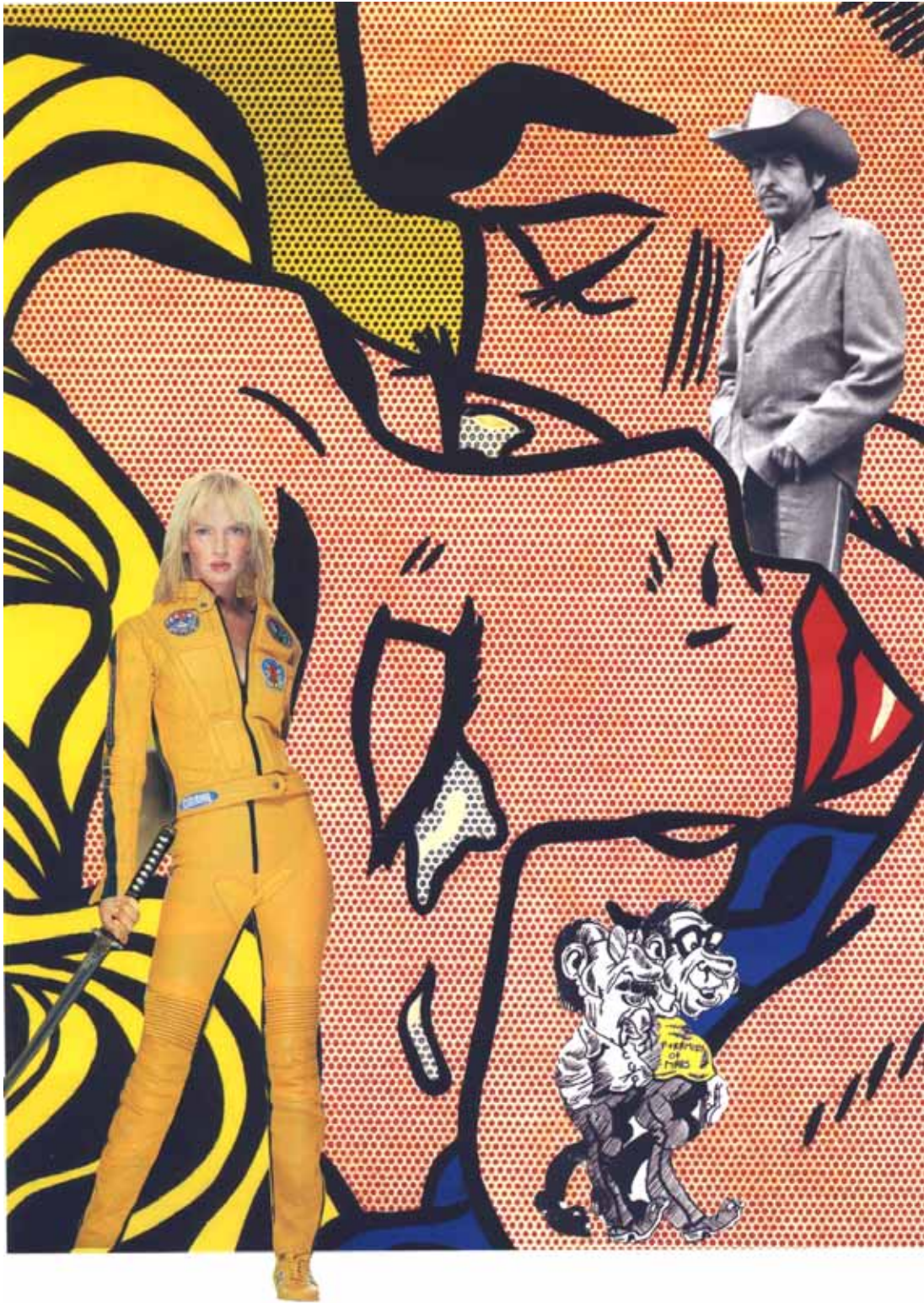


Freewheelin-on-line

Take Twenty Six



Coverdown

Freewheelin 224

Since August 2003 the art of the American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923 - 1997) has been on the road in Europe. The tour started out at The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Amsterdam and will finish, in September 2004, at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, in Madrid. I caught up with the road show during its gig at The Hayward Gallery in London in the spring of 2004.

The thing about the art of Roy Lichtenstein is that he took images from everyday life, as depicted in the comic books of the 1950's, and turned them into giant paintings. Simple idea that: 'any kid could do it' you might say. But there was a reasoning behind this simplicity as is explained in the exhibition's catalogue:

'What Lichtenstein wanted to point out was how important it is for modern man to know the difference between pictures and reality: if we start to identify with all the pictures that are out there trying to convey ideas and impose models, patterns of consumption, concepts of beauty, criteria for success and objects of desire on us then we lose our grip on reality. And that is why Lichtenstein keeps on painting reality so that it looks artificial. For only that way do we learn to recognize a model when we see one.'

The back drop to this month's cover is taken from a 1964 painting called 'Kiss V' which itself is taken from a book of cartoons. Now I couldn't have a cover with a cartoon without the images of our very own cartoon characters The Sad Dylan Fans, from the pen of Mark Carter, making an appearance. They are deep in conversation. About what do you think? The cat suited lady in yellow on the left is 'The Bride' from Tarantino's latest masterpiece Kill Bill Volumes 1 and 2 which are films containing many cartoon characters. And on the subject of films, Jack Fate looks down and ponders what's real and what is not. On the other hand, he could have stopped trying to figure everything out a long time ago!

Freewheelin-on-line take twenty six (freewheelin 224)



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	Distance	Audio	Steadiness	Heads	Focus	Image
1	1/2 screen	1	Not in pic	80%	No pic !	L=left
2	3/4 screen	2	In pic 25 %	70%	Out of focus	C= Center
3	Full length	3	in pic 50 %	60%	Mostly blurred	R=Right
4	Knees	4	In pic 75 %	50%	Bit Blurry	1-9 10% angle
5	Thighs	5	In pic 100%	40%	Goes in and out	B=balcony
6	Waist	6	In pic moves	30%	Soft Focus	S=Stalls
7	Mid Chest	7	steady hand	20%	Mostly In Focus	PRO=TV
8	Head/Shoulders	8	monopod steady	10%	Near Perfect	D = Dark
9	Head	9	perfect	Never	Perfect	



Magnetic Movements Video's

Magnetic Movements-On-Line by Chris Cooper

Hello and welcome

A very short month this time, whilst there are tons of old things arriving on DVD this is the only actually completely new film to come way this month. I am sure things will be hotting up soon when the European tour kicks off again. But this worth your attention in the mean time.



D3 A8 S9 H9 F9 I BC5

**19-03-04 Ricoh Coliseum TORONTO, ONTARIO
(105)**

Drifters Escape/ Its All Over Now, Baby Blue / Tweedle Dee & Tweedle Dum /Just Like A Woman / Things Have Changed / Highway 61 Revisited / Ballad Of A Thin Man /Stuck Inside Of Mobile /Floater /Most Likely You'll Go Your Way / Make You Feel My Love /Honest With Me /Girl Of The North Country /Summer Days
Cats In The Well /Like A Rolling Stone /All Along The Watchtower

This is a "Lividz" film. This guy seems to produce quite good, if not terribly close, films. This fits that bill perfectly, clear steady view and a sharp picture with good sound. SO this is certainly worth seeing, if it were just a little closer at times it would be spot on. It's not the best gig of the tour but a fine competent if not entirely absorbing show. Catch it if you can.

Till Next Time



By Mark Carter

Another European tour brings the usual deluge of press reaction. Having scrutinized these (almost annual) reviews since 1988, it really does seem as though there is very little left for the average critic (and many of them are very average) to say. Since - what? - 1994 or thereabouts the shows have been excellent at best and workmanlike at worst. Without the stunning highs of, for instance, February 1990 or the grotesque lows of 1991 (a year that always seems to spring to mind whenever the word "grotesque" is used, though huge chunks of 1992 and 1993 would also nicely fit the bill) all we have left are fewer and fewer interesting ways of saying that Bob came onstage, did what he was being paid to do and then left.

Anyway, enough foaming at the mouth from me, let's trawl through this latest lot, mainly from Germany.

Prior to the German tour, the German Journalist Association was told that there would be a complete ban on photographers at all shows and so they suggested that all newspapers should boycott the gigs in protest. Of course, it didn't happen but can you really imagine Dylan giving a shiney shite whether the press turned up or not? Aide; "Bob! Bob! The German media have refused to come and review your shows!" Dylan; "What?! Well, there's no point going ahead, then. Cancel the tour!!"

Hamburg first, where Karl Bruckmaier of the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* reckoned that It's Alright Ma was an early highlight but that Dylan nowadays, though not a caricature like the Rolling Stones, is little more than an old man, obviously not in the best of health.

Die Welt sent two critics along to the show - Stefan Krulle and Stefan Grund - both of whom praised Man In The Long Black Coat as the definite highlight. Elmar Bendull of the *Neue Osnabrucker Zeitung* again singled out It's Alright Ma as a "12-bar hymn", he is also impressed with Freddie Koella, who allows Dylan to remain more in the background.

Beate Nelson's brief review in *Hamburger Morljenpost* still managed a wild stab in the dark at humour whilst referring to the photographer ban; "...anybody who's not really collecting pictures of tousled bird's nest hairstyles hasn't missed anything." Journalists - can't laugh with 'em, can laugh at 'em.

Basil Wegener of the *Buxtenader Tageblatt* gets things off to a good start by calling Dylan's voice "phenomenal" before concluding; "...Germany 2003: music industry in crisis, pop written off - and Dylan proves to be the authority who can still celebrate a musical mass with decency."

A brief sulky review in *Bild* complained that Dylan didn't talk to his audience (yawn) and that there was a five minute wait before the encores, by which time many people had already left. Possibly not the most rivetting review I've ever read. Andreas Montag of the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* reckons that Dylan gives the audience what they want, even if they hadn't realised that they wanted it, while a very brief review in *Neue Presse* claimed that the hardcore Dylan fans were happy with Dylan's "Thankyou" - "two words in a whole concert count for close contact with his audience." An ecstatic Michael Werner of the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* insists that Dylan's phrasing on "the rarely played jewel" Man In The Long Black Coat was so ghostly that it turned it into a horror movie; "...It's hardly imaginable that Dylan can get any better in this life."

Onto Berlin, where *Tagesspiegel's* Rudiger Schaper nominates Don't Think Twice as the highlight; "...The last verse he sang with the voice of a younger Dylan - powerful, confident, cheerful..."

Gerd Dehnel of the *Markische Allgemeine* was impressed that the only constant thing about the Neverending Tour is the fact that it keeps changing, while Die Welt was similarly impressed to see To Be Alone With You transformed from a "yearning love song" into a rough rock 'n' roll number. *Frankfurter Rundschau's* Renee Zucker was not disappointed that Dylan didn't smile ("a man at work - why should he smile?") and *Berliner Morgenpost's* Peter E. Muller says the most special things about Dylan are the things that he can't do - "He can't sing "beautifully". He can't toady to anybody. He can't play the same song the same way twice in a row."

A curt review in *Berliner Kurier* complained that Dylan played too many "experimental" numbers from Love And Theft, "which didn't have anything to do with the good old Blowin' In The Wind", and his singing sounded as though he had a bad cold (why are critics always at their funniest when they're trying not to be?).

Berliner Zeitung celebrated the art of change; "...It's unbelievable what Dylan did with All Along The Watchtower within one single year. Last time it was rolling rock, this time he drove his musicians into a metallic interpretation of brutal beauty. "Their only complaint was that, Every Grain Of Sand excepted, the setlist was unspectacular.

Uncut's Gavin Martin caught the Rome show, where he was suitably amazed by the band ("This is the post-apocalyptic Chess band of his dreams made real") and - once again - old Bob himself; "...At the end, Dylan stands alone, shuffling his feet, covering his tracks. None of the crowd wants to leave. Whatever else they see, they know they'll never see a show like this again. Whatever else he does, Bob will make sure they don't."

Onto the UK, where probably the strangest preview of the tour appeared in **The War Cry** by Philip Halcrow. It's obviously written by someone who knows his Dylan and is factually more correct than any number of more pretentious column inches in the dailies. Obviously the dominant theme is Bob's Christianity but that's hardly unexpected. Halcrow concludes by expressing a hope that his audiences might be challenged into reviewing their own religious leanings (or lack thereof). Well, he can hope...

London, Wembley Arena. **The Independents** Andy Gill awarded it three stars out of five and again nominated It's Alright Ma as a standout number; "...a rockabilly rave-up last time we heard it, now reborn as a blues slouch loosely draped around the riff of Smokestack Lightnin". **The Times'** David Sinclair was even more impressed; "... Whereas in the past he has been guilty of throwing together groups and setlists as if putting on a performance for a paying audience was the last thing on his mind, this was a skilfully paced show which built from an arena-strength, Southern boogie version of Highway 61 Revisited to a resounding climax of All Along The Watchtower during which the guitarists were finally and famously turned loose. It's a little late now, but Dylan seems to have decided that the time has come when even a living legend has to make an effort to put on a show."

The Guardian's Betty Clarke was somewhat less bowled over, claiming that only Dylan's poetry saved the evening; "... Watching a living legend inspires duplicity. You're torn between wanting to hear something seminal and admitting that you want to witness possibly the last, faltering steps of a star. When the legend is Bob Dylan, the event turns into a freak show. His voice hovers between that of a shrill housewife and Yoda, and he teeters around the stage with the elegance of the Elephant Man." A good time was had by all, then.

In contrast, the **Financial Times'** Ludovic Hunter-Tilney was happy enough with what he saw; "...It was a treat to watch him work the stage without his customary guitar..... At the end of each number, as the lights went down, you could see his silhouette jogging around, clenched fists bobbing like some old boxer. A fragment of a line he sang from Like A Rolling Stone rang out with particular gusto: "You said you'd never compromise". Dylan's rejuvenation continues."

Mojo, unusually, didn't actually review a show but did devote a page to the final couple of intimate London shows, commenting on the unusual song selections and Bob's happy demeanour. Actually, the text is really quite limited but this is compensated by a lovely photo of Dylan onstage at Brixton - quite possibly the only photo you'll see of Bob during the European tour outside of the fanzines.

Finally, I've been sent a review of the four London shows, though I have no idea where it appeared or who wrote it. Normally, I'd not bother mentioning something without a source or author's name, but this is a nicely written and highly enthusiastic piece and is a good way to wind up this month's column. With praise awarded equally for Dylan's voice and his keyboard playing (not something you're likely to see very often. In both cases) as well as this year's gorgeous treatment of *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll*, this is evidently written by a fan first and a critic second. You even sense that the author was thrilled by Dylan's very reception by his audience, no more so than at Brixton; "...In a lifetime of concert-going, in smokey jazz club and grand opera house, rock stadium and pop arena, you'd be lucky to see a more tumultuous reception than that accorded Dylan on Tuesday night."

By the end, the mysterious author is nailing his colours very firmly to the mast and claiming that "The London shows underlined Dylan's claim to be regarded as one of the great creative forces of the age...Comparisons with poprock contemporaries - the Beatles, say, or the Stones, or the army of superannuated hoofers still peddling heritage entertainment to eager nostalgics - do Dylan a disservice...Bob Dylan's writing and performance art bridge the gap between popular entertainment and high culture. His is quintessential music for grown-ups."

And that, I think, is a good a place to leave it for this month as any. I happen to think that Dylan's recent keyboard playing is only perfunctory when it isn't being downright awful, but I'd rather read a review by someone who thinks it's wonderful than someone who doesn't. Does that make sense?

**THANKS TO: DEREK AND TRACY BARKER/ ANDY MUIR/ JENS WINTER/
BRYAN GREY AND ANGELA.**



The Whole Wide World is watching

The Best of the Web by Martin Stein (With thanks to Expecting Rain)

Days ahead of his (last ever?) UK tour, here's a summary of what happened last month:

1. **Columbia/Legacy** has set a 1st June release date for 14 remastered Bob Dylan titles, which first hit the marketplace last year as Super Audio CD hybrids. The remasters, which include *Blonde on Blonde*, *Blood on the Tracks*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, *John Wesley Harding* and *Bringing It All Back Home*, will be available in jewel cases as opposed to the digipaks that housed last year's editions. The lone album that was part of the initial hybrid campaign that is not being made available next month is 'Love and Theft'.
2. **The late music composer** Trinh Cong Son will be the first Vietnamese composer to be posthumously awarded the World Peace Music Award (WPMA) for his contributions to global peace. Five other notable music composers, namely Joan Baez, Peter Paul & Mary, Bob Dylan, Harry Belafonte and Country Joe McDonald will be awarded at the ceremony. The award ceremony will be on 22nd June.
3. **Dylan's added an extra show** at the 1,900-seater Barrowland club in Glasgow on 24 June sold out in hours.
4. **Apparently Bob** is one of the 25,000 members of the Scotch Malt Whisky Society.
5. **Old Crow Medicine Show's new single** *Wagon Wheel*, is an unfinished Bob Dylan song originally intended for the Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid soundtrack but never recorded by Dylan. Fiddler Ketch Secor added additional lyrics and melody. So, on his very first album, Secor is, essentially, co-writing a song with Bob Dylan. "We heard it on a bootleg. A great song. 'Rock me mama like a wagon wheel . . .' It cuts through like a hot knife," Secor said.
6. **Three new celebrity wines** - from Bob Dylan, Carole Bouquet and Gerard Depardieu - debut in the U.S. next autumn. Dylan's wine, produced with Italian winemaker Antonio Terni, is called *Planet Waves 2002*, a blend of Montepulciano wine and merlot. It will sell for \$65 a bottle.
7. **Avril Lavigne will contribute a song** on *Unity*, the official Athens 2004 Olympic Games album. The Canadian singer covers Bob Dylan's *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*. This first of three official 2004 Olympic albums is set for release on 10th August.

TWO RIDERS APPROACHING



Larry Charles Interview

by Trev Gibb

Have you visited the 'Masked and Anonymous Database'?

Yes I have its amazing!

I'm happy you like it...

Oh I'm very pleased, I'm very touched actually.

I've got quite a lot of points to filter through and how I'll approach them I'm not sure, but I'll plunge ahead...

We'll just riff around and I'm sure that something interesting will come out of it.

I think the movie speaks so much truth; it's been a long time since I've seen a film like that. Did you intend it to be a social commentary?

Well you know, it's interesting, we never had any intention at all or any concern about results or consequences. We really started from a very purely organic place, just exchanging ideas thoughts; sometimes a word or an expression in a very almost unconscious, automatic, writing it up technique, without imposing any order on it and letting the order and patterns emerge out of it naturally.

The film is very poetic in feel and very Shakespearian, especially in the case of the screenplay...

I agree, that's you know... Bob inspires you to reach these heights you didn't think were possible.

It must've been an experience meeting Bob Dylan?

There's nothing to describe it. It was the most life changing experience of my life...its just meeting your guru, just holding a mirror to you and the world and saying look. That's what it's like being with him, just surprising you at all times, confounding you at all times, confusing you. But all with the end result of cracking open your head and just seeing more deeply and more clearly.

Dylan always seems discreet, but his discretion speaks a thousand things at the same time, he seems to evoke and provoke so much...

He does and he's very enigmatic and very complex and very dense, which is no surprise. And so he will never say, "This is what I think". He will have something and he will say it and I will say "Wow you really feel strongly about that!" and he'll say, "Well somebody does".

Very Dylanesque...

Laughs

The film is so layered; it's colourful, provocative, like a puzzle...

Yes, the last piece of the puzzle was you. That to me is the key. When I go around the country to these screenings I tell people it is a puzzle and the last piece is you. You have to kind of be involved and interact with it. And wherever you are in your life at that moment you're gonna see certain things in that movie like you do in a Bob Dylan song. And you may come back a year from now or ten years from now and be in a different place and see the movie in a different light as well.

The film has only really played in America. Is it going to play England any time soon?

Yes it should be opening. I know there's a film festival in England that it's gonna open at. BBC films, was one of the financial partners, so it's definitely meant to open in England. It's gonna open all over Europe now; over the next couple of months, actually.

There have been rumours of a DVD release coming out soon, is there any plans finalised for what will appear on the DVD?

There is a DVD that's going to come out I believe in February, with some deleted scenes and some other bonus stuff. But that's not the definitive version there's still yet my directors cut somewhere down the line, if we can get the financing together we'll put that out too, that's kind of more expensive to put together.

Will there ever be a definitive version? There's so much going on and so many scenes that didn't make it.

Well right. By definitive I only mean like... everything, we shot everything that's in the script. And there is a version of that, that from a historically archival position might be worth having out there as well... I also have hours and hours of bob rehearsing. And I kept a camera rolling while he was doing all the music, never cutting so I have all the between song patter and warm-up stuff, and I feel like there's a great historical archive there not to be exploited commercially, I think that would be wrong, but at some point down the line, way down the line perhaps, it should have some historical value.

It's very intimate... Most of those live scenes with the band. The camera perspective creates such an intimate feel.

As far as the music goes, one of our earliest conversations was how to shoot the music. Bob had some very specific ideas about how he thought music should look and what's gone wrong with music on film and why he has felt that he had never actually been well represented performing on film. And we went back and looked at some things we both liked a lot. Like old *Johnny Cash* shows, and even *Ed Sullivan* and *The Grand Old Opry* shows with Hank Williams and we found they basically used one camera and put you right there and there was an intimacy created between the musician and the home audience And we really responded to that, and nowadays people are afraid to stay on that one shot – and we cut and we cut, and this kind of MTV style – and we made a conscious decision to go back to this more pure version of presenting the music and it wound up being very dramatic.

You get right in perspective-wise. It's very direct. The cinematography on the whole is so rich. One frame is like a photograph with so much going on in every part of the screen.

I'm glad you noticed that. Thank you very much, that was an effort to... we were both attracted to density and I tried to just fill the frame up at all times with a lot of information. The way Bob's songs filled with references and allusions so that you could go back over and over again and listen to and never get tired. I wanted this to have that same quality.

There appears to be layers at every level in the film. One of the sections on the website actually deals with the idea of allusions and references.

Yes I've read that, it's great. The thing is again I've been to about 20 cities where I've hosted screenings and answered questions and what's so great is that the audience, as I said, the audience being part of the puzzle, and the puzzle pieces can be moved around and create a different puzzle each time. Also, besides the last piece being you, the puzzle itself is constantly shifting. But people see things in the movie beyond even what was intended and those are valid quite often. I've heard interpretations of aspects of the movie that were certainly not conscious on our part. But when I looked back, I go "absolutely! That's a very valid interpretation of what's going on there"

The film is like a living art form and I'm sure it will grow through time and have a resonance like Dylan's songs do. Even politically some of the references in there could apply to now or ten years ahead.

Or a hundred years ago, Yes. Well that was one of the themes. We didn't intend for it to be as prophetic as it turned out to be, it was again no intention to comment or be topical in any way, we were more interested in talking about the idea of the cycles of history and how history repeats itself. We think we're unique, we think we're in a unique time but really this is just another cycle of history that resembles every other one that's come before it and as it turned out it winded up being very prophetic and topical as well.

Were you thinking about W. B Yeats and "Turning and turning within the widening gyre"?

Yes, well when you're with Bob again you with a Bard on that level. Someone who is... whose job it is in life to be thinking about those things and commenting and writing about those things, so you're in that state of mind when you're with him and inevitably in the

way Bob has throughout history – his own history – your tapping into things, into a certain psyche again almost unconsciously but inevitably.

I've seen this film countless times, I found it initially very overwhelming but it made me more willing to engage with it and to explore.

Yeah, well people who are willing to engage with it, that's usually the reaction. What happened with some of the critics was that they were so overwhelmed at first that they checked out and they never got to engage with it and see all the levels and the layers and all the different things that were available to them in the movie. But people like you, and again, I've gone around the country to all kinds of obscure places and the audience is very willing to engage and they have that sense of being overwhelmed. And then they let it wash over them and they enter into it and experience it and they wind up having a great experience from it.

You've tapped into something that at this particular moment in cinema history is dwindling. Now, when you go see a movie its escapism and you sit back and let it do its things, whereas with this film you have to engage and take part.

Yes, well most movies today are very cut and dry. It's a very risk-averse business now because there is so much money involved. They need people to come in and move on. And this is not a movie that's intended that way. This is a movie that's intended to be savoured and revisited like something you'd see in a museum or a poem you'd read in a book, rather than mass-market entertainment.

I do feel it will gain a Cult Status somewhere along the line. As I've said it has richness and a resonance.

Bob was very clear about that. And his work, often a lot of his greatest work, has been met with disdain when it comes out. And then later on people go, "Wow! You know 'Slow Train Coming' is a brilliant album", or whatever... You know what I mean? And I look at this that way also. This is not done for a commercial acceptability; this is done to make a statement. And it's out there and people will find it and it will always be there for them.

I think Dylan said, "What's wrong with being misunderstood?"

Yeah that's Bob. I mean when we were working on it he had a line that he wanted to put in and he said he had a line and I said, "Bob I have to say even in the script I don't think people are gonna understand that line". And he said, "Well what's so bad about being

misunderstood?” And I think he was saying... He’s a person; he’s been understood, he’s done that, he’s now willing to risk being misunderstood in order to reach a deeper level of understanding. And that’s a very courageous place for an artist to go.

I think that’s true artistic temperament. You’re willing to take risks because you know art has to extend beyond the normal confines of what you must and must not do and again I guess that applies to cinema culture at this point in time. The fear to experiment and to be profound has led to the studio system conforming.

Exactly, well that’s why, this was conceived, financed, produced... Everything about this movie was done outside of that system. I mean again there was no intention, no result that was desired. There was no commercial consideration in making this movie. This is a purely instinctive process which is really an anathema to the making of movies today.

It is such a shame that the critics could not engage with this movie. They completely missed the boat.

Well Bob again in his way told me that the critics wouldn’t get this movie, but the audience would if they had a chance to see it and that has been born out by my own personal experience. I think the critics are now sort of for the most part, part of a larger system, a more corporate system. And this (the movie) just doesn’t fit into any niche that they can really relate to. They don’t have time anymore, there’s not that kind of serious film criticism that there was 20, 30 years ago. They don’t have time to write the kind of detailed soft pieces about a film, even if they wind up rejecting it, they don’t have time to even think about it before they reject it. Here it’s just so easy to go “Oh Bob Dylan, Oh Larry Charles... Oh it’s a difficult movie, how dare they make a movie. I’m not going to engage in this” or “I’m not gonna try to look into the movie I’m not gonna try to be part of the movie.” And the end result is a lot of bad reviews obviously.

‘Masked and Anonymous’ has a mood of the Carnavalesque, for example, ‘Desolation Row goes to the Movies’. The colour, the lighting, the characters and so forth... There is a cartoon feel, especially in the case of the main soundstage.

Yes, well it was a great synthesis of various things that were going on in our heads at the time and if we started today it might be totally different, you know.

The characters evoke a Shakespearian quality, each of the characters seems to act as a device in the story. One of my favourite performances is that of Luke Wilson, who seems to have a more moralistic voice in the movie.

Luke was great.

He just gets the part down perfectly, so real, so convincing.

Luke is also one of these people. He travelled with me quite a bit on this tour I did and he's one of these people also who totally gets it. I mean people either understand how cool it is to make a movie with Bob Dylan or they don't and he was one of the people, he was the first person to commit to the movie. He just called me up and said look "I will do anything in this movie," and he and I became very close friends through the making of this movie.

Yeah he appears to be a really good guy.

Yeah he's a great guy

All the actors who contributed all provide really great performances. John Goodman's performance for example.

It's fantastic... It's a great performance.

All the characters to me have this underlying cynicism that's rounded off with satire. In fact the film is full of dark humour and black comedy.

Well right, the dark humour and black comedy, which is so much a part of Bob's music also, was missed by a lot of people, a lot of the critics I think. Whereas, the audience was able to see it and I think by the same token the performances are so monumental, but very distinctive and unique and non-naturalistic in a way and yet they also give dimensions of the characters, at the same time that it was again hard for critics – used to a straight ahead naturalistic performance – to kind of gauge what this performance means, you know Jessica Lange or John Goodman

This is no normal movie. These people are really absorbed into the characters.

Yes they committed and that's the kind of actors they are. If you look at Jessica Lange and John Goodman and Jeff Bridges body of work, Penelope Cruz... you see, they're very risk taking actors, they're willing to go out there and they work. They were all great.

One of the scenes that only got to me later on was the scene in the movie about the shooting gallery of world leaders. That's hilarious!

Yeah, yeah that was really funny, I agree. Well again we initially set out to have different look-alikes and I couldn't find good look-alikes of the versions I wanted and finally we started to, well at a least there's a good Ghandi, and it was like, let's use that. So it was again, you know, the synchronicity of it. You had to be very open to the synchronicity of it to take advantage of it.

A lot of key scenes in the film take place on staircases, such as Jack Fate's release from prison, his conversation with Oscar Vogel and his visit to his mother's grave. There are also references to stairs in the dialogue, like when Pagan Lacey says, "We'll take the stairs" or when Fate says, "My fall from grace didn't end at the bottom of those stairs." What was the logic behind the staircase motif running through the film?

Yes, Yes, absolutely. Right that's true. You know something. What you just said actually was one of those things that happened at the screenings, I hadn't thought about that. There's a lot of staircases imagery in the film. I just was attracted when I went around scouting I was attracted to staircases in around LA there are a lot of dramatic staircases hidden from view. If you ever seen Laurel and Hardy's, *The Music Box*, there were incredible staircases in L.A., on the side of hillsides and I'd be struck by them as we drove by. And I'd say we could do the scene here, we could do the scene there. Something unconscious was drawing me to them. That's a very interesting comment, I hadn't even thought about that. But I actually see it now. It's totally valid.

Funny you should mention that but that Laurel and Hardy scene with the piano I believe was influenced by where Stan Laurel originally came from, in North Shields, which is ten minutes from where I am now. I believe there are some stairs there exactly like what's portrayed in that film.

Yeah, yeah, Wow! Well that's really interesting. It's all connected ultimately.

The poetic feel of the movie and especially some of the lines in the movie is astounding... lines such as: "Hospitals built as shrines to the diseases they create" and "Vietnam War lost in the whore houses of Saigon", and importantly "We spend our time trying to kill time, but when all is said and done time ends up killing us"...

I know. Sometimes Bob would come in with a line a like that and say do you think we should use that and I'd go, "You crazy!?!? It's such an amazing line, you just changed

my life with that line”, you know. But Bob is very irreverent in relation to his own work and he’s very willing to... he doesn’t like it to be pretty, he likes to twist it and push it and make it sound wrong, you know, ‘Only time will tell who has fell and who’s been left behind’. You know, he really likes to sort of flirt with the wrongness of it, to see what might be elicited by that and with a lot of these lines he would play with them and you know where I might be really satisfied with the pretty version of it, he would want to push further and deeper and see if we can kind of twist it around somehow. It was a fascinating process to go through.

It’s that subversive nature that makes the film is so intense and so great. ‘Masked and Anonymous’ totally subverts the notion of how a film should be. It isn’t a movie as you would define a movie, it isn’t a conventional movie, but that’s why it’s so great. Once you get into it there’s so much.

I totally agree, I mean I want to almost not call it a movie, because it’s so Brechtian and so theatrical and so literary and so poetic... It seemed almost limiting to call it a movie.

So is it a work in progress? Every time it expresses something slightly different.

Yes, well one of the things that I’ve said and I’ve felt a lot about this, is the concept of the finished product. We’ve come to believe in this society that something is finished, but that’s really an illusion and this is a movie that really can be... if I could I would work on it for the rest of my life and change it and play with it and re-do it, and take the pieces apart and put it back together. Really it’s a flowing fluid thing rather than a finished product.

The passion that watching the film creates seems to last and especially in your case

Well I feel responsibility to it. I feel that it was something that was born out of a very organic, pure process and I feel like it’s my responsibility to take care of it. It’s a very precious thing and yet it’s a very resilient thing and I want people to experience it. I really think that everybody who winds up experiencing it is glad they did. But its been hard to get it to people, that been the biggest obstacle really.

But it’s great that you and Bob can put up your receivers and allow this stuff to flow through you and for the art to seep through...

Well again, that’s the inspiration that he has been to me, I mean he is a purely instinctive person, he doesn’t judge his thoughts. These are my thoughts and they might have levity they might not, lets find out. He really just follows his instincts. Look, they made him

Bob Dylan so he has reason to trust those instincts and so that was the philosophy I adopted. It was like, “we’re just gonna trust our instincts here and see where it takes us”

One of the phrases that strikes me, and seems to resonate through the movie is the phrase “As long as I keep talking I know I’m still alive”. All the characters seem to be governed by this idea, this frustration, in finding something real, such as Pagan Lace’s tragic pleas of, “Save me, save me”.

Yes, exactly. That’s exactly right. There is a sense of the film on one level being about communication and the breakdown of communication and how do we even hear, what do we hear? What is the process by which we hear someone else, when the words come out of someone else’s mouth? Things like that we were interested in. We’re interested in language itself. Language itself becomes a theme of the film. What is the purpose of language? How is language used to transmit ideas? These are kind of interesting, complex themes that are there again, part of the fabric as well.

Of course the film itself uses language in many different ways, not just musically, or vocally, but its there visually, it’s in what you hear and what you don’t hear. It’s everywhere. It’s often only suggested. In fact there are suggestions everywhere in the film. And all of these things going on simultaneously can lead you off in so many different directions.

Right, and even when your seeing a visually dense frame you are also hearing a cacophony usually in the background of that frame as well, that could be peeled away as well to hear a lot of different things going on too.

Well. even the reference to “Evil Doers” as spoken by Edmund certainly has a resonance with the ‘here and now’.

Yeah and at the same time there’s a kind of, almost a quaintness to that expression. And Bob is very interested in that and I think if you listen to ‘Love and Theft’ its there too. And I think this is part of that same period in his work which is the juxtaposition of the old and the quaint and the old fashioned with the post-modern. He’s trying to really juxtapose those forms and see what happens.

He seems to have retained – and it certainly shows in the film – or regained what he had in the 65-66 period of stream of consciousness, but there’s another element to it completely. I was wondering is there any connection between ‘Love and Theft’ and ‘Masked and Anonymous’? Did either/or inspire the other? Did some of the lines from ‘Masked and Anonymous’ appear in ‘Love and Theft’ and so forth?

Yes, what happened was, he was working on 'Love and Theft' at the same time and in fact I had the privilege of going to the recording studio and what happens is, a lot of lines that didn't wind up in 'Masked and Anonymous', wind up in Love And Theft and vice versa. Again we're mixing and matching and sort of making our own puzzle. And so there were quite a few things like that, that emerged. Again, it was part of his interest at the time. I think from 'Time Out Of Mind' through this movie you can almost look at now as a period, like the *born-again period*, or the *electric period*. And I think that now he's done that, the culmination is maybe the movie, now I think you're going to see him drift for a while until he finds that next thing that interests him.

This movie explores the idea of things that are not defined, in many ways and Dylan doesn't go for perfection.

Right, he very much embraces the imperfect, and the beauty of the imperfect, the beauty of the flaw and he's not afraid of that. And that's part of his courage as an artist. Also, you know, he recognises the illusion of perfection... This goes back to the idea of the finished product also, which is why there is such a wealth of Bob Dylan bootleg material also.

Well he inspires a lot of that. Mainly because he is an art form, what he does is an art form. There's a respect for the art so much so that people want to hear more because he's such an experimentative performing artist.

Yes

And 'Masked and Anonymous' is as much an example of this performance art.

Yes

As Pagan Lace says about the songs, "They may not be recognisable", the idea of change and the thing with 'Masked and Anonymous' and even Dylan as a performing artist is that you may see something once, but the next time you see it, it won't be the same.

That's right; it's constantly fluid and ever changing. It's like a natural bi-product of who he is. Very interesting that way... he's very comfortable also – and inspired me to be more comfortable – with the concept of ambiguity. He is willing again to court ambiguity, court confusion, in order to explore the ambiguous nature of whatever it is

we're talking about and when people are finally able to straddle that ambiguity they get some deeper level out of the work and people who don't, people who can't handle the ambiguity, turn away and those are the people that don't wind up benefiting from him.

And ultimately there's a message there, or as the editor states, "There is a story there" and it comes in many different ways in the movie, whether it be moralistic or not, there is a message.

Yes exactly and again it depends who you are and where you are when you see the movie what you'll draw from

Exactly, and where you are in your life as well.

Yes, yes....

The film will continue to grow I know that in maybe ten years time a line in the film will jump out like never before, it will have a resonance. This even applies with 'Love and Theft'. I don't know if Dylan or anyone else is aware of this, though he probably chuckles to himself over it, but there are lines in 'Love and Theft' that come from...

The Japanese book?

Yes

Yeah, the 'Confessions of a Yakuza'... Yeah, well a couple of things about Bob: First of all, he is like one of the last of the well-read people, you know what I mean? He's so well read and well read in the sense that he can quote anything. He can quote the Bible, he can quote Rimbaud, he can quote Yeats, he can quote whatever it is and he has just a really innate knowledge of literature, no matter what the source, in many different languages also. By the same token, he is constantly... he has these fragments, these bits rolling round in his head all the time and he's constantly – almost like a roulette wheel – trying different bits together and seeing what happens and so when people say, "Oh this is from 'Confessions of a Yakuza', I think he laughs, because he's taken a totally non-poetic sentence, perhaps out of the middle of a paragraph of 'Confessions of a Yakuza' and turned it into art.

The album itself conjured up the feel of the America South in places, so how can you take a line from a Japanese book about a gangster and make it part of what appears to be a vision of the American South or the lost American South?

Exactly, taking these seemingly mundane lines from this Japanese book and totally re-imagining them in this other context. It's the way art is actually made and I think again it was a quick little glimpse into his process, which is fascinating.

In 'Masked and Anonymous' that whole idea applies also, references, allusions and so forth and I guess therefore there's a lot linkage to people like T. S. Eliot.

Absolutely, well again we're talking about juxtaposing a lot of different forms, almost stripping them together, one after the other; a biblical reference might be followed by a reference to Shakespeare, which might be followed by a film-noir reference. Just constantly pushing and mixing and matching and seeing if they hold together, it's an experiment to see if they hold together.

There is definitely a noir influence there...

Yes, that was a big influence. We talked about movies like 'Key Largo' and I've described it as 'sci-fi-film-noir-musical-comedy'. And I see Bob as this kind of post-apocalyptic Humphrey Bogart or Clint Eastwood. Yeah and I think Bob is very much of that era also. Those were movies that probably really made an impression on him.

Well, 'Empire Burlesque' is made up of lines from 'The Maltese Falcon' and so forth.

Yes, yes.

And of course while watching 'Masked and Anonymous', watching the performances and watching Dylan's performance as well as the use of lines in the film harks back to that whole idea.

Absolutely, that was again, very intended, very intentional.

Most of the critics who see the film don't see an art form. They have resentment to its experimentative nature and this whole Yakuza situation with 'Love and Theft' only fuels their negativity and fuels controversy.

Right, well people thought they had something, again, this sensationalistic aspect of the media today. People thought, “We’ve caught Bob Dylan somehow”. But instead what they did was – and this is why the story fell apart – because it was so much more complex and so much more enigmatic and ambiguous than the way it was presented, that the media couldn’t handle it after a while. It’s like, if you really want to enter this world, the world of Bob’s head, you better take your shoes and get ready for a long journey.

And “You’ve got to be born on my side”

That’s right, that’s right, and the media was not prepared to do that, and of course this movie is also a movie where Bob really confronts the media and this is another reason why the media have been somewhat resistant to it.

The media in many ways controls the minds of people. It’s destroying art, and there’s a lot of lines in the film that apply to that idea: “They have a reach and resonance more than even they themselves realise”. Again, this whole idea was also presented in Michael Moore’s ‘Bowling for Columbine’, the idea of manufactured fear, to make the masses consume. ‘Masked and Anonymous’ also addresses this issue of the media and corporate powers.

It creates an anxiety and makes it much easier to make people vulnerable and therefore controlled

Truth again...

Well when you’re around Bob that’s what’s coming out of him. You know, he’s somebody who’s seen more than you have and knows more than you know and if you wise you listen and he will tell you everything you need to know, but your gonna have to do the work of interpreting it and that’s how the movie is also, its like Bob is telling you everything, this is another aspect of the movie. This is Bob telling you everything about himself also, but it’s not laid out clearly, you have to do the work of kind of putting the pieces together.

I think it may have been Andrew Motion, or perhaps Sean Wilentz who spoke of how in ‘Masked and Anonymous’ Bob is able to say the things that as Bob Dylan he cannot say, but it can be done as Jack Fate and with ‘Masked and Anonymous’. Of course when Bob is talking about himself he often refers to himself in the third person.

Absolutely, well there is an aspect of Bob, you know, he needs to be called Bob for instance, because 'Dylan' is our problem. Dylan is what we've imposed on him and he holds on to his Bob-ness his humanness in way, his realness, because if he gets sucked into the Dylan part, that's the mythological part that everybody has kind of created, that is almost too gigantic a burden for him to carry.

Yes, it must be hard to retain any form of reality or even normality when you're faced with that.

Yes...

In a documentary made about 'Hearts of Fire', Bob talks about looking through the windows of a pub and seeing people being very real, but once he's walked into the room, he knows that realness will disappear.

Right, right. Well I think also when the time comes people will start to see the connection between Bob's cinema work. One of the things I realised after the fact, I was watching 'Don't Look Back' recently and I realised that the scene where he has the argument with the English journalist, that's Jeff Bridges character forty years ago. And then wow! It started to connect to me and then also and I'd seen 'Don't Look Back' five times and I watched it again recently and at the end of the movie, there Bob's sitting at the back of a limousine after a performance, staring out the window, driving away and the camera just stays on him and I'm thinking that's a parallel ending to the ending of our movie.

Continued in the next issue



Was You What It Wanted?

by Jim Gillan

John Green 4 day. You made it what it was, either by your presence or, like me, by your absence. Yes folks, both are equally significant. Think of a cheese sandwich with and without the bread. Manifestly, one is not the opposite of the other, although the hungry amongst us might argue otherwise. Shift perspective, apply it to Dylan and have a cup of nice tea whilst you ponder on whether his performances would be better if they were fewer and shorter.

In the meantime, savage and untimely illness having laid me low, the Moat House experience imploded in one dimension, but gave birth to its virtual twin, albeit one interrupted by frequent trips to the medicine cabinet for comfort. Not cure – the aspirin/codeine/paracetamol variants don't actually combat anything, but they give the impression that they might. Like so many things in the endless constructs of life, *illusion* is what we cling to.

Masked And Anonymous made for a pleasant couple of hours. It's a bleak film, without much subtlety. Portraying a world where bigger issues of behavioural, moral and ethical significance are utterly ignored in favour of narrow self-interest, there is a hint of hope, but ultimately no redemption. The Dylan character accepts his fate and jacks it in. None of that nonsense about saving the nation, getting the girl and wisecracking into tomorrow. As I watch it, Iraq burns. In Rwanda, one of the many women brutally raped in the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi is in constant pain. In the White House, George Bush is on the 'phone to Tony Blair; they are talking about the importance of getting the electorate on message. I go to the PC, type "Hutu and Tutsi" into Google.

Of the 8,830 results, the first is www.benetton.com/colors/issues/hutu41/, an eloquent testimony, more telling than anything *Masked & Anonymous* can manage. Iraq+Solution produces 'about 1,760,000', which is a lot of commentary, *but which contains absolutely no answer*. Bush+Blair+message gets 434,000, but I don't read 'em, as I won't believe 'em. "Bush+Blair+intelligence" gives 4. A surprisingly high figure.

On to the *Victoria's Secret* advertisement. Which, appropriately enough, is brief, but unrevealing. *Victoria's Secret* is to lingerie what the Big Mac is to nutrition. It looks good on the ad, but that's it. The commercial is a jolly enough diversion, which does absolutely nothing for me, either in respect of Dylan's art, or the underwear. Which if that's the best that the designers can come up with, definitely needs to be covered up. Actually, there is a momentary *frisson*, an elegantly sensuous movement from the model, as she slides one leg over the other. Will the association result in Dylan selling more CDs than he otherwise would? Is he saying that none of it matters? Will *Victoria's Secret* attract a new client group? I hope that Mark feels a cartoon coming on, because that would be a result that this admittedly harmless diversion deserves.

What saved the day was the music. I dipped at random into the shelves and, in addition to Bob from across the years, gave Blind Willie Johnson, Harry Manx, Tom Doughty, Eliza Gilkyson and others I can't now remember a spin. I dialed up my fractured personalities and had a chat with them, parting, as always, on good terms with all who were there. In the evening, I curled up with Ros, the pair of us drinking a very pleasant organic Nero d'Avola, though it doesn't go all that well with Lemsip.

Now then. The Spoke being impatient for my offering, I'll have to hold it here. If it seems brief, it's because it is. But as *Victoria's Secret* would have us believe (though not on the strength of the Venice ad), less is more. This is rarely the case, especially if there's neither bread, nor cheese.



Bit-Trouble

By Chris Cooper

This is a sad, sorry tale of decline in addiction, of lost hopes and lengthy troubles. An yes guys it has all happened to me, I thought I should make you aware of this sinister drug before you fall foul of it as I have. (one moment whilst I wipe the tears from eyes)

You all know me right? Completist collector of old? Addiction an me, well we are old mates. I should have seen this coming really, but if there is one thing all these years in Psychiatry has taught me, it's that no matter what we may think, we poor humans are only too happy to sit down an make exactly the same mistakes all over.

It started innocently enough. I was using email fine, happy with the PC. Then various companies start advertising broadband. Instead of downloading things and accessing web pages at a mere 52 k a second I could move up to 512k a second, hyperspeed. Well like most of us there was not enough time to do everything so I took the plunge. Within days I was zooming all over the internet at new dazzling speeds. Then it happened the way it usually does, a well meaning friend, (I know, she knows who she is) told me about it.

Bit-Torrent (or was that Bit-Torment)

A brief description of this terrible addiction follows, if you have a weak stomach you may want to miss the next paragraph
When one downloads data from a site you basically transfer it from A to B. That's simple enough of course, but it means you can only take the data at

the speed the person gives it. This can be very slow. A new system was devised that enables more than one person to download from a person (called a "seed") So, if A is the seed, B, C, D & E can all download from A at the same time. But here comes the clever bit, If B has more of the data than C, then C can take from A & B at the same time. This means that they can in theory go at much faster downloading than A is allowing. It also means the more the merrier. The more people the faster you can go. So when you load this thing up you usually have two categories Download speed (the rate you take data from people) and Upload speed (the rate people take from you). There is courtesy to this and that is that you upload as much as you download.

So what was the purpose of all this technology. What was I downloading?
Pictures , no. Porno? No?

It was concerts.

Some well meaning souls were creating sites that you could visit and join a torrent to download a Cd- worth of audio. Yes there are sites where you can get the latest Kylie album, but of course in my case it was Bob I was looking for. And there they were, sometimes a show could be up there to download when it had happened only a day or so ago, A collectors dream come true. But for people like me there was a catch (isn't there always) Simply these sites did not just contain the latest Dylan shows, they contained any shows that anyone cares to place there, and as if that wasn't enough, and here is the REAL problem, there were lots more shows, of other artists too.

If you know me you will know that well Dylan is essentially my main man, I am a child of the sixties and a long way from being a musical virgin. I mean I listen to and collect lots of other people, not just rock also. An suddenly there it all is. So, you visit these sites looking innocently enough for a Bob Show, you scan the list, what's this? An unreleased Jimi Hendrix show from 1968? Hmm lets hear that too. Hey, what's that? A Miles Davis show I went to in '82! Gotta have that.

So soon I was downloading things non -Dylan. At first just a few, but the people at these places were so seductively helpful. Here's a box set of Cream unreleased material. TWENTY cds long!! Wow bet that's hot let's go

for it. An this here? Soundboard recordings of the last Fillmore shows 15 cds long...yes please..

Before I knew what was happening I was sucked in, I nstead of downloading one it was 30. I nstead of 15 Dylan cds waiting to play there are 45 cds of other people.

The downloaded tracks are saved as SHN files, these occupy less space so download quicker, but on average it could take 6-8 hours to download a complete show (2 cds) I soon found I can download up to 4 different things at the same time without affecting download speed too much. That is not the good news it sounds like. It meant if there was Dylan show I wanted, so the PC was going to be on, I might as well take 3 others at the same time. Yet more discs. An if that wasn't enough some people started placing DVD's up there! Bastards! Dvd files cannot be compressed, so the average Dvd takes about 8 times longer to download than a concert. This meant my PC could take 4-8 days to grab one Dvd. You can see, probably better than me what was happening. Before long the PC is on permanent download. An this slows it up for doing other things, like reading mail, writing FW articles an stuff.

It was a while before I saw this happening, and now I fear it may be too late for me. I am cutting back to only 20 new discs worth a week at present. Its a long slow road.

So be careful, take it easy. If you get broadband watch out for these people. I won't mention site names to protect the innocent but just be careful. Or you may end up like me.

Hey what if I bought a second PC? (forget that, an for God sake don't tell Dizzy)

If you can help, drop me an email, or send me your IP address to download the data from..... **OH GOD DID I SAY THAT**

Worried



HIPSTERS, FLIPSTERS & FINGER POPPIN' DADDIES!

BY C.P.LEE

THE TIMES THEY ARE AN OLD SONG?

A couple of weeks ago an interesting glimpse into one of the song writing mechanisms of Mr Dylan emerged when he revealed that the melody of *The Times They Are A Changin'* was built around a tune known as *The Highland Division's Farewell To Sicily*. Time then for a little history, both personal and general.

We're all aware of what is called 'the Folk process', whereby adaption, oral transmission and various other factors are brought into play when writing (and discussing the origins of) a tune or a song. It's certainly no secret that Mr Dylan, like countless other musicians, uses these creative tools in the construction of numbers. We can look at the utilisation of the melody of *No More Auction Block* for a melodic framework on which to base *Blowin' In The Wind*. Also, *The Two Sisters* or *Wind & The Rain* as it's sometimes known, for *Percy's Song*. In a sense, it's a time honoured tradition of the songwriter's craft, and it often provides great fun hunting down root derivatives and sources, but I never, I repeat – never – would have linked *TTTAAC* with *Farewell To Sicily*.

One of my reasons for this is that I've actually known the song longer than I've known Bob Dylan, if you understand what I mean. My father used to sing it occasionally when the mood took him and he was presumably in some way, thinking back to the war, or to Sicily. He usually sang it, more often hummed it, when he was doing something around the house. When I was older, during the 'Folk Boom', I asked him where he'd got it from and he told me that he first heard it in Naples in 1944, and then increasingly as they moved up northwards towards Rome and then eventually Venice. He heard it from the Scottish soldiers and the song he knew was much shorter than the 'proper', complete version I was to discover in a copy of *Sing Out* that I bought in 1966. This one came with a full set of lyrics and an explanation of how it came to be –

The song was written by Scottish Folklorist, Hamish Henderson, who at the time he composed it was serving in Military Intelligence. He built the words around a pipe tune *Farewell To The Creeks* that had been composed by a friend of his, Pipe-Major James Robertson. Henderson doesn't say how the tune got disseminated, but says he was pleasantly surprised when he heard that it had caught on with the Highland troops in Italy (my dad was actually in the Navy, but that's another story). In his short introduction to the song, Henderson goes on to discuss the way a song can cross over into the public domain, as it were, and become regarded as a 'Folk song', that is, a song with no known point of origin, and he tells a great story about almost getting punched out by an irate partygoer who insisted that another of his songs (*The Taxi Driver's Cap*) was an

authentically orally transmitted Folk song with no known author. He says in *Sing Out* – “I soon learned that the biggest honour I could pay my songs was to realise that they no longer belonged to me.”

In my ‘world’ as a performer, *Sicily* has had its place in my repertoire for forty years; it was natural for me to sing it way back when, and sing it I did. I even sang it two years ago in New York, much to the delight of the Italian-American organiser who said “Nobody ever sings songs about Sicily! Have a beer!” If he could have understood the words to the third verse (difficult for a non Scot, I’d wager) he might not have been quite so forthcoming – “Then fare weel, y dives o’ Sicily/Fare ye weel, ye sheilas an ha’s/We’ll all a’mind shebeens an’bothies/Whaur Jock made a date we his dearie ~” Mind you, considering it’s referring to illegal drinking dens and illicit sexual activities with ‘ladies of the night’, maybe he wouldn’t have offered me that beer.

More history ~ Mimi and Dick Farina recorded it as an instrumental in 1965 under the title *Hamish*, presumably an oblique reference to Henderson, though this didn’t stop Farina claiming the song writing credit for it! I had that album and I bought the Vanguard Records re-issue when it came out on CD, and guess what? I never once connected it to *Times*.

I look now at a copy of Todd Harvey’s scholarly *The Formative Dylan – Transmission and Stylistic Influences, 1961-1963*. Writing in 2001, Doctor Harvey traces a melodic link with a tune called *Deliverance Will Come*. Dylan first suggested in the notes to *Biograph* that it stemmed in a loose way from Scottish and Irish ballads, “*Come All Ye Bold Highway Men, Come All Ye Miners, Come All Ye Tender Hearted Ladies*.” It’s true that they all share the ‘gather round and I’ll tell you a tale’ vibe, but not the melody. Despite Doctor Harvey’s assertion that *Times*, *One Too Many Mornings* and “to some degree”, *When The Ship Comes In*, share much the same melody, *Times* varies in as much as – “... the A phrase rises from the 1st to the 3rd scale degrees, while the B phrase begins on the 5th scale degree and descends to the 2nd. Dylan creates a C phrase comprised only of the 5th scale degree, while his final phrase descends to the tonic.”

Now that’s easy enough for him to say, but it doesn’t explain why I never saw the connection! I know that Dylan is reported to have suggested that *Times* is ‘probably’ from *Farewell*, note the use of the word ‘probably’ and ‘suggested’, because it came from a BBC website and was also on Karl Erik’s wonderful expectingrain.com, but I’m sat here now with a CD of Hamish’s song on one side and a Dylan songbook on the other and I’m trying to make them fit. They must fit because Bob says they do, but I can’t get an exact match. Actually, I can’t get even the vaguest match. Maybe, in a bagpipe droney way there’s a suggestion of an harmonic connection, but I find myself in the rather bizarre position of not being convinced by Mr Dylan’s assertion. Then I look back and take comfort in his use of the words ‘suggested’ and ‘probably’ – Phew! – That’s better. Just Bob winding us up again then.

Have you seen Integrity?

Visions of Victoria, Jokerman and Eyes of the Idol

By Trev Gibb

I thought I'd start my first piece for *Freewheelin' Magazine* with an air of controversy, and I guess I've learned from the best – Bob Dylan.

Originally my first piece was going to be about Freddy Koella and his effects on Dylan's current touring band, however, in recent days I have been drawn into rather heated discussions on various Dylan forums regarding Bob's appearance on the *Victoria's Secret's* commercial and a possible forthcoming appearance on looking-for-a-talentless-popstar-to-exploit-in-the-shortterm-for-corporate-financial-gain, reality TV show *American Idol*. Although the latter may turn out to be nothing more than the dust of rumour, the whole idea of 'our hero' appearing on such a show has caused quite a stir among his fans, something I'm sure Dylan finds hilarious. In this piece I intend to explore the whole issue 'in character', and that is, in the character of someone defending Dylan's supposed decision to appear. Basically I don't really want you to know what I think, because no doubt it would result in unpleasant backlash, however that aside, tongue remains firmly in cheek and I'm sure people will work out for themselves what I really think on the matter.

My first reaction to Dylan's appearance on *American Idol*, I guess was like everyone else's: "Bob what the hell are you doing?" However, I began to sit back and try to think of a rational reason why Bob Dylan of all people – the least person you'd ever expect to do this – would even consider agreeing. Part of the answer is perhaps in the question itself. Bob Dylan knows the controversy it would cause and no doubt that was part of the attraction and after his appearance in *Victoria's Secret's* which stirred up enough peoples tempers I'm not at all surprised. Ok, so what's Dylan's main reason for pursuing such an appearance? The absurdity of the whole thing basically.

For me – if this appears to be true – it is Dylan heading into the extremes of irony and him being completely post-modern. What I'm essentially trying to convey in calling it post-modern is the idea of pastiche and of an alignment of absurd and perhaps contradictory notions, ideas and themes. Dylan has been exploring this vaguely for most of his recording career. However, "*Love And Theft*" is one such recent and successful example, as are both his film *masked and anonymous* and his appearance in *Victoria's*

Secret. They're bold and contradictory and at the same time, in their own way, quite wonderful. We see a man who stands for, signifies and symbolises so much, appearing in what would appear to be the anti-thesis of who he is and what he stands for, and the reason he is doing this is to create this tension and this contradiction... this irony. Dylan has always been attracted to, and even used aspects of, the carnivalesque in his songs throughout his career and to me this is him further exploring that notion, that chaos and that absurdity in current culture and society.

In a sense, Dylan's most recent creative efforts fall in line with his appearances on *Victoria's Secret* and *American Idol*, they're all interlinked, and as I've said, it's Dylan being ironic and post-modern. For me that is *the* defence of his actions, because if he were Paul McCartney or Sting or even Craig David then we would come to expect it and we would be fully aware that there would be a catch or an ulterior motive. A vain and egotistical one, such as, "I have a new record out, buy it!" or "I'm cool really, because I appeared on American Idol and I'm buddies with Simon Cowell". With Dylan this is certainly not the case, he has no other motivation to do this other than to be absurd, he doesn't need the publicity, he doesn't need the money, Dylan is in many ways so impenetrable that such an appearance will only further assert this notion.

Another reported appearance as guest judge on *American Idol* is – surprise, surprise - Paul McCartney, and in one sense there's no shock in someone such as him appearing on such a show. This is something I would expect from McCartney and therefore there is no real surprise or uproar concerning his appearance. Whereas with Dylan - and considering his track record - this gives much fuel to the fire currently burning around his artistic and personal integrity. However, the simple fact that one would expect it from McCartney should be enough to dispel all this controversy surrounding Dylan. Dylan is probably only agreeing with this because he knows that, a). it isn't expected of him and b). people would be in uproar. It's absurd and completely contrary to what one would expect of Dylan and essentially that's why I believe he's considering it.

Many who read this defence may be asking themselves, "Trev, this is Dylan selling out big time, what the hell are you thinking?!?"

Well I'm thinking: I like Bob Dylan's words, his music, and all the things he's done and continues to do, however perverse they may be. In fact I love them. Jack Nicholson called Dylan "a disturber of the peace" and he was right and we as fans are well aware of how perverse Dylan can be. I find his actions and his character bizarre as I'm sure many do, but this is part of my attraction to him. If he wishes to appear in a lingerie ad, or on *American Idol* or whatever it may be, I personally don't give a damn and I'm not going start looking at this as hypocritical or trying to hold him up for judgement. Dylan is an intelligent man, I'm sure he knows exactly what he's doing and I'm convinced he's loving the controversy it's causing. In the end he's still going to be an enigma, because he never comes at anything straight – this recent occurrence being a perfect example. Bob Dylan can do whatever he likes in my opinion and if he were answerable to me or his fans then where would he be today? He most certainly wouldn't have achieved as much as he has. Dylan isn't out to please people, he never cared about that. As fans we have to

get over the fact that at times he will disappoint us and we must deal with that. I really believe Dylan understands the absurdity of what this means to many of his fans, the thing is, as fans we appear not to be in on the joke.

His appearance will be bizarre, strange and unnerving to see, it will create fanatic reactions from press and fans alike and what more does Bob Dylan like to do than stir things? Bob has always been a put-on artist... Bob Dylan has almost consistently wrote some of the greatest music of our times, he has consistently been subversive, he is certainly not a publicly popular artist in the sense that a lot of others are, but publicly popular and culturally important are slightly different and appearing on *American Idol* or whatever else wont necessarily change that. I think Dylan transcends that. His contribution to our times is without doubt immeasurably important and people are either going to like his music or not and appearing on *American Idol* or *Victoria's Secret* isn't going to alter that. I hope, yet feel somehow that in Bob appearing on *American Idol*, he will turn the whole reality TV mould on its head and add his own subversive touch to it. People only see what they want to see and if they see this or the *Victoria's Secret's* commercial as selling out then that's their decision, but if we're going to look at the term 'selling-out' then you can align that with a certain type of person also. There are certain people who are natural "sell-out's" because they are ego driven creatures who follow fashion trends, and commercial interests. Dylan is not naturally one of those people, he has never followed, and these two recent occurrences are not examples of Dylan following any sort of trend or fad, the trend and fad that *American Idol* and *Victoria's Secret's* represent are no longer new or even necessarily 'in', although they will continue until their appeal burns out. They are not examples of Dylan propping up his ego and trying to look cool, as far as I'm concerned they are examples of Dylan thinking, "wait how weird would it be if I appeared on these shows, it would be totally insane, Ok I'll do it and see what happens". He's not thinking, "hmm yeah well I've got that duet with Sting coming up and that J-Lo photo shoot, this will do wonders for my reputation and my coolness". If we think Dylan cares about these things then we truly don't understand him, if we think he is truly selling out or losing his integrity in appearing on *American Idol*, then maybe we've never really understood what Dylan is about.

We have *Masked And Anonymous* as an example of his world view and so in many ways we know how he truly feels, as opposed to the insane things he does for effect. This whole reality TV fad has been over-exploited and is on a slow burn-out right now as far as I'm concerned, its not the huge thing it was a few years back and that's why it makes more sense for Bob to climb aboard now, He's going to either help sink it or give it some sort of substance, I'm convinced of that much.

Larry Charles, the director of *Masked And Anonymous*, has said that Bob likes "to twist things" to bend them and to disfigure them, putting opposing notions together and seeing how it works. To quote Larry Charles in full:

'Sometimes Bob would come in with a line and say do you think we should use that and I'd go, "You crazy!!?? It's such an amazing line, you just changed my life with that line", you know. But Bob is very irreverent in relation to his own work and he's

very willing to... he doesn't like it to be pretty, he likes to twist it and push it and make it sound wrong, you know, 'Only time will tell who has fell and who's been left behind'. He really likes to sort of flirt with the wrongness of it, to see what might be elicited by that and with a lot of these lines he would play with them and where I might be really satisfied with the pretty version of it, he would want to push further and deeper and see if we can kind of twist it around somehow. It was a fascinating process to go through.'

Dylan himself said "What's wrong with being misunderstood". And as can be seen above, Dylan often distances himself from the things he creates and the things he says and I believe he can distance himself from something he actually physically does, such as these appearances in lingerie ad's and on pop-music contests. Dylan is constantly playing around with absurdity, yet he is also constantly distancing himself from such associations.

Dylan has read all the great poets, he's read all the great philosophers, all the great books, and there is no doubt he has insight into the perversity of life. Dylan has quoted poets and philosophers throughout his career, even recently quoting Yeats' *The Second Coming*, if even briefly, in *Masked And Anonymous*.

A selection from Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all convictions, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Dylan understands the above quotation and what it represents, he understands the cycles of history, and I forget where but I'm sure in one of his many interviews he's spoken about it. He knows the hopelessness of humanity and absurdity of our repeated actions, and he as with us all is contributing to aiding and abating this massiveness that we live within. He understands that we are in this whirlpool of insanity and that within this chaos and within these contradictions and paradoxes that surround us we're trying to create art, trying to express and within this contradiction Dylan is trying to make a statement too, he is trying to create art and on one level that's what he's doing with *Victoria's Secret* or *American Idol*, he's doing something which is expressive, that has a uniqueness to it, a strangeness, something different, something profound...

The press tried to nail him over *Confessions of a Yakuza* and over many other things, but they had nothing on him, they cannot box him in, he's too ambiguous a person and this

current controversy is further example of that. *American Idol* or not, people will still have nothing on him, he's 3 hours and 50 years ahead of the rest of us. The mere idea of Dylan appearing on *American Idol* is enough to turn such a TV show on its head and bury it up its own ass. The force of Dylan in my mind will override the commercial, short-term-exploitative-profit-making, egotistical, market-strategy, formulaic bullshit that is *American Idol*. Dylan understands the absurdity of our current culture and he most certainly isn't being sucked into the worm-hole, he's putting a spanner in the works. Dylan will make something of substance from this mess, I truly believe it. We know he has integrity, remember when he walked out on Ed Sullivan? An immensely important show at that time which potentially could've helped his music reach millions. Dylan could walk out on *American Idol* too, but I don't think he needs to. His mere appearance on the show is enough to really subvert the mould of reality TV and what it represents. This is a game to Dylan and I'm convinced he will do something to subvert the whole fakery of what shows like this represent. In fact on the other hand he may even bring a bit of insight and actually attract real talent to come on the show.

I know many will continue to disagree over Dylan appearing on *American Idol*, However it sure as hell will be interesting to see what stunts Mr Dylan will pull if he's actually confirmed as a guest judge.

Some wise words from Mr Dylan:

***It will destroy your family, your happy home is gone
No one can protect you from it once you turn it on.
It will scramble up your head and drag your brain about,
Sometimes you gotta do like Elvis did and shoot the damn thing out.***

'Tv Talkin' Song', *Under The Red Sky* (1990)

And yes, you could do like Elvis did, or alternatively just get Bob Dylan to appear on a TV Show near you and that might solve everything.



COME YOU BRASTERS OF WAR



(I JUST WANT YoU TO KNOW THAT I can see through your basques)

By Mark Carter

I'm somewhat amazed at the amount of press reaction Bob's recent advert for Victoria's Secret has generated, especially in the States, where the wonders of the internet have allowed me to print out reports from what seems like dozens of horrified hacks, all throwing their hands up in the air and crying about how Bob had "sold out" (hmmm.. ..there's a new one) and - more importantly - let us down (ditto). When they say that he's let us down, I assume they really mean that he's let them down, since - if they are including me amongst the "us", which I guess they are - they have no idea about how I feel about the matter, nor how any of you reading this feel about it, come to that. I say that I'm "somewhat amazed" because, let,s face it, these writers and critics always seem to get steamed up most about what matters least. Where were the voices of dissent a decade ago when Bob effectively allowed himself to be publicly castrated on prime-time television for the Unplugged show? Where were the raised voices of horror when, for instance, we were presented with a truncated version of With God On Our Side that neatly lost it's most powerful verse - that of the Holocaust - along with any reference to early 1960s paranoia ("I've learned to hate Russians"). Who pulled Dylan's teeth that night and why did Dylan let them pull them? As I wrote at the time, the 1960s Bob Dylan would have refused to perform under such censorship - the 1990s Bob Dylan was a different creature. The 1960s Bob Dylan would have played what he wanted or not played at all. The 1990s Bob Dylan, who wanted to play a set of traditional numbers, was told exactly what to play and, it seems, (and this is worse) exactly how to play it. I remember Jeff Stevens once referring to the "dumbing down" of Bob Dylan. Maybe it started right there at the Unplugged recordings. Or maybe it started a whole decade

earlier at the 1984 Grammy Awards, where his comedy routine with Stevie Wonder did not give Morecombe And Wise a run for their money (hell - it didn't even give The Crankies a run for their money!). Anyway, I digress. Or maybe I don't, because this latest advert is merely part of the same dumbing down process that Jeff wrote about in reaction to -I think - the Things Have Changed video.

This isn't, after all, the first time Dylan has allowed his songs to be used in advertising (remember a similar furore when he sold Times to an accounting firm in –there's that year again - 1994, and then even let the Bank of Montreal use a song to promote it's wares a couple of years later?) or even the first time he's allowed his face to be used to sell something (a Blonde On Blonde Bob promoting computers a few years back. If people say that he isn't usually associated with women's underwear, since when has he been associated with state-of-the-art computers, of all things??) so why is the media getting so hot and bothered this time around? It seems to me that people are still confusing the Bob Dylan of the late 20th century/early 21st century with the Bob Dylan of the 1960s, and the early 1960s at that. By the beginning of the 1970s - 1975 and 1979/80 notwithstanding - much of what he has done has been for maximum profit. There's nothing wrong with this - everybody does it; you, me, Ricky Gervais, John Lydon, Jack Nicholson – it's just that the popular (mis)conception of Dylan seems to be of a starving artist in his attic, refusing to sell his soul or his art for a lousy buck, refusing to abandon his ideals of the 1960s - ideals that, in reality, he probably began abandoning himself by 1965.

What Dylan is doing now is the natural continuation of that abandonment, a natural continuation of, say, appearing on Dharma And Greg, appearing at Woodstock 2 (1994 yet again! Can we see a theory forming, people?), agreeing to the idea and principle of BobFest, helping to sell Canadian banks, playing corporate gigs, etc. etc. We either begrudge him his money or we don't and, either way, it has absolutely nothing to do with us. His image, his reputation, is beyond any lasting damage anyway. In the decades and centuries to come, he will be remembered for A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, Chimes Of Freedom, Blood On The Tracks and a hundred other good things, not for an advert for ladies skivvies. Just as he will be remembered for Manchester 1966 and not for Hammersmith Odeon 1991.

As to why he did it - money aside (and if you believe his “spokesman” saying that money was not a motivation, then you probably believe that Elvis is stacking shelves in Tesco's in Romford and that God didn't make little green apples and that it don't rain in Indianapolis in the summer time) - well, look at it from his point of view. He's a 63 year-old man with a history of chasing after (and usually catching) the women. Even if he doesn't indulge in such activities nowadays, the chances are that the spirit is still willing. Suddenly, he gets an offer to spend a few days in Venice alongside a top model who is going to be wearing little more than a piece of dental-floss and a pair of angel wings. On top of that, the company making the offer are going to offload shitloads of money onto him as payment for having to spend a few days in Venice alongside aforementioned top model in floss and feathers and also sell a compilation of his songs in all of their shops throughout the US of A. Is it just me, or is that not the best job in the world, save for

being Britney Spears' personal masseur? Is that not a win-win situation? Appearing in one measly advert hardly makes him some kind of media whore and I think it'll be a while before he begins turning up on whatever the American version of Celebrity Big Brother happens to be.

A different theory, one that appears to have begun on - where else? - the internet, is that Dylan is supplying the punch line to a 40 year-old joke. At the 1965 San Francisco press conference he said that, if he had to get into another business, then it would be "ladies garments". True, and perhaps Dylan does remember saying that, or has recently listened to a bootleg, but it seems an awfully long while to wait to deliver the punch line to a joke that didn't really need a punch line anyway, especially not one quite so literal. Anyway, to the best of my recollection, at the same press conference he also said that (a) he had formed his own political party, (b) he was a song and dance man and (c) that he was about to make a movie in which he was going to play his own mother. Considering that (a) he hadn't, (b) he wasn't and (c) he didn't, why should he think that it was worth pursuing another off-the-cuff humorous comment four decades later?

Do you feel disappointed that Dylan has consented to appear in the advert and, if you do, is it because he is above "mere" advertising or because it's ladies undies and not, say, the complete set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica? I'd just like to say that it doesn't bother me one bit, but then my expectations of Bob Dylan have tumbled somewhat over the past few years and very little that he does surprises or upsets me any more. Despite how it sounds, this is not actually supposed to be a criticism; while he is still able to produce the occasional classic song (Cross The Green Mountain) and the criminally overlooked Masked And Anonymous, then he's doing o-kay in my book and it's entirely up to him how he wants to earn money the rest of the time, whether it be schucking his live show around the world one more time or appearing on t.v. extolling the virtues of lace teddies and under-wired bras, it's up to him. It's his career and he's entitled to do what he wants with it.

And, if anyone still insists that Dylan has let them down; well, all heroes let you down eventually. Dylan just took longer than most. Be grateful that it took him forty years to do so. Now get used to it.

Last Thoughts on Bob Dylan...

Part One: When yer head gets twisted

by bob fletcher

A confession. I am not a writer by choice and never will be. Furthermore, I am comfortable with that statement. I have written a short story, designed to exorcise personal demons, but nothing more. Many have chosen to write extensively on the subject of Bob Dylan's life, others have concentrated on his music. Some have caught a glimpse of a moment and, by adding conjecture, have absolved themselves of personal responsibility. They believe they are telling the truth but fail to recognise that it is not universal. The music of Bob Dylan has changed my life, but only because I wanted my life to be changed. Maybe that's why I feel so protective of him – God knows he doesn't need me to look out for him, but the songs and performances have given me so much that I should be able to offer something in return. That something is responsibility. For what I hear and how I hear it, for what it means to me and me only. For the emotions I chose to accompany a performance.

The notion of writing anything relating to Bob Dylan has, until this moment, been just that. I will come to the whys and wherefores but beforehand, I need to confess again. Bob Dylan became a part of my personality many years ago, the obsessive component following at a later date. However, I know my limitations. I am not an expert; merely a spectator and I have no desire to engineer a meeting with him. I may return to this later but in case I don't let me clarify. I don't know him and he doesn't know me therefore he owes me no explanation or insight. About anything. And anyway, we may dislike each other. Sadly I never met John Bauldie, but by all accounts he thoroughly deserved his reputation as the Dylan fans Dylan fan (having read the many tributes to John Green I suspect that those of you who knew him would argue the case). What troubles me is the suggestion by Q magazine that John Bauldie was at the forefront of a never-ending quest to discover who Dylan is. A note of caution: "All the truth in the world adds up to one big lie". John was, I'm certain, intelligent enough to recognise his own limitations as well as the futility of such a journey.

Back to the whys and wherefores. Many people have written many things and I have read many of them. Some have been informative and some not. Some have been hugely enjoyable; others contain nothing more than conjecture. Some are frightening. It occurred to me how I might feel opening a magazine and discovering that it was entirely about me. Furthermore, some of the articles profess to know who I am. *I don't even know that.* I have no problem with opinion. Take the following....." the song (Caribbean Wind), through this performance burns itself into the consciousness of every person who ever hears it. It becomes flesh; it breathes; even the mere memory of hearing it roars in the listener's blood ". I have absolute faith in that description. It is perfect example of Dylan 'performing' and Paul Williams' opinion is certainly not conjecture. He hears it and then decides what it means to him.

Here are some facts. By typing Bob Dylan into Google I can browse 1,630,000 sites. According to BobDylan.com 'notion' appears once in a Dylan song. 'Writing', 'anything', and 'relating..' appear a total of 45 times. 'Until' emerges on 18 occasions. By far the most used word is 'just' with 217 mentions. And the really frightening thing? Somebody somewhere will read this and set out to prove me wrong. So be it. The following suggests that Bob Dylan has a similar outlook regarding those who take him a little too seriously: "These so-called connoisseurs of Bob Dylan music. I don't feel they know a thing, or have an inkling of who I am or what I'm about. It's ludicrous, humorous and sad. That such people have spent so much of their time thinking about who? Me? Get a life please. You're wasting your own".

I care more about the component parts of the performances than the man. Bob Dylan performs I Believe in You during November of 1981(Saenger Performing Arts Centre) because he chooses to. The performance is exquisite because, in all probability, he wanted it to be. This in itself is, of course, conjecture. There may well have been good reason for his treatment of the song but I don't need to know. I choose to regard it as exceptional and others may not. I suspect Bob Dylan wrote (and subsequently performed: there is a difference) overtly political songs because he needed to. That's a good enough reason. I know Dylan has rewritten melodies and borrowed songs. He has also rewritten songs and borrowed melodies. On many occasions. I also know that he probably hasn't been very nice to be around at times. Trust me, I work with people experiencing stimulant psychosis. But don't let any of this distract you. As Paul Williams helpfully suggests "Don't try to find out what Dylan is saying instead of listening to what he is saying".

When I bought the first album at the age of 15 I was (somewhat pompously) convinced Dylan would continue to divide opinion, mine included, that's what made his music so fascinating. He is, as Jack Nicholson noted "a disturber of the peace" (Dylan certainly disturbs me). Since that first summer 24 have come and gone. The most recent found me listening to Nashville Skyline, revisiting the Johnny Cash/Bob Dylan sessions, discovering the New Morning acetate, enjoying Self Portrait immensely, and uncovering an excellent copy of the George Harrison/Bob Dylan collaboration.

Back then I didn't need to know when or where the songs were recorded. It didn't matter to me. (It does now. Now it is entirely necessary to know that a matter of months after appearing at the Philharmonic Hall Dylan recorded further sessions of what would become Bringing It All Back Home and followed this by touring England because, all of a sudden, it makes complete sense) The Clash mattered a lot, the Buzzcocks interested me to a point. The Undertones were fantastic live and others came and went. Joy Division, and later New Order, held sway but, portentously, it was Dylan who came with me to London in 1983. As Sean Wilentz notes" Bob Dylan was leading (me) into new places, the whereabouts unknown but deeply tempting". Dylan, in all his guises, was an invited guest in my flat so had to behave himself. Like many before me I had no idea that I was entering a long-term relationship. The music eased the passage. There are, of course, two sides to the arrangement. Blood on the Tracks has since seen me safely across the channel on several occasions. Seasickness was the alternative.

Since I have introduced the sea it seems appropriate to conclude on an aquatic note, a water feature if you will – ho, ho, ho. Arlo Guthrie is of the opinion that "songwriting is like fishing in a stream; you put in your line and hope you catch something. And I don't think anyone downstream from Bob Dylan ever caught anything".

Until the next time, go in peace my friends.





Portrait by A. Fortier

ALTERNATIVES TO COLLEGE by Michael Crimmins

“Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”

It would have been so nice to have seen Chuck Berry walking side by side with Allen Ginsberg in the famed opening sequence, that is “Subterranean Homesick Blues” from D.A.Pennebaker’s fly on the wall style documentary ‘Dont Look Back’ from 1965. I did have the idea of superimposing Berry’s image onto a still from the video, much in the same way that Freewheelin’ often features our favourite minstrel keeping good company on its covers. Up until the release of ‘Bringing It All Back Home’ Chuck Berry stood alone as the poet laureate of Rock’n’Roll, added to this the fact that his guitar solos, never mind songs, were the real inspiration behind The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and countless others, Dylanologists would do well to look a little closer at the songs of Charles Edward Anderson Berry and realise the huge importance of his influence on not only The Beatles and The Stones, but on Dylan too.

Bob Dylan chose to open the film ‘Dont Look Back’ with “Subterranean Homesick Blues”, he also chose it as the opener for his ground breaking album ‘Bringing It All Back Home”. I doubt very much that this was any coincidence. I see it as a direct reference; call it tribute if you like, to Chuck Berry. The album cover itself reveals Dylan’s intention to note some of the influences upon himself and his songs, some of which are quite obvious and others that are not so. Among them being Robert Johnson and Sally Grossman. All sorts of interpretation have been laid at the door of those first few lines from “Subterranean Homesick Blues” Dylan biographer Bob Spitz had this to say in his book ‘Dylan A Biography’

“The influence of LSD is everywhere in Bringing it all back Home, launched by the opening line “Johnny’s in the basement/ mixing up the medicine”- into brilliant and ethereal allusions “Ah, get born keep warm,/ short pants, romance...” The guy was gonged out of his nut”.

The influence of LSD may have been elsewhere, though certainly not everywhere! when it is I think I can spot it, but in those opening lines? I really don’t see that at all. The song, as has been noted many a time, is obviously a rework of Berry’s “Too Much Monkey Business” and to me those opening words, far from being drug references, refer to Berry and Dylan themselves. Berry, who may or may not, have not carried his guitar in a gunny sack, is without doubt Dylan’s Johnny! the one synonymously united with the greatest

guitar lick of all time in “Johnny B Goode” “Johnny’s in the basement mixing up the medicine” Johnny is the creator of the Rock ‘n’ Roll platform on which Dylan “talking about the government” stands. Dylan yearns to return to Rock ‘n’ Roll. He IS homesick and needs to get back to base. Dylan’s return, not conversion to, Rock ‘n’ Roll is the whole point of these opening lines from an album where the title is so obviously stating the same.

Dylan has always turned his nose up at the term “Folk Rock”. Basically I trust that his reason for this is because he finds it misleading, pretentious! There was no invention here, no wondrous fusion of Rock and folk! It happened yes, and Dylan played his part, but certainly not here! or at any precise point in time! Please don’t misunderstand, this is a great record and side two, as we old un’s used to call it in our vinyl youth, contains some wonderful music indeed. “Mr Tambourine Man” is nothing short of phenomenal! as Dylan found the sound(his sound) and inspiration to take him to the even greater heights of ‘Highway 61 Revisited’. With ‘Subterranean’ the supposition could be that Dylan turns the trick of saluting Berry while ripping him off at the same time! Mr Berry must have taken the former as being our Bob’s intention, as he didn’t pick up the phone to call the artist or his lawyer as he had with Brian Wilson (Surfin’ U.S.A) or was to with John Lennon (Come Together), it is though my belief that Dylan was tipping his hat at Berry by featuring the song as opener for both film and album, and in the album’s case alluding to and underlining it’s title. The Rap like Rhythm and Blues structure of “Subterranean Homesick Blues” that is so similar to “Too Much Monkey Business” and therefore so Berry like, and the urban imagery so strong in both songs, added to the fact that the Chuck Berry song came eight years earlier, makes an obvious mockery of modern day claims that Dylan is the Godfather of Rap.

To go back to his Rock ‘n’ Roll roots, Bob Dylan chose to pick up an electric guitar. If Dylan is to be credited with any hand in the invention of Folk Rock, it is easier to make a case from the point of his first album rather than anything you will find on ‘Bringing It All Back Home’. Dylan was using folk music changes and timing, and then adding a beat, although I’ll bet this was not a combination that he gave too much thought to. Dylan had done this before a few years earlier anyway with “Mixed up Confusion” and “Corrina Corrina”. The integration of musical styles helped along by people like Dylan who refuse to be pigeon holed as this or that, help the music to evolve naturally.

Roger McGuinn is another whom people have bestowed honour on as the inventor of Folk Rock. In the BBC/TV music documentary programme ‘Dancing in the Streets’ McGuinn indirectly passed that honour onto The Beatles when he told of first hearing them while still playing folk music himself . “I realised that this was electrified folk music, I was never really a purist but I did respect the people who liked the acoustic music and didn’t want to see it changed, however I realised that The Beatles were incorporating a lot of folk music changes into their songs” he went on to say how he first heard Dylan’s version of “Mr Tambourine Man”, the version with Jack Elliott, and how he was inspired to use a little Bach like refrain at the opening of his version of the song. McGuinn was now using a twelve string Rickenbacker guitar that he had noticed George Harrison using in the film ‘A Hard Days Night’ “I decided to put the Beatle beat to it (Mr Tambourine Man) and that was 4/4 time instead of 2/4 time”. Dylan himself revealed part of the process to Anthony

Scaduto, that you can find within 'Bob Dylan. An Intimate Biography' when he also talking about The Fabs said "They were doing things nobody was doing, their chords were outrageous, just outrageous" The Beatles themselves of course grew out of the Skiffle roots of Lennon's Quarrymen group, and of course Skiffle leads us straight back to the likes of Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee

Of course we do have to have an order to things so we can see the wood for the trees, but so often over categorisation within music just leads to so much snobbery. On the 5TH September 1977 the Voyager 1 spacecraft was launched, it is now estimated to be 13.5 bn kilometres away from the Earth. The craft has Earthly music on board, ninety minutes of it to be precise. "Johnny B Goode" is to be found alongside of Beethoven's ninth symphony! Does this make Ludwig Van Beethoven and Chuck Berry far out man? Boom Boom! Did Berry foresee this coupling when he penned "Roll over Beethoven"? enough of the jokes, my point is that physically through science this music has transcended it's time and place of origin, and if listened to in the great unknown, perhaps our categorisation will mean little.

Leonardo Da Vinci called music "The shaping of the invisible". I believe music poetry and visual arts to be a human manifestation of heavenly beauty "Ghosts of 'lectricity howls in the bones of her face" is as good of a way as any to express such a manifestation, but I'm sure that it's been done before!

Recently as part of the TV music documentary series 'Faith & Music', Sanandra Maitreya on much the same theme, had this to say "Writing songs or being the recipient of songs is a grace" I was elated, although it may sound strange to say, this elation was not brought on by hearing words that I wanted to hear, he went on "In my experience, all good song writing is prophesy". Sanandra Maitreya is a name of Buddhist origin, meaning in the first instance Saviour of the universe, and in the second, a reference to the tree of life. Sanandra is the newer name of another artist whose work is important to me, Terence Trent D'Arby. Forgive me if you already knew that. Of course there are two sides to every coin, and while I believe that to create good music is to reach out and grab a piece of heaven, then maybe to label every article and overstate any one persons contribution is to grab a little of the opposite.

Getting back to the monkey business though for a while, and to a little known, or at least a lot less talked about, Dylan show from 1988. It was the eleventh of July in Hamilton, Ontario, and as had been Dylan's routine for the past month or so, he opened with, yes you guessed it "Subterranean Homesick Blues". The connection your waiting for isn't forthwith I'm afraid, it is just that I have been trying to get hold of this show on DVD for a while, and lo and behold,(didn't even mean that one) it decided to arrive right in the middle of my sitting here today to write my bit for Freewheelin'. I had been informed what a great outing this one was. It is. It is an incredible performance, and a just a titchy bit spooky, with Dylan deciding to deliver 'Blonde on Blonde' nuggets like "Absolutely sweet Marie" and "Stuck inside of Mobile" with all of that old vitriolic sneer that made the electric half of those 1966 shows – well so electric!

Dylan worked so well with G. E. Smith in the early years of the N.E.T, that it makes you wonder if Smith's departure in October 1990, that Dylan even comments upon on the jacket notes of 'World gone wrong', affected him in any great way. Some of the drunken stumbling performances of 1991 signalled loud and clear that something was very wrong. Smith's influence on the way Dylan performed was quite obvious to anyone taking note. Dylan who before and after Smith, for all intents and purposes, at least always looked to be in sole control of his band, the exception of course being most of 1991, made it glaringly obvious during their time together that he was taking his cue from him. On this particular night in the Copps Coliseum, Dylan delivered "breath taking" performances of "Like a Rolling Stone" and "A Hard Rains A-Gonna fall" and it was that very breath taking, that made these versions so special. After Dylan's return to live performance in 1974 there was a marked difference to Dylan's delivery of his songs. To me that difference was the spacing between one verse and the next, or the spacing between verse and chorus, most commented that the 1974 delivery was rushed, and some even questioned his ability, timing wise. They were wrong to do this! His timing has always been impeccable. His timing/spacing from this period I would say had become unconventional, although he must have been very aware of this to remain constant with it. My point is that G.E. Smith during his period with our man somehow managed to keep the reins on him, and that maybe, for whatever reason, this control was something Dylan was loathe to relinquish. Two songs that perhaps state the exact opposite of each "Gotta serve somebody" and "Maggie's Farm" wryly brought together here and featured for their very positive position in Dylan's career, were never better. Glorious rock music. I could go rambling on about the acoustic set that featured Dylan and Smith on twin Martin's for "It Aint Me Babe" "To Ramona" and "Mr Tambourine Man" but I will have to let someone else get a word in soon. This is all ancient history to most readers here I know, but there are always new faces to our ranks, and as life long Dylan nut, all of this stuff is the very breath to me!

The fourth annual John Green Day held in Northampton at The Moat House Hotel on 27th March, was another great success. This was my third John Green Day and my first as a Freewheeler. I was honoured to be shown the secret Freewheelin' handshake and I must confess that at first thought that the whole thing was a massive put on arranged for my benefit. It was the real thing though! ceremoniously performed, though importantly not without humour, and initiated I'm told first time around by John Green himself. Thank you all for extending the hand of friendship. All of the performers and speakers of the day were excellent and it was nice to meet some of them later as the day wore on. I was glad to see John Nye present, he has been a good pal. Trev Gibb impressed me with his knowledge of Bob, he seems happy and at home on either piano or guitar. I would like to wind up here by thanking the Sisters of Mercy (the real thing) for turning up and treating me and Gerry to a lovely meal.

WHAT WAS IT YA BLOODY WANTED?

by Jim Gillan

G'DAY MATES!

As you read this, I'm in Australia for the wedding of a real bewdie sheila (my daughter) to a blow-in (the future son in law's family hail from bloody Poland, or somewhere equally bloody unlikely), so for this dollop only, I've adopted the local patois. Australia, not Eastern Europe.

Actually, I'm using what passes for my imagination and am writing this whilst still at home in Dewsbury, jewel of West Yorkshire, rather than in Cairns, cradle of Queensland. Why cradle? Well, Cairns is predominately a backpackers town. As such, it's a place where copious amounts of alcohol are downed, a practice which soon reduces most to cradling their head in their hands as they chunder copiously. An unpleasant process to witness, but one that its many supporters argue does at least clear the system for more beer, wine, spirits and, for the truly hardy, turpentine in milk.

Dylan played Cairns a few years ago, appearing in the vast barn of its conference centre (stunningly ill-named, as constructive debate in Australia is an obvious oxymoron), but the relatives, including my ever-loving first ex (*pace* Damon Runyon) who is also Kirsten's mum and who now lives in Aus) didn't go. Not because she doesn't like Bob, but because she does. Back to Bob in a moment. But first, picture the scene...

...Under the shade of a vast rain tree (even in June, which is the middle of tropical Queensland's winter, it's bloody hot), the rellies and guests are milling round the eats. The confused-looking groom is dressed in his wedding outfit of cut-down daks and T-shirt. With him are some of his dinky-di cobbers, busy stoking the barbie whilst downing plenty of stubbies, tinnies and cans of grog. Yabbies, chooks and snags are piled high on the coals, as well as plenty of dead horse. The damper is done to a turn, there are big mobs of bush tucker laid out, and some one has trundled out a telly for the footie.

Can't have a bloody open-air wedding without risks. So it's no surprise that a few pikers are hangin' about, all of 'em bloody daggies who hope to get their teeth in to a free floater or chiko roll. Bloody galahs, hoons and two-pot screamers, the lot of them. Couple of scoops and they think they're Mel flamin' Gibson, in his 'What Women Want' guise.

Pretty soon these dags start running an eye over the talent, who have all spent weeks getting ready for the do. Judging by the cut of their swimming cozzies, most have had

their hair done for the occasion. Looks good to me. Not surprisingly, it's not long before some of the raw prawns start askin' round for a root. Strewth! BLOODY wrong thing to raise, mate - and I don't just mean the question! EVERY Sheila starts in on the yahoos, giving 'em a good barrack. Bloody drongos only bloody think that this is foreplay, which finally causes a couple of the Top End warfies to do their blocks, lob in, and sort the flamin' yobbos. A couple of 'em hid in the bloody toilet, but were ambushed by 500,000 hungry dunny budgies, so they won't ever be seen again.

Nobody wants to talk to the bride's father, so I spend me time gazin' out at some poor buggger on a boogie board. Looks like shark biscuit to me, so it's no surprise that he carks it. Me an' my current off-sider are talking about taking a few days off to shoot through to the woop-woop. A ridgy-didge Koori has promised to show us the never-never. We need to sort the swag and check the ute, otherwise the bush-bash will be on Shank's pony.

As it turns out, the reception lasts until the sparrow farts, so we all go off for some brekky. Some of the blokes look like croc fodder, but the rest are past any sort of help. An' if you think this is all a furphy, good on you. And if all the above doesn't make 'Highlands' more accessible, then nothing will. Next spasm...

As we're going to be away for five weeks, music is an essential. Didgeridoo versions of 'Series of Dreams' are unlikely to sustain us, so we are bringing ten mini-discs with us. In addition to some Eliza Gilkyson, Po' Girl, Emmylou Harris, Redbird, David Goodrich, Chris Smither and Steve Earle, there is *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*, *Love And Theft*, *Time Out Of Mind* and various odd tracks. I strongly suspect that lots more will get added, as five discs don't weigh much, or take up a lot of space. Whilst the sounds inside my mind are what always go with me, an ear-full (sadly, just the one that works) is also necessary. We arrive back in the UK about half way through Bob's tour, but I ain't going. OK, I might. Actually, I probably will. It's always possible that an arena can be as intimate as Bungies once was, that Bob can do a Hammersmith 2003 and that he does perform 'Angelina', 'Never Let Me Go', or Peter Case's 'Entella Hotel'. I've already heard them loads of times, but so what?

Is it me, or is the Dylan world slowing on its axis? I gladly confess that I try to avoid reading much to do with Bob (which, if you think about it is an excellent, even necessary, quality in an Isis book reviewer), scanning the web, deconstructing the lyrics or explaining the addiction, but it does seem as though things are running out of steam. If so, what's going to be the future for *Freewheelin* 7

This isn't an entirely idle question, as everything passes into something else, though whether by revolution, evolution, or (in my case at least) convolution, is uncertain. Thinking about it more deeply, (my, how those nano-seconds fly by), this may be because I detect a slowing in Bob. Granted, he still has the schedule of a restless little buggger, but the tools are getting worn to a point where they need a radical overhaul. Which means a break from it all. Maybe his public embrace of lingerie will indeed cause him to linger over other things, or even lead him into other temptations. Whether all that stimulates a further explosion of creative energy, be it directed at something entirely new,

or at reinterpreting the existing oeuvre (a nice word that, albeit with the risk of being associated with pretension) is yet to be revealed. The only thing that is certain is that SOMETHING will happen. Even death is not the end - indeed as Presley, Hendrix and others have discovered, it's a nice little earner. Heigh ho. Time to lie in the bath. Sadly, there has yet to be a return visit from her(?)self, still less from St John the whatever, though it's also possible that I blinked and missed it. I'm thinking of submitting the event as an idea for a TV programme - a soap opera seems appropriate.

Well, whatever about that, or Dylan doing the anticipated unexpected - which is what happens when anything is around for long enough - it's almost time for me to call a halt. But first, I read the other day that the Government has spent over one billion pounds on management consultants. That buys a lot of answers, but not necessarily any solutions. Indeed, it's not in the interest of any consultant to ever achieve full closure, as it means that there is no further need for their intervention. What they are good at is making the same old stuff look sparkling new. Meanwhile, fifty-two senior former diplomats get front-page coverage on the broad sheets when they point out that Tony's Middle East policies are doomed to catastrophic failure, a conclusion reached by anyone interested in anything beyond Posh and Becks. Maybe Blare (a much better spelling) needs to spend more on consultants, though suddenly coming over all concerned about perceptions of immigration to the UK was a cheaper way of deflecting debate. It's like Bob. When there's nowt else for it, rehash things - ie release a compilation, re-master the tapes, bring out some DVDs of material we already have. I think Tony should give Brown the elbow and pass the coronet to Bob. Which would, I believe, improve things no end in every field, except perhaps diplomacy and ballroom dancing,

C'est tout, mes amis. A bientot!

H'mmm! Is it me, or have I been sent the wrong Linguaphone discs?

Cheerio, cobbers.

THE MISSIONARY TIMES

A CROSS IN THE GREEN MOUNTAIN (Far Away)

by J.R.Stokes

In the cinema's half light, about 15 minutes before the film was due to start, I began to take an interest in the audience who would be sharing the evening's entertainment with me. It was the Wednesday after Easter Monday and the film we were all about to see, 'The Passion of the Christ', had been released in the UK a couple of weeks before in order to coincide with this apparently important festival in the Church calendar: the festival of Easter – a time for, in the Stokes household if nowhere else: chocolate eggs, garden centres, some very important football fixtures and, quite honestly, not much else.

I was quite aware that 'The Passion of the Christ' was a block buster, a record beaker in the States where it had grossed over 3 million dollars and had thus made its creator and Director, Mel Gibson, rich beyond his wildest dreams. The same thing was due to happen in the UK and it was expected that sooner or later 'The Passion' was about to overtake 'Titanic' as the highest grossing film of all time. The fact that the film was about to make cinematic history was probably the main reason why I had ventured mid-week to my local multi-screen complex: I wanted to see what all the fuss was about. But who would be joining me in the darkness? In view of the nature and content of the film would I be surrounded by a flock of vicars or a flurry of nuns or a herd of bishops or a gaggle of priests? And would I, in such company, feel ever so holy? Would I become born again? Would we all have to stand up and say Grace before the film started? Or, at the least, shout 'Alleluia'!

Actually, as it turned out, there wasn't a dog collar or a cassock in sight. Indeed I remember thinking that this audience had a similar make up to the audience that you often get at Dylan concerts: a considerable range of ages, from teenagers (although of course you had to be 18 to get past security) to 60 year olds who really do look their age. Perhaps slightly more male than female but really no obvious gender split. I did become a little concerned when the entire row a few steps down was taken up with a group of 20 something lads of the jeering kind but Warners don't allow alcohol in these places so a fracas wasn't going to happen. Presumably the lads had come for the well publicized blood and guts that would be splattered before our very eyes. Others had no doubt come because of the story being told; others perhaps, like me, out of intrigue, and others just to be entertained. A night out at the pictures. Mid-week and nothing else to do. Simple as

that. Whatever the reason for all of us being present before the big screen on a night like this, there was nothing in the faces or the dress of the audience which gave any indication as to why this particular film was such a record breaking block buster. It remains a mystery to me.

So, on to the film, and first of all to the part that has created the most controversy and indeed the very reason why my dear wife would not join me at the cinema to see this particular film and, further, the very reason why the dear wife of the person who accompanied me fled the cinema in tears when they both went to see the film the week before. I am talking here about the scenes depicting extreme hard core violence and bloodshed. Clearly these scenes are not for the faint hearted but it is because of these scenes that I consider the film to be fundamentally flawed.

Now I may have the whole thing wrong but as I understand it, Christ, who is probably the second most important person in the film, is thought to be God incarnate and by that I mean that, although He was born of woman just like you and me, He is the spiritual entity known as God in human form; the idea is that He was conceived through a union of God and woman and thus He is thought of as the Son of God. Despite his exalted spiritual state I don't think that it has ever been suggested that Christ was super human and so He was flesh and bone again just like you and me. If He was in fact super human then we would probably enter the realms of science fiction where, for instance, creatures lose their limbs and immediately grow new ones to replace those lost. All very Doctor Who!

The importance of my point about Christ being of human form is that no human being could ever have withstood the degree of violence perpetrated upon them as demonstrated in the film. An example of this extreme violence comes in an early scene of the film when Christ is arrested by a squadron of heavyweight Roman soldiers who proceed to whack Him about the head and the legs with a hefty metal chain. In reality, the force of the whack would have rendered any poor victim unconscious and would have also broken both his legs. Not so for this poor victim who struggles along with a limp and just one eye closed. Thereafter, in a long 20 minute 'scourging' scene, which brought gasps from some members of the cinema audience, Christ is subjected to a sustained violent assault by half a dozen of the said Roman heavyweights who start out with rods and move on to various other instruments of torture that tear into the victim's flesh causing massive blood loss. Yet the victim again comes through this overwhelming onslaught of physical force to stand on the steps of a holy temple and to subsequently drag a giant cross down Jerusalem's high street. In my view, it is just not possible for any human being to survive such an attack as depicted in the film: he would have died of shock and blood loss about 10 minutes into the 'scourging' scene.

Now if it is suggested that Christ was indeed super human and consequently He was able to withstand the ferocious violent attacks upon him as shown in the film then we are back to the scenario of science fiction where bones do not break, pain is not felt and massive blood loss is irrelevant. In that event Christ would not have suffered like you and me would have suffered under the weight of such an attack and He wouldn't have felt the pain like you and me would. And if He didn't feel the pain then why does He cry out so

loud in obvious pain when there is no pain to feel? On this fundamental point alone the film is entirely unrealistic and is a sham.

There are however some redeeming features, one being that the use of subtitles to interpret the Arabic and Latin language of the film is very clever because it stops you from taking your eyes off the screen. There are also some interesting moments of movie influences that are introduced into the film like the appearance of the black cloaked figure who has a conversation with Christ at the start of the film and who turns up again when Judas hangs himself and when Christ is ultimately crucified. It has been suggested that this figure is the Devil but I rather think it is the figure of Death who appears in a like manner in Bergman's 'The Seventh Seal'. In that film Death has a conversation with the main character at the start of the film and they play a game of chess. In 'The Passion' the conversation is between Death and Christ when a snake appears and the game is thus snakes and ladders! There is another cinema technique used throughout the film by the constant focus on 'the eye'; whether it is Christ's one eye (because the other one was closed after a clout) or the close ups on the eyes of others throughout the film. Once I had spotted this focus though, I found that it became overused and far too obvious to be clever.

Although the movie is supposedly mainly about Christ, as the film's title suggests, I found that the shocking violence directed towards Him actually masked what the film may have really been about and that is the story of Christ's mother, Mary. There were flashbacks to when Christ was a carpenter in Nazareth to display the close bond, and indeed the superiority of the mother in a mother and son relationship, and, for me, the most poignant scene in the film showed Christ as a small child falling over in the road whereupon his mother, like any mother would, rushed to pick him up and cuddle him just to make things better. Mary was a constant throughout the film, and when there was pain to be felt, she was there to take it away. But then, of course Mel Gibson is a staunch Catholic and thus may be a little confused about the grading of importance of characters in this particular passion play.

Another redeeming factor is the scenery in film, which is quite is stunning, although Calvary wasn't a green hill far away, but rather a mountain of rocks with the city in the background. But who wants to admire the scenery when you can witness the hardcore violence of someone being nailed, with bone crushing and blood squirting (is there any blood left in this individual you may ask?) effects, to a wooden cross?

One of the main criticisms that I have read about this film is that is that it does not reflect the true biblical story of these events which has more to do with what happens next: the importance is the matter of rebirth rather than the death. It is true that the film contains no future promise and it thus remains on one singular level of suffering without the hope of any kind of happiness, but then, as a vehicle for a display of hardcore violence, the film doesn't have to offer anything else. But is it just that hardcore violence that has caused the film to break all box office records? I am really not sure.

Dylan has of course at least one connection to the film in that his song 'Not Dark Yet' is included in the soundtrack. When I think however about the story that gave rise to 'The Passion of The Christ' it is another Dylan song that haunts me. A song that illustrates that, in art, you can show both the agony and the ecstasy of human suffering. A song that depicts violence, bloodshed and death but also offers the promise of rebirth. A song that is also part of a film's soundtrack and that is the tricky part because this particular song will always be tied to the particular film for which it is believed to have been written. But does it really have to be manacled in such a way? Do we always think about the human contest between Pat Garret and Billy the Kid when we hear 'Knockin' On Heavens Door'. Of course we don't, that would be far too narrow minded.

The song I am referring to here is 'Cross The Green Mountain' from the soundtrack of the film 'Gods and Generals'. If you divorce this song from the confines of the film to which it is attached then this could represent a more accurate picture of what has been told about the last days of Christ and also concerning his message of better times to come. But Gibson and Dylan look at the story in vastly different ways: for a start Gibson **closes** his film with a cross on what is meant to be a green hill whereas Dylan **opens** his song with one:

'I cross the green mountain'

Obviously a different use of the word 'cross' you say but if, just if, you were given three words and asked to say what event in history they represent; and if the three words were... 'green' 'hill' 'cross', what would you say? The Crucifixion or the American Civil War? But that is a word game rather than a war game and has no place here does it?

I can't help sometimes thinking pictorially about certain lines in Dylan's songs and it is that opening of the second line that has some wonderful blues and reds:

'Heaven blazing in my head'

They are almost opposites aren't they: 'heaven' and 'blazing' ? You would normally associate 'blazing' with the fires of hell rather than with the peace and tranquility of 'heaven' but here they are together in the narrators head, thus enjoining the suffering of hell with the prospect of an afterlife – in heaven.

But enough of this word play, let me cut to the chase. I was talking about the last days of Christ as depicted by Mel Gibson's film and I was saying that there was no promise of any kind redemption following the violence of the cross. Compare this to what Dylan looks forward to after the last days:

*'It's the last day's last hour, of the last happy year
I feel that the unknown world is so near.
Pride will vanish and glory will rot*

But virtue lives and cannot be forgot.

*The bells of leavening have rung
There's blasphemy on every tongue
Let 'em say that I walked in fair nature's light
And that I was loyal to truth and to right*

*Serve God and be cheerful, look upward, beyond
Beyond the darkness of masks, the surprises of dawn,'*

Before I go any further, let me mention that line:

'the bells of leavening have wrung'

which has a direct connection to Christ's last days in that the biblical ritual of the Passover is a feast of eating bread that was 'unleavened' i.e. before any yeast had been added to it to make it rise. It will be remembered, by all those who know the story, that Christ's last meal, commonly known as the Last Supper (a scene played out in Gibson's film) is where unleavened bread was eaten before the bells were rung to signify the end of the Passover: those same bells signifying the start of Christ's last hours. By this line being included in the song, Dylan creates a biblical scenario rather than a battlefield one.

The use of the word '*blasphemy*' clearly introduces a religious connotation but it is the subsequent cluster of lines that could have been lifted from the Bible. Lines that were reported as being spoken by Christ just before he was arrested. Dylan has:

*'Let 'em say that I walked in fair nature's light
And that I was loyal to truth and to right*

*Serve God and be cheerful, look upward, beyond
Beyond the darkness of masks, the surprises of dawn,'*

Compare this walking 'in fair nature's light', 'beyond the darkness of masks' to this passage from John 8:12

'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life'.

There is also, in true biblical fashion, the suggestion of the state of ascension, to survive death and be carried away to a far better land somewhere over the rainbow where blue birds fly:

*'I'm ten miles outside the city, and I'm lifted away
In an ancient light, that is not of day*

*The world is old, the world is gray
Lessons of life, can't be learned in a day
I watch and I wait, and I listen while I stand
To the music that comes from a far-better land'*

So, unlike the empty bleakness at the end of Gibson's film, Dylan sticks somewhat closer to the script by suggesting that something good arises from the suffering. On the other hand, the song could just be about the American Civil war and nothing else.

This isn't an after thought but it relates to a verse in 'Cross the Green Mountain' that bothered me from the first time I heard the song. The verse seems somehow out of place, clunky and unnecessary. It goes as follows:

*'A letter to mother came today
Gunshot wound to the breast is what it did say
But he'll be better soon, he's in a hospital bed
But he'll never be better - he's already dead'.*

Discounting the view that this verse concerns the delay of the American postal service – that the letter took so long to arrive the person who had been shot in the breast had died before the letter was delivered – the sentiment reminded me of the letter sent by another soldier to his mother, that soldier being John Brown who went off to fight in another 'good old fashioned war'. In a previous Dylan song there was of course the lone soldier on the cross, who, in the final end won the war after losing every battle and who had an idiot wind blowing through the letters that he wrote. But if you read that last line again:

'But he'll never be better - he's already dead'

the image of ascension, of hearing music from a better land, smacks home. Dylan is not saying that the soldier will never **get** better (i.e. his condition will not improve) but that he will never **be** better (i.e. his condition will not be improved upon). He has a condition after death and in that condition he has never had it so good – he will never be better off. Sounds like a land of permanent bliss to me!

'The Passion of The Christ' certainly could have been a lot better. It could have been closer to the truth, if indeed there is any truth in the story being told. But was it just a question of Mad Max rides again – give 'em blood and gore and they will come? Or is there something more to this film. God knows.