Recording sessions
In June 1975 Dylan began to work on several new songs, finishing at least one song called "Abandoned Love."

Then, sometime in late June, while being driven in his limousine around the Village, Dylan spotted Scarlet Rivera, walking with her violin in the case. Dylan stopped to converse with Rivera and invited her to his rehearsal studio where she spent the afternoon playing along with several of the new songs.

According to Rivera, "One More Cup of Coffee," "Isis," and "Mozambique" were all rehearsed with Dylan on guitar and Rivera accompanying on violin.

As the rehearsals progressed, Dylan attempted some of the same songs on piano, experimenting with different keys in the process.

Soon after, Dylan would ask Rivera to join him for his next album. As early as mid-July, the concept of the Rolling Thunder Revue was beginning to solidify. According to Don DeVito, a representative for Columbia Records, the possibility of forming a band and touring the United States playing unannounced concerts was already being discussed at this point.

Meanwhile, Dylan's songwriting partnership with Jacques Levy continued to grow. Jacques Levy was then best-known for "Chestnut Mare," a collaboration with Roger McGuinn that ultimately became one of The Byrds' last hits. Dylan had met Levy the previous spring, but they became reacquainted with each other at the Other End.

One night, Dylan met Levy at his loft and showed him an early draft of "Isis." According to Levy, "Isis" began life as a "slow dirge", unlike anything he had ever heard before, which he felt gave the appearance of setting the listener up "for a long story". When Dylan first played this embryonic version for him, the two of them started working together. According to Levy, it was an enjoyable songwriting partnership, with Levy writing words and Dylan contributing ideas. The session lasted until the early hours of the morning, after which Dylan and Levy traveled to The Other End. Dylan read the lyrics to the gathered crowd, to favorable reactions. The partnership went on to pen "Hurricane" and other tracks later featured on Desire.
First Session: Dylan finally held a recording session on July 14th, recording two songs co-written with Levy: "Joey," an epic ballad about gangster Joey Gallo, and "Rita Mae," a short song about lesbian writer Rita Mae Brown. At this time, the Rolling Thunder Revue had not yet formed. The participating musicians instead consisted of the Dave Mason Band, Scarlet Rivera (the only future member of the Rolling Thunder Revue to participate in this session), and a number of other session players. Disappointed with the results, the session merely encouraged Dylan to form his own working band for his upcoming album. Following the session, Dylan and Levy isolated themselves in the Hamptons to work on their songs. According to Levy, they finished off a total of fourteen songs over a three week period, but in reality, they finished roughly half that number in less than two weeks. In total, an entire album's worth of songs was written in less than four weeks of collaboration with Levy.

"We tried it with a lot of different people in the studio, a lot of different types of sound, and I even had back-up singers on that album for two or three days, a lot of percussion, a lot going on. But as it got down, I got more irritated with all this sound going on and eventually just settled on bass, drums and violin."

Bob Dylan 1978.
Second Session: Two weeks after the first, failed session, Dylan returned to Studio E on July 28 with approximately 21 musicians at his disposal. By most accounts, the recording process was very haphazard. Dylan was determined to record the songs live, while producer Don DeVito's inexperience led him to 'stack' instruments on the multitrack tapes, making it virtually impossible to properly remix any of the songs or to overdub any off-key accompaniments.

Neil Hubbard, who was present at the session, felt that there were too many musicians present and the session lacked leadership. Guitarist Eric Clapton was present, just one of five guitarists in the studio. Clapton recalled later that Dylan appeared to be seeking
an opportunity to work with new people he had met, although Clapton felt that Dylan was uncomfortable performing personal songs with such a large group present, and left the session after advising Dylan to use a smaller band, a sentiment later reiterated by Rob Stoner to producer Don DeVito. Others at this session included Rob Stoner, Scarlet Rivera, Emmylou Harris, and the English pub rock band Kokomo. Many of them would later, and at the time, recount their frustrations regarding the recording process for Desire which was, in the opinions of the many professional musicians present, a rather chaotic process.

**Third Session:** The following day, July 29, Dylan returned to Studio E with roughly half the number of musicians, retaining Stoner, Rivera, Harris, Hugh McCracken, and Vinnie Bell as well as saxophonist Mel Collins and percussionist Jody Linscott of Kokomo. This time, they managed a usable take of the song "Oh, Sister", but the remainder of the session was deemed unacceptable.

**Fourth Session:** On the night of July 30, 1975, Dylan returned to Studio E with a smaller group of musicians, including Stoner, Rivera, Harris, and drummer Howie Wyeth (*a friend of Stoner's who was hired by Dylan on Stoner's suggestion*). For the most part, this group of musicians formed the core of the Rolling Thunder Revue. The difference became apparent early on in the session, when a usable take of "Isis" was recorded on the first try. Both Dylan and Stoner were pleased with the session, and Stoner suggests that the more intimate sound was much closer to the sound of the completed album. Five of the nine songs from *Desire* were recorded at that session, as well as a slow version of "Isis," the original master take of "Hurricane", the single-only release "Rita Mae," and a successful take of "Golden Loom" that was later released in 1991. Of the participating musicians, only
Emmylou Harris was dissatisfied with the results. It would also be her last session, as she had prior commitments with her own career.

**Fifth Session:** The following night, July 31, Dylan held another session, this time recording three songs. From this session, Dylan recorded the master take for "Isis" as well as master takes for "Abandoned Love" and "Sara." Dylan's wife Sara, the subject of the song that bore her name, also accompanied him to this session.

**Emmylou Harris Interview, BBC Radio 1976**

**BBC:** How did you come to play on that album [Desire]?

**EH:** Well, Dylan just wanted a girl to sing and he asked Don (Devito) if he knew of anyone. And Don said, "Well there's this girl Emmylou Harris." I thought he wanted me to sing on a country song, but it turned out he just wanted me to sing period. As it turned out it was very interesting, but you know, it wasn't... well you know, I have to have her. The way it came about was quite unusual.

**Outtakes**

The *Desire* sessions yielded a number of outtakes, but only one of these outtakes received any serious consideration. Written from the point-of-view of someone "despairing, isolated, [and] lost", "Abandoned Love" debuted as an impromptu performance at the Other End on July 3, 1975. Originally intended for the album, it was ultimately replaced by "Joey." Its first and only live performance at the Other End circulates as a highly-prized recording among collectors.

Another song, "Rita Mae," was issued on a single-only release.

Two other recordings from the sessions, but not destined for the LP were *Golden Loom & Catfish*, a tribute to future Baseball Hall Of Fame pitcher Jim Hunter (*better known as Catfish*).

**Song information**

1. **Hurricane**

The album opens with "Hurricane", arguably the most popular song on *Desire*. It protests the conviction of former middleweight boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter for triple murder in 1966, arguing for his innocence. Rubin Carter was eventually released in 1985 after United States District Court Judge Haddan Lee Sarokin had ruled, that in his opinion, Carter had not received a fair trial.

Dylan had been inspired to write it after reading Carter's autobiography, *The Sixteenth Round*, which Carter had sent to Dylan because of his prior commitment to the civil rights struggle.

During the fall tour preceding Desire's release, Dylan and the Rolling Thunder Revue played a benefit concert for Carter in New York City's Madison
from Dylan, for the purposes of the photograph. Dylan has not performed "Hurricane" since 25 January 1976.

2. Isis
One of the most celebrated songs on Desire is the symbolic travelogue "Isis". According to NPR's Tim Riley, "Isis" tells the story of a young groom who marries his bride before he learns the value of loyalty.

3. Mozambique
"Mozambique" started as a game, to see how many rhymes for "-ique" Dylan and Levy could find.

4. One More Cup of Coffee
'One More Cup of Coffee' tells the tale of a girl whose family are gypsies and drifters and of the man who must leave her to enter the "valley below". The narrator describes a character who is beautiful: "your eyes are like two jewels in the sky" but one for who the narrators love or admiration is not reciprocated "but I don't sense affection no gratitude or love, your loyalty is not to me but to the stars above." The song deals with themes of abandonment, the apparent end of a relationship and the concept of a coming journey. The song could be seen as a metaphor for Dylan's relationship with Sara; however, this is unsubstantiated. The song is also thought to have been inspired by a visit Dylan made to Saintes Maries de
Mer in Provence, France, where there is an annual gathering of Romany people who venerate Saint Sarah the Egyptian. This would seem to point to another link to Sara Dylan. (Ref. Picknett, L. and Prince, C. "The Templar Revelation", 1997, p.90.)

The song is a duet between Dylan and Emmylou Harris; as an incidental to its use of the harmonic minor scale it has a decidedly Middle Eastern flavor in the vocal melody. The song was written at a corner table at the Other End nightclub in Greenwich Village in the summer of 1975.

5. Oh, Sister
"Oh, Sister" became a concert favorite during the fall tour preceding Desire's release. Tim Riley noted that it was the first time Dylan had invoked God as a method of wooing a woman, and that with Emmylou Harris, the song became a discourse on the fragility of love. Harris's vocal on the final mix was actually overdubbed a day later, one of the few overdubs made during the Desire sessions.

6. Joey
The longest song of the album is "Joey". A twelve-verse ballad, it describes the life of deceased gangster Joey Gallo and created a substantial amount of controversy when Desire was released. Dylan presents Gallo as an outlaw with morals, in the tradition of songs like Woody Guthrie's "Pretty Boy Floyd". Dylan's Gallo refused to kill innocent people, made peace with black men, and shielded his family when he was about to be shot as they were eating in a restaurant. Many commentators, notably rock critic Lester Bangs have argued, however, that Gallo was well-known as a vicious Ma-
and his wife Mary, were introduced to Dylan through Levy. Dylan said in 1975 that he had considered Gallo more a hero than a gangster. After hearing Jerry and Mary Orbach talk about Gallo, Dylan wrote the entire song in one night. Unlike legendary outlaws like Robin Hood, or historical ones like Jesse James and Billy the Kid, Gallo was not a figure of the distant past nor was he mythologized by tall tales spread by word-of-mouth and the local press. With Gallo’s life still prominent in the minds of the public and without favorable media coverage, Dylan’s attempt to romanticize Gallo was greeted with an enormous amount of contempt by the press, public officials, and private citizens alike.

Goddard’s biography depicted Gallo as a racist who often beat his wife and abused his children, and who had taken part in a brutal gang rape of a young boy while he was in prison. None of these details was mentioned or alluded to in Dylan’s "Joey". Instead, the song paints a far more romantic portrait, incorporating a lyric that Gallo "would not carry a gun/ I’m around too many children," he’d say, "they should never know of one."

Lester Bangs later wrote a scathing response to a question posed by Dylan in the song’s chorus: "What made them want to come and blow you away?". In a Village Voice article published in March 7, 1976, Bangs argued that some could have considered there to have been an open contract
on Gallo for his shooting of gangster Joe Colombo almost a year previously. Bangs also suggested that two other theories advanced by investigators extremely close to the case showed Gallo attempting to lay claim to territory occupied by other, more powerful mob factions. Despite all the controversy, Clinton Heylin noted that “Joeys” remained the one song from Desire to have regularly featured in concert in the nineties.

In an interview with Bill Flanagan for his album Together Through Life in 2009, Dylan claimed that Jacques Levy wrote the lyrics to 'Joey', not Dylan himself.

7. Romance in Durango
"Romance in Durango" concerns an outlaw and his lover, on the run in Mexico. Dylan biographer Clinton Heylin described the song as "the climax to an unmade Sam Peckinpah movie in song."

This song has been covered by the Italian singer and songwriter Fabrizio de André in the name of "avventura a Durango", and also by the Brazilian singer Raimundo Fagner in the name of "Romance no Deserto".

8. Black Diamond Bay
As described by Heylin, the "Black Diamond Bay" describes the destruction of a tiny island, observed from two perspectives: from a hotel on the island itself and from the narrator's point of view through a television news report. The song essentially describes what the people on the island at the time do with the time that they have left when they realize that they are about to die. The various characters tend to fend for themselves, panic, and in one case commit suicide, rather than collaborating to find a way to save each other. The song also describes the news-watcher's indifference to the catastrophes he hears about on TV, as the narrator goes to get another beer rather than watch the news story about the catastrophe on the island. He says "I never did plan to go anyway to Black Diamond Bay." Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness was a major influence to this song, which references many of its themes. The song title, the island, the volcano, the gambling, and the Panama hat are all references to Joseph Conrad's Victory, which seems to be more of an influence than Heart of Darkness.

9. Sara
Desire closes with "Sara", arguably Dylan's most public display of his own personal life. An ambitious tribute to his wife, Sara, it is possibly Dylan's only song in which he steps out of his public persona and directly addresses a real person, with striking biographical accuracy. Tim Riley wrote that it was "a fevered cry of loss posing as sincere devotion." Dylan's marriage was in a turbulent state when he wrote the song. Dylan's estrange-
ment from his wife had led to at least one separation in the previous year. Sara was present at the song's recording session, (on the same day he recorded two other songs that touched on the subject of marriage: "Isis" and "Abandoned Love"). However, in March of 1977, Sara Dylan filed for divorce. In the lyrics, Dylan also states that he wrote Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands (from Blonde on Blonde) for Sara.

**Aftermath**

*Desire* would not be released until early the following year. In the meantime, Dylan embarked on the first leg of a North American tour with the Rolling Thunder Revue. During the course of the tour, which received heavy media coverage, Dylan and his band unveiled songs from *Desire* in addition to reinterpreting past works. The Rolling Thunder Revue was also augmented by guest musicians such as Mick Ronson and other artists such as Roger McGuinn, Joni Mitchell, and Joan Baez who not only contributed during Dylan's set, but also played complete sets of their own. Bruce Springsteen was invited to perform, but declined when Dylan informed him that he could not use the E Street Band to back him.

The fall of 1975 would ultimately produce a widely criticized film, Renaldo and Clara, but the concerts themselves were well-received. Often regarded as one of Dylan's finest series of shows.

On January 5th 1976, *Desire* was released, garnering a fair share of critical acclaim.

The album also received a fair share of commercial success, eventually topping the U.S. Billboard charts.
DISC 1  Quadraphonic Desire
All tracks written by Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy, except as noted.

Side one
1. Hurricane - 8:33 (October 24, 1975)
2. Isis - 6:58 (July 31, 1975)
3. Mozambique - 3:00 (July 20, 1975)
4. One More Cup of Coffee (Valley Below) (Dylan)
   - 3:43 (July 30, 1975)
5. Oh, Sister - 4:05 (July 30, 1975)

Side two
7. Romance in Durango - 5:50 (July 28, 1975)
8. Black Diamond Bay - 7:30 (July 30, 1975)
9. Sara (Dylan) - 5:29 (July 31, 1975)

CREDITS DISC 1 - Quadraphonic Desire
All Quadraphonic tracks recorded Studio E, Columbia Recording Studios, New York City.
Tracks 1 - 9 released on DESIRE, Columbia PCQ-33893, (quadraphonic version), 1976.

JULY 28, 1975 - 2nd Desire session,
produced by Don DeVito.
Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Emmylou Harris (vocal), Vincent Bell (guitar), Eric Clapton (guitar), Neil T. Hubbard (guitar), Perry Lederman (guitar), James Mullen (guitar), Erik Frandsen (slide guitar), Michael Lawrence (trumpet), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Mel Collins (tenor saxophone), Sheena Seidenberg (tenor saxophone), Dom Cortese (accordion), Tony O'Malley (keyboards), James "Sugarblue" Whiting (harmonica), Rob Rothstein (bass), Alan Spenner (bass), Jody Linscott (percussion), John Sussewell (drums), Dyan Birch, Francis Collins, Paddy McHugh (background vocals).

JULY 30, 1975 - 4th Desire session,
produced by Don DeVito.
Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Emmylou Harris (vocal), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Mel Collins (tenor saxophone), Sheena Seidenberg (tambourine & congas), Rob Rothstein (bass), Howie Wyeth (drums).

JULY 31, 1975 - 5th Desire session,
produced by Don DeVito.
Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Sheena Seidenberg (tambourine & congas), Rob Rothstein (bass), Howie Wyeth (drums).

OCTOBER 24, 1975 - 6th and last Desire session, produced by Don DeVito. Bob Dylan (vocal & guitar), Steven Soles (guitar), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Rob Rothstein (bass), Howie Wyeth (drums), Luther Rix (congas), Ronee Blakley (backup vocal).

DISC 2 Abandoned Desire
1. Joey (previously uncirculated July 14 version)
2. Rita May (July 14, 1975)
3. Catfish (July 29, 1975)
4. Golden Loom (July 30, 1975)
5. Hurricane (Desire Session Version) (July 30, 1975)
6. Rita May (45 Version) (July 30, 1975)
7. Abandoned Love (July 31, 1975)
8. People Get Ready (October 1975)
10. Rehearsal Dialogue
11. Buckets Of Rain

CREDITS DISC 2 Abandoned Desire

JULY 14, 1975 - 1st Desire session, produced by Don DeVito. Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Jim Krueger (guitar), Dave Mason (guitar), Vincent Bell (mandolin), Dom Cor- tese (accordion), Mark Jordan (piano, keyboard, organ), Scarlet Rivera (violin), James "Sugarblue" Whiting (harmonica), Gerald Johnson (bass), Rick Jaeger (drums), Vivian Cherry, Hilda Harris, Josmie Armstead (background vocals).
JULY 29, 1975 - 3rd Desire session, produced by Don DeVito.
Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Emmylou Harris (vocal), Vincent Bell (guitar), Michael Lawrence (trumpet), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Mel Collins (tenor saxophone), Sheena Seidenberg (tenor saxophone), Tony O'Malley (keyboards), James "Sugarblue" Whiting (harmonica), Rob Rothstein (bass), Jody Linscott (percussion), John Sussewell (drums).

JULY 30, 1975 - 4th Desire session, produced by Don DeVito.
Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Emmylou Harris (vocal), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Mel Collins (tenor saxophone), Sheena Seidenberg (tambourine & congas), Rob Rothstein (bass), Howie Wyeth (drums).

JULY 31, 1975 - 5th Desire session, produced by Don DeVito.
Bob Dylan (guitar, vocal), Scarlet Rivera (violin), Sheena Seidenberg (tambourine & congas), Rob Rothstein (bass), Howie Wyeth (drums).

OCTOBER 1975 - Rehearsals for Rolling Thunder Revue, Studio Instrumental Rentals, New York City
Bob Dylan (vocal, guitar), Bob Neuwirth (guitar), T-Bone J. Henry Burnett (guitar), Roger McGuinn (guitar), Steven Soles (guitar), Mick Ronson (guitar), David Mansfield (steel guitar, violin, mandolin, dobro), Rob Stoner (bass), Howie Wyeth (piano, drums), Luther Rix (drums, percussion), Ronee Blakley (vocal).

OCTOBER 1975 - Bette Midler recording session, Secret Sound Studios, New York City
Bette Midler (vocal), Bob Dylan (vocal), Dave Webster (slide guitar), Moogy Klingman (piano & harmonica), Ralph Schuckett (organ), John Siegler (bass), John Wilcox (drums).
Quadraphonic vinyl releases

Columbia PCQ 33893 (USA)
CBS Q 86003 (Spain)
CBS SBPQ 234778 (Australia/New Zealand)
Jan 1976

This album was created using the Columbia "SQ" quadraphonic system and has mistakes in:
R-0124 Joey - at the end of verse three there is a vocal mistake - "to the boss I say he said" - this must have been edited out on the regular release
R-0125 Romance In Durango - again at the end of verse three there is a vocal mistake - "In the face of God will appear" - this too must have been edited out on the regular release. It's also reported there is an outstandingly bad trumpet track that was also removed from the regular stereo release!
Another difference is that in One More Cup Of Coffee there is apparently an intrusive scraping sound just before the third verse, again something that was edited out of the regular stereo release

Rob van Estrik: "The entire album was drastically remixed by Don DeVito from the master session tapes for quadraphonic replay. The resulting LP sounds entirely different from the regular release and is consequently one of the most collectable Dylan albums. Contrary to what was stated in Isis #50, the CD version of the album is NOT the Quadraphonic remix."

This is confirmed by Les Kokay, who has sent a detailed analysis of the differences between the current CD version and the Quadraphonic mix.
The very rare Dutch release has a similar rear sleeve to the regular release and the same inner sleeve. The Spanish release has a distinctive gold border, and extra printing on the right centre of the front cover "NO. UNO EN USA" [#1 IN USA].
The rear sleeve has the song titles in Spanish and English with pictures of six other quadraphonic releases including Nashville Skyline.
Matrix number: QAL/P BL 33893-1A.
The labels translate the album title as "Deseo" and also have the song titles in Spanish and English.
This record could have been produced by Don DeVito
Engineer/Don Meehan
Chief Recordist/Lou Waxman
Mastering/Stan Kalina
Quadraphonic Sound and
Remix Supervision / Harold J. Kleiner
Quadraphonic Remix
Engineer / Don Young

Musicians
Marvin Gaye/Rhythm guitar, harmonica,
piano on “Isis”
EmmyLou Harris/Background vocals
Rob Stoner/Bass, background vocals
Scarlet Rivera/Violin
Howard Wyeth/Drums
Vincent Bell/Bellzouki
Dom Cortese/Accordion
Ronee Blakley/Background vocals
“Harricane”
Steve Soles/Background vocals
“Harricane”
Luther/Congas “Harricane”

Special Thanks
Jacques Levy
EmmyLou Harris
Rob Stoner
Howard Wyeth
and
Scarlet Rivera
Serviced by J.P.s
New York City
1975

DISC 1 - Quadraphonic Desire
1. Hurricane
2. Isis
3. Mozambique
4. One More Cup of Coffee
5. Oh, Sister
6. Joey
7. Romance in Durango
8. Black Diamond Bay
9. Sara

DISC 2 - Abandoned Desire
1. Joey (previously uncirculated July 14 version)
2. Rita May
3. Catfish
4. Golden Loom
5. Hurricane (Desire Session Version)
6. Rita May (45 Version)
7. Abandoned Love
8. People Get Ready
9. Nuggets of Rain
10. Rehearsal Dialogue
11. Buckets Of Rain