



Bob Dylan and The Queens of Rhythm.

SPECIAL SUMMER DOUBLE ISSUE

Rolling Stone

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Bob Dylan with Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers

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As they prepare for their American tour, Dylan and Petty and the Heartbreakers travel an old road to a new rock & roll sound

By Mikal Gilmore

This story is from the July 17th, 1986 issue of Rolling Stone.

It is just past midnight, and Dylan is standing in the middle of a crowded, smoke-laden recording studio tucked deep into the remote reaches of Topanga Canyon. He is wearing brown-tinted sunglasses, a sleeveless white T-shirt, black vest, black jeans, frayed black motorcycle boots and fingerless black motorcycle gloves, and he puffs hard at a Kool while bobbing his head rhythmically to the colossal blues shuffle that is thundering from the speakers above his head. Sitting on a sofa a few feet away, also nodding their heads in rapt pleasure, are T-Bone Burnett and Al Kooper – old friends and occasional sidemen of Dylan. Several other musicians – including Los Lobos guitarist Cesar Rosas, R&B saxophonist Steve Douglas and bassist James Jamerson Jr., the son of the legendary Motown bass player – fill out the edges of the room. Like everyone else, they are smiling at this music: romping, bawdy, jolting rock & roll – the sort of indomitable music a man might conjure if he were about to lay claim to something big. The guitars

crackle, the horns honk and wail, the drums and bass rumble and clamor wildly, and then the room returns to silence. T-Bone Burnett, turning to Kooper, seems to voice a collective sentiment. "Man," he says, "that gets it." "Yeah," says Kooper. "So dirty."

Everyone watches Dylan expectantly. For a moment, he appears to be in some distant, private place. "Subterranean," is all he says, still smiling. "Positively subterranean," he adds, running his hand through his mazy brown hair, chuckling. Then he walks into an adjoining room, straps on his weatherworn Fender guitar, tears off a quick, bristling blues lick and says, "Okay, who wants to play lead on this? I broke a string." Dylan has been like this all week, turning out spur-of-the-moment, blues-infused rock & roll with a startling force and imagination, piling up instrumental tracks so fast that the dazed, bleary-eyed engineers who are monitoring the sessions are having trouble cataloging all the various takes – so far, well over twenty songs, including gritty R&B, Chicago-steeped blues, rambunctious gospel and raw-toned hillbilly forms. In part, Dylan is working fast merely as a practical matter: rehearsals for his American tour with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers start in only a couple of weeks, and though it hardly seems possible in this overmeticulous, high-tech recording



era, he figures he can write, record, mix and package a new studio LP in that allotted term. "You see, I spend too much time working out the sound of my records these days," he had told me earlier. "And if the records I'm making only sell a certain amount anyway, then why should I take so long putting them together? ... I've got a lot of different records inside me, and it's time just to start getting them out."

Apparently, this is not idle talk. Dylan has started perusing songs for a possible collection of new and standard folk songs

and has also begun work on a set of Tin Pan Alley covers – which, it seems safe to predict, will be something to hear. At the moment, though, as Dylan leads the assembled band through yet another roadhouse-style blues number, a different ambition seems to possess him. This is Bob Dylan the rock & roller, and despite all the vagaries of his career, it is still an impressive thing to witness. He leans lustily into the song's momentum at the same instant that he invents its structure, pumping his rhythm guitar with tough,

unexpected accents, much like Chuck Berry or Keith Richards, and in the process, prodding his other guitarists, Kooper and Rosas, to tangle and burn, like good-natured rivals. It isn't until moments later, as everybody gathers back into the booth to listen to the playback, that it's clear that this music sounds surprisingly like the riotous, dense music of Highway 61 Revisited – music that seems as menacing as it does joyful, and that, in any event, seems to erupt from an ungovernable imagination. Subterranean, indeed.

It was with rock & roll remarkably like this that, more than twenty years ago, Bob Dylan permanently and sweepingly altered the possibilities of both folk music and the pop-song form. In that epoch, the reach of his influence seemed so pervasive, his stance so powerful and mysterious, that he was virtually changing the language and aspirations of popular culture with his every work and gesture. But Dylan barely got started in rock &



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roll before he got stopped. In the spring of 1966, he was recording *Blonde on Blonde* and playing fiery, controversial electric concerts with his backing band, the Hawks (later renamed the Band); a few months later, he was nearly killed in a motorcycle accident and withdrew from recording and

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performing for nearly a year and a half. For many, his music never seemed quite the same after that, and although much of it proved bold and lovely, for about twenty years now Bob Dylan hasn't produced much music that transfigures either pop style or youth culture. To some former fans, that lapse has seemed almost unforgivable. Consequently, Dylan has found himself in a dilemma shared by no other rock figure of his era: He has been sidestepped by the pop world he helped transform, at a time when contemporaries like the Rolling Stones attract a more enthusiastic audience than ever before. This must hurt an artist as scrupulous as Dylan, who, for whatever his lapses, has remained pretty true to both his moral and musical ideals.

In the last couple of years, though, there have been signs that some kind of reclamation might be in the offing. For one thing, there's been his participation in the pop world's recent spate of social and political activism, including his involvement in the USA for Africa and Artists United Against Apartheid projects and his appearance at the Live Aid and Farm Aid programs (the latter, an event inspired by an off-the-cuff remark Dylan had made at Live Aid). More important, there were intriguing indications in 1983's *Infidels* and 1985's *Empire Burlesque* that the singer seems interested in working his way back into the

concerns of the real-life modern world – in fact, that he may even be interested in fashioning music that once more engages a popwise audience. And, as demonstrated by the strong response to his recent tour of Australia and Japan, as well as to his summer tour of America, there is still an audience willing to be engaged.

Of course, Dylan has his own views about all this talk of decline and renewal. A little later in the evening at the Topanga studio, while various musicians are working on overdubs, he sits in a quiet office, fiddling with one of his ever-present cigarettes and taking occasional sips from a plastic cup filled with white wine. We are discussing a column that appeared in the April issue of *Artforum*, by critic Greil Marcus. Marcus has covered Dylan frequently over the years (he penned the liner notes for the 1975 release of *The Basement Tapes*), but he has been less than compelled by the artist's recent output. Commenting on Dylan's career, and about the recent five-LP retrospective of Dylan's music, *Biograph*, Marcus wrote: "Dylan actually did something between 1963 and 1968, and ... what he did then created a standard against which everything he has putatively done since can be measured ... The fact that the 1964 'It Ain't Me, Babe' can be placed on an album next to the 1974 'You Angel You' is a denial of everyone's best hopes."

Dylan seems intrigued by Marcus's comments, but also amused. "Well, he's right and he's wrong," he says. "I did that accidentally. That was all accidental, as every age is. You're doing something, you don't know what it is, you're just doing it. And later on you'll look at it and ... " His words trail off, then he begins again. "To me, I don't have a 'career.' ... A career is something you can look back on, and I'm not ready to look back. Time doesn't really exist for me in those kinds of terms. I don't really remember in any monumental way 'what I have done.' This isn't my career; this is my life, and it's still vital to me."

He removes his sunglasses and rubs at his eyes. "I feel like I really don't want to prove any points," he continues. "I just want to do whatever it is I do. These lyrical things that come off in a unique or a desolate sort of way, I don't know, I don't feel I have to put that out anymore to please anybody. Besides, anything you want to do for posterity's sake, you can just sing into a tape recorder and give it to your mother, you know?" Dylan laughs at his last remark. "See," he says, "somebody once told me – and I don't remember who it was or even where it was – but they said, 'Never give a hundred percent.' My thing has always been just getting by on whatever I've been getting by on. That applies to that time, too, that time in the Sixties. It never really

occurred to me that I had to do it for any kind of motive except that I just felt like I wanted to do it. As things worked, I mean, I could never have predicted it." I tell him it's hard to believe he wasn't giving a hundred percent on *Highway 61 Revisited* or *Blonde on Blonde*. He flashes a shy grin and shrugs. "Well, maybe I was. But there's something at the back of your mind that says, 'I'm not giving you a hundred percent. I'm not giving anybody a hundred percent. I'm gonna give you this much, and this much is gonna have to do. I'm good at what I do. I can afford to give you this much and still be as good as, if not better than, the guy over across the street.' I'm not gonna give it all – I'm not Judy Garland, who's gonna die onstage in front of a thousand clowns. If we've learned anything, we should have learned that." A moment later an engineer is standing in the doorway, telling Dylan the overdubs are done. "This is all gonna pass." Dylan says before getting up to go back into the studio. "All these people who say whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing – that's all gonna pass, because, obviously, I'm not gonna be around forever. That day's gonna come when there aren't gonna be any more records, and then people won't be able to say, 'Well this one's not as good as the last one.' They're gonna have to look at it all. And I don't know what the picture will be, what people's judgment will be at



Bob Dylan and clarinetist and band leader Benny Goodman listen to legendary record producer John Hammond backstage at the taping of the special 'The World of John Hammond' in the studios of WTTW-TV on 10th September, 1975 in Chicago, Illinois.

that time. I can't help you in that area."

"Everyone's always saying to me, 'What's Bob Dylan like?'" says Tom Petty a few nights later, seated in the tiny lounge area of a Van Nuys recording studio. Petty and his band, the Heartbreakers, have gathered here to work out material for a forthcoming album and also to help supervise the sound

mix for Bob Dylan in Concert, the HBO special documenting their recent tour of Australia with Dylan. "It's funny," Petty continues, "but people still attach a lot of mystery to Bob ... I think they figure that, since we've spent time around him, we can explain him, as if he's somebody who needs to be explained." Petty shakes his head. "I



Bob Dylan and Richie Havens attend a party hosted by Bob Dylan at Chasen's in Beverly Hills, California, 2nd April, 1986.

mean, Dylan's just a guy like anybody else – except he's a guy who has something to say. And he has a personality that makes it his own. There's not many people that can walk into a room of 20,000, stare at them and get their attention. That's not an easy trick." Petty may be a little too modest to admit it, but Dylan also has something else going for him these days. A good part of the excitement over Dylan's current U.S. tour owes to the singer's alliance with a band as rousing as the Heartbreakers – a band

more given to propulsive rock & roll than any group Dylan has worked with in over a decade. Judging from the HBO special, the Heartbreakers can render the Highway 61 sound – that unmistakable mix of fiery keyboards and stray-cat guitars – with a convincing flair. Yet rather than simply replicate the sound, the group reinvigorates it and applies it evenly to a broad range of Dylan's music, helping bring a new coherence to his sprawling body of styles. As a result, many of Dylan's more recent

songs – such as “When the Night Comes Falling From the Sky” and “Lenny Bruce” – come across in concert with an uncommon force and conviction, perhaps even a bit more force than some of the older songs. But Dylan isn’t the only one whose music has benefited from this association. Ever since the end of the Australasian tour, Petty and the Heartbreakers seem to be on an inspired streak, cranking out blues-tempered rock and pop songs in the same impromptu fashion that Dylan so often employs. It isn’t so much that the group’s new music resembles Dylan’s (actually, it suggests nothing so much as the reckless blues of Exile on Mam Street), but rather that it seems born of the same freewheeling intensity and instinctive ferocity that has marked Dylan’s most ambitious efforts. But there is something more to it – something that belongs only to Petty and the Heartbreakers. I have seen this band on numerous occasions, both in the studio and onstage, and though they’ve always seemed adept and exciting, they’ve never struck me as particularly inspired improvisers, in the way, say, that the Rolling Stones or the E Street Band can seem. Now, here they are, jamming with unqualified verve, playing not only head to head but also heart to heart and, in the process, creating what is probably their most inspiring music to date. “We’ve never

done anything like this before,” says Petty, fishing a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket. “It’s not like we’re even thinking we’re making a record... . Yet here we are with enough for a double album.” Petty plants a cigarette between his lips, lights it and settles back into the sofa. “Tonight was a good night,” he continues. “In fact, this has been a good time for us in general. I think we feel pretty glad to be together.”

Though nobody likes to admit it, following the 1982 release of Long After Dark, the Heartbreakers more or less dissolved. Petty withdrew into his home, where he was building a state-of-the-art studio and anticipating a solo project; drummer Stan Lynch joined T-Bone Burnett’s band for a brief tour; keyboardist Benmont Tench played onstage and in the studio with Lone Justice; guitarist Mike Campbell began experimenting with some new aural textures on a twenty-four-track machine in his basement, where he would eventually compose “The Boys of Summer” for Don Henley; and bassist Howie Epstein did some session work and began assembling material for a possible record of his own. “It was reaching a point,” says Campbell, “where everybody was getting a bit stale with each other, inspirationwise. We just weren’t committed as a band.” Adds Stan Lynch, “It’s like we all faced this ultimate question: If I’m not doing what I do now,

what would I do? That’s a horrible thing, but we all faced it and realized we wouldn’t roll over and die if we lost this gig.” Then, in 1984, inspired by some conversations with Robbie Robertson, Petty came up with an idea that couldn’t be realized without the band’s contribution. He wanted to make an album about the modern American South – the common homeland that most of the group’s members had emerged from but had never quite forgotten. “I’d seen these people I’d grown up around struggling with that experience,” Petty had said in an earlier conversation, “with all the things about that legacy they couldn’t shake free of, and I think that was tearing at me.” The result was Southern Accents – a work that examined the conflict between old ways and new ideals and that also aimed to broaden and update the band’s musical scope. Though some band members now feel that the record was a bit overworked, they all credit it as a reconciliatory experience. “They’ve been real supportive of me through this record,” Petty says. “I think in the last album we were in a lot of different camps... Now they laugh about Southern Accents and its sitters. They had to let me get this out of my system.” Then along came Bob Dylan. He had already employed Tench on Shot of Love, and Tench, Campbell and Epstein on Empire Burlesque, and was now looking for an electric band to support him

at Farm Aid. When Neil Young, one of the event’s organizers, mentioned that Petty and the Heartbreakers had also committed themselves to the show, Dylan decided to ask the group to accompany him. “He called me,” says Petty, “and I said, ‘Yeah, come over,’ and shit, we had a great time. We rehearsed about a week, playing maybe a million different songs. That was one of the best times I ever had. We were blazing. So we went off to Farm Aid and had a great night: The Heartbreakers had a good set, and Bob had a good set. But it was over too quick.” Well, not quite. Dylan had been considering offers for a possible Australian tour, but was reluctant to assemble a makeshift band. Plus, the Heartbreakers had just finished their own tour and were firming up their schedules for February. “The next thing I knew,” says Petty, “we were doing the Australian tour, and we wanted to do it.”

According to some reviews, the tour got off to a shaky start in New Zealand, where the opening-night audiences responded more fervently to Petty’s set than Dylan’s. But within a few shows, Dylan was storming into such songs as “Clean Cut Kid,” “Positively 4th Street,” “Rainy Day Women” and “Like a Rolling Stone,” often facing off with Campbell and Petty in fierce three-way guitar exchanges and launching suddenly into songs that nobody had rehearsed,

and that some band members hardly knew. "One night," recalls Tench, "Dylan turns around and goes, 'Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues.'" ' We'd never played it... At times, that tour sounded like some-bizarre mix of the Stooges and Van Morrison." "There's nothing tentative about Dylan onstage," adds Lynch. "I've seen gigs where the songs have ended in all the wrong places, where it's fallen apart, and it's almost as if, in some perverse way, he gets energy from that chaos." Dylan can also seem daunting in other ways. "He has more presence than anyone I've ever met," says Mike Campbell. "But when you're working together, you sort of forget about that. Then all of a sudden it will hit you. I mean, I can remember when I was in junior-high school: I was in a diner eating a hamburger, and 'Like a Rolling Stone' came on. I got so excited by the song and the lyric. I thought, 'There's somebody singing and writing for me.' I went out and got a guitar. I'd forgotten about that until one night in Australia, and I realized, 'This is the first song I ever learned on guitar, and here I am playing it with the person who wrote it.' "Dylan was also the object of much intense feeling in Australia. "I pretty much saw it all," says Lynch. "I saw the girl who slept in the elevator claiming to be his sister from Minnesota; I saw the one who claimed to be his masseuse, who flew in from Perth and was riding up and

down the elevator trying to figure out what floor he was on. I also saw the people that were genuinely moved, who felt they had to make some connection with him, that this was an important thing in their life. They wanted to be near him and tell him they're all right, because they probably feel that Bob was telling them that it was going to be all right when they weren't all right, as if Bob knew they weren't doing so well at the time.

"They forget one important thing: Bob doesn't know them; they just know him. But that's all right. That's not shortsightedness on their part. That's just the essence of what people do when you talk to them at a vulnerable-time in their lives. It doesn't matter that he was talking to them by way of a record; he was still talking to them." Two weeks later, Bob Dylan sits on a dogeared sofa in the Van Nuys studio where Petty is working, sipping at a plastic cup full of whiskey and water. He blows a curt puff of smoke and broods over it. His weary air reminds me of something he'd said earlier: "Man, sometimes it seems I've spent half my life in a recording studio... . It's like living in a coal mine." Dylan and Petty have been holed up in this room the better part of the night, working on a track called "Got My Mind Made Up," which they have co-written for Dylan's album. By all appearances, it's been a productive



session: The tune is a walloping, Bo Diddley-like raveup with Delta blues-style slide guitar, and Dylan has been hurling himself into the vocal with a genuinely staggering force. Yet there's also a note of tension about the evening. The pressure of completing the album has reportedly been wearing on Dylan, and his mood is said to have been rather dour and unpredictable these last several days. In fact, somewhere

along the line he has decided to put aside most of the rock & roll tracks he had been working on in Topanga, and is apparently now assembling the album from various sessions that have accrued over the last year. "It's all sorts of stuff," he says. "It doesn't really have a theme or a purpose." While waiting for his backup singers to arrive, Dylan tries to warm up to the task of the evening's interview. But in contrast to his manner in our earlier conversation, he seems somewhat distracted, almost edgy, and many questions don't seem to engender much response. After a bit, I ask him if he can tell me something about the lyrical tenor of the songs. "Got My Mind Made Up," for example, includes a reference to Libya. Will this be a record that has something to say about our national mood? He considers the subjects. "The kinds of stuff I write now come out over all the years I've lived," he says, "so I can't say anything is really that current. There may be one line that's current... . But you have to go on. You can't keep doing the same old thing all the time."

I try a couple more questions about political matters – about whether he feels any kinship with the new activism in pop music – but he looks exhausted at the possibility of seriously discussing the topic. "I'm opposed to whatever oppresses people's intelligence," he says. "We all have

to be against that sort of thing, or else we have nowhere to go. But that's not a fight for one man, that's everybody's fight." Over the course of our interviews, I've learned you can't budge him on a subject if he's not in the mood, so I move on. We chat a while, but nothing much seems to engage him until I ask if he's pleased by the way the American public is responding to the upcoming tour. Demand has been so intense that the itinerary has been increased from twenty-six to forty shows, with more dates likely. In the end, it's estimated that he'll play to a million people. "People forget it," he says, "but since 1974, I've never stopped working. I've been out on tours where there hasn't been any publicity. So for me, I'm not getting caught up in all this excitement of a big tour. I've played big tours and I've played small tours. I mean, what's such a big deal about this one?" Well, it is his first cross-country tour of America in eight years.

"Yeah, but to me, an audience is an audience, no matter where they are. I'm not particularly into this American thing, this Bruce Springsteen-John Cougar-'American first' thing. I feel just as strongly about the American principles as those guys do, but I personally feel that what's important is more eternal things. This American pride thing, that don't mean nothing to me. I'm more locked into what's real forever."

Quickly, Dylan seems animated. He douses one cigarette, lights another and begins speaking at a faster clip. "Listen," he says, "I'm not saying anything bad about these guys, because I think Bruce has done a tremendous amount for real gutbucket rock & roll – and folk music, in his own way. And John Cougar's great, though the best thing on his record, I thought, was his grandmother singing. That knocked me out. But that ain't what music's about. Subjects like 'How come we don't have our jobs?' Then you're getting political. And if you want to get political, you ought to go as far out as you can." But certainly he understands that Springsteen and Mellencamp aren't exactly trying to fan the flames of American pride. Instead, they're trying to say that if the nation loses sight of certain principles, it also forfeits its claim to greatness.

"Yeah? What are those principles? Are they Biblical principles? The only principles you can find are the principles in the Bible. I mean, Proverbs has got them all." They are such principles, I say, as justice and equality. "Yeah, but ..." Dylan pauses. As we've been talking, others – including Petty, Mike Campbell, the sound engineers and the backup singers – have entered the room. Dylan stands up and starts pacing back and forth, smiling. It's hard to tell whether he is truly irked or merely spouting provocatively for the fun of it. After a

moment, he continues. "To me, America means the Indians. They were here and this is their country, and all the white men are just trespassing. We've devastated the natural resources of this country, for no particular reason except to make money and buy houses and send our lads to college and shit like that. To me, America is the Indians, period. I just don't go for nothing more. Unions, movies, Greta Garbo, Wall Street, Tin Pan Alley or Dodgers baseball games." He laughs. "It don't mean shit. What we did to the Indians is disgraceful. I think America, to get right, has got to start there first." I reply that a more realistic way of getting right might be to follow the warning of one of his own songs, "Clean Cut Kid," and not send our young people off to fight in another wasteful war. "Who sends the young people out to war?" says Dylan. "Their parents do." But it isn't the parents who suited them up and put them on the planes and sent them off to die in Vietnam. "Look, the parents could have said, 'Hey, we'll talk about it.' But parents aren't into that. They don't know how to deal with what they should do or shouldn't do. So they leave it to the government." Suddenly, loudly, music blares up in the room. Perhaps somebody – maybe Petty – figures the conversation is getting a little too tense. Dylan smiles and shrugs, then pats me on the shoulder. "We can talk

a little more later," he says. For the next couple of hours, Dylan and Petty attend to detail work on the track – getting the right accent on a ride cymbal and overdubbing the gospel-derived harmonies of the four female singers who have just arrived. As always, it is fascinating to observe how acutely musical Dylan is. In one particularly inspired off-hand moment, he leads the four singers – Queen Esther Morrow, Elisea Wright, Madelyn Quebec and Carol Dennis – through a lovely a cappella version of "White Christmas," then moves into a haunting reading of an old gospel standard, "Evening Sun." Petty and the rest of us just stare, stunned. "Man," says Petty frantically, "we've got to get this on tape." Afterward, Dylan leads me out into a lounge area to talk some more. He leans on top of a pinball machine, a cigarette nipped between his teeth. He seems calmer, happy with the night's work. He also seems willing to finish the conversation we were having earlier, so we pick up where we left off. What would he do, I ask, if his own sons were drafted? Dylan looks almost sad as he considers the question. After several moments, he says: "They could do what their conscience tells them to do, and I would support them. But it also depends on what the government wants your children to do. I mean, if the government wants your children to go down and raid Central American countries,

there would be no moral value in that. I also don't think we should have bombed those people in Libya." Then he flashes one of those utterly guileless, disarming smiles of his as our talk winds down. "But what I want to know," he says, "is, what's all this got to do with folk music and rock & roll?"

Quite a bit, since he, more than any other artist, raised the possibility that folk music and rock & roll could have political impact. "Right," says Dylan, "and I'm proud of that."

And the reason questions like these keep coming up is because many of us aren't so sure where he stands these days – in fact, some critics have charged that, with songs like "Slow Train" and "Union Sundown," he's even moved a bit to the right. Dylan muses over the remark in silence for a moment. "Well, for me," he begins, "there is no right and there is no left. There's truth and there's untruth, y'know? There's honesty and there's hypocrisy. Look in the Bible: you don't see nothing about right or left. Other people might have other ideas about things, but I don't, because I'm not that smart. I hate to keep beating people over the head with the Bible, but that's the only instrument I know, the only thing that stays true."

Does it disturb him that there seem to be so many preachers these days who claim that to be a good Christian one must also



be a political conservative? "Conservative? Well, don't forget, Jesus said that it's harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than it is for a camel to enter the eye of a needle. I mean, is that conservative? I don't know, I've heard a lot of preachers say how God wants everybody to be wealthy and healthy. Well, it doesn't say that in the Bible. You can twist anybody's words, but that's only for fools and people who follow fools. If you're entangled in the snares of this world, which everybody is ..."

Petty comes into the room and asks Dylan to come hear the final overdubs. Dylan likes what he hears, then decides to take one more pass at the lead vocal. This time, apparently, he nails it. "Don't ever try to change me/I been in this thing too long/ There's nothing you can say or do/ To make me think I'm wrong," he snarls at the song's outset, and while it is hardly the most inviting line one has ever heard him sing, tonight he seems to render it with a fitting passion. It is midnight in Hollywood, and Bob Dylan, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers are clustered in a cavernous room at the old Zoetrope Studios, working out a harmonica part to "License to Kill," when Dylan suddenly begins playing a different, oddly haunting piece of music. Gradually, the random tones he is blowing begin to take a familiar shape, and it becomes evident that he's playing a plaintive, bluesy variation of "I Dreamed I

Saw St. Augustine." Benmont Tench is the first to recognize the melody, and quickly embellishes it with a graceful piano part; Petty catches the drift and underscores Dylan's harmonica with some strong, sharp chord strokes. Soon, the entire band, which tonight includes guitarist Al Kooper, is seizing Dylan's urge and transforming the song into a full and passionate performance. Dylan never sings the lyrics himself but instead signals a backup singer to take the lead, and immediately "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine" becomes a full-fledged, driving spiritual.

Five minutes later, the moment has passed. According to Petty and Tench, Dylan's rehearsals are often like this: inventive versions of wondrous songs come and go and are never heard again, except in those rare times when they may be conjured onstage. In a way, an instance like this leaves one wishing that every show in the current True Confessions Tour were simply another rehearsal: Dylan's impulses are so sure-handed and imaginative, they're practically matchless. Trying to get Dylan to talk about where such moments come from – or trying to persuade him to take them to the stage – is, as one might expect, not that easy. "I'm not sure if people really want to hear that sort of thing from me," he says, smiling ingenuously. Then the perches himself on an equipment case

and puts his hands into his pockets, looking momentarily uncomfortable. Quickly, his face brightens. "Hey," he says, pulling a tape from his pocket, "wanna hear the best album of the year?" He holds a cassette of AKA Graffiti Man, an album by poet John Trudell and guitarist Jesse Ed Davis. "Only people like Lou Reed and John Doe can dream about doing work like this. Most don't have enough talent."

Dylan has his sound engineer cue the tape to a song about Elvis Presley. It is a long, stirring track about the threat that so many originally perceived in Presley's manner and the promise so many others discovered in his music. "We heard Elvis's song for the first time/Then we made up our own mind," recited Trudell at one point, followed by a lovely, blue guitar solo from Davis that quotes "Love Me Tender." Dylan grins at the line, then shakes his head with delight. "Man," he says, "that's about all anybody ever needs to say about Elvis Presley." I wonder if Dylan realizes that the line could also have been written about him – that millions of us heard his songs, and that those songs not only inspired our own but, in some deep-felt place, almost seemed to be our own. But before there is even time to raise the question, Dylan has put on his coat and is on his way across the room. "I'm thinking about calling this album Knocked Out Loaded," Bob Dylan

says. He repeats the phrase once, then chuckles over it. "Is that any good, you think, Knocked Out Loaded?"

Dylan and a recording engineer are seated at a mixing board at the Topanga recording studio, poring over a list of song titles and talking about possible sequences. Dylan seems downright affable, more relaxed than earlier in the week. Apparently, the album has fallen into place with sudden ease. In the last few days, he has narrowed the record's selections down to a possible nine or ten songs, and tonight he is polishing two of those tracks and attempting a final mix on a couple of others. So far, it all sounds pretty good – not exactly the back-snapping rock & roll I'd heard a few weeks earlier but, in a way, something no less bold. Then Dylan plays one more track, "Brownsville Girl," a piece he wrote last year with playwright Sam Shepard. A long, storylike song, it begins with a half-drawn, half-sung remembrance about a fateful scene from a western the singer had once seen, then opens up from there into two or three intersecting, dreamlike tales about pursued love and forsaken love, about fading heroes and forfeited ideals – about hope and death. It's hard to tell where Dylan ends and Shepard begins in the lyrics, but it is quite easy to hear whom the song really belongs to. In fact, I've only known of one man who could put across a performance

as exhilarating as this one, and he is sitting there right in front of me, concentrating hard on the tale, as if he too were hearing its wondrous involutions for the first time. If this is the way Bob Dylan is going to age as a songwriter, I decide, I'm happy to age with him. Twelve minutes later, the song closes with a glorious, explosive chorus. I don't know exactly what to say, so Dylan picks up the slack. He lights a cigarette, moves over to the sofa, takes off his glasses and smiles a shy smile. "You know," he says, "sometimes I think about people like T-Bone Walker, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters – these people who played into their sixties. If I'm here at eighty, I'll be doing the same thing. This is all I want to do – it's all I can do. I mean, you don't have to be a nineteen- or twenty-year-old to play this stuff. That's the vanity of that youth-culture ideal. To me that's never been the thing. I've never really aimed myself at any so-called youth culture. I directed it at people who I imagined, maybe falsely so, had the same experiences that I've had, who have kind of been through what I'd been through. But I guess a lot of people just haven't."

He falls silent for a moment, taking a drag off his cigarette. "See," he says, "I've always been just about being an individual, with an individual point of view. If I've been about anything, it's probably that, and to let some people know that it's possible to do the impossible."

Dylan leans forward and snuffs out his cigarette. "And that's really all. If I've ever had anything to tell anybody, it's that: You can do the impossible. Anything is possible. And that's it. No more."

This story is from the July 17th, 1986 issue of Rolling Stone.



The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome (commonly called the Metrodome) was a domed sports stadium located in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. It opened in 1982 as a replacement for Metropolitan Stadium, the former home of the National Football League's (NFL) Minnesota Vikings and Major League Baseball's (MLB) Minnesota Twins, and Memorial Stadium, the former home of the Minnesota Golden Gophers football team.

The Metrodome was the home of the Vikings from 1982 to 2013, the Twins from 1982 to 2009, the National Basketball Association's (NBA) Minnesota Timberwolves in their 1989–90 inaugural season, the Golden Gophers football team until 2008 and the occasional home of the Golden Gophers baseball team from 1985 to 2010 and their full-time home in 2012. It was also the home of the Minnesota Strikers of the North American Soccer League in 1984. On January 18, 2014, the Metrodome roof was deflated, signaling the beginning of demolition work. The Vikings played at the University of Minnesota's TCF Bank Stadium for the 2014 and 2015 NFL seasons, ahead of the planned opening of U.S. Bank Stadium in 2016.

The stadium had a fiberglass fabric roof that was self-supported by air pressure and was the third major sports facility to have this feature (the first two being the

Pontiac Silverdome and the Carrier Dome). The Metrodome was similar in design to the former RCA Dome and to BC Place, though BC Place was reconfigured with a retractable roof in 2010. The Metrodome was reputedly the inspiration for the Tokyo Dome in Tokyo, Japan. The stadium was the only facility to have hosted a Super Bowl (1992), World Series (1987, 1991), MLB All-Star Game (1985) and NCAA Division I Basketball Final Four (1992, 2001).

The Metrodome had several nicknames such as "The Dome", "The Thunderdome", and "The Homer Dome." Preparation for the demolition of the Metrodome began the day after the facility hosted its final home game for the Minnesota Vikings on December 29, 2013, with actual demolition beginning on January 18, 2014. The Metrodome was torn down in sections while construction of U.S. Bank Stadium began.



BOB DYLAN

TOM PETTY + THE HEARTBREAKERS

JUNE 9	SAN DIEGO, CA.	2	AKRON, OH.
11	RENO, NV.	4	BUFFALO, NY.
12	SACRAMENTO, CA.	6 & 7	WASHINGTON, D.C.
13 & 14	BERKELEY, CA.	8 & 9	BOSTON, MA.
16 & 17	COSTA MESA, CA.	11	HARTFORD, CT.
18	PHOENIX, AZ.	13	SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY.
20	HOUSTON, TX.	15 & 16 & 17	NEW YORK CITY, NY.
21	AUSTIN, TX.	19 & 20	PHILADELPHIA, PA.
22	DALLAS, TX.	21	E. RUTHERFORD, N.J.
24	INDIANAPOLIS, IN.	24	KANSAS CITY, MO.
26	MINNEAPOLIS, MN.	26 & 27	DENVER, CO.
27	MILWAUKEE, WI.	29	PORTLAND, OR.
29	CHICAGO, IL.	31	TACOMA, WA.
30	DETROIT, MI.	AUGUST 1	VANCOUVER, BC.
JULY 1	DETROIT, MI.		

TRUE CONFESSIONS TOUR

BOB DYLAN WITH TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

Bob Dylan - vocal, electric guitar, aco. guitar, harmonica

Tom Petty - vocal, electric guitar

Mike Campbell - lead guitar

Benmonth Tench - piano, keyboard

Howie Epstein - bass

Stan Lynch - drums

WITH THE QUEENS OF RHYTHM

Carolyn Dennis

Louise Bethune

Madelyn Quebec

Queen Esther Marrow

