE
Painter

"Wine, flowers, chocolates, money – anything he wanted for all the enormous pleasure he's given me over the years."

TIMOTHY LEARY
Known in the Sixties as the "high priest of LSD"

"A precious flower that contains within its perfume a rejuvenating liquor that will keep him young and productive for 50 more years, with an option to renew."

BETTY BOO
Pop star

"A copy of my album, *Boomania* – it might give him a few new ideas."

JOHNNY CASH
Country singer and friend who duetted with Dylan on the *Nashville Skyline* album in 1969

"Peace of mind."

JAMES FOX
Actor and writer

"I'd give him a double dose of the muse he had in 1964 and 1979."

BARBARA ORBISON
Widow of Roy Orbison, a fellow member of the Traveling Wilburys

"A big hug, a new van and a pink tutu."

TIM RICE
Author, lyricist and pop historian

"I went to see him at Hammersmith and I could hardly hear the vocals. He missed out some verses of 'Desolation Row' – I'd give him a good sound mixer and an autocue."

YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO
Poet

"Some magic glue to piece together all our broken dreams."

MELVYN BRAGG
Presenter and producer of *The South Bank Show*

"The complete works of Big Bill Broonzy."

ROGER McGUINN
Singer, guitarist and leader of The Byrds, whose first hit was Dylan's "Mr Tambourine Man"

"Fifty dimes and fifty tambourines."

BOY GEORGE
Pop star

"A copy of the *Bhagavadgita*."

LEONARD COHEN
Poet, songwriter, singer and friend

"A ball of wax and the whole nine yards."

BONO
U2's singer

"A copy of *Finnegans Wake*."

ALLEN GINSBERG
Beat poet, early inspiration, friend since 1963 and member of the Rolling Thunder Revue 1977-78

"I'd suggest that the major media commission lengthy essays that examine Dylan's works as a minstrel, sympathetically accounting the progression of his phases of interest, empathetically tracing his technical, ethical, religious and political moves in a reasonable way, absent of smart-alec cynicism, motivated by an admiration for his obvious intelligence, abundance, maintenance of dignified privacy and ability to manifest humane changes of spirit and thought – that he be accorded the same dignities as Yeats, Eliot, Stevens, Bunting, Pound and other twentieth-century poetic peers."

JOHN LEE HOOKER
Blues singer who topped the bill at Gerde's Folk City in April 1961, Dylan's first paid residency at a New York club

"I'd give him my Cadillac."

RAY DAVIES
Singer and songwriter, the Kinks

"A new birth certificate, so that he could go through it all again and give us another golden era full of great songs."

GEORGE HARRISON
Ex-Beatle and friend who persuaded Dylan to appear at the Concert for Bangladesh in 1971 and to join the Traveling Wilburys in 1988

"A 1015 CD Wurlitzer juke-box."

PAUL SCHRADER
Film maker (*Mishima*, etc); director of unsuccessful Dylan video in 1984

"Another 50 years; he'll know what to do with it."

T-BONE BURNETT
Singer, songwriter and producer; member of Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue

"I would arrange it so that he never had to be included in any more lists." □

So much older then

OH DEAR, the times they are a passing, Bob Dylan is fifty. I don't know what impact that's had on him, but it's making me feel old.

Dylan was probably the biggest single influence of my youth. He, more than any other individual or single event, made me think that we live in a rotten world that had to be changed.

Don't get me wrong. Dylan was never a revolutionary, yet more than anybody else he articulated the anger and revulsion of a generation of young people looking for change. While he was at it he also revolutionised popular music.

With his second and third albums Dylan produced a series of songs that spat in the face of practically every major facet of capitalism.

Dylan towered above his contemporaries. His songs had more raw anger than other people's, yet at the same time they displayed a subtlety which most others lacked.

When the black civil rights leader Medgar Evers was murdered by white racists, a number of protest singers immediately wrote fairly mundane tributes to Medgar.

Dylan sought to do something much more complex. Without giving an inch to the racists he sought to show that racism has two victims not just one, the black at the receiving end and the 'poor white' who is blinded to his real condition and place in society by his racism.

The song 'Pawn in the Game' is not primarily about Evers but about the man who shot him.

'The deputy sheriffs, the soldiers and governors get paid
and the marshalls and cops get the same
but the poor white man's used in the hands of them all like a tool
he's taught in his school
from the start by the rule
that the laws are with him
to protect his white skin
to keep up his hate
so he never thinks straight
'bout the shape that he's in.'

Racism was a product of the society which aided the ruling class by diverting the white worker from his real problem, and real enemy. The song goes on to explain the dehumanising effect the racism has on the poor white racist.

'From the poverty shacks he looks
from the cracks to the tracks
and the hoofbeats pound in his brain
and he's taught how to walk in a pack
shoot in the back
with his fist in a clench
to hang and to lynch
to hide 'neath a hood
to kill with no pain
like a dog on a chain...'

At the end of each verse Dylan describes how the killer is 'only a pawn in their game.'

Dylan abandoned political commitment by the mid-1960s, yet continued

Dylan: songs of love and hate

to inspire. Now he produced songs of vivid lyrical imagery, songs that portrayed a tangled and confusing world from which we were becoming more and more alienated.

The imagery was exciting and mysterious, and though he may have abandoned politics, those coming to politics often looked to songs such as 'Like a Rolling Stone' or 'Desolation Row' as much if not more than to the earlier, more overtly political, ones.

Added to the excitement was the music. Dylan had now broken from the folk formula and (much to the disgust of folk purists) had started playing an electric guitar with a rock band backing him.

The result was revolutionary. For the first time a top ten 'pop song' did not have to last two or three minutes and be about as meaningful as cornflakes. Dylan released extraordinary songs that could last three or four times as long as the average pop song. For the first time songs with real meaning were being brought to a mass audience.

His love songs and indeed his hate songs broke through the 'boy meets girl, they fall in love and get married' standards of pop. In Dylan songs relationships were complex entanglements bringing joy and misery.

All of this may seem unexceptional now, but when Dylan hurled it at us it was new and breathtaking.

The 1980s were easily the least impressive decade of Dylan's work; as if everything else about that decade wasn't bad enough Bob had to desert us too. He became religious and his religious songs (with one or two exceptions) were easily the most trite and boring he ever produced. Yet every now and then a gem still emerges, reminding us of the sheer genius of the man.

But his songs of the 1960s could keep the old flame burning when things seemed bleak.

If I was feeling really down, I would listen to the one avowedly revolutionary song he wrote: 'When the Ship Comes In'. Written in a rage after a trivial run in with a hotel manager, Dylan used the ship as a metaphor for revolution when our side would get our own back on theirs.

'Oh the foes will rise with the sleep still in their eyes
and they'll jerk from their beds and think they're dreamin'
but they'll pinch themselves and squeal
and know that it's for real
the hour when the ship comes in.
Then they'll raise their hands
sayin' we'll meet all your demands
but we'll shout from the boughs
your days are numbered
and like Pharaoh's tribe they'll be drowned in the tide
and like Goliath, they'll be conquered.'

Pat Stack

HANDY DANDY - A GAME THAT ANYONE CAN PLAY

by John R Stokes

Searching for the identity of Dylan's dandy - the somewhat enigmatic character who is featured in the song **Handy Dandy** from **Under The Red Sky**, Dylan's first album of the 90's - is like playing one of those early Sinclair Spectrum computer games. You know the sort of thing, you load the game onto the computer and a little Pac-man appears on your monitor screen. He dit-dit-dits his way around a Hampton Court maze until you guide him safely through the correct exit where he finds a golden key. Various obstacles are then fired at him from all directions and you have to become something of a keyboard wizard in order to save your little man from total destruction.

If you and your Pac-partner are fortunate enough to have survived that second phase onslaught, you then play the end game. Dit-dit-ditting along with key in hand your little man comes face-to-face with a row of locked doors. If he chooses the wrong one it's back to Hampton Court but if he uses his key to unlock the right door then the screen bursts into a brightly coloured holocaust of dazzles and flashes to herald your arrival at the winning post. You are then invited to record your name on the computerised scoreboard and there it will remain until someone else comes along who is better and faster than you.

Now some may think that it is somewhat ludicrous to compare playing a computer game to interpreting a Dylan lyric but remember that in both pursuits the answer is ready and waiting for you to achieve. In the former pursuit the answer has been programmed into the computer's memory and will be disclosed when all the correct functions have been performed; in the latter pursuit the 'answer' is inherent in the lyric and will be disclosed merely upon listening and thinking. The fundamental difference between these pursuits is, of course, that, in the science of mathematics there can only ever be one correct answer to a pre-set equation (although there may be different ways of arriving at that answer), whereas in the appreciation and understanding of poetry there are as many different answers as there are people who care to take the time to listen and think. What the song means to me may be totally different to what it means to you as we perceive the lyric in our own individual way, according to our senses and experiences. The song has a life of its own and when it enters our lives we make it our own, finding in it questions and answers that are peculiar to ourselves; and if you believe in the answers you have found then, for you, they must be correct.

So, in search of some answers, I am going to play the Pac-man game with **Handy Dandy**. As I am doing this under your watchful eye, you will no doubt be able to see where I go wrong and where you would have done things differently. But then this is my game, you are there only to watch, there can be no conferring.
Dit-dit-dit....

Phase One: The Search For The Key.

The term *dandy* is normally used when referring to the physical appearance of someone in order to describe their manner or the way that they are dressed. Firstly, therefore, the spotlight has to be turned on to other characters who have been featured in Dylan's songs where Dylan has alluded to their manner of appearance or their dress. **Under The Red Sky** being scattered with images of fairy tales and nursery rhymes, it is perhaps applicable that the first reference should be to a song which opens with the first four words of every good fairy story:

Once upon a time you dressed so fine
You threw the bums a dime in your prime, didn't you?

Whereas **Like A Rolling Stone** is a Dylan landmark and must be a contender for the song that Dylan has performed the most number of times in concert, the next reference is taken from **Blind Willie McTell**, a song only recently officially released and never performed in concert. In this song Dylan sings about a fine young, handsome man:

He's dressed up like a squire
Bootleg whisky in his hand

In a short snippet of a song that was released officially in 1985, some 20 years after it was recorded, Dylan refers to the appearance of the man/woman character who is the subject of the song. He sings about the character's "jet pilot eyes" and describes her/him further:

She's five foot nine and she carries a monkey wrench

There is no question however about the sexuality of the next character. Big Jim from **Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts** is a 'ladies man'. Rosemary plays the role of Big Jim's wife whereas Lily has his ring. Dylan actually uses the term *dandy* in describing this character:

He made his usual entrance looking so dandy and fine
With his body guards and silver cane and every hair in place
He took whatever he wanted to and he laid it all to waste

Another Dandy of this ilk is William Zanzinger from the song **The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll**. He owns a tobacco farm, he has rich, wealthy parents and can't you just imagine him dressed up so dandy and so fine as he attends a Baltimore society gathering:

With a cane that he twirled around his diamond ring finger

Dylan also endeavours to paint a portrait of the song's victim, the poor Hattie Carroll. He describes her as a maid of the kitchen, she was fifty-one years old and had given birth to ten children. It's not difficult to imagine her appearance as she:

Carried the dishes and took out the garbage

Standing back and looking at these six characters it is easy to see the common denominator and connection between them and Dylan's dandy. They are all using their hands: throwing the bums a dime; holding a bottle of bootleg whisky; carrying a monkey wrench; carrying a silver cane; twirling a cane in the hand; carrying the dishes and taking out the garbage. It is so easy to see the obvious once you have been given the answer but Dylan draws attention to the main characteristic of his Dandy by mentioning it so many times in the song as an observation. In fact it is contained in the title. The Dandy is 'handy' - not handy as in convenient, but handy because of the way that he uses his hands. So the key appears in the title to the song - it was staring at me all the time - indeed in the first four letters of the title: **HAND**.

Dit-dit-dit-dit-dit...

Phase Two: Avoiding the obstacles

Now, because of certain references in the song, a number of people have concluded that the real Handy Dandy is Prince Rogers Nelson or, as he is more commonly known, Prince. The references are, of course, to certain lines "controversy surrounds him". (Prince's fourth album was called **Controversy** and this is also the name of the officially recognised Prince magazine). Prince is also famous for the scantily clad females in his backing band and, therefore, the reference to the *all girl orchestra* certainly fits. Prince has, no doubt, been *around the world and back again* and the *fortress on the mountain* could refer to 'Paisley Park', his high security studio complex in Minnesota.

It was only a matter of time before Prince would pervade Dylan's psyche as these two artists have so very much in common.

For instance:

Both	Dylan	Prince
Are Geminis	Born 24/5/1941	Born 7/6/1958
Born In Minnesota	St. Mary's Hospital, Duluth	Mount Sinai hospital, Minneapolis
First bands had initials G.C.	The Golden Chords	Grand Central
Debut albums bearing their names only	**Bob Dylan**	**Prince** (In the UK)
Have recorded at Sound 80 studio, Minneapolis	**Blood On The Tracks** - new version	Session musician
Have released albums with the words *Times* and *Rain* in the title	**The Times They Are A Changin'** and **Hard Rain**	**Sign of the Times** and **Purple Rain**
Have written songs using sexual innuendo relating to automobiles	**Dirty World**	**Dirty Mind**
Appeared in concert, in London, in 1981	Earl's Court	The Lyceum
Have appeared as rock stars in feature films and, during such roles, have watched their female co-stars 'skinny dipping'	Watching Fiona in **Hearts Of Fire**	Watching Apollonia in **Purple Rain**
Have had top 50 albums in the consecutive years 1988, 1989 and 1990	**Down In The Groove, Oh Mercy, Under The Red Sky**	**Lovesexy, Batman** (soundtrack) and **Graffiti Bridge**
Have had residencies at London concert halls during 1990	6 nights at the Hammersmith Odeon	19 nights at the Wembley Arena

And so on.

Because of all these coincidental factors that have occurred in the lives and works of both artists, I am sure that, sooner or later, they will produce some 'common' work (whether they intend to or not). But I do not believe that the identity of Dylan's dandy has anything to do with Prince. For a start this would not fit into the theme that I see as being prevalent in the majority of the songs on the album. A theme involving a battle between good and evil, from Creation to Apocalypse. Secondly, you get the feeling that Dylan's remarks about and descriptions of his Dandy are derogatory rather than complimentary whereas in the past Dylan has nearly always been sympathetic towards the 'famous' people about whom he has written songs e.g. Hurricane Carter, Lenny Bruce, George Jackson, Joey Gallo, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Billy The Kid etc.

If Dylan was truly being somewhat uncomplimentary about Prince then this would certainly be contrary to what he said during the course of an interview, part of which was transcribed for the 1990 tour programme:

Interviewer: *Do you like Prince's stuff?*

Dylan: *Prince? Yeah. Who don't like Prince. Well I guess I could name a few! Hahaha! No, he's a fantastic guy, ain't he? He can do anything, can't he?*

Hopefully, therefore, I have not fallen at the obstacle of mistaken identity that was placed before me and I can continue to play.

Dit-dit-dit-dit-dit...

Phase Three: The End Game.

Now it is time to look in more detail at how Dylan describes his Dandy in an endeavour to reveal his true identity. Remembering the key that was collected in Phase One, the Dandy's most important attributes are his hands and even though it is an obvious and silly rhyme (but, nevertheless, it does fit nicely into the fairy tale, nursery rhyme thread of the album) Dylan also tells us a number of times that his dandy is "just like sugar and candy,"

But is he really so sweet? He is a schemer:

Ya want a gun? I'll give ya one

He is evasive:

You say "What are you made of?"
He says "can you repeat what you said?"

And he is deceitful:

If every bone in his body was broken he would never admit it

More than all this however, he is afraid of nothing "neither live or dead." This clearly puts him not only among the living but also amongst the dead because, unless you are psychic, how can you know whether you are afraid of something that is dead unless you've been there, unless you have been among the dead yourself?

Not only earthly then but ethereal. He has "all the time in the world" and therefore he will be around for the same time that the world will be in existence.

So we are looking for someone who appears to be sweet and nice but is, in fact, scheming, deceitful, evasive and uses his hands to great effect. In another song, Dylan tells you exactly where to find him:

Look out your window, baby there's a scene you'd like to catch
The band is playing ***Dixie****, a man got his hand outstretched.*
Could be the Fuhrer.....

The song is, of course, **Man Of Peace** from the album **Infidels** and when describing Satan (the ethereal beast) in this song Dylan constantly refers to how he uses his hands:

Both hands can be full of grease...
He knows where to touch you...
He'll put both his arms around you...
You can feel his tender touch...

This man of Peace certainly appears to be sweet and nice

He's got a sweet gift of the gab, he got a harmonious tongue
He knows every song of love that ever has been sung

but, in reality, he is a schemer and evasive

First he's in the background, then he's in the front...
No-one can see through him, not even the chief of Police...

and he is deceitful because, although he is evil to the core, he masquerades as a man of peace. Dylan's Dandy carries with him a "basketful of flowers" but beware, because if you accept a flower (symbol of peace) from this man, all you'll get is a "bag full of sorrow".

Dylan appears therefore to be updating his 1983 version of the anti-christ and making him into this year's (1990) model. And, if you need any further proof of Dylan's intuition with regard to these matters, then just remind yourself of the picture on the front pages of most newspapers on the day that the album was released in September 1990. A decorated Dandy claiming to be a man of peace. Keep Dylan's lyrics in mind and observe this Dandy very closely. Above all, watch what he does with his hands.

Dit-dit-dit-dit-dit.

Game over.

Do I get to enter my name on the scoreboard? I'll leave that up to you.

A BOOK THAT NOBODY CAN WRITE.....

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BOB DYLAN

MARK CARTER

A BOOK THAT NOBODY CAN WRITE.....

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BOB DYLAN

..... MAY 24TH 1941: AT 9.05 P.M. BEATTY ZIMMERMAN GIVES BIRTH AT ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL IN DULUTH, MINNESOTA. IT IS HER AND HUSBAND ABRAHAM'S FIRST CHILD. THEY NAME HIM ROBERT ALLEN, AND EVERYONE AGREES THAT HE IS A BEAUTIFUL BOUNCING BABY.....

..... FEBRUARY 1946: ROBERT'S BROTHER DAVID IS BORN, AND, A FEW MONTHS LATER, YOUNG ROBERT GIVES HIS FIRST PERFORMANCE ON MOTHER'S DAY SINGING 'SOME SUNDAY MORNING' AND 'ACENTUATE THE POSITIVE.' HE WILL LATER REPEAT THIS SHOW AT OTHER FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS, AND IS, NO DOUBT, THE DARLING OF THE FAMILY, ESPECIALLY TO MANY A MISTY-EYED AUNT.....

... YOUNG ROBERT BEGINS TO WRITE AT THIS TIME, ALSO, MAINLY POEMS FOR HIS MOTHER AND FATHER, BUT THE BEGINNINGS OF SOME SIMPLE SONGS ALSO APPEAR.....

..... DURING 1955, ROBERT DISCOVERS HIS FIRST HERO, HANK WILLIAMS, AND, THROUGH HIM, COUNTRY MUSIC, WHICH CONSUMES HIM FOR A WHILE.....

..... SOME OF YOUNG ZIMMERMAN'S EARLY CREATIVEITY MAY HAVE RISEN FROM HIS SURROUNDINGS. WHEN HE WAS SIX HIS FAMILY MOVED FROM DULUTH TO HIBBING, WHERE HIS FATHER ABRAHAM RUNS AN ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE SHOP. BOBBY SPENDS MUCH TIME ALONE, WRITING AND DRAWING - THERE IS LITTLE ELSE TO DO, SINCE HIBBING IS NOT EXACTLY THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF AMERICA.....

..... MID 1950's, ZIMMERMAN DISCOVERS ANOTHER IDOL, JAMES DEAN. HE ADOPTS A NEW IMAGE AND BEGINS TO GROW HIS HAIR. HE BUYS A MOTORBIKE AND LEATHER JACKET. HE IS RARELY SEEN WITHOUT A CIGARETTE HANGING FROM HIS SULLEN MOUTH. YOUNG ZIMMERMAN CERTAINLY BEGINS TO TURN A FEW HEADS.....

..... LIKE ALL TEENAGERS IN 1955, ZIMMERMAN DISCOVERS ROCK 'N' ROLL. HE HAS NEW HEROS THEN, MOST NOTABLY ELVIS AND LITTLE RICHARD. HE FORMS SEVERAL HIGH-SCHOOL GROUPS, THE MOST FAMOUS BEING THE GOLDEN CHORDS, WHO TAKE PART IN THE HIGH SCHOOL TALENT CONTEST. THEY ARE LOUD AND RAW - PERFECT ROCK 'N' ROLL. DYLAN PLAYS PIANO STANDING UP, JUST LIKE LITTLE RICHARD AND JERRY LEE LEWIS. THE KIDS LOVE THEM BUT THE HIBBING ELDERS ARE HORRIFIED, ESPECIALLY AT THE TRANSFORMATION OF THAT NICE ROBERT ZIMMERMAN.....

..... NOW ZIMMERMAN BUYS ALL THE ROCK 'N' ROLL RECORDS HE CAN GET HIS HANDS ON. HE HAS ONE OF THE BEST RECORD COLLECTIONS IN TOWN, AND HE LOVES EVERY ONE.....

..... HIBBING BEING WHAT IT IS, ROCK 'N' ROLL IS NOT ACTIVELY ENCOURAGED, EVEN THOUGH THE KIDS BEGIN TO EMBRACE IT THERE AS THEY DO THROUGHOUT THE STATES. BOBBY EMBRACES IT QUICKER THAN MOST. HE CANNOT PICK UP ROCK 'N' ROLL ON HIS RADIO DURING THE DAY, SINCE THERE ARE NO NEARBY RADIO STATIONS. BUT AT NIGHT, WHEN THE AIR IS CLEAR AND STILL, HE CAN TUNE IT IN TO FAR AWAY PLACES AND LISTEN TO THE NEWEST SOUNDS WHILE THE REST OF HIBBING SLEEPS.....

..... BOBBY FINDS IN HIS FIRST STEADY GIRLFRIEND, ECHO HOLSTROM, A KINDRED SPIRIT. SHE TOO IS INTO ROCK 'N' ROLL, AND IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO COME FROM THE 'WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS'. THEY TRAVEL EVERYWHERE ON HIS BIG MOTORBIKE, WEAR LEATHERS AND PLAY RECORDS. AT THIS TIME ZIMMERMAN FLITS FROM BAND TO BAND, BUT DESPERATELY TRIES TO HIDE HIS JEWISHNESS FROM OTHERS, THOUGH NOT TOO SUCCESSFULLY.

WHEN HE AND ECHO SPLIT UP, ZIMMERMAN BEGINS TO EXPAND HIS MUSICAL HORIZONS, AND STARTS TAKING AN INTEREST IN BLUES AND FOLK MUSIC. BY NOW, HE HAS SET HIS HEART ON BEING A STAR.....

.....ZIMMERMAN BUYS AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR, A GIBSON, AND BECOMES A FOLK SINGER IMMEDIATELY. HIS LOVE FOR ROCK 'N' ROLL IS TEMPORARILY FORGOTTEN, AS TIN PAN ALLEY AND BUSINESSMEN WATER IT DOWN INTO SAFE MUSIC.....

.....DURING SEPTEMBER 1959 BOBBY ENROLS INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNEAPOLIS AND JOINS THE FRAT HOUSE SIGMA ALPHA MU. HE BEGINS TO CALL HIMSELF BOB DYLAN AS A FURTHER ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL HIS JEWISHNESS, BUT HE DOES NOT FIT IN WITH UNIVERSITY LIFE. HE HANGS AROUND FOR A FEW MONTHS BEFORE DROPPING OUT FOR GOOD. WHILE THERE, LEGEND HAS IT THAT HE FLUNKS BIOLOGY FOR REFUSING TO DISSECT A FROG.....

...THE NEW FOLKIE DYLAN BEGINS PLAYING AROUND MINNEAPOLIS, MAINLY IN THE PURPLE ONION AND THE TEN O' CLOCK SCHOLAR. HE BUILDS UP A REPETOIRE OF TRADITIONAL MATERIAL, AND MAKES A COUPLE OF HOME-MADE RECORDINGS IN AND AROUND ST. PAUL. HIS VOICE AND GUITAR PLAYING ARE STILL RUDIMENTARY, BUT THE RECORDINGS, ESPECIALLY 'WADE IN THE WATER', 'GOTTA TRAVEL ON', 'JESUS CHRIST', 'MULESKINNER BLUES' AND 'JOHNNY I HARDLY KNEW YOU' SHOW A PARTICULAR PRESENCE AND ENTHUSIASM.....

.....BEFORE LONG, DYLAN SEES HIMSELF AS A JACK KEROUAC FIGURE, AND DECIDES HE HAS TO RAMBLE ON HIS OWN PERSONAL ODYSSEY. HE BEGINS TO STRAY FURTHER FROM MINNESOTA, BUT YEARNS TO MAKE THE BREAK TO THE BIG CITIES. BY LATE 1960, AS A NEW DECADE AND A NEW ERA ROLLS IN, DYLAN DROPS OUT OF COLLEGE AND BIDS FAREWELL TO HIS PARENTS. HE AND A FRIEND HEAD FIRST FOR CHICAGO, PLAYING MUSIC WHEREVER AND WHENEVER THEY CAN, AND THEN DYLAN VEERS OFF TOWARDS HIS MECCA, HIS DREAM, NEW YORK CITY.....

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A BOOK THAT NOBODY CAN WRITE.....

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BOB DYLAN

JANUARY 1961, DYLAN HITS NEW YORK DURING A HEAVY BLIZZARD. HE HAS NOWHERE TO GO AND NOWHERE TO STAY.....

..... HE MANAGES TO GET A FEW ENGAGEMENTS SINGING HIS REPETOIRE OF OLD FOLK AND BLUES NUMBERS IN A FEW CLUBS AND BARS. HE RECEIVES NO FEE BUT IS ALLOWED TO "PASS THE HAT" AROUND THE AUDIENCE. UNFORTUNATELY, BOB'S HAT IS RATHER SMALL.....

..... QUITE OFTEN DYLAN MANAGES TO GET A BED WITH PEOPLE HE BEFRIENDS. HE HAS A CERTAIN CHARM AND INNOCENCE THAT PEOPLE LIKEN TO CHARLIE CHAPLIN..... AND IF THE CHARM DOESN'T WORK, DYLAN ALWAYS FINDS SOMEWHERE WARM.....

..... NORMALLY, THOUGH, DYLAN'S "LITTLE BOY LOST" ROUTINE MAKES MOST WOMEN WANT TO MOTHER HIM.....

DYLAN SOON BEGINS TO SOAK UP OTHER PEOPLE'S STYLE AND INFLUENCES LIKE A SPONGE..... HIS APPETITE IS INSATIABLE.....

HMMM..... BET I COULD PLAY THAT..... LOOKS EASY ENOUGH! JUST PRACTICE IT!!

THERE IS A HOUSE IN NEW ORLEANS THEY CALL THE RISING SUN.....

..... HE BEFRIENDS THE GLEASON FAMILY AND DISCOVERS THEIR ENORMOUS COLLECTION OF FOLK RECORDS. AS THE SPELLBOUND DYLAN HEARS EACH SONG HE RUSHES TO HIS GUITAR TO LEARN IT.....

WISH I COULD SING LIKE THEM BLUES SINGERS..... HMMM, WISH I COULD SING!!

PANSETTE

LEAD-BELLY

HANK WILLIAMS

BLIND LEMON PIE SINGS FOR YOU

BIG BILL

..... BUT IT'S WHEN DYLAN FIRST HEARS WOODY GUTHRIE THAT HE FINDS WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR.....

GULP..... THAT'S IT..... THAT'S IT..... A GENIUS.....

.....PASTURES OF PLENTY.....

BOB'S FIRST EARLY ATTEMPT AT WHAT WOULD LATER BECOME KNOWN AS THE "RENALDO AND CLARA" JAW-DROP

..... ALMOST IMMEDIATELY DYLAN BECOMES A GUTHRIE CLONE, AND HE HITCHES TO SEE THE DYING GUTHRIE WHENEVER HE CAN.....

NEW YORK

EVERYWHERE ELSE

NEW JERSEY

THIS IS A SONG WOODY TAUGHT ME WHEN WE USED TO TRAVEL TOGETHER.....

EVERY NIGHT'S A HOOT AT GERDE'S

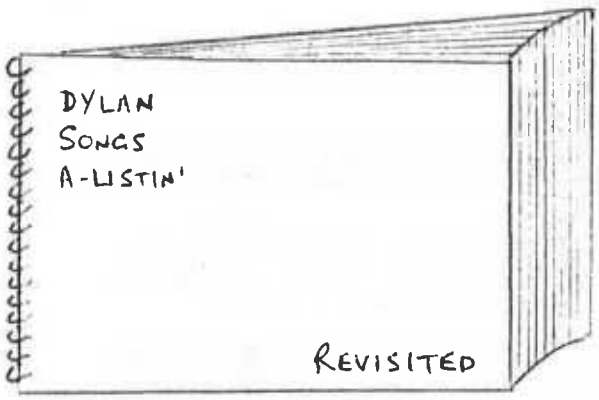
..... GUTHRIE'S INFLUENCE IS IMMEDIATE, AND DYLAN PERFORMS SEVERAL OF HIS SONGS AT EACH AND EVERY CONCERT. HE ADOPTS STYLES TO SUIT HIMSELF, AND BECOMES A MASTER AT THE COVER VERSION. YEARS LATER HE WILL RELEASE 'DOWN IN THE GROOVE' JUST TO PROVE THAT HE STILL IS!!

© M. CARTER

IF I'VE TAKEN A FEW LIBERTIES, IT'S ALL FOR THE SAKE OF ART

1·7·88

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH



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DYLAN HAS PERFORMED ALMOST 900 SONGS AND WITH OVER 5,000 ENTRIES THESE LISTS SHOW THE SONGS ALPHABETICALLY AND CHRONOLOGICALLY INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION :-

WHETHER THE SONG IS WRITTEN BY DYLAN, BY ANOTHER COMPOSER OR IS TRADITIONAL.
WHERE THE SONG IS FIRST PERFORMED (EXACT PLAC AND DATE) INITIAL VENUE TYPE: 1.e. STUDIO, CONCERT, PRIVATE OR MEDIA.
SUBSEQUENT RECORDING VENUES.
IF RECORDING IS AN INSTRUMENTAL OR IF DYLAN IS ONLY A BACK-UP ARTIST.
ALSO LISTS OF NON AVAILABLE RECORDINGS, RUMOURS AND SPECULATIONS.

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SPECIAL NOTICE !!!! FOR THOSE WHO BOUGHT THE ORIGINAL 'SONGS A-LISTIN' YOU SHOULD NOW HAVE YOUR REVISITED COPY. DUE TO AN UNFORTUNATE COMPUTER MALFUNCTION I LOST ABOUT 25 NAMES AND ADDRESSES. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE YOUR UPDATE BY 10/9/90 COULD YOU PLEASE CONTACT ME SENDING GREEN SLIP. THANKS

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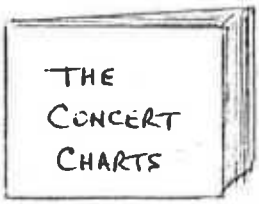

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Dylan has sung 'HURRICANE' on 32 occasions which places it at No. 99

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Fare Thee Well

Goodbye & Subscription Details

Another issue completed, it is time to look to the future. The next issue is a news special from the "year of many cuttings". Perhaps you can look on it as a Christmas treat. I'll simultaneously be preparing the January issue for which half the articles have already been submitted. We'll have Mel Gamble on Dignity; Dave Wingrove on how he saw the light, or rather heard the song, JRS with a controversial column and perhaps I'll even include the long promised *Oh Mercy* and John de Staehely articles.

Subscription Rates (in pounds) for issues 4–7 or 5–8 inclusive:

UK = 12.50, Europe 17:50, Rest Of World 25:00. (USA via Rolling Tomes see advert below.)

Cheques, postal orders etc. payable to "Andrew Muir"; send to 24a Inglethorpe Street, Fulham, London, SW6 6NT.

This issue will be the first to go on sale in Virgin Megastore in Oxford Street. The price is yet to be decided, whatever it is, though, the benefits of subscribing are many: first copies, inserts and the special issues.

There are no back issues available at the moment. There will be a reprinting of issues two and three some time in the future.

Remember that there are four issues per year; so that, if you took out subscription with the last issue, you have paid for issues 3,4,5 and 6. Some flyers quoted "3–7 inclusive" which is, of course, five issues. (Ouch!)

Part Three of *Chung Kuo* out now!

Read Dave Wingrove on Dylan in Homer, *the slut*!

Born in Battersea, South London, in 1954, David Wingrove left school for a career in banking in 1972 and became one of the youngest-ever Associates of the Institute of Bankers. Successful but dissatisfied, he left the bank in 1979 and returned to education, obtaining in 1982 a First Class Honours degree in English and American Literature from the University of Kent, Canterbury. By 1986, he had obtained a further degree and published *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*, which he co-authored with Brian Aldiss – a volume which won the prestigious Hugo Award for that year's best non-fiction work in the SF genre, amongst other honours. *The White Mountain* is the third novel in the *Chung Kuo* series. The first two are *The Middle Kingdom*, now translated into four languages, and *The Broken Wheel*. He lives in North London with his wife and three daughters.

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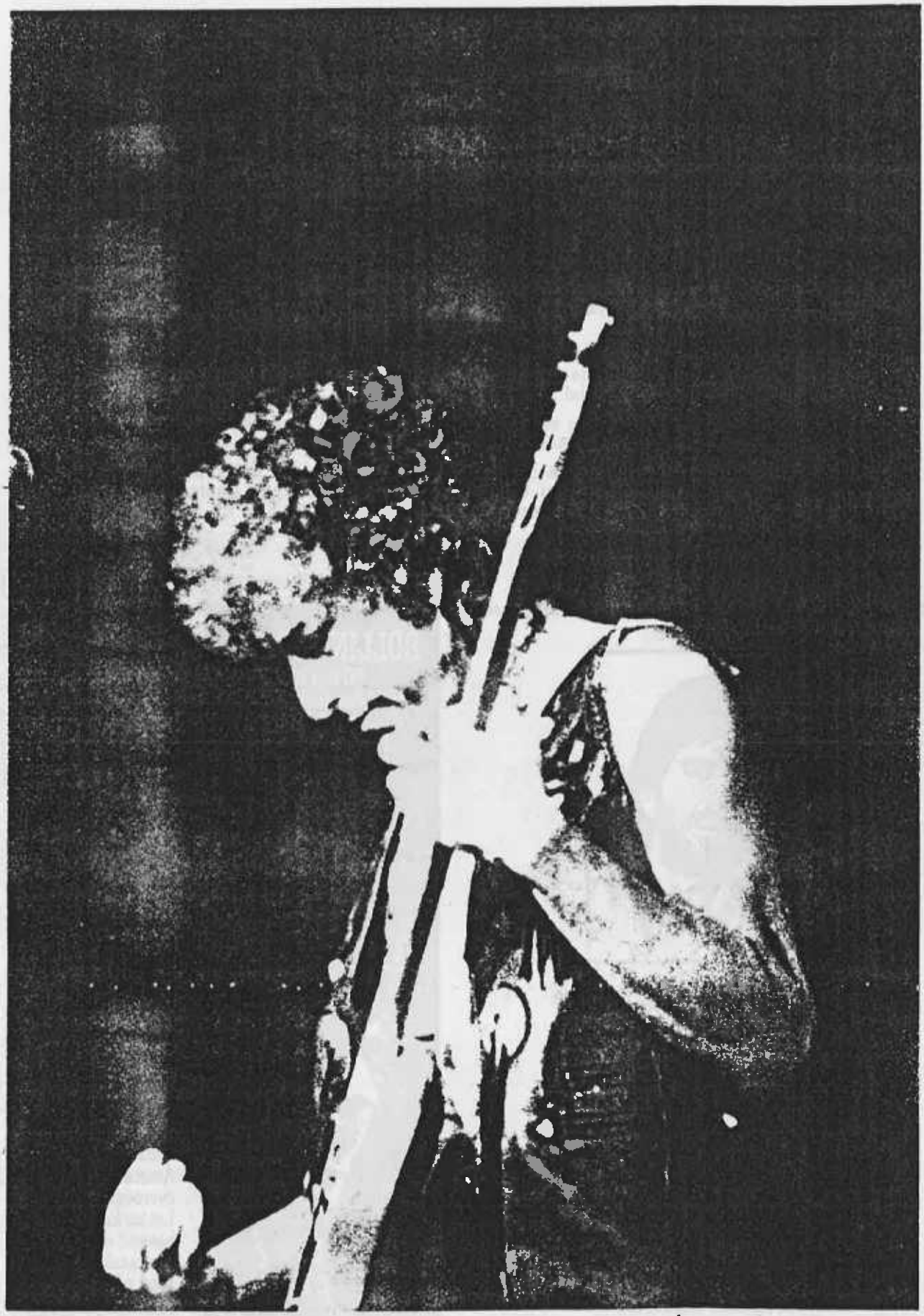

From a photograph by Roger Wass