

Freewheelin-on-line

Take Thirtythree



Freewheelin 231
November 2004

Coverdown

Freewheelin 231

In chapter 5 of 'Chronicles. Volume 1' Dylan enthuses as follows about a modern artist:

'Suze's favorite current modernist artist was Red Grooms, and he became mine, too. I loved the way everything he did crushed itself into some fragile world, the rickety clusters of parts all packed together and then, standing back, you could see the complex whole of it all. Grooms's stuff spoke volumes to me. He was the artist I checked out most. Red's stuff was extravagant, his work cut like it was done by acid. All of his mediums - crayon, water-color, gouache, sculpture or mixed media - collage tableaus - I liked the way he put the stuff together. It was bold, announced its presence in glaring details. There was a connection in Red's work to a lot of the folk songs I sang. It seemed to be on the same stage. What the folk songs were lyrically, Red's songs were visually - all the bums and cops, the lunatic bustle, the claustrophobic alleys - all the carnie vitality... I loved the way Grooms used laughter as a diabolical weapon. Subconsciously I was wondering if it was possible to write songs like that.'

With such a glowing recommendation, I just couldn't help but crush some of Red Grooms' rickety clusters onto a Freewheelin cover. This backdrop is taken from a 1964 painting called 'Purple Umbrella'. The snowflakes add a seasonal touch as they fall upon Santa's three reindeers Rudolph, Dancer and Blitzen who are cunningly disguised as Rough Collies. Bob is blowing the snowflakes away and if you look closely you will see Suze's hand making its way towards Bob's heart. But there's something in the way she smiles that shows she wouldn't be able to hold on to him very long.

Freewheelin-on-line take thirty three (freewheelin 231)



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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-On-Line Issue 231

Hello again

Things are moving a little now. Certainly this is a very current MM with everything herein only a matter of weeks old at most. I do hope you appreciate the great efforts we at FW Towers go to bring you the best, first. I do not expect there to be much, if any for December however. But there's more'n enough here for you to find. Not listed but also doing the round is a very nice double DVD "UK 97 Tour Compilation" none of the material is new but the sound has been redubbed to Crystal Cat type quality, making it a very nice memento indeed. Look it up, if you've got the time.



14-11-2004

D3-5 A7 S8 H8 F7 I BR5

BINGHAMPTON

104.00

Down Along The Cove /God Knows / I Shall Be Released /Things Have Changed /Tweedle Dee And Tweedle Dum /Lay, Lady, Lay /I Don't Believe You /High Water /Po' Boy / Highway 61 Revisited /Not Dark Yet /Honest With Me /Tangled Up In Blue /Summer Days Like A Rolling Stone / All Along The Watchtower

Our furtive hero here went two consecutive shows and filmed both, and as is apparent learn from his own mistakes. This first show is pretty much complete, and the filmer has obviously used a tripod. However he is too far away and the angle is not great. The film varies from 3 to 5 as the taper zooms in a lot. But the distance makes the picture a little soft when he does so. The distance also means that camera shake is hard to avoid. The a taper is looking down at Bob so if he bends over the keyboard his hat gets in the way. It was a good first effort though, and you may want to check it out for the less than standard set list.



16-11-2004

D5 A7 S8 H9 F8 I BC4

BETHLEHEM

95.00

Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat /Absolutely Sweet Marie /Lonesome Day Blues /This Wheel's On Fire/ Seeing The Real You At Last /Positively 4th Street /Tweedle Dee And Tweedle Dum /Under The Red Sky /Bye And Bye /Highway 61 Revisited /Masters Of War /Honest With Me / Girl Of The North Country /Summer Days Like A Rolling Stone /All Along The Watchtower

Night two and our man is at it again. He's got to the right side so Bob is nearer to face on to him. He is also closer but sensibly does not zoom in much closer. The net result is a much steadier, sharper film that is easy to watch. Get this one. (I'd get 'em both actually.)



05-12-04

SIXTY MINUTES TV INTERVIEW

15.30

Sadly sixty minutes is the name of the news show and does not relate to the length of the interview! This is charming stuff, Bob's genial and open and he is interviewed in a sympathetic manner. However I do not intend to go on here but elsewhere in this issue. Suffice to say you should be looking for this now rather than reading this!

Till Next Time



20 POUNDS OF HEADLINES

SOMEONE'S
GOT IT IN
FOR ME!

© MARK '01



by Mark Carter

There are two main subjects that we'll be looking at this month, both of which dominated the Dylan press during June and July 2004; the belated publication in the USA of Christopher Ricks' *Visions Of Sin*, published by Ecco ("Never heard of them," as Alan Partridge would say) and the press reaction to Dylan's mini Summer tour of Germany.

Let's start with Ricks' book - will the American critics welcome it with wider arms than their English counterparts did? Well, let's see, shall we? *Dan Kennedy* of the [*Boston Phoenix*](#), who proudly admits to not reading the book, was not terribly impressed with a review in the *New York Times*, in which Charles McGrath wrote; "...At various points he compares Mr. Dylan to Marvell, Marlowe, Keats, Tennyson, Hardy, Yeats and Marlon Brando, to cite just a few of his references...Other chapters draw insightful and persuasive parallels between, say, Lay Lady Lay and John Donne's poem To His Mistress Going To Bed". Kennedy obviously views his Bob Dylan differently; "Whoa!" he cautions, "The problem with Ricks is the same as that of many academicians who are drawn to pop culture. By comparing Dylan to the Great Poets, Ricks both over praises and diminishes Dylan's gifts. Although Brando makes sense". Furthermore, it seems obvious that he would rather listen to Dylan's songs than read anything too deep and meaningful about them (good man!); "...Maybe a few of Dylan's songs can hold up on the page; Desolation Row, a Ricks favourite, certainly comes to mind. But Dylan isn't a poet so much as he is a singer/ songwriter/ musician/ kick-ass rock-and-roller. His genius flows from the combination of his lyrics, his music, and his uniquely urgent, idiosyncratic singing (never mind his voice; Dylan is among the greatest singers rock has produced)." Yay!! Let's give a big hand to Mr. Kennedy (or, to quote Mr. Partridge again; "Now you're making sense!").

In contrast, [*Newsday*](#)'s *John Jeremiah Sullivan* did enjoy the book, even if it

seems to be against all odds, since he begins his lengthy review by questioning why we should tolerate Ricks at all; "...With his weakness for - no, defencelessness against - puns, his love of the half-buried allusion (sly, but never so sly as to risk having his reader fail to note the erudition involved) and delight in his own humour, his prose sometimes reminds me of a guy I worked with at a drugstore in Ohio who would simultaneously wink, cluck and fire a finger-pistol every time he passed me in the aisle. After six months, it was all I could do not to choke him." And yet, insists Sullivan, "Ricks is one of the best three or four living writers on English literature, if "best" means helpful, useful, and capable of shedding light." If there is a criticism to be made, suggests Sullivan, it's that Ricks will not hear - or write - one bad word against Dylan, and Sullivan is not convinced that Dylan is as great a poet as Milton and Keats (but let's not open that particular can of worms all over again), but his work "is able to reward the sustained attention of Ricks without turning to dust, and that's a virtue."

Christopher Hitchens of ***The Weekly Standard*** can definitely be categorised as one of Ricks' lesser enthusiasts, and produces the lengthiest review of all to prove his point, beginning by questioning his need to be "matey, or hip, or cool". He takes Ricks to task for his take on practically every song (though there are, to be fair, a couple of exceptions) and here's what he has to say about Ricks on *Most Of The Time*; "...Unbelievably, he manages to go on for a half-dozen pages about this song, without ever achieving the realisation that it is one of the most vertiginous, knife-edge accounts of a post-love trauma ever penned. You should only listen to the song if you are not currently trying to persuade yourself that "it" is all over and that you are all over "it"." As an almost complete put-down of *Visions Of Sin*, Hitchens' review accomplishes its aims, yet it is itself overly wordy and almost as pretentious as the book it seeks to attack.

The New York Times' *Jonathan Lethem* had no such problems with the book, or with the concept of *Dylan the Poet*, and relished the chore of having to read all 500 pages for his review ("...I did, with escalating ease and pleasure") because he can find no fault with Ricks' approach; "...Such clockwork analysis never seems to drain Dylan's work of its vitality (a tribute to Ricks and Dylan both, I suspect), but rather renew a listener's amazement. For instance, by the end of one such disquisition Ricks may threaten to persuade you that rhyme, that corny tool, is the central receptacle not only for Dylan's wit but for the moral and emotional brilliance of his art."

Bill King of ***The Denver Post***, who is, we are told, writing a series of radio shows on Dylan called *Shakespeare In The Alley*, also enjoyed the book, claiming that "Ricks' unique approach delights in its eccentricity and produces fascinating results for the dedicated reader. He insists on both a sense of humour and careful attention to detail; he demands a wide range of interest and a long attention span...the irony of a book titled *Dylan's Visions Of Sin* by an atheist adds even more flavour to this tasty treat."

Another reviewer who embraced the book wholeheartedly is [The Cleveland Plain Dealer](#)'s *Tony Brown*, who realises that many people are going to consider it a worthless project. "But," he claims, "For those of us who have pored over Dylan's lyrics looking for clues to the poetry in the songs, *Visions Of Sin* will serve as a heaven-sent map and minutely detailed tour guide to the complex wordscape of a true literary giant."

Here in the UK, the July issue of [The Observer Music Monthly](#) recommended it's ten music books for taking on holiday and selected Ricks' book as one of them; "...500 pages of stunning nutty professorship on Dylan in the context of Yeats, Pope and Coleridge, with positive indifference to the idea of Dylan in the context of Guthrie and Lennon."

Charles McGrath of the [Toronto Star](#) interviewed Ricks briefly and learned that he actually signed a contract to write a book about Dylan twenty years ago, but only recently got around to writing it, even though it was some of Dylan's 25 year-old Christian lyrics that seemed to demand the theme. He reveals that not all of his family share his 100% enthusiasm/ obsession of all things Dylan ("My eldest child is 45, and I think he faintly pities me about this.") and even his wife didn't attend all of Dylan's recent three Boston concerts. Ricks considers all of his shows to have a certain sadness because Dylan is the one person who has to be there, and the one person who can't go to a Bob Dylan show. "It's sad," he says, "In the way it's sad that Jane Austen couldn't read a Jane Austen novel." If there's one thing about Dylan that he actually isn't keen on it's his Clarke Gable moustache; "I just don't think it looks good. Do you?" He admits that he considered getting up a petition to send to Dylan which read; "*Mr. Dylan, please remove the stipple from your upper lip*". "I didn't send it," he admits, "because my students said that it might hurt Dylan's feelings. But "lip" and "stipple" - I quite liked that."

An old student of Ricks', *Alexandra Jacobs*, now writes for [The New York Observer](#), and he also interviewed Ricks, beginning with learning more about the time that the author and the object of his desire eventually met backstage after a Boston University gig a couple of years ago. Dylan apparently greeted him by saying; "Mr. Ricks, we meet at last" (which makes him sound like a James Bond baddie); a greeting that absolutely delights Ricks because he thinks that Dylan's words mean that *he was up to something*, though he won't reveal what, and, as Jacobs points out, in Ricks mind Dylan is always *up to something*. When Jacobs presses him for information about what the two talked about, Ricks develops sudden amnesia; "I think I asked him if he'd read any good books lately". Not having seen it, Jacobs queries the Victoria's Secret advert, asking whether Dylan is actually in it himself or just his music. "He is in it," Ricks tells him, "A famous model, although she wasn't famous to me, is in it. I don't know her name; I'm not interested in that...I find him more beautiful. It's 30 seconds of seeing him prowling slightly and, I think, looking fine and good." Then, giving a glaring insight into how his mind works, he continues, "I, of course, know what Victoria's Secret

is. Do you know what Victoria's secret is? Victoria's secret is John Brown - that is, the gillie with whom Queen Victoria was supposedly really in love...So is it just a coincidence that Dylan's lately been performing - as he did not for decades - his song John Brown?" It's hard to tell whether he's being serious or not, given that Ricks must know that Dylan first began performing it in 1988 and actually hasn't played it at all during the past few years. Then again, he doesn't appear to spend too much time here on Planet Earth, so who knows? He did enjoy Bob's recent interview in the LA Times, especially when it reinforces ideas put forward in his book; "...He talks about what the poets meant to him when he was young, and how he read the poets as people now read Stephen King. So people who want to say; "Excuse me, I don't think he's ever heard of John Donne," they have some explaining to do."

Presumably Ricks' still has the underwear-selling Bob Dylan in mind when he compares him to Shakespeare during an interview with *Dean Schabner* for ABCnews.com, implying that the Bard also aimed to get his work heard and seen to as great an audience as possible; "...One reason I keep mentioning Shakespeare is not because I think Dylan is a genius, which I do, but because I think that, like Shakespeare, he sought the widest possible constituency." As for putting Dylan up there with the great Poets, as far as Ricks is concerned there's no question of doubt; "...Are his good qualities as good as their good qualities? And is his quality anything like their good quality? Well, I think I've made the case for that."

In an interview with *Donald MacLeod* for the UK's Guardian, Ricks admits that many of the negative British reviews may have been at least partly old scores being settled in public ("The dust has settled but have the scores?") and admits; "...Like the great athlete, the great artist is at once highly trained and deeply instinctual. So if I am asked whether I believe that Dylan is conscious of all the subtle effects of wording and timing that I suggest, I am perfectly happy to say that he probably isn't... (and) in this he is not less the artist but more."

Finally, whilst mentioning Ricks' book in passing in his New York Observer column, *Ron Rosenbaum* tackles the thorny subject of whether Dylan's songs have earned the right to be called poetry; "Of course they have earned the right, but we have the right to think of them as songs as well." Spot on, sir.

Before we get onto the German reviews, there are a couple of odds and sods worth mentioning in passing. Jeff Bridges gave an interview to *Colin Covert* of The Star Tribune in which he discusses his Masked And Anonymous screen partner Bob Dylan ("I've always been impressed by his screen presence"). He reveals that Larry Charles asked him to give any acting tips that he could, since the schedule was so tight and the script so wordy; "...It was a lot of fun. We did a lot of improving with Bob. I can't think of another artist I admire more than Bob Dylan, so the chance to work with him was just something special." While on set, Bridges, an amateur musician himself, got the chance to jam with Dylan; "...We

picked a bit," he chuckles, "I played him a tune of mine, and we played a tune that he sang on "Natural Born Killers", called "You Belong To Me". That's a memory."

Live 1964 received a belated review in the June/July issue of [The Electric Review](#) by *Paolo Carmassi* and it was a good 'un from someone who has followed Bob's career since 1962; "...There have been many Bob Dylans. He is the chief chameleon. Very capricious. We all know this. The Philharmonic Concert presents my favourite Bob Dylan: the poet, the seer, the humorist, the social critic, the political observer, the wordsmith who assimilated and synthesised all the great existential themes found in history, philosophy, and literature, and crafted them into magnificent songs....(it) ultimately displays the immense humanity, dignity, poetic vision and reality of America's greatest 20th century songwriter."

To commemorate Dylan's latest UK tour and Chrome Dreams release of The Weberman Tapes, *Nigel Williamson* of [The Times](#) ran a brief history of A.J. "Pig" Weberman, touching on all of the nutter's more notable Dylan activities and concluding - with heaps of irony - with Weberman's prison sentence during the late 1980s for supplying drugs, after being convicted on evidence found in his own dustbin. Lovely; what goes around comes around.

Joan Baez was interviewed during June by *Olaf Neumann* for Germany's [General-Anzeiger](#) and talk turns to Dylan, especially his Victoria's Secret ad. Surprisingly, she seems quite pleased by the whole affair; "...Bob has put people's noses out of joint his whole life. This spot doesn't bother me at all. This man has given us so much great music. Even if he produced rubbish for the rest of his life it would be okay. I don't want a grumpy Dylan. I like to laugh about such things and I know he does as well. At least when he cashes his cheque." Does she ever run into her old partner whilst on tour nowadays? "Funnily enough, very rarely. If it happens, we say "Hello", talk for a while and laugh."

[Uncut](#)'s *Nigel Williamson* reappraised World Gone Wrong a decade on and decided that - here in the UK at least - it had been unfairly maligned at the time of its release and is an essential part of Dylan's artistic rebirth; "...Listening to it more than a decade on, (it) is not only a vivid and authentic evocation of the roots of Dylan's own music. With hindsight, it also played an essential part in the resurrection of his muse...(it is) simply a breathtaking record, and although the world's greatest songwriter didn't write a single line on the album, it's as if all the hard-earned wisdom of his first half-century has been distilled within its grooves."

Onto the German tour now, beginning with a preview of the Worms gig by *Susanne Muller* for [Wormser Zeitung](#), where she reveals that the promoters were extremely lucky to book Dylan; Munich and Hanover also wanted him on the same date. Dylan's management forwarded a 40-page rider before the show, which included bottles of still water (but no Evian), bilberries, blackberries, melon,

a selection of muesli, grilled fish, exactly 3 bilberry muffins, vegetables, salads and Mousse au Chocolat. By the looks of all those berries and muesli, Bob's obviously determined to keep himself regular.

A few days later Muller was at the show and discussing some members of the audience, which included a doctor who was hoping to get Dylan's autograph on a painting and my old mate Jens Winter, who was proud to announce that he has a life-size cardboard cut-out of Dylan standing in his house. One fan arrived ticketless all the way from Tokyo and was lucky to get a cancellation ticket at the very last minute.

The earlier Bonn concert seems to have been a critical success, though several newspapers reported that fans were forced to queue up for ages before they could get in because security were thoroughly searching everyone for concealed cameras. Such is Bob's paranoia about being snapped for posterity nowadays that the security staff were warning punters that he may well stop the show if he noticed a flash bulb go off.

Edo Reents of the [Frankfurter Allgemeine](#) certainly seems to have enjoyed himself at the show, calling "Honest With Me" a highlight that came down like a "hard rock thunderstorm".

Birgit Eckes of [Bonner Rundschau](#) also enjoyed it, especially because it didn't sound anything like Dylan's Düsseldorf concert six months earlier. He also managed to get the names of Bob's band members wrong and even insists that he heard a saxophone playing on "It Ain't Me Babe".

Gunter Hochgurtel of [Kolner Stadt-Anzeiger](#) wonders how someone can keep their audience on its toes for decade after decade, but that's what Bob's still doing; "...It shows that Dylan 2004 isn't a nostalgia act, he's still up to date."

Susanne Schramm of [Aachener Zeitung](#), on the other hand, insists that it is a nostalgia act, forever comparing the show to Greenwich Village, Woodstock, Newport, etc, and claiming that the bulk of the audience is growing old along with Dylan ("one rarely sees so many grey hairs at a rock concert"). For all that, his unique voice makes the fans feel young again and, for them, "'Dylanmania" isn't over yet."

[Stuttgarter Zeitung](#)'s *Michael Werner* praised Dylan's voice at Bonn, especially on "Don't Think Twice" and "Masters Of War" which was "a revelation". Bob even attempted a joke while introducing the band, proving that he was in a good mood at that particular show, at least.

Dietmar Kanthak of [General-Anzeiger](#) also mourned the passing of time while watching Bob onstage; "...The man who formerly moved the world now rarely moves himself...He croaks like an old bird and it seems as though he's been on tour for 63 years already." Even so, "the longer the inspired concert lasted, the more relaxed Dylan became, sometimes even meditative." He votes "It's Alright Ma" as a highlight, along with the "unique" encore.

[Der Tagesspiegel](#)'s *Rudiger Schaper* was unsurprised that Dylan didn't mention Iraq or George Bush during the show, but decided to point it out in his review

anyway. For him, Bonn was enjoyable but without surprises, except for "This Wheel's On Fire".

Jorg-Peter Klotz, writing for [Mannheimer Morgen](#), enjoyed Worms, despite the absence of a "beloved" acoustic section this time around; "...After the last notes of a Hendrix-version "All Along The Watchtower" fade out, Bob Dylan accepts the ovations. Then he disappears the same way he arrives; without a word. We look back to a surprisingly virtuoso blues-rock concert."

"...Despite never batting an eyelid, Bob Dylan played a great concert," reckons [Wormser Zeitung](#)'s *Jens Frederiksen*, "...The arrangements are brilliant and Dylan's cracked voice is a vigorous contrast to it." The review includes, for once, a nice recent onstage photo.

Thomas Bruckelmeier of [Die Rheinpfalz](#) also thought that Bob's ravaged voice brought a certain freshness to the old chestnuts, even if "his phrasing was almost absurd". He felt that only "All Along The Watchtower" failed to hit the spot and that "The Times They Are A-Changin'" is "one of his most beautiful songs". In conclusion, then, "...Bob Dylan remains what he is: an aloof man and an absolutely exceptional artist."

[Donakurier](#)'s *Philipp Schmatloch* commented on the advancing years of Bob and his audience, and of how the crowd's lack of mobility and excitement made "this beautiful evening look more like a funeral service than a rock concert." If he could have one wish, it would be to have the Worms concert in the same venue, but 20 years earlier. Yes, I think I'd also trade anything that 2004 Bob Dylan can offer onstage for that of his 1984 counterpart (except the pub-rock "Highway 61" shit, Taylor's neverending guitar solos and Santana as support act, of course).

In contrast, [Die Tageszeitung](#)'s *Holga Pauler* found the audience's insistence on singing along somewhat annoying during the quieter numbers, where they drowned out old Bob's vocals. He reckons that Dylan's voice is the best it's been for 20 years; "...he wheezes, croaks and speaks through his nose, but anyone who heard "All Along he Watchtower" in this new, ominous arrangement knows that it's the singer, not the song."

And there we leave Bob Dylan for this month, either the best he's been for 20 years or the worst. You buys your newspaper, you takes your choice.

THANKS TO: EXPECTING RAIN and JENS WINTER

TWO RIDERS APPROACHING

A Fistful of Tapes by The Two Riders

Detroit **16th March 2004**

Not the greatest night but there is a better-than-average stab at **Shooting Star** and also a second encore of the old Bob Seger tune, **Get Out Of Denver**.

Norfolk **6th April 2004**

Great sound, good show. It could not have started better – with a superb version of **Cold Irons Bound**. Not long after Dylan rolls out an excellent and fully sustained rendition of **Lonesome Day Blues**. And, wait for it, a delicious **Under The Red Sky**.

Boone **7th April 2004**

Bit of a mixed bag but more highs than lows. **She Belongs To Me** is well done and most welcome. **High Water** features some knockout piano work and **Hollis Brown** is excellent. In between those two Dylan manages to truly murder **Tears of Rage**.

Now a couple of outstanding Fall shows from 2002.

Ashville **9th April 2004**

One is lulled from the déjà vu of the show openers by song three when we are treated to the now ultra- rare **Unbelievable** and it is done so well. **Most Likely..** is super and is followed by a mean and moody **Can't Wait**. As ever, **If Dogs Run Free** hits the mark.

Columbia **10th April 2004**

Nothing out of the ordinary except for a spirited **Ring Them Bells** and a solid-as-a-rock **Things Have Changed**.

Atlanta

12th April 2004

Not a very good show tonight. Once more **Unbelievable** is unveiled but this time it is tuneless and is quickly followed by a very poor vocal performance on **I'll Be Your Baby Tonight**. **Highway 61** goes on far too long and **Summer Days** is just so tired. It is time for him to drop this number.

Atlanta

13th April 2004

Once again **Cold Irons Bound** serves as a great opener and is matched by **Red Sky** and a really tasty **Not Dark Yet**.

Atlanta

14th April 2004

Third night in a row and it's a bit better tonight. **Hollis Brown**, though welcome, is a bit flat due to the now-limited range of Dylan's voice and the lack of a tune anyway. However, **It Ain't Me, Babe** is great – very dynamic. And there is a spot-on harp intro to **Cat's In The Well**.

Gilford

4th June 2004

First night of a new tour and a lot of Sixties stuff in the set-list. Eight songs in tonight's set date from that era but the standouts are from another time, namely **I Believe In You** and **Floater**.

To be continued.....

Restless Farewell for now.



The **Whole Wide World** is watching

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

More snippets for you to ponder...

1. ***Grab A Grammy*** - Live 1964 has been nominated for a Grammy award. Live 1964 was nominated in the Best Album Notes category for the essay written by Sean Wilentz, bobydylan.com's historian-in-residence and Dayton-Stockton Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Princeton University.
2. ***Small Ads*** - The short story of how Dark Eyes came to be used in the Audi 'Zoo' advert can be found at <http://portobloggo.blogspot.com/2004/10/audi-commercial-zoo.html>
3. ***Lights, Camera, Cut!*** - When singers become actors, the results are not always high art. That's the thinking behind *Blender* magazine's list of the 25 worst rock-star actors of all time. Madonna tops the list. Bob Dylan is second, followed by Mariah Carey, Jon Bon Jovi and Elvis Presley
4. ***Foot(age) of Pride*** - Glastonbury 1997 video footage wanted. Mr Temple, who directed *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, the 1980 film about the Sex Pistols, told the BBC News website the five performances he was looking for were all seminal moments from the festival. Mr Temple added that Bob Dylan insisted that the BBC removed their cameras from the stage during his 1997 appearance.
5. ***Golden Halls*** - Photos from Dylan's concert at 27 or 28/11/79 Golden Hall, San Diego, California can be found at <http://www.photosets.net/artist/dylanbob.htm>
6. ***A Site for Sore Is*** - Information on Dylan covers can be found at <http://dylancoveralbums.com/>
7. ***It Shall Be Released*** - The full story of how Like A Rolling Stone came to be released can be found at <http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/music/features/story.jsp?story=591491>



SIXTY MINUTES FOR BOB

by Chris Cooper

Hi Again

Some months I confess that something original to place here can be hard to find. Life has certainly been pushing my back to the wall lately and inspiration at times has deserted me. But this month, people, we once again have cause for celebration. In the last few days Bob has given his first TV interview in some time (almost twenty years actually) so that seems a suitable thing to cover. So I do, and here it is. Bob Dylan on Sixty Minutes from December 5th speedily rushed to us by the modern wonder of bitorrent. (An if you don't know what that is then I know you haven't been reading my stuff) Press reports suggest its not so good (see one attached but I dispute that vigorously. You really need to see this as his facial expressions and body language add enormously to the whole. So, here it is.

Ed Bradley

For as long as I've been here on 60 minutes I've wanted to interview Bob Dylan. Over his 43 year career there's no musician alive who's been more influential. His distinctive twang and poetic lyrics have produced some of the most memorable songs ever written. In the sixties his songs of protest and turmoil spoke to an entire generation. While his life has been the subject of endless interpretation, he's been largely silent. Now at age 63 he's written a memoir called *Chronicles* volume 1. An I finally got to sit down with him in his first television interview in nearly 20 years. What you will see is pure Dylan, mysterious, elusive, fascinating just like his music.

Clip of Blowin In the Wind (Bangla Desh)

EB:

I read somewhere that you wrote "Blowin In the Wind" in ten minutes, is that right?

BD

Probably

EB

Just like that?

BD

Yeah.

EB

Where'd it come from?

BD

It just came, err it came from out of that well spring of creativity I would think, you know.

EB

That well spring of creativity has sustained Bob Dylan for more than 4 decades and produced 500 songs and more than 40 albums.

EB

You ever look at music you've written and look back at it and say Oh that surprised me

BD

I used too. I don't do that anymore. Err I don't know how I got to write those songs

EB

What do you mean you don't know how?

BD

Well those early songs were like almost magically written. Hmm Darkness at the break of noon, shadows even the silver spoon, the hand made blade, the child's balloon..

Clip from DLB Its Alright Ma

BD

Well, try to sit down and write something like that, there's a magic to that an it's not a Siegfried and Roy kind of magic its a different kind of a penetrating magic an err I did it at one time.

EB

An you don't think you can do it today?

BD

Huh huh.

EB

Does that disappoint you.

BD

(shrugs) well you can't do something forever err, I did it once, an I can do other things now. But I can't do that.

EB

Dylan has been writing music since he was a teenager in the remote town of Hibbing Minnesota. The eldest of two sons of Abraham and Beatty Zimmerman.

Did you have good life? A Happy childhood growing up?

BD

I really didn't consider myself happy or unhappy. I always knew there was something out there hmm that I needed to get to. An it wasn't were I was at that particular moment.

EB

It wasn't in Minnesota

BD

No.

EB

"It was in New York City. As he writes in his book he came alive when at age 19 he moved to Greenwich Village which at the time was the frenetic center of the sixties counter culture. Within months he had signed a recording contract with Columbia Records. "

You reffered to New York as the capitol of the world. But when you told your father that he thought that it was a joke didn't he? Did your parents approve of you being a singer-songwriter. Going to New York.

BD

No. They wouldn't have wanted that for me but my parents never went anywhere. My father probably thought the capitol of the world was wherever he was at the time. It couldn't possibly be, be anywhere else. Where, he an his own wife were in their own home that was the capitol of the world .

EB

What made you different, what pushed you out of there?

BD

Well I listened to the radio a lot, hung out in record stores and slam banged around on the guitar an played the piano and learned songs from , err a world which didn't exist around me.

EB

"He says even then he knew he was destined to become a music legend, I was heading for the fantastic lights, he writes. Destiny was looking straight at me an nobody else. " You use the word destiny over and over throughout the book, what does that word mean to you?

BD

It's a feeling that you have that you know something about yourself that nobody else does, The picture you have in your mind of what you're about will come true. That's a kind of thing you have to kind of keep to your own self. Because it's a fragile thing. An you put it out there somebody'll kill it. So it's best to keep that all inside,

EB

When we asked him why he changed his name, he said that was destiny too. So you never saw yourself as Robert Zimmerman.

BD

For some reason I never did.

EB

Even before you started performing?

BD

Nah even then. Some people get born you know to the wrong names, the wrong parents. I mean that happens.

EB

Tell me how you decided on Bob Dylan?

BD

You call yourself what you wanna call yourself. This is the land of the free.

EB

"Bob Dylan created a world inspired by old folk music, with piercing and poetic lyrics as in songs like A Hard Rains A-Gonna-Fall. Songs that reflected the tension and unrest of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the sixties. It was an explosive mixture that turned Dylan by age 25 into a cultural and political icon. Playing to sold out concert halls around the world and playing to people wherever he went. He was called the voice of his generation. And was actually reffered to as a prophet, a messiah. Yet he saw himself simply as a musician. "

BD

You feel like an imposter. When, when your, when someone thinks your something an your not.

EB

What was the image people had of you and what was the reality?

BD

The image of me was certainly not a songwriter or a singer. It was more like a threat to society in some kinda way.

EB

What was the toughest part for you personally.

BD

It was like being in an Edgar Allen Poe story. Your just not that person everybody thinks you are who. They call you that all the time. You're the prophet, your the saviour. I never wanted to be a prophet or a saviour. Elvis maybe. I could easily see myself becoming him, but prophet? No.

EB

I know and I accept that you don't see yourself as a voice of that generation. But some of your songs did stop people cold. An they saw them as anthems an they saw them as protest songs, it was important in their lives. It sparked a movement.

Clip of Times from Don't look Back

You may not have seen it like that but that's the way it was for them, How you reconcile those two things?

BD

My stuff were songs you know. They weren't sermons. If you examine the songs I don't believe you're gonna find anything in there that says I'm a spokesman for anybody or anything really.

EB

Well they saw it

BD

Well they must not have heard the songs.

EB

It's ironic you know that the way people viewed you was just the polar opposite of the way you viewed yourself.

BD

Ain't that somethin'.

EB

"Dylan did almost anything to shatter the lofty image people had of him, he writes that he intentionally made bad records. Once poured whiskey over his head in public and as a stunt he went to Israel and made a point of having his picture taken at the wailing wall wearing a skull cap" When you went to Israel

you wrote the newspapers overnight changed me into a Zionist and this helped a little. How did it help.

BD

Look if the common perception of me out there in the public eye was that I was either a drunk or I was a , a sicko, a Zionist or a bhuddist or catholic or mormon, all this was better than archbishop of anarchy.

EB

Spokesman of the generation, opposed to everything.

BD

Yeah.

EB

"He was especially opposed to the media which he says was always trying to pin him down. "

Clip from the SF Press Conference

Let me talk for a little bit about your relationship with the media. You wrote the press, I figured you lied to it. Why?

BD

I realized at the time that the press the media, they're not the judge. God's the judge. An the only person you have to think twice about lying to is yourself or to God. The press isn't either of them. An I just figured they're irrelevant.

EB

"Bob Dylan tried to run away from all that in the mid sixties, he retreated with his wife and three young children to Woodstock New York. But even there he could not escape the legions of fans who descended on his home begging for an audience with the legend himself. " So people would actually come to the house?

BD

Hmm hmm

EB

An do what?

BD

Wanna discuss things with me, Politics and philosophy. An organic farming an things, you know.

EB

What did you know about organic farming?

BD

Nothin! Not a thing.

EB

What did you mean when you wrote that the funny thing about fame is that nobody believes it's you.

BD

People will say "Are you who I think you are?" An you'll say I dunno, you know. An they'll say "your him" an you'll say OK, an you say yes, An the next thing they'll say is "No you're really him? You're not him. " An you know, that can go on and on.

EB

You go out to restaurants now?

BD

I don't like to eat in restaurants,

EB

Because people come up an say are you him?

BD

That's always gonna happen. Yeah

EB

Do you ever get used to it?

BD

No.

EB

"At its peak fame was taking it's toll on Bob Dylan. He was heading towards a divorce from his wife Sara. In concerts he wore white makeup to mask himself but his songs revealed the pain."

Clip of Tangled Up In Blue from Renaldo & Clara

You said my wife when she married me had no idea what she was getting herself into.

BD

Well she was with me back then through thick and thin you know? It just wasn't the kind of life that she had ever envisioned for herself. Anymore than the kind of life that I was living that I had envisioned for mine.

EB

By the mid 1980's he felt he was burned out and over the hill. You also wrote I'm a sixties troubadour, a folk-rock relic, a wordsmith from bygone days. I'm in the bottomless pit of cultural oblivion. Those are pretty harsh words?

BD

Well I seen all these titles written about me, you know.

EB

An you started to believe them ?

BD

Well I believed that anyway you know? I wasn't getting any thrill out of performing, I thought it might be time to, err packing it up you know?

EB

You really thought about quitting? Folding up the tent?

BD

I had thought, hey, I'll just put it away for a while. But then I started thinking that's enough, you know.

EB

"But within a few years Dylan told us he had recaptured his creative spark an he went back on the road. Performing more than 100 concerts a year. In 1998 he won three Grammy Awards, At age 63 Bob Dylan remains a voice as unique and powerful as any there has ever been in American music. His fellow musicians paid tribute to him when he was inducted into the Rock n Roll Hall Of Fame, joining him in a rousing rendition of his most famous song.
"

As you probably know Rolling Stone magazine just named your song Like A Rolling Stone the number one song of all time. 12 of your songs are in their list of the top 500. That must be good to have as part of your legacy.

BD

Oh maybe this week, but you know other lists they change names you know, quite frequently. Really I don't pay much attention to that.

EB

But its apat on the back Bob.

BD

This week. It is. But, you know, who's to say how long that's gonna last.

EB

Its lasted a long time for you. I mean your still out here doing new songs. Youre still on tour.

BD

I do, but I don't take it for granted.

EB

Why do you still do it? Why you still out here?

BD

Well it goes back to the destiny thing. I made a bargain with it, long time ago an hmm I'm holding up my end.

EB

What was your bargain?

BD

To get where hmmm where I am now.

EB

Should I ask who you made the bargain with?

BD

Ha ha you know with the chief, the chief commander.

EB

On this earth?

BD

On this earth and in the world we can't see.

EB

"Bob Dylan has been nominated this year for the Nobel prize in literature. For his song writing. His new book has been a best seller for the past 6 or 7 weeks,. It was published by Simon and Schuster who are owned by Viacom the parent company of CBS. Dylan is planning to write 2 more volumes of his memoirs.

Till Next Time

A CBS promo for last night's *60 Minutes* interview with Bob Dylan asked portentously: "Why is Bob Dylan giving his first television interview in nineteen years?" After the 15-minute segment was up, viewers might still be asking the same question, since neither of the participants seemed to much care about the proceedings. Dylan displayed the flat affect of the clinically depressed, avoiding eye contact, mumbling evasively and sometimes visibly wincing at Ed Bradley's questions, which were not just toothless but gumless. Not that there's any need to put the 63-year-old artist through the wringer, but for God's sake, at least ask him something that rises to the level of mildly interesting cocktail chatter.



Grumpy old man

For example, when Bradley asked Dylan about *Rolling Stone* magazine's recent selection of (surprise) "Like a Rolling Stone" as the number one song of all time, Dylan was characteristically unimpressed: "Well, the lists, they change names pretty frequently ... I don't really pay much attention to that." Follow-up question that would be asked by ANY SENTIENT INDIVIDUAL at that moment: So, Mr. Dylan, what do you think *is* the greatest song of all time? Had the focus shifted for a moment off himself and his status as a legend, Dylan might have opened up a little, smiled, maybe even picked up a guitar and sung a Woody Guthrie song or something. But Bradley neglected to ask his subject anything about music, current events, pop culture or religion. Instead, the interview dwelled awkwardly on Bradley's amazement at the fact that Dylan might not enjoy being a celebrity. The basic Q & A template went something like this: Bradley: "Many regard you as a prophet/god/savior/genius. What do you say to that?" Dylan: "Argh, erm, well, hmmm." Bradley: "Wow, you're so enigmatic."

Indeed, you could catch a more revealing glimpse of Dylan in the fake interview on last night's episode of *The Simpsons*. When Marge's archrival, the hyper-urbane journalist Chloe Talbot (voiced by Kim Cattrall) asks the animated Bob what religion he's converting to next, he responds in a twangy burst of incomprehensible Dylanese, ending with the word "Shalom."

So why *was* Dylan doing his first interview in nearly 20 years? The answer may lie in something Steve Kroft told viewers at the top of the hour, before the Dylan segment aired: Dylan's new autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume One*, is published by Simon and Schuster, which, like CBS, is owned by Viacom. Earlier this year, *60 Minutes* [took heat](#) for failing to tack on a similar disclaimer after an interview with Richard Clarke about the publication of his new book, also with Simon and Schuster. The newsmagazine has featured recent stories on Viacom properties like Comedy Central's Jon Stewart and Dave Chappelle, as well as Jim Carrey, whose upcoming film *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* comes from Paramount, another Viacom company. Was this uninspired interview just another compulsory stop on the press junket? ... 11:42 p.m.

*Dana Stevens (aka Liz Penn) writes on television for **Slate** and on film and culture for the High Sign.*



ALTERNATIVES TO COLLEGE

by Michael Crimmins

What do Paul McCartney and Robert Johnson, besides being absolute gods of music, have in common? They have both had their respective ***** airbrushed from history! Just as old Bob decided, or had decided for him, that it was a good idea to tamper with “My Back Pages” from ‘Bobfest’ we have another example of what author Christopher Buckley quite rightly, in my opinion, refers to as, the tampering with cultural DNA. I know all of this is hardly news now, but it does make me wonder where it will all end.

Will Sir Winston Churchill end up cigarless? Will the clouds of smoke that pervade most of the pictures taken of Bob Dylan, particularly in the sixties, mysteriously vanish? Will the people of the future when the word cigarette means little to them, wonder why John Lennon cursed Sir Walter Raleigh so, in his Beatles song “I’m so tired”? Will the heroes of our era only be remembered for using harder drugs??

We do not need, or want, to encourage our loved ones into the habit of smoking, I think I can safely say that we are all agreed on that one. Yet it does seem rather silly to take the ciggy out of Mr Johnson’s fingers, let alone tamper with one of the only two known photographs of the great bluesman that are in existence. After all, if we are to worry about the influence famous musicians can have, is not the enduring legend/myth of Johnson selling his soul to the devil much more harmful? And to conclude my little rant,

out of all the guitars manufactured worldwide since the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Peter Townsend appeared on the scene, I would hazard a guess that only a very very small percentage have been deliberately smashed up.

In last months edition of Freewheelin' I admitted that I found 'Chronicles' most enjoyable. I did and I must say that I can hardly wait for Vol. 2. Contradicting myself somewhat, I suppose, as I normally do! I did state that I felt that there was no real need for it.

I received an email from a guy in Glasgow (James Conoughton) questioning my reasons for saying so. By the way I would like to take the opportunity to say that I am always very grateful to receive any correspondence connected with Freewheelin' I don't get much of it, so it is nice to know that somebody out there is taking note of my humble efforts. I'm sure that James will not mind if I impart to you mostly the same reasoning that I used in my mail to him.

Bob Dylan has surrounded himself in myth. That is, I'm sure you will agree, a common enough assumption regarding him. But is not that a myth in itself?

He is different I will grant you that, but really when has he avoided interviews? Maybe up until 1971 and with Scaduto, details surrounding him were a little sketchy. His career though since has been well documented. Beside Dylan's early fairy stories regarding himself and his past, most of the responsibility in the mythology stakes must go to the journalistic effort put into understanding their man, and most of the time in their failing miserably. If Dylan can be accused of putting the proverbial 'spanner in the works' and of course he can, it also has to be acknowledged, that right from the word go he has had two trains runnin' in as much as he was laying condensed forerunners of Chronicles on us, exactly the sort of thing that he now gives with his final acquiescence to our desire for convention.

'My life in a stolen moment' is an early document and a perfect example of my point. Dylan truth attacks came from within his work, his poetry and his songs! Dylan's duelling with the media press and the often abstract documentation that came out of this, was in my opinion another aspect of him as an entertainer, born out of, either his lack of respect for Mr Jones or his a need to show another side of Bob Dylan.

My Life In A stolen Moment

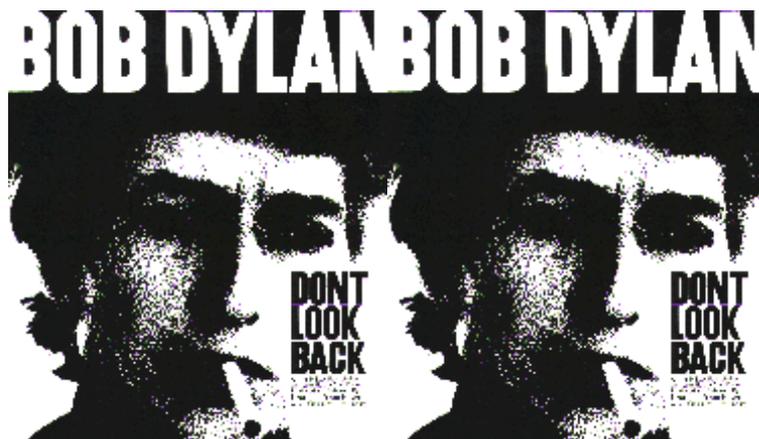
Duluth is an iron ore shipping town in Minnesota
It's built up on a rocky cliff that runs into Lake Superior
I was born there-
My mothers from the Iron Range County up north
The iron range is a long line of mining towns
That begins at Grand Rapids and end at Eveleth
We moved up there to live with my mothers folks when I was young
Hibbing's got the biggest open pit ore mine in the world

Hibbing's got schools, churches, grocery stores an' a jail
It's got high school football games an' a movie house
Hibbing's got souped- up cars runnin' full blast on a Friday night
Hibbing's got corner bars with Polka bands
You can stand at one end of Hibbing on the main drag
An' see clear past the city limits on the other end
Hibbing's a good ol' town

I ran away from it when I was 10, 12, 13, 15, 15 and a half, 17 an' 18
I been caught an' brought back all but once
I wrote my first song to my mother an' titled it 'To Mother'
I wrote that in fifth grade an' the teacher gave me a B+
I Started smoking at 11 years old an' only stopped once to catch my breath
I don't remember my parents singing too much
At least I don't remember swapping any songs with them
Later I sat in college at the University of Minnesota
On a phony scholarship that I never had
I sat in science class an' flunked out for refusin' to watch a rabbit die...

There is a lot more of it- you could write a book on it, I might have, can't remember!
Anyway most of you reading here will be familiar with 'My Life In A Stolen Moment'
but I wonder if you will agree that there is a familiarity of the style that Dylan gives us
especially in the opening chapter of 'Chronicles'.

Bob says that he was 11 years old when he started smoking-hmmm- I wonder! No I
don't think that those two pictures, although taken.



WAS IT WHAT You WANTED?

by Jim Gillan

WAS IT WHAT You WANTED?

by Jim Gillan

How did it last begin?

Ah yes...*Time, as a Bob once observed, is an ocean.* Then, after much of the by now familiar unusual, it finished with...*Death, like the ocean, ends at the sure.* I impressed myself with that pun – or is it merely a truth? As I never write anything else, I guess it must be the latter. Well, he's gone now. Just as I was about to go up and stick his head under the water for a bit, *Chronicles* arrived, so I sat down on the stairs and opened it up. A fabulous read, surely a contender for the Booker Prize – and THAT'S a fact.

Well, later we talked and talked and talked some more. The old wood stove had nothing on us. I wish I had the sense to record it, but maybe that would have captured only the moment and lost the meaning. It's all a jumble, so you sort it out in whatever way suits you. It may not be the same as anyone else's take, but as there is always more truths than one, does it matter? Here's how I recall it:-

...all the tired horses in the sun how am I supposed to get any riding done good question what does it mean obsessed people are said to ride a hobby horse the sun is a metaphor signifying that they want their obsession to be seen in the dark it cant be so the hobby horse ridden for all its worth gets tired and when horses get tired no one else can ride them sometimes though we can all see more in the dark its called insight it doesn't always survive the glare of scrutiny but whose scrutiny and why should one scrutiny be valued more highly than another good question in your opinion it's the one that matters to me it's all jest...

Deer reader, I'm not trying to lock horns with you, though jest what I mean may not be clear. Actually, the above is my seasonal gift to everybody. It comes with a box of assorted punctuation that you can use as you like. You can change the sense and perhaps the tense, though ironically tension is almost inevitable at this time of year as folks fall over themselves to express goodwill. What starts in celebration can end in commiseration. Let's try some more:-

...bob dylan only exists as a construct of others some buy the records and go to the shows some read the lyrics and books some seek to explain what is already clear to at least one part of one facet of one manifestation of the person who sometimes calls himself bob dylan there is another person

who exists as an integral part of but quite separate to bob dylan this is true for all of us yes but it is very scary so we dont go there as much as we should if we understood ourselves better we would understand others better from understanding comes consensus and so harmony instead of division and hatred and exploitation can you get all that from a song lyric maybe you can but others cant and when there are a lot who cant they often rant for which some get awards and accolades and others get reviled like jesus who said lots of things that were simple to understand but hard to follow was that failure a miracle because without it no crucifixion so how then could we have been saved from what good question its hard to understand the ways of the lord whoever she is its strange that people obsess about the meaning of a lyric then stranger that they arrive at an answer that owes much to a misprint or a misunderstanding words intrinsically absurd but how they are used and reactions to them can be...

Bob read a lot of books, heard a lot of music, met a lot of people. What if he had read less, listened to more and met other people How would that have changed things? What if he had been a girl? Maybe in some parallel universes he is, which is a nice thought. If he had never made a record, would we have heard of Michael Gray, AJ Weberman, Neil Corcoran et al? Does he have to answer for that?

What's really real? Bob Dylan said that. If my answers frighten you, don't ask such scary questions. Someone else said that. I said the folks I meet aren't always kind. Actually Tom Paxton said it before me, but I might mean it more. All I know is everything comes to a . Which is how *1066 And All That* finishes. More fun than the Bible, not as opaque, doesn't comfort misogynists and has never been used to justify colonialism and war. How comes *1066 And All That* isn't the Good Book?

Well enough. Seasons greetings, health to all, peace on earth and farewell. It's into the stop with *WWIYW* and its variants. Where 'stop' is as an expression of infinity. Which in a way contradicts my opening observations, but with much that is associated with Dylan (and indeed life in general), things rarely make sense. But then for many people that usually matters much less than making a living.

Last Thoughts on Bob Dylan

Man thinks coz he rules the world, he can do with it as he please.....

by Bob Fletcher

Were it possible, there would be two versions of this. The first would begin, with the help of Simon Schama, as follows: Dear Worldly America, you who “freely engage, commercially and culturally, with Asia and Europe in the easy understanding that those continents are a dynamic synthesis of ancient cultures and modern social and economic practices”, my heart goes out to you.

The second, safe in the knowledge that America is now, undeniably, two nations that loathe and fear each other, would plough a different furrow: Dear Godly America, you who “turn your back on the dangerous, promiscuous, impure world and proclaim to high heaven the indestructible endurance of American Difference”, you got what you deserved.

There now follows a minute’s silence.

During 2001, Bob Dylan suggested that the songs on Love and Theft “deal with what many of my songs deal with – which is business, politics and war, and maybe love interest on the side”. He also stated that ‘Masters of War’, as far as he was concerned, “has nothing to do with being anti-war. It has more to do with the military industrial complex” (according to Howard Sounes, “Bob scandalised Baez by telling her he wrote Masters of War simply because he thought it might sell”).

In 1961, three days before he lay down the responsibilities of office, Dwight Eisenhower delivered a speech to the American people. He argued that “A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction....we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense (sic); we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions”. Paul Williams notes that “critics complained that Masters of War was over stated and one-dimensional; today it seems to me we need more Old Testament prophets as brash and angry as young Dylan”. Williams continues by noting that the song “seems to contradict everyone who praises Dylan for the understated quality of his political songs; it shouts, it is openly angry, it points a finger, it even rejects forgiveness and calls for the antagonists death.....the issue is as real today as it ever was: those who consciously and manipulatively participate in war profiteering still hide behind walls and desks and they more than ever encourage and enable the young of faraway nations to slaughter each other”.

As Williams is careful to point out, the critics were missing the point. Dylan had written anything but a 'one dimensional' song. Howard Sounes provides an interesting theory by hinting that "he (Dylan) did not write the song simply because it chimed with antiwar sentiments then in vogue. It is noteworthy that he rarely included direct references to current events in even his most socially aware songs... mentioning specific political events would date the material. Without these references, the songs would remain relevant as the years went by". During 1990, as if to prove the point, Dylan himself commented that "Some people say it was the first anti-war song, it's always like a NO-war song to me" (in 1963, after writing the song, Dylan was quoted thus: "I'm only 21 years old and I know that there's been too many wars"). Indeed, Dylan chose to perform the song at the Grammy Awards (20th of February, 1991) in what was, according to Andrew Muir, "a brave choice given that the Gulf War was still going on and Hawkish jingoism was rife". A brave choice indeed. However, with Dylan registering a temperature of 104 degrees, ("I was extremely sick that night. Not only that, but I was disillusioned with the entire musical community"...), and his decision to bring "maybe two or three ferocious guitar players", the performance was always going to be of an incendiary nature. Andrew Muir describes it thus: (Dylan) "chose to sing it without a pause for breath.....no-one who did not already know the song would have got the message. In fact, many who did know the song didn't even recognise it here. Not only did Dylan's nasal passages sound blocked, but it seemed he had swallowed a burst of helium before starting to sing. Many observers thought he was singing in Hebrew". As ever, there is an opposing view. Robert Hilburn described the performance as "classic Dylan – enigmatic and provocative....no apologies made, and no answers offered".

I, of course, was curious. Thankfully the search wasn't a protracted one. Unfortunately the evidence, both aural and visual, does nothing to detract from the fact that, given the circumstances, Dylan had an off day. It may also support the long held belief that, during the early 90's, Dylan provided the voices for Mr Magoo and Elmer Fudd.

Mind you, I have much bigger things to worry about.

Reacting to the re-election of Beelzebub, Oliver James, a clinical psychologist, stated that he was "too depressed to even speak this morning. I thought of my late mother, who read Mein Kampf when it came out in the 1930's and thought 'Why doesn't anyone see where this is leading?'" During the article, published in the Guardian, James stated that people have every right to express their dissatisfaction. "People invest in political ideas as a way of creating a sense of the future. A big factor in depression is a sense of hopelessness; the feeling that you can have no influence on outcomes. There are many who will feel that George Bush in the White House compromises their personal safety". Brian Keenan, a man who knows a thing or two about hopelessness, wrote for the BBC website last month. He attempted to illustrate the mindset of those responsible for his imprisonment. "If these men talked about the dispossessed and the poor of the world and the spectre of international capitalism, that is because that was there very real experience of the world. These are people who want to be heard, who feel in their skin the exclusion of the world and so turn against it." More recently, during a radio interview, Keenan questioned

Bush's motives and, when challenged, (Cole Moreton argued that Keenan used his status as a former hostage) replied, "Well it was my view. When people in powerful places point the finger of guilt and call people evil, we've got problems, because that's not the language we need in the 21st century. When Ayatollahs in the White House start screaming about the axis of evil, we're all in trouble".

To my knowledge, Dwight D. Eisenhower was considered to be a popular politician. Despite the fact that he graduated from West Point, became the Commander in Chief of US and British troops in North Africa, oversaw the invasions of just about everywhere, and had Richard Nixon as vice president, he viewed disarmament as a continuing imperative (his proposals were, in part, responsible for the first International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy). Here's how he concluded the 1961 speech: "We pray that peoples of all faiths, all races, all nations, may have their human needs satisfied; that those now denied opportunity shall come to enjoy it to the full; that all who yearn for freedom may experience its spiritual blessings; that those who have freedom will understand, also, its heavy responsibilities; that all who are insensitive to the needs of others will learn charity; that the scourges of poverty, disease and ignorance will be made to disappear from the earth, and that, in the goodness of time, all peoples will come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love".

I have it on good authority that, just as God was tackling 'poverty', Dick Cheney replaced him.

I haven't been listening to Dylan much lately. I have periodically revisited Madison Square Garden (2002) and Stirling Castle (2001) discovering moments of magic from each. A recent conversation with John Stokes (in which he informed me that he chose not to listen to many of Dylan's 'live' recordings) has stayed with me. Overtime I have begun to better grasp John's reasoning. Whilst accepting that we approach the subject from different directions, my problem lies, not with Dylan's contribution, but with that of others. Digital technology means we are now able to listen to recordings of a quality hitherto unavailable, and some are absolutely magnificent. The problem is that we also get the audience.

Now I am aware that this is also the case with pre digital recordings (throughout the Isle of Wight tape, save for the soundboard recordings, the audience is in close proximity to the tapers). However, compared to 1965 (when attendees sat in complete and reverential silence), today's audiences see no reason to remain quiet whilst actually having nothing of importance to say but saying it anyway. At least those at Newport felt passionate. Later the same year, according to Levon Helm, "The audiences kept booing...the more Bob heard this stuff, the more he wanted to drill these songs into the audiences". By 1966, audiences were battling not just with Dylan but also with themselves.

During November 1979, Dylan began a tour designed to showcase *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved*, and his abiding belief in a God of vengeful righteousness (who by now, had also become a God of restoration and love). Paul Williams suggests that the audiences for the San Francisco shows "included a fair number of Christian believers...The next four

shows were in Santa Monica, and were heavily attended by people from the Vineyard Fellowship”. It strikes me that, for a performer so used to confrontation, preaching to the converted may not have been what hat Dylan had in mind when he planned the tour. Paul Williams appears to be in agreement: “It’s worth noting that performing in a self-consciously ‘Christian’ environment may not have been an entirely positive experience for Dylan”. However, one thing the environment did allow was the chance to deliver ‘onstage raps’. To begin with, as Clinton Heylin notes, Dylan would add his thoughts during the band introductions but “On November 16, Dylan for the first time incorporates into this rap a direct enquiry to the audience”. By doing so, Dylan must have known he was testing the water. He would, I assume, have recognised the possibility that not all present would be in agreement. Therefore, Dylan would surely have been prepared for a confrontation of sorts. Which is exactly what he got. But he had already met the ‘enemy’ at the beginning of the tour. According to Bob Spitz “the first show was a real eye opener...after the second song, the audience began to come out of its shock ‘We want Dylan’, someone shouted. What they got instead was ninety minutes of devotional songs...after the finale, Bob spoke his first words: ‘That’s the show for tonight. I hope you’ve been uplifted’...Then he disappeared, carried offstage by a volley of boos and catcalls”. The tour moved on to Tempe, Arizona, where Dylan was to encounter increased levels of hostility. During 1966, Dylan chose to ride the waves, at times relying on a mixture of humour and otherworldliness to overcome the hecklers. By 1979, he confronted them head on.

On July the 13th, 1985 Bob Dylan played to the biggest audience of his performing career. As Howard Sounes points out “the fact that Dylan was chosen to headline the Philadelphia show...was testament to his enduring legend”. Following an introduction by Jack Nicholson (“Some artists’ work speaks for itself. Some artists’ work speaks for its generation. It’s my deep personal pleasure to present to you one of America’s great voices of freedom. It can only be one man, the transcendent Bob Dylan”) he took the stage and was greeted by a roar from those in the stadium. Over one billion people were watching on television. Dylan and his accomplices (Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood) performed three songs: ‘Ballad of Hollis Brown’, ‘When the Ship Comes In’, and ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’. The performance will not be remembered for the songs, despite the fact that Dylan was contending with feedback from the enormous PA system, the entire cast were rehearsing the finale directly behind him, and he was forced to use Wood’s guitar after strings broke on his own. It was the comments made prior to the second song that invited confrontation, albeit from a television studio within Wembley Stadium.

During the natural break between performances, Dylan spoke. “I’d just like to say I hope that some of the money that’s raised for the people in Africa, maybe they could just take a little bit of it – maybe one or two million maybe – and use it, say, to pay the... er..... pay the mortgages on some of the farms...the farmers here owe to the banks” According to Sounes, “Bob Geldof, watching on television in London, was aghast. He thought Bob displayed a complete lack of understanding of the issues raised by Live Aid”. Geldof further declared that Dylan’s comments were “crass, unforgivable and nationalistic”. But, as Gavin Martin points out, Geldof may well have missed the point: “Dylan’s plea for

charity at home was in keeping with sentiments displayed six years earlier". The sixth verse of 'Slow Train Coming' begins 'People starving and thirsting, grain elevators are bursting, Oh you know it costs more to store the food than it do to give it'. Geldof may well have not made the connection between Dylan's speech and the choice of the first song (here's a funny thing. I thought I was alone in noticing this but Heylin, Williams, Wolcott, and indeed most of the Western world, have made the connection – oh well, all good things to he who waits). I am of the opinion that Dylan may well have intended to cause consternation. As James Wolcott argues, "Bob Dylan rigs every performance, no matter how direct, with decoys and trip wires. His welcome mat is set above a trapdoor". Not that anyone should have been at all surprised by Dylan's performance. Prior to the event he had suggested that "people buying a song and the money going to starving people in Africa....is a worthwhile idea but I wasn't so convinced about the message of the song. To tell you the truth, I don't think people can save themselves". And, to a point, Dylan was right. Queen, one of the acts credited with a critical renaissance following Live Aid, had broken the artistic boycott requested by activists attempting to dismantle Apartheid by playing Sun City. The concert, to some extent, saved their career. So why did Dylan, at times the biggest ego of all, bother to perform. Maybe he just wanted to puncture the balloon of those displaying empathy with the poor. Those who, at the same time, were fully aware of the fact that their royalty payments were about to increase dramatically. Maybe Dylan was slighted at being offered the final slot, and in the process, being labelled, yet again, as the spokesman of a generation.

My own conclusion, based I admit on conjecture, is that Dylan intended to highlight the fact that people are always starving, at any given time, somewhere in the world. I don't believe he felt that farmers were more or less deserving, he just wasn't sure that focussing on one area was the answer. And lest those gathered for Live Aid should forget, Dylan reminded them that he had always been a man of morality. Even without his comments, the fact remains that the world's governments continue to sell arms and refuse to drop debt whilst applauding Geldof for his humanitarian efforts. Never before has the phrase 'Band Aid' been so apposite.

These days, the only challenge Bob Dylan the performer has is to maintain a Herculean touring schedule whilst finding new ways of annoying his critics. And I can't help but wonder if he misses the confrontation. I can only imagine that Barrowlands presented Dylan with a challenge of sorts: should he accept the audience participation or deliberately sabotage proceedings by adjusting tempo, rearranging phrasing, and generally bamboozling those present. On that particular night he chose to enjoy himself immensely.

Although I have chosen not to listen to Dylan, I have, as you would expect, continued to read 'Chronicles', which continues to surprise, delight, and dumbfound me. In my last article I made reference to the music that was exciting me (In fact I was so excited that I sent an email to CP Lee. The grumpy bugger has yet to reply). The recordings featured all come from a collection entitled 'Arhoolie Records 40th Anniversary Collection 1960-2000: The Journey of Chris Strachwitz'. Ordinarily this would be another chance discovery, recommended to friends. However, as with all things Dylan, it's not quite so

simple. Arriving at page 239 of 'Chronicles' I was delighted to find mention of 'Haul Away Joe' (a song taught to me by Dad). Seven lines later Dylan cites the Arhoolie label, informing the reader that this is where he "first heard Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Charlie Patton and Tommy Johnson". I suppose I ought to have guessed as much.

Consequently, the mention of John Jacob Niles should have come as no surprise. But it did. I had no idea who he was (he died in 1980). Nor did I realise that he had composed (he is credited as a collector, balladeer, and composer) "Go 'Way From My Window". Therefore, of course, I had not the slightest idea of the origins of 'It Ain't Me Babe'. I have always been aware that Dylan has reinvented existing songs, in particular, those of his 'blues' heroes. Typically, Dylan has taken a line or two or rearranged a phrase (the 112 page chapter within Song and Dance Man provides a fascinating glimpse. For those with a shorter attention span I suggest the condensed version featured in Uncut Legends #1). Niles composed the aforementioned song at a young age. Concerning its origins he wrote "In 1908 my father had in his employ a Negro ditch-digger known as Objerrall Jacket. As he dug, he sang, 'Go way from my window, go way from my door' – just those words, over and over again, on two notes. Working beside Jacket all day, I decided something had to be done. The results were a four-verse song dedicated to a blue-eyes, blond girl, who didn't think much of my efforts". Not only does Dylan advise the person to go away from his window (the same person who, by all accounts isn't over impressed with what he has to offer) he also suggests that they can take as long as they like, a theme which reappears much later on Love and Theft: "It's not always easy kicking someone out, Gotta wait a while – it can be an unpleasant task" (sincere apologies to those of you who, following a mention in the introduction, were left wandering if I was ever going to arrive at the 'Love and Theft' link).

In the spirit of the upcoming festivities, Uncut magazine have decided to treat us to the full story behind 'Blood on the Tracks' (Mojo, June 2001 featured an extended essay by Andy Gill and this year saw the publication of 'A Simple Twist of Fate' by both Gill and Kevin Odegard. Therefore I'm not expecting anything new). As ever, it appears that Dylan's name increases circulation so there will be two versions, each with a different CD attached. The first will contain songs that influenced him, the second, songs that bear his influence. At the time of writing I don't have a track list but I'm guessing 'Wagon Wheel' won't be featured (known as 'Rock Me Mama' in its original form, the song was written by Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup, and recorded by Dylan during the 'Pat Garrett' sessions. It remains unreleased but can be heard on 'Peco's Blues'). I happened upon 'Wagon Wheel' by chance. The Old Cow Medicine Show come with a fine pedigree. Patronized by Doc Watson, the group's eponymous first album contains a most astonishing mix. Steeped in the earliest traditions of American music the musicians combine Dobro, guitar, double bass, banjo, fiddle, and harmonica to create a sound somewhere between Appalachian string music and heaven. 'Wagon Wheel' is credited to 'Bob Dylan with additional lyrics and melody by Secor'. Live, they perform with the ferocity and evangelicalism of travelling showmen. Seeing them at the Borderline recently was an absolute pleasure. Such a pleasure, I went again four nights later.

The poet Gerald Locklin, cited in 'Country Roads: How Country Came To Nashville' sees "the current craze for Americana as white people searching for their roots". This is not the case with The Old Crow Medicine Show. The songs come from deep within their bones whilst the very pulse of history is buried in the music they create. At times the instruments speak to an audience standing at the crossroads. To paraphrase Brian Hinton, for those with "ears to listen and a heart to understand" here is music "which has too often been the tightly guarded secret of its own initiates".

This particular story has a very happy ending. I was fortunate to meet the band the first time I saw them. On the second occasion, by way of 'the Desire hat' I was instantly recognised, greeted with genuine affection, and afforded the pleasure of an after show chat. Dylan, as you no doubt will have expected, was discussed at length. Copies of various recordings, alongside articles from Freewheelin, will be forwarded to the band over the coming months. I left with a renewed sense of well-being and a signed copy of the CD for my three-year-old daughter Lola (I have explained to her the possible consequences of singing "tell it to me, tell it to me, drink corn liquor, let the cocaine be" whilst at nursery but she refuses to acknowledge my reasoning). Quite unexpectedly, the audience contained several Dylan fans, one of whom had come simply because she had heard that the band covered a Dylan track. In fact, on the first night, they encored with a beautiful version of 'Goin' To Acapulco' so she was rewarded twice for her efforts. Intriguingly, The Borderline is located in a basement.

Sadly, even a million dollar bash is sometimes followed by tears of rage. Dad visited his consultant recently and was advised that while his prostate specific antigen was, once again, under control, the likelihood is that the cancer will reappear in an advanced state. Timescales are, as you would expect, vague. We both express anger, albeit in relative degrees ("one man's temper might rise where the other man's might freeze"). Despite our differences he did indeed carry me in his arms therefore I have no intention of 'throwing him aside' or 'putting him on his way'.

It has been suggested that if you cut Bob Dylan he will bleed American music. Whilst the following connection is of my own making, I think Clinton Heylin's observations, adapted on this occasion to illustrate my point, can be applied to both a young Bob Dylan and the Old Crow Medicine Show: "The diversity of songs is quite remarkable, from pure Gospel to morality tales – from the Appalachian Mountains, the Mississippi Delta, Nashville's Music Row, and even Tin Pan Alley – as if somehow attempting to tap into some common constituency in American popular music in order to remind (themselves) not only of (their) roots, but of (their) audience".

Following the final Borderline appearance, the Old Crow Medicine Show returned to Nashville to record a new album. In 1967 Dylan did the very same thing. With god on my side, I hope to take you there soon.

Until then, go in peace.

the conspiracy to kill the free and romantic

by Patrick J. Webster

What follows is a draft, a very cursory and first draft of a paper submitted to an academic journal there is no need to specify here.

The paper was not - in the end - chosen for publication, and, as it was based on a piece I originally wrote for *Freewheelin'* as long ago as June 1988, I thought it might be appropriate to place it back in *Freewheelin'* - some sixteen years on.

The paper is somewhat longer than a normal contribution to *Freewheelin'* and pitched at a slightly different level. Nonetheless, I am confident our readership will be able to deal with it.

Bob Dylan's work has, as far as I can ascertain, rarely been approached from an ecocritical point of view (ecocritical simply meaning an approach to literature via its relationship with the physical environment), but it is one that, I think, is worth the effort.

An Ecocritical Interpretation of Gender Issues in Bob Dylan's 'License to Kill'

Part One

In the songs of Bob Dylan we find relatively few examples wherein he exhibits a concern for the environment. The environment is constantly present, but it is invariably a mere backdrop to the main thematic pattern of the songs in question. For example, in the first song Dylan offers us, 'Talkin' New York' (1962), the song opens with the narrator:

*Ramblin' outa the wild West,
Leavin' the towns I love the best.
Thought I'd seen some ups and downs,
Til, I come into New York town.* (Dylan 1985, 3)

Thus the narrator appears to us 'ramblin' outa the wild West' but the wildness of the wild West is scarcely an issue in his work. Dylan is an urban songwriter, the great majority of

his work takes place within the city, within a conurbation of some kind. The vast landscape of America is constantly alluded to in Dylan's work, but it is rarely of significance. Whilst it is true we find a consistent desire to travel in Dylan's work, a relentless sense of movement from one place to another, the countryside in between seldom seems of particular interest.

He does at times consider the natural world, but it is rarely more than a stereotypical bucolic idyll. For example, in such a song as, 'Let Me Die in My Footsteps' (1963) we find the song's narrator declaring:

*Let me drink from the waters where the mountains streams flood
Let the smell of wildflowers flow free through my blood
Let me sleep in your meadow with the green grassy leaves.*

But he follows this up with the line:

Let me walk down the highway with my brother in peace (Dylan 1985, 21)

Dylan's songs are more concerned with the highway running through the environment, and not with the environment itself. The pathways that take men from place to place through the environment is Dylan's concern; with the highway acting as a common trope throughout his work. The highway acts as something much larger, as Ellen Willis once put it:

For Guthrie, the road was habitat; for Dylan, metaphor. (McGregor, 1972, 227)

There is insufficient space available to offer a comprehensive perspective of those Dylan songs that do deal with the environment, but a few other selected examples might be pertinent. One could look, for example, to 'Girl from the North Country' (1962) wherein we find a superficial concern for the countryside:

*Well, if you're travelling in the north country fair
Where the winds hit heavy on the borderline ... (Dylan 1985, 54)*

Dylan is probably talking about his home state of Minnesota, using 'fair' in a Shakespearian sense, as beautiful and attractive. He alludes to the winds 'hitting heavy' on the border, presumably the border between the USA and Canada. Hence there is some sense in which the land, the north country fair, is of some significance. Yet in reality it is really the addressee in the song (almost certainly male) and the need to tell 'him' about the concern the narrator still possesses for his 'true love of mine' that is the song's real concern.

In contrast to the generally held belief that Dylan is the great writer of love songs, Dylan's songs are most often about men, about men and the way homosocial relationships intrude upon sexual relationships with women. In such a way this exactly corresponds to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's idea that men were really interested in women inasmuch as they could then invest intense emotions between each other. In this sense a

consideration of the way the environment intrudes into Dylan's supposed love songs is of interest. It turns out that the environment is as insignificant as the love object in question.¹ This issue of gender specific relationships within Dylan's work is significant, and it has significance to the song under consideration in this essay, as will later be discussed.

In this light one might note how, in one of Dylan's rare songs of genuine heterosexual love, 'Tomorrow is a Long Time' (1963), his narrator expresses love for his beloved at the expense of a comparison of her and nature's beauty:

*There's beauty in that silver, singin' river.
There's beauty in the sunrise in the sky,
But none of these and nothing else can touch the beauty
That I remember in my true love's eyes.* (Dylan 1985, 42)

Whilst in one of Dylan's most famous songs, 'Blowin' in the Wind' (1963) we find lines filled with poetic images from the natural world. The song asks:

*How many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?*

And:

*How many years can a mountain exist
Before it is washed to the sea?*

And:

*How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?*

However, the actual focus of the song is arguably that of racial segregation, it was a song asking:

*... how many years must some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?* (Dylan 1985, 53)

The 'some people' have generally been interpreted as representing African-Americans striving for civil rights in the racist society of 1960s America. This was the ideological intent of the song, and the poetic imagery of sand and sea and sky seemed merely to provide a backdrop in front of which such a discourse of race could be unveiled. Thus once again the concern for the environment seemed secondary.

In one of Dylan's other great songs of social protest of the time: 'A Hard Rain's a Gonna Fall' (1963), a dialogue with an ecological discourse was perhaps more clearly delineated. This was a song that portrayed a vivid vision of an apocalyptic future, with

pessimistic ecological images such as: ‘seven sad forests’ and ‘a dozen dead oceans’ of hearing ‘a roar that could drown the whole world,’ and the idea that ‘the pellets of poison are flooding their waters.’ Thus the chorus of the song: ‘And it’s a hard, it’s a hard, it’s a hard, it’s a hard/ It’s a hard rain’s a gonna-fall,’ (Dylan 1985, 59-60) cannot help but put one in mind of the fall of acid rain or some other pollution driven ecological disaster. At the time Dylan denied this interpretation, but the inference remains within his text. It is one of the key early songs in which Dylan expressed anything like a concern for issues of pollution and the environment in general

To be continued.

¹ Note how the homosocial elements within ‘Girl of the North Country’ is more fully delineated in Dylan’s duet with Johnny Cash on the recording included on the Nashville Skyline album (1969). The original song was concerned with a narrator addressing what was probably a male addressee about his feelings for a lost love. In the duet between Dylan and Cash this literally becomes the case, through the actual performance of the song.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

BY PAULA RADICE



Short and sweet this month, I'm afraid – two days away from the first performance of our Christmas show (“Rock around the Flock”) and also not well (again). I have such a reputation now for getting ill at the end of terms that it's practically written into the office diary in advance. I think it's a very good argument for shorter school terms...

It's been a great year on the Bob front, but I'll save the summing up for the Top Ten in the next issue. Want to put money on how many of us will have "Chronicles" at number one? I haven't reread it yet - having devoured it when it first arrived, in one sitting that went well into the night. I'm going to try to put time aside over the Christmas break to read it through carefully again.

2004 will also have been the first year, for a very long time, that I haven't seen Bob in concert at all, and I'm certainly ready to hear that some British shows are in the planning. If he doesn't come here, then it may be a case now - as time goes on - of travelling to wherever he is performing. We've been saying for ages that we shouldn't take the touring for granted, but seeing Bob in concert regularly has become a very normal part of life: not seeing a single show this year (because of work commitments) really brought it home to me how much I'll miss the concerts when they're not happening any more. My New Year's Resolution: be prepared to travel to any shows in school holiday time that are even slightly affordable. I couldn't face regretting (in ten, twenty years time) missed opportunities.

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas, and that 2005 will bring you and your families everything you need to be happy and healthy.

Love and Affection

by Richard Lewis

In “Mississippi” Dylan sings

*I've got nothing but affection
For those who've sailed with me*

This is beautifully illustrated in the absolutely marvellous “Chronicles” where Dylan writes about some of his fellow travellers with a touching generosity.

We first meet John Hammond “*an extraordinary man*” who Dylan obviously respects not only for what he did for others but for his faith in him as a young man. Dylan then paints us miniature portraits of people he meets, other artists who he hears or sees but avoids telling us much about his own family. Although we do hear a little about his father.

At the CafeWha? the mc is Fred Neil of whom Dylan says “*Freddy had the flow, dressed conservatively, sullen and brooding, with an enigmatical gaze, peachlike complexion, hair splashed with curls and an angry and powerful baritone voice that struck blue notes and blasted them to the rafters with or without a mike.*”

Hearing Ricky Nelson on the radio he notes “*he was different than the rest of the teen idols, had a great guitarist who played like a cross between a honky-tonk hero and a barn-dance fiddler*”. The guitar player was of course the now legendary James Burton. Dylan carries on describing Nelson who “*had never been a bold innovator like the early singers who sang like they were navigating burning ships. He didn't sing desperately, do a lot of damage, and you'd never mistake him for a shaman. It didn't feel like his endurance was ever being tested to the utmost, but it didn't matter. He sang his songs calm and steady like he was in the middle of a storm, men hurling past you. His voice was sort of mysterious and made you fall into a certain mood.*”

These descriptions are in the first dozen pages and they carry on throughout the book. I'm sure you have all noticed them just like me so I just want to share a few more now and let you go back for another reading of this extraordinary book.

Dave Van Ronk was “*passionate and stinging, sang like a soldier of fortune and sounded like he paid the price.*” Izzy Young “*was an old-line folk enthusiast, very*

sardonic and wore heavy horn-rimmed glasses, spoke in a thick Brooklyn dialect, wore wool slacks, skinny belt and work boots, tie at a careless slant." We meet Ray Gooch and Chloe Kiel who put Dylan up for a while and hear about Roy Orbison on the radio. *"His stuff mixed all styles and some that hadn't even been invented yet. He could sound mean and nasty on one line and then sing in a falsetto voice like Frankie Valli on the next. With Roy, you didn't know if you were listening to mariachi or opera. He kept you on your toes."*

There is a vivid portrait of Gorgeous George, the wrestler who sees Dylan playing in Minnesota in the 50s and seems to wish him good luck. *"Whether he said it or not doesn't matter.....and I never forgot it.....Crossing paths with Gorgeous George was really something."*

He meets Bobby Neuwirth for the first time. *"Right from the start, you could tell that Neuwirth had a taste for provocation and that nothing was going to restrict his freedom.....He could talk to anybody until they felt like all their intelligence was gone. With his tongue, he ripped and slashed and could make anybody uneasy, also could talk his way out of anything."*

There is a wonderful passage about Joe Hill and we find out that Johnny Rivers recorded Dylan's favourite cover version of any of his songs. There is Mike Seeger, Ritchie Havens, Woody Guthrie, Harry Jackson, Cisco Houston, Irwin Silber, Harry Belafonte, Bobby Vee, Liam Clancy, Len Chandler, Frank Sinatra Jr., Elliot Roberts, Mick Jones, Marianne Faithful, Daniel Lanois, Sun Pie, Rambling Jack Elliot, Carla and Suze Rotolo, Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill and Joan Baez.

Each and every one is remembered with a beautiful description that goes way beneath the surface and gives them all the respect and dignity that they so thoroughly deserve.

In another song on "Love and Theft", 'Po' Boy Dylan sings

*'He did a lot of nice things for me
And I won't forget him'*

Some twenty, thirty and even forty years after meeting these people Dylan shows us that he not only has not forgotten them but is able with just a few well turned and highly original phrases to bring them all to life.

There are lots more to "Chronicles" but my first impression is that Dylan has still within him a marvellous generosity to those he met on his incredible journey from Hibbing to now.

THE MISSOURIAN TIMES

TALES FROM EAST OF EDEN (Chronicles. Volume 1. Chapter 4.)

Let the record show that there have been two occasions in Dylan's life when his career has been threatened by injury as a result of accidents that have befallen him. The first occasion was on the 29th July 1966 and the second occasion, as disclosed by chapter 4 of Chronicles Volume 1, was sometime in January 1987.

This is how Dylan, in his own words, describes the 1987 accident and its potentially career ending consequences:

'It was 1987 and my hand, which had been ungodly injured in a freak accident was in a state of regeneration. It had been ripped and mangled to the bone and was still in the acute stage – it didn't even feel like it was mine. I didn't know what had befallen me, and this was a bizarre twist of fate. All potentialities had gone to pieces. With a hundred show dates scheduled for me starting in the spring it was uncertain that I would be able to perform. This was a sobering experience. It was now only January but my hand was going to need plenty of time to heal and be rehabilitated. With a cast on my hand that went nearly to the elbow, I realized that my playing days might well have faded out.' (*Chronicles page 145*).

Dylan then goes on to reflect upon the events of the year before the accident happened:

'I'd been on an eighteen month tour with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. It would be my last'. (*Chronicles page 148*).

'The tour with Petty was broken up into parts and during one of the lay offs, one of the organizers, had set up some shows for me to do with the Grateful Dead. I needed to go to go to rehearse with the band for these shows so I went to St. Raphael to meet with the Dead.' (*Chronicles page 149*)

'I rejoined Petty for what was to be the final run of a long, drawn out tour.'
(*Chronicles page 151*)

'The shows with Petty finished up in December.....After the tour I was sitting in London at the St. James Club with Elliot Roberts who had engineered both the

Petty shows and The Dead shows. I told him I needed to work two hundred show dates next year.’ (*Chronicles pages 153/154*)

After accepting Elliot’s advice that it would be best to wait until the spring before Dylan started his ‘two hundred show dates’, Dylan then writes further about his career threatening accident:

‘Then it hit me..... Returning from the emergency room with my arm entombed in plaster I fell into a chair – something heavy had come against me. It was like a black leopard had torn at my tattered flesh. It was plenty sore.... I was on the threshold of nothing, ruined. This could be the last turn of the screw. The trail had come to a halt.’ (*Chronicles page 156*)

And on the prospect of how the injury affected the way he wanted to play guitar:

‘That wouldn’t be happening any more. The thing was, I needed two hands. If I couldn’t play, I wouldn’t be doing anything better than ever now. Nothing would be exactly right.’ (*Chronicles page 162*)

But, thankfully, the injury subsequently improved:

‘One day I went to the clinic where the doctor examined my hand, said the healing was coming along fine and that the feeling in the nerves might have a chance of coming back soon.’ (*Chronicles page 170*).

Until the damaged hand was finally healed:

‘In time my hand got right.... The doctor encouraged me to play my guitar - that stretching my hand was therapeutic, actually good for my hand – and I was now doing that a lot. I could begin the shows that were scheduled for me, starting in the spring, and it seemed like I was back where I began.’ (*Chronicles pages 173/174*)

I opened this article by referring to the first career threatening accident in which Dylan was involved in July 1966. Actually as it turned out, the seriousness of that accident was somewhat overplayed for the purpose of providing Dylan with a reason for excusing himself from continuing a damn impossible life on the road. He didn’t break his neck, he wasn’t on death’s door but the prematurely terminated motorcycle ride did give him the much needed opportunity to spend some quality time with his wife and family.

So, what of the accident that occurred in January 1987? Well, for a start it couldn’t have happened in January 1987. Dylan talks of the tour with Petty the previous year and the concerts with the Grateful Dead. That tour and those concerts were in 1987 so the January after that year would be January 1988. He says **‘The shows with Petty finished up in December’** but actually the last date of the Petty tour was on October 17th 1987 at London’s Wembley Arena. He mentions the two hundred show dates to start ‘in the spring’ but actually what subsequently came to be called The Never Ending Tour was due

to start in June 1988 and would run to 71, not two hundred (or even one hundred) dates that year.

Taking the above facts into account, the 'January' that Dylan writes about when he was walking around **'with a cast on my hand that went nearly to the elbow'** and when he, **'realized that my playing days might well have faded out.'** must have been January 1988. Agreed?

But hold on a minute, on the 20th January 1988 Dylan appeared on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and, playing guitar, he jammed with George Harrison and Mick Jagger after shaking hands with Bruce Springsteen. It was all caught on TV for posterity, but no hand to elbow cast can be seen So perhaps it wasn't January 1988 after all. Confused? Perhaps Bob just got the date wrong. If that is so then you would be excused from thinking that if Bob can't quite remember the exact sequence of events of something important as a career threatening accident that occurred less than 20 years ago how on earth could he remember the pattern on the wood floor when he visited Lou Levy's office more than 40 years ago?

The answer my friend is what makes Bob Dylan and Chronicles Volume 1 so unique. It is a book that blurs fact with fiction; that makes you believe that what you are reading is gospel but actually it isn't. This book is written like a song which you think is biographical but actually isn't. It is almost a novel rather than a biography and, to my mind, it should be read that way. All the colour, all the memories, all the detail (true and false) are mixed together to present a self portrait which has a recognizable face but also has philosophical undertones and ironies of life's bitter sweet journey. A Pilgrim's Progress with a Joker acting out the part of a real life pilgrim. Like a Dylan song which improves the more you get to know it, Chronicles just gets better the more you read it.

If Dylan is a cowboy angel and Chronicles is his War and Pace and his pen is his candle, then he foresaw this project many years ago in the first verse of another great work of fiction:

*Of war and peace the truth just twists
Its curfew gull just glides
Upon four-legged forest clouds
The cowboy angel rides
With his candle lit into the sun
Though its glow is waxed in black
All except when 'neath the trees of Eden.*

Although Dylan may consider that his fame has banished him to somewhere east of Eden; with Chronicles he has joined together the wood and the trees. Read it with joy as we all move onwards towards that eternal forest.