

INTERVIEWS FROM THE 60's



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Source: <http://www.interferenza.com/bcs/interv.htm>



THE BILLY JAMES INTERVIEW FALL 1961

This interview was conducted by Billy James of CBS sometime in the Fall, 1961. It is the first known taped interview and this is a transcript of the, unfortunately incomplete tape, published in Stephen Pickering's Praxis: One. A complete transcript (?) was published in New Musical Express 4/24/76.

Dylan: Yeah, well I was in the carnival when I was about thirteen -
- all kinds of shows.

James: Where'd you go?

Dylan: All around the mid-west, uh, Gallup, New Mexico, Aptos, Texas, and then ... lived in, Gallup, New Mexico and ...

James: How old were you?

Dylan: Uh, about seven, eight, something like that.

<--- break --->

Dylan: If I'm on stage, my idol -- even my biggest idol when I'm on stage -- the one that's running through my head all the time, is Charlie Chaplin. And, uh, it, well it takes awhile to explain it, but I'd say he's one of **the** men.

James: When did you first see Chaplin?

Dylan: Ah, I seen some of his films -- I just sort of knew who he was and that kind of stuff. Vaudeville, that kind of thing. Will Rogers. And I never really met anything -- I never really came across anything until I lived in New York. I don't think it's got the best of me. At least I know it hasn't got the better part of me.

James: Touched you?

Dylan: It might have touched me a little bit. In fact it **has** touched me a little bit, but I never lived in a city that was more than 15,000 people. And there's an awful lot of difficulty here.

<--- break --->

Dylan: And I was very stupid at the time, and I was with a friend of mine, and I played. And they booed, and I figured ...

James: Where?

Dylan: Cafe Wha? And I didn't know anything, and they never paid me, and that kind of stuff. And I didn't even want money to play. And he looked at me and he said, "I'll give you a dollar". So he gave me a dollar and said, "Play it cool, man". And it came to a dollar-fifty and I played there and they flipped. They really did. And I figured if they liked me so much, they'd give me a place to stay that night - a better place. So I asked from the stage, and about four hands went up. So my buddy and I, we sort of went and checked 'em all. It was with a girl. And my buddy says to me, "You don't look so hot" and I ... he says "You look pretty gay". [James laughs]. And I said - I didn't really know anything, you know. Anyway ... he was with a girl. And the girl got off at 34th Street and we got off at 42nd Street. [Dylan laughs]. Well, we went in a bar first before we went to find a place to stay. And we met his friend Dora. Dora was his friend who stayed with him. And we all went to a party. And that was my first night in New York.

<--- break --->

Dylan: I sense they're liking me - maybe not the music so much, but maybe - I feel if they saw me on the street, or playing someplace, I feel like they wouldn't be so friendly.

<--- break --->

Dylan: I like the land, the people that are strange in the west. I like some of the people, don't like some of the people. Hard, hard people. And down south it's worth than that. I can't say much for the south. I hate - I can't stand - anywhere they're thinking ...

<--- break --->

Dylan: I'm not a folk-singer. I just sing a certain place that's all. And ...

James: Was Woody a folk-singer?

Dylan: Woody was a folk-singer, Woody was a folk-singer.

James: Why do you say you're not?

Dylan: Ah, Woody was a folk-singer up to the point. Woody was a glorified singer. Woody was a man that went back to some record ...

James: No, man, no ...

Dylan: Well, you see, Woody was a man who dwelled on a simple record because he was getting attention ... <--- interrupted --->

Dylan: I play the piano. I used to play the piano. I used to play great piano, very great. I used to play Little Richard stuff only an octave higher. And everything came out - He made a big mistake - his records were great records - but couldn't have been greater. His great mistake was he played low. If he had played high, they would've been uncomplicated. Do you listen to Little Richard?

James: No.

Dylan: Well, Little Richard's something else. He's a preacher, man. But I sort of played the piano in his style. And I played everything high and amplified it.<--- interrupted --->



FROM THE IZZY YOUNG JOURNALS

OCTOBER 20, 1961

From an interview conducted by Izzy Young at his Folklore Center in New York, October 20 & 23, 1961. Parts of this interview appear Carnegie Recital Hall Programme November 4. The parts above appear in Scadoto's biography.

"I didn't know the term 'folk music' until I came to New York. 'Folk music' is just a name. I sing a lot of old jazz songs, sentimental cowboy songs, top forty hit parade stuff. People have to name it something so they call folk music. Now there are very few people singing that way. There's been no one around to cut records like the old Leadbelly, Houston and Guthrie. There are young people singing like that, but they're being held back by commercial singers. People who run radio programs don't play the ones singing like that. Folk music is being taken over by people who don't sing that way. It's all right, but to call it folk music ..."

"I don't want to make a lot of money, I want to get along. The more people I reach, and have the chance to sing the kind of music I sing, ... But people have to be ready, They have to see me once already, People often say the first time they hear me, this isn't folk music. My songs aren't easy to listen to.

"The concert isn't going to be a planned concert. I can offer songs that tell something of this America. No foreign songs. The songs of the land that aren't offered over TV or radio and very few records. Offering a chance to hear them."

"I won't join a group. Groups are easy to be in. I've always learned the hard way. I will, now, too. When you fail in a group you can blame each other. When you fail alone, you yourself fail."

"I play a lot of cards. Believe in 'dead man's hand' - the aces and eights. It's time to cash in when you get aces and eights, dead man's hand. Sounds illogical? The other things I believe in are logical. Like the length of my hair. The less hair on the head, the more hair inside. Wear a crewcut and you have all that hair cluttering around your brain. I let my hair grow long to be wise and free to think ... Or religion. Got no religion. Tried a bunch of different religions. The churches are divided. Can't make up their minds, and neither can I. Never saw a god; can't say until I see one."

"I've been with Jack Elliot ... Jack hasn't taught me any songs. Jack doesn't know that many songs. He's had a lot of chances."



THE 'SCENE' INTERVIEW JANUARY 1963

This article was originally published in the English magazine 'Scene' on January 26, 1963. The reporter is uncredited but is thought to be Ronnie or Richard Gilbert. The article is reprinted in Clinton Heylin's "More Rain Unravelling Tales", 1984.

“Tomorrow's Top Twenty”

It really would be a test of the assimilatory powers of Tin Pan Alley if folk music suddenly hit the charts in a big way. How for instance would the men in the sharp suits deal with Bob Dylan, the shambling boy genius of American Folk music?

Dylan does his very best to talk, act, dress and behave as much like a Tennessee mountain man as he can.

When I first met him he was talking vaguely about heading off for Rome, Paris or maybe New York. It worried him very little that he was halfway through the telerecording of the BBC play "Madhouse on Castle St." and that high-level conferences were being held all

over London because of an overtime squabble at the BBC which threatened to take the production time of the play some weeks beyond the time stipulated in Dylan's contract.

"They're paying me two thousand dollars to do this play." said Dylan. "If I got to stay another three weeks to finish it they'll probably have to pay the same money all over again."

"But to me two thousand, four thousand, I can't imagine the difference. It's too much money. And what's the money for three whole weeks of time? Three weeks is too long to lose."

Dylan is one of the biggest stars on the American folk circuit ...

It was a lunchtime dawn for the tousled boy who opened the door, on which hung a "Do Not Disturb" notice. Thin-faced with a week's growth of boyish hair on his chin, he rubbed a floppy mass of hair out of his eyes and perched out on his bed, feet bare, legs crossed tailor fashion.

His guitar case stood in the centre of the floor, a pile of rolled up shirts erupted from an open suitcase and a large sheepskin jacket in dire need of cleaning lay beside the bed, where it had obviously been dropped the night before.

Dylan is the most exciting white folk and blues singer, the experts say, America has produced. He writes many of his own songs, sings them 'consciously trying to recapture the rude beauty of a southern farmhand musing in melody on his porch' and accompanies himself on guitar and harmonica (fixed round his neck).

Dylan talked like Brando imitating that southern farmhand. "I'm not in show-business," he said. "Money? I don't know how much I make. Sometimes I ask, sometimes I don't. I don't know what I spend it on, it just falls through holes in my pocket."

The curtains were still drawn in his room and they remained that way for three hours.

"I don't like singing to anybody but Americans. My songs say things. I sing them for people who know what I'm saying."

"Nowadays I just play at concerts," he said. "Clubs I don't play at. A few years ago when I needed the money they wouldn't pay me. Now they're writing all the time asking me to play. Sometimes I write back and tell them no, sometimes I just don't answer. But

they keep right on asking, offering me percentages of the house and all."

Dylan dressed to go out to a local cafeteria for lunch with his manager, Mr. Albert Grossman.

Later that afternoon Mr. Grossman and Dylan decided they would finish the TV play, in which Dylan played a guitar-playing hobo.

A week or so after that I caught up with Mr. Grossman and Dylan in London again. Dylan was now wearing a black hat with a coloured band and a curvy brim.

In the plush stalls of the new Prince Charles Theatre Dylan slumped in a seat



THE SIDNEY FIELDS INTERVIEW, AUGUST 1963

*This article/interview was originally printed in New York Mirror, 9/12/1963.
Reprinted in Craig McGregor (ed): Bob Dylan. A Retrospective.*

Only Human Driftin' And Learnin' by Sidney Fields

All things that once churned inside Bob Dylan when he was knocking about America are pouring from him now.

These past six years he's written over hundred songs, with rare perception, covering everything from nuclear fallout and integration to lover's lament or his own loneliness.

Some Like "Hard Rains Are Going To Fall" are in his current best-selling album, "The Free Wheelin' Bob Dylan". Others, like "Blowin' In The Wind" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" are hits by Peter, Paul And Mary, and Bobby Darin.

Dylan is twenty-one, wears faded dungarees, uncut hair, an assumed hillbilly accent, and has been on and off resident in Greenwich Village (where else?) for over two years. Before that he was trying to cover every highroad and by way of the country.

"The itch to move, to see, and hear, was always there", he says. "But I didn't want to see the atomic bathrooms and electronic bedrooms and souped up can-openers; I wanted to watch and feel the people and the dust and ditches and the fields and fences."

His parents and a younger brother are still in Hibbing, Minnesota, where he first tried to leave when he was ten, with his guitar and harmonica. He got 900 miles away before police picked him up and sent him home by train.

"I got walloped, but not hard enough to make me stay", Dylan says, "I took off again at 12 and five times after that, getting caught and walloped each time. But when I was 18 I made it."

He touched about every state, trying to earn his keep by telling stories of what he saw, but eating more regularly when he trimmed hedges, mowed lawns, or any work he could get. His first New York job earned him \$2 for a one-night stand in a village coffee joint. When another folk singer made a record for Columbia he was asked to accompany her on the harmonica. Columbia

signed him. He made his first album and was given a Town Hall debut.

The program notes about himself came from "My Life In A Stolen Minute" a long autobiographical poem. Part of it goes: "With my thumb out, my eyes asleep, my hat turned up an' my head turned on, I'se driftin' and an' learnin' new lessons."

His voice is small, but telling, and what he sings in his own penetrating way has all the bright rhythm of a poet aware of the world.

Since his Town Hall appearance he has appeared at colleges and folk festivals, coast-to-coast, and in London and Rome. He has been on the Ed Sullivan show; on stage at Carnegie Hall. He gives a second Carnegie Hall concert next October 27. Of late he has shown up on the same stage with Joan Baez in "impromptu-on-purpose."

After his first album, titled simply Bob Dylan, he concluded "That's not me. There was only a couple of my stories on it." He was happier with his second "I wrote all the stories except for one or two songs."

His songs always start as stories. When he was on the road he became a fine teller of other people's stories. But he quit that.

"Because Dickens and Dostoievski and Woody Guthrie were telling their stories much better than I ever could", Bob Dylan says, "I decided to stick to my own mind"



THE LES CRANE SHOW FEBRUARY 17, 1965

*Broadcasted live by WABC-TV. Bruce Langhorn back up on electric guitar.
Sources: Tape. Transcript printed in 'Bob Dylan' by Barry Miles.*

Crane: Mr Bob Dylan, Ladies and Gentlemen! (applause) (shouts)
Hello Bobby!

Dylan: I'm alright!

Crane: Are you plugged in? All right.

Dylan: [sings It's All Over Now Baby Blue]

Crane: Thank you Bob and I'll be right back.

-----< break >-----

Crane: How'd it feel?

Dylan: Fine.

Crane: Did it feel good?

Dylan: Felt good.

Crane: Yeah, you were groovy. What'cha doin' with that?

Dylan: Oh, I'm just trying to get it down so it doesn't fall in the way of my voice you know.

Crane: We had ... looking at that harmonica, have you ever met Jesse Fuller?

Dylan: Sure.

Crane: Jessie was on the show a couple of weeks ago. We didn't get a chance to talk much but next time he comes back, I want to because he looks like an amazing gentleman. Talking about amazing gentlemen, how old are you?

Dylan: 23!

Crane: 23 years old!

Dylan: Yeah, I'll be 24 in May!

Crane: Yeah. A lot's happened to you in just 23 years hasn't it?

Dylan: Yeah, yeah, fantastic!

Crane: Are you happy about it?

Dylan: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Crane: You oughta be. Because you're successful at doing, I think, what you want to do more than anything else.

Dylan: Yeah, yeah, I don't have much to think about.

Crane: You don't have much to think about? I think you must be thinking about an awful lot of things to write the kind of things you do.

Dylan: Yeah, yeah.

Crane: Tell 'em!

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: Tell 'em, just for those out there in the audience that might not know all of the songs that you've written. Just name a few of the big ones!

Dylan: Oh.

Crane: This is the composer of ...

Dylan: SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES!

Crane: No! That ain't one of the big ones! (audience laughter)

Dylan: No?

Crane: No.

Dylan: Let's see, One Too Many Mornings.

Crane: How about Blowin' In The Wind?

Dylan: Yeah? (applause)

Crane: Do you folks. maybe you remember the night that Judy Collins..., and I kept saying "You gotta sing this song, you gotta

sing this song" and Judy Collins came out and and sang the full original version of Hard Rain's Gonna Fall? Well, Bob wrote that!

Dylan: Yeah, I wrote that (applause).

Crane: Who are you waving at?

Dylan: Odetta!

Crane: Odetta! (To audience) Do you know who Odetta is? (lots of applause). Put a light on that lady!! How are you darling? ... Talk about great artists! That's one of them! (To Odetta) You are going to be on show in a while aren't you?

Odetta: Next month.

Crane: Next month. Yeah, Odetta is all booked ...

Crane: When did you first start pickin' and singin', Bob?

Dylan: Oh... When I was about ten, eleven.

Crane: Did you start out with a guitar or did you start out playing something else?

Dylan: Piano. Piano and guitar.

Crane: Where are you from? Where were you born?

Dylan: Minnesota.

Crane: Did you go to school there?

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: How far did you get through school?

Dylan: Oh, I got all the way.

Crane: High school?

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: To college and all?

Dylan: No, not really, no.

Crane: Then, you kinda got on the road, huh?

Dylan: Well, I got on the road, I got on, you know (audience laughter). I did it! (giggles) Whatever.

Crane: When did you start writing original tunes?

Dylan: Well, I started writing a long time ago. You know, you write different things down, when you really don't know what else to do. That's when I started writing. I started writing songs ... that's a different story, you know ... I started writing songs after I heard Hank Williams.

Crane: Hank Williams? Did he really inspired you?

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: Cold Cold Heart? Jambalaya? Things like that?

Dylan: Yeah. Cole Porter.

Crane: Cole Porter??

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: Now you're putting me on!

Dylan: No. (audience laughter).

Crane: Yeah, you are!

Dylan: No, I'm not!

Crane: Did you see Judy Collins sing Hard Rain?

Dylan: I did. I saw that!

Crane: You watch the show.

Dylan: All the time. Yeah I do.

Crane: Where do you see it mostly?

Dylan: I saw it last time I was in New York City. I was there to make another record. I saw the show. I saw her singing.

Crane: Where were you when you watched the show? You remember the last time?

Dylan: Somebody's house.

Crane: They told me you were in a pool hall last time you saw it.

Dylan: Oh, I did see the show from a pool hall. Your show goes into the pool halls! (audience laughter)

Crane: Yeah?

Dylan: Because, it goes right in and it stays on ... and ... not even the late movie can get it out.

Crane: We're very big in the pool halls.

Dylan: Very big in the pool halls (audience laughter) and ... around ... south side bars (audience laughter).

Crane: South side bars? Yeah? (audience laughter)

Dylan: Right there. Down that East End.

Crane: You think that means anything?

Dylan: No, no (audience laughter).

Crane: You think we're gonna make it with this show?

Dylan: I think so!

Crane: Yeah?

Dylan: Yeah! I think so! (giggles) (audience laughter)

Crane: What's the matter?

Dylan: Oh, nothin'! (audience laughter)

Crane: Are you nervous?

Dylan: I'm not nervous, no! I'm eh ... the carpet!

Crane: The carpet??

Dylan: Yellow ... you know ...

Crane: Yeah?

Dylan: I've never seen ..., eh ... I never reflected before when I've seen the show that it was so yellow. (audience laughter)

Crane: The floor. I assume he's ... you're referring to the floor?

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: Did you get the painting crew in here? (audience laughter)

Dylan: No.

Crane: I mean, is it good or bad?

Dylan: It's fine, It's fine! Just, you know, it's I did see the show and it's so ... tight! That's all. It seems like it's very big.

Crane: Everybody says that. Apparently it looks bigger on the television than it does here in the studio. But it's a pretty big studio. We have one of the largest studios audiences of any television... What do you think about it, do you watch much television?

Dylan: Oh, I do once in a while you know.

Crane: What kind of shows do you like mostly?

Dylan: Oh, I like the movies.

Crane: Yeah.

Dylan: Like the movies ... I see good movies on television. Best place to see good movies these days, on television!

Crane: Yeah ... We'll be right back, Bob Dylan and I in just about a minute from right now.

-----< break >-----

Crane: Bob, when you hear other people do your stuff, do you enjoy listening to Peter Paul And Mary do all your things.

Dylan: Sure, yeah.

Crane: Yeah?

Dylan: Yeah!

Crane: I think that's a real compliment to have so many people recording your things. Besides, you get all that money too.

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: What are you doing with all that money by the way?

Dylan: Oh, buying boots, bananas, fruit, pears.

Crane: Boots, bananas, fruit, pears ...

Dylan: Bought some very fancy ashtrays the other day.

Crane: Did you really? Well, where do you keep all that? I understand you don't have a place to keep all that ... You travel all the time.

Dylan: I do, yeah.

Crane: What, you strap it all on the motorcycle.

Dylan: No, I don't really ride my motorcycle that much. I have one though.

Crane: You do.

Dylan: Yeah. I'm thinking of getting a car.

Crane: A car!

Dylan: But I don't know what kind to get.

Crane: Yeah.

Dylan: Yeah, I'm thinking about a Maserati; You ever heard of one of those?

Crane: Yeah.

Dylan: Well, I never saw one, but I like the name.

Crane: Mas-er-rati!

Dylan: Yeah. Maserati. Bob Dylan and his Maserati.

Crane: Because it's Italian? Bob Dylan and his swinging Maserati. No, I don't want you in a Maserati.

Dylan: No?

Crane: No, I don't. I ... you know I shouldn't say this because I ...

Dylan: He wants me in one! (referring to someone shouting 'yeah' in the audience).

Crane: Well, that's because he didn't get the same kind of chilling thought I just got which I probably shouldn't bring up.

Dylan: What?

Crane: But I will anyway.

Dylan: Yeah?

Crane: I think you represent to America and to American youth something very very vital and the last guy that had this kind of impact on the youth of this country was James Dean ...

Dylan: Aahh.

Crane: And I don't want you riding around in any hot sports cars.

Dylan: OK! I won't. I won't, Les! (audience laughter).

Crane: OK?

Dylan: Well, you know.

Crane: It's Volkswagen time for you! (audience laughter)

Dylan: That's what I've been told.

Crane: A detoned Volkswagen.

Dylan: What about one of those little three wheeled jobs? You know those little ...

Crane: Yeah, a Messerschmidt they call those. Did I say that right? Yes I did. We're still on so apparently I did (audience laughter). Listen, how does it feel, Bob, when you're 22 years old and you go out on the stage at the Lincoln Center ...

Dylan: Old?

Crane: Well, you were 22 then.

Dylan: Oh, yeah.

Crane: And there are thousands of people jamming that place, paying top dollar, and according you one of the greatest ovations

that ... What does it feel like when you're getting this kind of ovation at this kind of an age when you have the kind of respect and adulation you have? That's a tough question.

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: But answer it.

Dylan: Well ... well, I'll tell ya Les (giggles, audience laughs) ... I can't answer that.

Crane: Yes, you can.

Dylan: Oh. Well it feels just delicious, wonderful. It feels ... marvelous, splendid, swinging, groovy, fantastic

Crane: Groovy, marvelous, splendid, fantastic

Dylan: Bobby Neuwirth (laughs)

Crane: Yeah, I'll buy. I'll buy all those things. What do you do mostly, you travel a lot don'cha?

Dylan: I do yes.

Crane: Give a lot of concerts?

Dylan: Aahh. I do, yes. Yeah.

Crane: Where mostly.

Dylan: Oh, it really ranges, you know. Everyplace from college theaters to Vaudeville halls.

Crane: Yeah. What kind of crowds, mostly young people or are the older people starting to get your message?

Dylan: Oh, good crowds, good crowds. I don't really know, uh, I don't really know what ... young people, or old people, but they're all right people. You know. They're all right.

Crane: Yeah.

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: Most of your songs.... I don't want to hang you up with corny questions, but it's true that most of your songs say something

Dylan: Uh-hum.

Crane: There is a message ...

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: ... in almost everything you say. What is your main message?

Dylan: Eat?

Crane: No, I don't think that's it. And that's a cute answer but that's not the message.

Dylan: Yeah. Aah. My main message is, ah, you know (giggles), you want it in one word (giggles, audience laughs), one word!

Crane: No.

Dylan: Well, I'll tell ya Les.

Crane: Yeah, Bob.

Dylan: One word message. It's just, ah, 'Be', you know.

Crane: Be?

Dylan: Be. Be period. Is.

Crane: How about love?

Dylan: Love? That's an OK word, yeah, That's all right I guess, but it's been used a LOT, it's been used a lot.

Crane: But that's part of your message, isn't it?

Dylan: Love? Well, yeah, but everybody says that.

Crane: That doesn't make it anything wrong with it.

Dylan: No, yeah, anybody can say it.

Crane: What about 'swing'?

Dylan: Swing? That's a good message.

Crane: Is that part of your message?

Dylan: Swing. Swing. Love. Be. Is. Was. Were. Double.

Crane: Double?

Dylan: Double up, once in a while.

Crane: Yeah (audience laughter). You're gonna sit there and I, I put on these duds for you tonight.

Dylan: You did?

Crane: In a tribute to you and you're gonna sit there and put me on, right?

Dylan: No, I'm not putting you *on*, everybody always thinks that (audience laughter).

Crane: Everybody always thinks you're putting them ...

Dylan: Yeah, yeah, it's weird, weird. That's a nice tie though.

Crane: You like that tie?

Dylan: Yeah. Like the tie.

Crane: You never wear a tie.

Dylan: No. Once in a while I do. I watch television in a tie (applause). Hey, that's OK. I work, hey! You gonna gimme that tie?

Crane: Swing! Love!

Dylan: Thank you very much! fantastic. What about those boots Les? (audience roars with laughter). Your's don't have a hook on ...

Crane: What size are yours?

Dylan: 8 1/2.

Crane: You couldn't get in ... it's the same boots! You know that?

Dylan: They are?

Crane: It's the same boots.

Dylan: Yours are a little shinier than mine though.

Crane: Hey Bob, that's a nice harmonica.

Dylan: It is.

Crane: [plays some tune on it] We'll be back right after this brief message

-----< break >-----

Crane: We're back! Tommy Sands, Caterina Valente, Bob Dylan, Cy Pulman ...

-----< talk with Tommy Sands, break >-----

Dylan: No, no. I'm not married.

Crane: You say that as though you don't approve of it.

Dylan: Oh, I approve.

Crane: You just haven't found the lady yet? Is that it?

Dylan: Oh, that's not true either. I just am not married you know (audience laughter).

Crane: (to part of the audience) What are you breaking up about over there? You're really cracking up.

-----< talk with Caterina Valente >-----

Crane: (to Dylan) What did you do when I looked over there?

Dylan: Nothing, Les. (audience laughter). I didn't do anything.

Crane: You are really cracking up this audience!

Dylan: Nah, nah, I'm not.

Crane: Yes you are

Tommy Sands: You know why he's cracking up this audience

Crane : Why

Sands: I was sitting back there watching him. Of course, I say you know why he's cracking up this audience, I can't speak for this audience. But I think I recognize talent. And I think as big and as successful as Bob Dylan is as a singer and writer of folk songs I

think that he has a tremendous future as an actor. [Audience Applause]

Sands: In fact you know, I don't; know I was never familiar with Bob Dylan. I've seen record albums and I'd heard songs and everything But I was never familiar with the man, and I've never seen him And after watching him, I'm sure that other producers right now, .its wild. , because tonight somebody might see him and offer him the thing he wants, not that he would take anything. He does remind me of Jimmy Dean and he's very funny

Crane: How do you like that Bobby?

Dylan: Well, (briskly) Thank You Very Much (audience laughter).

Crane: Have you ever given any thought to acting. Think you might enjoy acting?

Dylan: Well, I'm gonna try to make a movie this summer. Which Allen Ginsberg is writing. I'm rewriting ...

Crane: Allen Ginsberg, the poet?

Dylan: Yeah, yeah.

Crane: He was on this program you know.

Dylan: Yeah.

Crane: Extolling the virtues of marijuana one night.

Dylan: Really? Allen?? (audience laughter). Sounds like a lie to me (audience laughter).

Crane: That's really ... You think I'm lying?

Dylan: No, I didn't mean that.

Crane: Allen Ginsberg was sitting in that chair where Caterina Valente is sitting right now and he said that he thought that we ought to legalize pot.

Dylan: He said that?

Crane: Right on the television.

Dylan: Pheeeww!

Crane: Can you imagine that?

Dylan: Nah. Allen is a little funny sometimes (audience roars with laughter).

Crane: Allen's funny sometimes, huh? Yes ... what is this movie going to be about?

Dylan: Oh it's a, sort of a horror cowboy movie (audience laughter). Takes place on the New York Thruway.

Crane: A horror cowboy movie that takes place .. I don't think that's exactly what Tommy Sands had in mind.

Dylan: No, well, its, that's the kind of movie it's gonna be though. You know.

Crane: It's gonna be one of those underground pictures, right?

Dylan: No. It's gonna be all straight. On the up and up.

Crane: Yeah? Are you gonna star in it?

Dylan: Yeah, yeah, I'm a hero.

Crane: You're the hero? You play the horrible cowboy?

Dylan: I play my mother (audience laughter).

Crane: You play your mother? In the movie?

Dylan: In the movie. You gotta see the movie (audience laughter).

Crane: He's quite the put on artist, isn't he?

Dylan: Nah, God.

Crane: You're terrible.

Dylan: Nah. Don't want to be categorized.

Tommy Sands: Hey, can I ask you a question? may I ask you a question, Bob?

Dylan: Sure.

Tommy Sands: so many of the present artists seem to do the same thing as the country artists, yet they seem to have a wider appeal. Why is that?

Dylan: I Don't know. No. No.

Crane: I'll tell you why. It's because the country artists haven't had the kind of exposure, lately, that the folk artists have had. They travel in different circles ...

-----< talk continues with Caterina Valente & others >-----

Dylan: [sings It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)]



DYLAN MEETS THE PRESS - VILLAGE VOICE MARCH 3, 1965

Reprinted in Clinton Heylin: More Rain Unravelling Tales.

The press: Bobby, We know you changed your name. Come on now, what's your real name?

Dylan: Philip Ochs. I'm gonna change it back when I see it pays.

The press: Was Woody Guthrie your greatest influence?

Dylan: I don't know that I'd say that, but for a spell, the idea of him affected me quite much.

The press: How about Brecht? Read much of him?

Dylan: No. But I've read him.

The press: Rimbaud?

Dylan: I've read his tiny little book 'evil flowers' too.

The press: How about Hank Williams? Do you consider him an influence?

Dylan: Hey look, I consider Hank Williams, Captain Marvel, Marlon Brando, The Tennessee Stud, Clark Kent, Walter Cronkite and J. Carrol Neish all influences. Now what is it - please - what is it exactly you people want to know?

The press: Tell us about your movie.

Dylan: It's gonna be in black and white.

The press: Will it be in the Andy Warhol style?

Dylan: Who's Andy Warhol? Listen, my movie will be - I can say definitely - it will be in the style of the early Puerto Rican films.

The press: Who's writing it?

Dylan: Allen Ginsberg. I'm going to rewrite it.

The press: Who will you play in the film?

Dylan: The hero.

The press: Who is it that you're going to be?

Dylan: My mother.

The press: What about your friends The Beatles? Did you see them when you were there?

Dylan: John Lennon and I came down to the Village early one morning. They wouldn't let us in The Figaro or The Hip Bagel or The Feenjon. This time I'm going to England. This April. I'll see 'em if they're there.

The press: Bob, what about the situation of American poets? Kenneth Roxroth has estimated that since 1900 about thirty American poets have committed suicide.

Dylan: Thirty poets! What about American housewives, mailmen, street cleaners, miners? Jesus Christ, what's so special about thirty people that are called poets? I've known some very good people that have committed suicide. One didn't do nothing but work in a gas station all his life. Nobody referred to him as poet, but if you're gonna call people like Robert Frost a poet, then I got to say this gas station boy was a poet too.

The press: Bob, to sum up - don't you have any important philosophy for the world?

Dylan: Are you kidding? The world don't need me. Christ, I'm only five feet ten. The world could get along fine without me. Don'cha know, everybody dies. It don't matter how important you think you are. Look at Shakespeare, Napoleon, Edgar Allan Poe, for that matter. They are all dead, right?

The press: Well, Bob, in your opinion, then, is there one man who can save the world?

Dylan: Al Aronowitz.



Sheffield University Paper, May 1965

(Interview date: 30 April 1965?) By Jenny De Yong and Peter Roche.

"I try to harmonise with songs the lonesome sparrow sings," sang Bob Dylan, alone on the stage at a packed City Hall last Friday: Dylan is himself sparrow-like - a thin, faded, ruffled sparrow - but one that sings to the tune of £2,000 per concert.

His dark-circled eyes seemed to peer above the conglomeration surrounding him (two microphones, a table with two glasses of much-needed water and a harmonica cradle round his polo-sweatered neck), while his penetrating songs convinced even the most cynical that Bob Dylan is worthy of the mound of superlatives which has been heaped upon him and under which his earlier followers feared he might suffocate.

An essential part of the popular image is the loneliness of Bob Dylan. He sings about it, in haunting symbols. He sings too about bitterness, of "The flesh-coloured Christs that glow in the dark". Make no mistakes though - Dylan can write in glowing images about war and violence but he can write with equal insight, and stricly for laughs, about the things that are reality to a greater part

of his audience, like the boy trying to persuade his girl to stay for the night.

Dylan has been set up as everything from a blue-denim god to a guitar-playing Socrates, corrupting youth by opening the door on hooliganism, warning the universal parent: "You sons and your daughters are beyond your command". It was for this reason that we approached him with some trepidation (and considerable difficulty, owing to positive festoons of red tape). We anticipated meeting the "sullen, bored Mr. Dylan" about whom so much has been written in the Press lately - and found instead an individual who was very tired but very willing to talk. He answered our questions in his room at the Grand Hotel, perched on the edge of a couch, a cup of black coffee in one hand, a cigarette (Player's, untipped) in the other. Around him his entourage: a tough, voluble manager with flowing grey hair; a hip-talking young man with glasses and [a lovely?] jacket; a tall negro with an engaging chin; a dark, chatty girl hitching a plastic iris.

Dylan talks rapidly - his voice very soft - even when discussing topics about which he obviously feels strongly (the Press, for example) his tone remains quiet, matter-of-fact. His thin, pale face has a fragile, almost transparent quality - although this was probably due in part to lack of sleep ("He's had no proper sleep for three days," Joan Baez had told us earlier). Miss Baez, who plans to tour Britain herself some time in the Autumn, sat quietly in a corner of the room, watching Dylan intently as he talked.

Q: To start with the obvious question: what do you think of Donovan and "Catch the Wind?"

A: Well, I quite like that song, and he sings it quite well. He's very young though, and people might like to try to make him into something that he isn't; that's something he'll have to watch. But the song is O.K.

Q: Isn't the tune a lot like your "Chimes of Freedom"?

A: Oh, I don't care what he takes from me; I don't care what other singers do to my songs either, they can't hurt me any. Like with the Animals and "Baby Let Me Follow You Down", I didn't worry none about that. I met the Animals over in New York, and we all went out and got scoused. Is that what you say? (Someone behind him suggests "sloshed".) Oh yeah, that's it, sloshed. Anyway, the Animals are O.K., I liked their last one, "Don't Let Me be Misunderstood", that was a good one.

Q: Coming on to your latest single, "Subterranean Homesick Blues", [many?] people seem worried about the electric guitars and drums.

A: Yeah, well we had a lot of swinging cats on that track, real hip musicians, not just some cats I picked up off the street, and we all got together and we just had a ball. Anyway, that's just one track off the album.

Q: So why release it as a single?

A: That's not me, that's the Company. The Company says to me "It's time to do your next album", so I go along and record [???h] tracks for the album. [What we?] do with the songs then, we [leave it?] up to them. But I record [???] I wouldn't record a single.

Q: Aren't you afraid though that they'll turn you into a pop star?

A: They can't turn me into anything; I just write my songs and that's it. They can't change me any, and they can't change my songs. "Subterranean" sounds a bit different because of the backing, but I've had backing on my songs before, I had some backing on "Corrain".

Q: What are your own favourite songs?

A: You mean the ones I've written? Well, it depends on how I'm feeling; I think to be really good a song has to hit you at the right moment. But I like most of the ones on my new album, and on my last album I guess the one I liked best was "I don't believe you".

Q: Your songs have changed a lot over the last couple of years. Are you consciously trying to change your style, or would you say that this was a natural development?

A: Oh, it's a natural one, I think. The big difference is that the songs I was writing last year, songs like "Ballad in Plain D", they were what I call one-dimensional songs, but my new songs I'm trying to make more three-dimensional, you know, there's more symbolism, they're written on more than one level.

Q: How long does it take you to write a song? Say a song like "Hard Rain"?

A: Well, I wrote "Hard Rain" while I was still on the streets, I guess that was the first three-dimension song I wrote. It took me about - oh, about two days.

Q: Is that normal?

A: No, that was kind of long; usually I write them a lot quicker, sometimes in a couple of hours.

Q: Would you say that your songs contain sufficient poetry to be able to stand by themselves, without music?

A: If they can't do that, then they're not what I want them to be. Basically, I guess I'm more interested in writing than in performing.

Q: Does that explain all those poems on the backs of your albums?

A: Oh, those (laughing) - well they were kind of written out of terror, I used to get scared that I wouldn't be around much longer, so I'd write my poems down on anything I could find - the backs of my albums, the backs of Joan's albums, you know, anywhere I could find.

Q: Why do you suppose that the national press tries to make you out to be angry and bored and all the rest?

A: That's because they ask the wrong questions, like, 'What did you have for breakfast', 'What's your favourite colour', stuff like that. Newspaper reporters, man, they're just hung-up writers, frustrated novelists, they don't hurt me none by putting fancy labels on me. They got all these preconceived ideas about me, so I just play up to them.

Q: How do you feel about being labelled as the voice of your generation?

A: Well, I don't know. I mean, I'm 24, how can I speak for people of 17 or 18, I can't be anyone else's voice. If they can associate with me that's O.K., but I can't give a voice to people who have no voice. Would you say that I was your voice?

Q: Well you manage to say a lot of things that I'd like to say, only I don't have the words.

A: Yeah, but that's not the same as being your voice.

Q: No, but it's something.

(Someone mentions food and at once Dylan and followers remember that they haven't eaten for hours. Not much is said but it becomes increasingly obvious that food has the edge on aesthetics... We took that as our cue to leave.)

THE LAURIE HENSHAW INTERVIEW, MAY 12, 1965

Printed in Disc Weekly May 22, 1965 under the title "Mr Send Up".

Henshaw: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Dylan: No, you can go and find out. There's many biographies and you can look to that. You don't ask me where I was born, where I lived. Don't ask me those questions. You find out from other papers.

Henshaw: I'd rather hear it from you.

Dylan: I'm not going to tell you.

Henshaw: Can you tell me exactly when you entered the profession? When you first started writing songs?

Dylan: When I was 12.

Henshaw: And you were writing poetry at the time? And you are writing a book now?

Dylan: I've got a book done.

Henshaw: Is it already published?

Dylan: It's going to be published in the fall.

Henshaw: What's it called?

Dylan: I'm not going to tell you.

Henshaw: Can you give me an idea what it is about?

Dylan: No.

Henshaw: Can you tell me your favorite song among the ones you've written?

Dylan: I don't have any. I've no personal songs that I wouldn't consider apart from any other.

Henshaw: You must obviously make a lot of money nowadays?

Dylan: I spend it all. I have six Cadillacs. I have four houses. I have a plantation in Georgia. Oh, I'm also working on a rocket. A little rocket. Not a big rocket. Not the kind of rocket they have in Cape Canaveral. I don't know about those kind of rockets.

Henshaw: Do you have personal things - cameras, watches and that sort of thing?

Dylan: No, I don't. I buy cars. I have lot of cars, the Cadillacs. I also have a few Oldsmobiles, about three.

Henshaw: Do you have fears about anything political.

Dylan: No.

Henshaw: Of course your songs have a very strong content ...

Dylan: Have you heard my songs?

Henshaw: I have. 'Masters Of War'. 'Blowin' In The Wind'.

Dylan: What about 'Spanish Lover'? [sic] Have you heard that? Why don't you listen to that? Listen, I couldn't care less what your paper writes about me. Your paper can write anything, don't you realize? The people that listen to me don't read your paper, you know, to listen to me. I'm not going to be known from your paper.

Henshaw: You're already known. Why be so hostile?

Dylan: Because you're hostile to me. You're using me. I'm an object to you. I went through this before in the United States, you know. There's nothing personal. I've nothing against you at all. I just don't want to be bothered with your paper, that's all. I just don't want to be a part of it. Why should I have to go along with something just so that somebody else can eat? Why don't you just say that my name is Kissenovitch. You know, and I, er, come from Acapulco, Mexico. That my father was an escaped thief from South Africa. OK. You can say anything you want to say.

Henshaw: Let's talk about you. Your clothes for instance. Are your taste in clothes changing at all?

Dylan: I like clothes. I don't have any particular interests at all. I like to wear drapes, umbrellas, hats.

Henshaw: You're not going to tell me you carry an umbrella.

Dylan: I most certainly do carry an umbrella. Where I come from everybody carries an umbrella. Have you ever been to South Dakota? Well, I come from South Dakota, and in South Dakota people carry umbrellas.

Henshaw: What would you say has been the greatest influence in your life?

Dylan: You! Your paper happens to influence me a lot. I'm going to go out and write a song after I've seen you - you know - what I'm used for. I feel what I'm doing and I feel what you paper does. And you have the nerve and gall to ask me what influences me and why do I think I'm so accepted. I don't want to be interviewed by your paper. I don't need it. You don't need it either. You can build up your own star. Why don't you just get a lot of money and bring some kid out here from the north of England and say "We're gonna make you a star! You just comply with everything, everything we do. Everytime you want an interview you can just sign a paper that means we can have an interview and write what we want to write. And you'll be a star and make money!" Why don't you just do that? I'm not going to do it for you.

Henshaw: Why should we bother to interview you if we didn't think you were worth interviewing?

Dylan: Because I'm news. That's why I don't blame you, you have a job to do. I know that. There's nothing personal here. But don't try to pick up too much you know.

Henshaw: When did you start making records?

Dylan: I started making records in 1947, that was my first recording. A race record. I made it down south. Actually the first record I made was in 1935. John Hammond came and recorded me. Discovered me in 1935, sitting on a farm. The man who discovered Benny Goodman saw me down the street. He had me in to do a session. It happened just like that. Otherwise I wouldn't be here.

Henshaw: Do you have a favorite guitar?

Dylan: Favorite guitar? I have 33 guitars! How can you have one favorite? I'm going to quit playing the guitar anyway. I'm playing the banjo.

Henshaw: Have you heard Manfred Mann doing 'With God On Our Side'?

Dylan: No, I haven't heard it. I've only heard about it.

Henshaw: It was sung on "Ready Steady Goes Live" and it made quite an impact.

Dylan: I would like to have seen it.

Henshaw: How do you feel about other groups doing your songs?

Dylan: Well, how would you feel about other groups doing your songs?

Henshaw: I'd be complemented.

Dylan: I'd feel the same as you.

Henshaw: What sort of people do you like? What type do you cultivate?

Dylan: I would cultivate the kind of person that sticks to his job. Sticks to his job and gets his job done. And is not too nervous. But nervous enough not to come back!

Henshaw: What kind of people to you take an instant dislike to?

Dylan: I take an instant dislike to people that shake a lot. An instant dislike - wham! Most of the time I throw them against a wall. I have a body guard, Toppo. (Dylan here puts his hands to his mouth and calls to the next room) TOPPO! Is Toppo in there? I have a bodyguard to get rid of people like that. He comes out and wipes them out. He wiped out three people last week.

Henshaw: Do you paint?

Dylan: Yeah, sure.

Henshaw: What sort of painting.

Dylan: I painted my house.

---< at this point Dylan abruptly ended the interview >---

BOB DYLAN INTERVIEW

by Nora Ephron & Susan Edmiston

Published in "Retrospective" ed. by Craig McGregor, also in "Positively Tie Dream" (Ashes and Sand 1979); post Forest Hills show; used by Pickering in "B. D. Approximately" who referred to a tape; rewritten in "Age of Rock" ed. J. Eisen, Random House, New York, 1969; also in "Age of Rock 2"

This interview took place in late summer of 1965 in the office of Dylan's manager Albert Grossman. Dylan had just been booed in the historic Forest Hills concert where he abandoned folk purity to the use of electric accompaniment. He was wearing a red-and-navy op-art shirt, a navy blazer and pointy high-heeled boots. His fact, so sharp and harsh when translated through media, was then infinitely soft and delicate. His hair was not bushy or electric or Afro; it was fine-spun soft froth like the foam of a wave. He looked like an underfed angel with a nose from the land of the Chosen People.

Q: Some American folk singers--Carolyn Hester, for example--say that what you're now doing, the new sound, "folk rock," is liberating them.

A: Did Carolyn say that? You tell her she can come around and see me any time now that she's liberated.

Q: Does labeling, using the term, "folk rock," tend to obscure what's happening?

A: Yes.

Q: It's like "pop gospel." What does the term mean to you?

A: Yeah, classical gospel could be the next trend. There's country rock, rockabilly. What does it mean to me? Folk rock. I've never even said that word. It has a hard gutter sound. Circusy atmosphere. It's nose-thumbing. Sound like you're looking down on what is... fantastic, great music.

Q: The definition most often given of folk rock is the combination of the electronic sound of rock and roll with the meaningful lyrics of folk music? Does that sum up what you're doing?

A: Yes. It's very complicated to play with electricity. You play with other people. You're dealing with other people. Most people don't like to work with other people, it's more difficult. It takes a lot. Most people who don't like rock and roll can't relate to other people.

Q: You mention the Apollo Theatre in Harlem on one of your album covers. Do you go there often?

A: Oh, I couldn't go up there. I used to go up there a lot about four years ago. I even wanted to play in one of the amateur nights, but I got scared. Bad things can happen to you. I saw what the audience did to a couple of guys they didn't like. And I would have had a couple of things against me right away when I stepped out on the stage.

Q: Who is Mr. Jones in "Ballad of a Thin Man?"

A: He's a real person. You know him, but not by that name.

Q: Like Mr. Charlie?

A: No. He's more than Mr. Charlie. He's actually a person. Like I saw him come into the room one night and he looked like a camel. He proceeded to put his eyes in his pocket. I asked this guy who he was and he said, "That's Mr. Jones." Then I asked this cat, "Doesn't he do anything but put his eyes in his pocket?" And he told me, "He puts his nose on the ground." It's all there, it's a true story.

Q: Where did you get that shirt?

A: California. Do you like it? You should see my others. You can't get clothes like that here. There are a lot of things out there we haven't got here.

Q: Isn't California on the way here?

A: It's uptight here compared to there. Hollywood I mean. It's not really breathable here. It's like there's air out there. The Sunset Strip can't be compared to anything here, like 42nd Street. The people there look different, they look more like... you want to kiss them out there.

Q: Do you spend a lot of time out there?

A: I don't have much time to spend anywhere: The same thing in England. In England everybody looks very hip East Side. They wear things... they don't wear things that bore you. They've got other hangups in other directions.

Q: Do you consider yourself primarily a poet?

A:No. We have our ideas about poets. The word doesn't mean any more than the word "house." There are people who write _po_ems and people who write po_ems_. Other people write _poems_. Everybody who writes poems do you call them a poet? There's a certain kind of rhythm in some kind of way that's visible. You don't necessarily have to write to be a poet. Some people work in gas stations and they're poets. I don't call myself a poet because I don't like the word. I'm a trapeze artist.

Q: What I meant was, do you think your words stand without the music?

A:They would stand but I don't read them. I'd rather sing them. I write things that aren't songs--I have a book coming out.

Q: What is it?

A:It's a book of words.

Q: Is it like the back of your albums? It seemed to me that the album copy you write is a lot like the writing of William Burroughs. Some of the accidental sentences--

A:Cut-ups.

Q: Yes, and some of the imagery and anecdotes. I wondered if you had read anything by him.

A:I haven't read _Naked Lunch_ but I read some of his shorter things in little magazines, foreign magazines. I read one in Rome. I know him. I don't really know him--I just met him once. I think he's a great man.

Q: Burroughs keeps an album, a collection of photographs that illustrate his writing. Do you have anything similar to that?

A:I do that too. I have photographs of "Gates of Eden" and "It's All Over Now, Baby Blues." I saw them after I wrote the songs. People send me a lot of things and a lot of the things are pictures, so other people must have that idea too. I gotta admit, maybe I wouldn't have chosen them, but I can see what it is about the pictures.

Q: I heard you used to play the piano for Buddy Holly.

A:No. I used to play the rock and roll piano, but I don't want to say who it was for because the cat will try to get hold of me. I don't want to see the cat. He'll try to reclaim the friendship. I did it a

long time ago, when I was seventeen years old. I used to play a country piano too.

Q: This was before you became interested in folk music?

A:Yes. I became interested in folk music because I had to make it somehow. Obviously I'm not a hard-working cat. I played the guitar, that was all I did. I thought it was great music. Certainly I haven't turned my back on it or anything like that. There is--and I'm sure nobody realizes this, all the authorities who write about what it is and what it should be, when they say keep things simple, they should be easily understood--folk music is the only music where it isn't simple. It's never been simple. It's weird, man, full of legend, myth, Bible and ghosts. I've never written anything hard to understand, not in my head anyway, and nothing as far out as some of the old songs. They were out of sight.

Q: Like what songs?

A:"Little Brown Dog." "I bought a little brown dog, its face is all gray. Now I'm going to Turkey flying on my bottle." And "Nottemun Town," that's like a herd of ghosts passing through on the way to Tangiers. "Lord Edward," "Barbara Allen," they're full of myth.

Q: And contradictions?

A:Yeah, contradictions.

Q: And chaos?

A:Chaos, watermelon, clocks, everything.

Q: You wrote on the back of one album, "I accept chaos but does chaos accept me."

A:Chaos is a friend of mine. It's like I accept him, does he accept me.

Q: Do you see the world as chaos?

A:Truth is chaos. Maybe beauty is chaos.

Q: Poets like Eliot and Yeats--

A:I haven't read Yeats.

Q: they saw the world as chaos, accepted it as chaos and attempted to bring order from it. Are you trying to do that?

A:No. It exists and that's all there is to it. It's been here longer than I have. What can I do about it? I don't know what the songs I write are. That's all I do is write songs, right? Write. I collect things too.

Q: Monkey wrenches?

A:Where did you read about that? Has that been in print? I told this guy out on the coast that I collected monkey wrenches, all sizes and shapes of monkey wrenches, and he didn't believe me. I don't think you believe me either. And I collect the pictures too. Have you talked to Sonny and Cher?

Q: No.

A:They're a drag. A cat got kicked out of a restaurant and he went home and wrote a song about it.

Q: They say your fan mail has radically increased since you switched sounds.

A:Yeah. I don't have time to read all of it, but I want you to put that I answer half of it. I don't really. A girl does that for me.

Q: Does she save any for you--any particularly interesting letters?

A:She knows my head. Not the ones that just ask for pictures, there's a file for them. Not the ones that say, I want to make it with you, they go in another file. She saves two kinds. The violently put-down--

Q: The ones that call you a sellout?

A:yeah. Sellout, fink, Fascist, Red, everything in the book. I really dig those. And ones from old friends.

Q: Like, "You don't remember me but I was in the fourth grade with you"?

A:No, I never had any friends then. These are letters from people who knew me in New York five, six years ago. My first fans. Not the people who call themselves my first fans. They came in three years ago, two years ago. They aren't really my first fans.

Q: How do you feel about being booed at your concert at Forest Hills?

A: I thought it was great, I really did. If I said anything else I'd be a liar.

Q: And at Newport Folk Festival?

A: that was different. They twisted the sound. They didn't like what I was going to play and they twisted the sound on me before I began.

Q: I hear you are wearing a sellout jacket.

A: What kind of jacket is a sellout jacket?

Q: Black leather.

A: I've had black leather jackets since I was five years old. I've been wearing black leather all my life.

Q: I wonder if we could talk about electronic music and what made you decide to use it.

A: I was doing fine, you know, singing and playing my guitar. It was a sure thing, don't you understand, it was a sure thing. I was getting very bored with that. I couldn't go out and play like that. I was thinking of quitting. Out front it was a sure thing. I knew what the audience was gonna do, how they would react. It was very automatic. Your mind just drifts unless you can find some way to get in there and remain totally there. It's so much of a fight remaining totally there all by yourself. It takes too much. I'm not ready to cut that much out of my life. You can't have nobody around. You can't be bothered with anybody else's world. And I like people. What I'm doing now--it's a whole other thing. We're not playing rock music. It's not a hard sound. These people call it folk rock--if they want to call it that, something that simple, it's good for selling records. As far as it being what it is, I don't know what it is. I can't call it folk rock. It's a whole way of doing things. It has been picked up on, I've heard songs on the radio that have picked it up. I'm not talking about words. It's a certain feeling, and it's been on every single record I've ever made. That has not changed. I know it hasn't changed. As far as what I was totally, before, maybe I was pushing it a little then. I'm not pushing things now. I know it. I know very well how to do it. The problem of how I want to play something--I know it in front. I know what I am going to say, what I'm going to do. I don't have to work it out. The band I work with--they wouldn't be playing with me if they didn't play like I want them to. I have this song, "Queen Jane Approximately"--

Q: Who is Queen Jane?

A:Queen Jane is a man.

Q: Was there something that made you decide to change sounds? Your trip to England?

A:I like the sound. I like what I'm doing now. I would have done it before. It wasn't practical to do it before. I spend most of my time writing. I wouldn't have had the time. I had to get where I was going all alone. I don't know what I'm going to do next. I probably will record with strings some time, but it doesn't necessarily change. It's just a different color. And I know it's real. No matter what anybody says. They can boo till the end of time. I know that the music is real, more real than the boos.

Q: How do you work?

A:Most of the time I work at night. I don't really like to think of it as work. I don't know how important it is. It's not important to the average cat who works eight hours a day. What does he care? The world can get along very well without it. I'm hip to that.

Q: Sure, but the world can get along without any number of things.

A:I'll give you a comparison. Rudy Vallee. Now that was a lie, that was a downright lie. Rudy Vallee being popular. What kind of people could have dug him? You know, your grandmothers and mothers. But what kind of people were they? He was so sexless. If you want to find out about those times and you listen to his music you're not going to find out anything about the times. His music was a pipedream. All escapes. There are no more escapes. If you want to find out anything that's happening now, you have to listen to the music. I don't mean the words, although "Eve of Destruction" will tell you something about it. The words are not really gonna tell it, not really. You gotta listen to the Stapes(Staple?) Singers, Smokey and the Miracles, Martha and the Vandellas. That's scary to a lot of people. It's sex that's involved. It's not hidden. It's real. You can overdo it. It's not only sex, it's a whole beautiful feeling.

Q: But Negro rhythm and blues has been around underground for at least twelve years. What brought it out now?

A:The English did that. They brought it out. They hipped everybody. You read an interview asking who the Beatles' favorite singer was and they say Chuck Berry. You never used to hear Chuck Berry records on the radio, hard blues. The English did that. England is great and beautiful, though in other ways kinda messy. Though not outside London.

Q: In what way messy?

A: There's a snobbishness. What you see people doing to other people. It's not only class. It's not that simple. It's a kind of Queen kind of thing. Some people are royalty and some are not. Here, man, somebody don't like you he tells you. There it's very tight, tight kinds of expressions, their whole tone of speaking changes. It's an everyday kind of thing. But the kids are a whole other thing. Great. They're just more free. I hope you don't think I take this too seriously--I just have a headache.

Q: I think you started out to say that music was more in tune with what's happening than other art forms.

A: Great paintings shouldn't be in museums. Have you ever been in a museum? Museums are cemeteries. Paintings should be on the walls of restaurants, in dime stores, in gas stations, in men's rooms. Great paintings should be where people hang out. The only thing where it's happening is on radio and records, that's where people hang out. You can't see great paintings. You pay half a million and hang one in your house and one guest sees it. That's not art. That's a shame, a crime. Music is the only thing that's in tune with what's happening. It's not in book form, it's not on the stage. All this art they've been talking about is nonexistent. It just remains on the shelf. It doesn't make anyone happier. Just think how many people would really feel great if they could see a Picasso in their daily diner. It's not the bomb that has to go, man, it's the museums.

THE PAUL J. ROBBINS INTERVIEW - SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA, MARCH, 1965

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Robbins: I don't know whether to do an serious interview or carry on in that absurdist way we talked last night.

Dylan: It'll be the same thing anyway, man.

Robbins: Yeah, Okay ... If you are a poet and write words arranged in some sort of rhythm, why do you switch at some point and write lyrics in a song so that you're singing the words as part of a Gestalt presence?

Dylan: Well, I can't define that word poetry, I wouldn't even attempt it. At one time I thought that Robert Frost was poetry, other times I thought that Allen Ginsberg was poetry, sometimes I thought Francois Villon was poetry -- but poetry isn't really confined to the printed page. Hey, then again, I don't believe in saying "Look at that girl walking! Isn't that poetry?" I'm not going to get insane about it. The lyrics to the songs ... just so happens that it might be a little stranger than in most songs. I find it easy to write songs. I been writing songs for a long time and the words to the songs aren't written out just for the paper; they're written as you can read it, you dig. If you take whatever there is to the song away -- the beat, the melody -- I could still recite it. I see nothing wrong with songs you can't do that with either -- songs that, if you took the beat and the melody away, they wouldn't stand up. Because they're not supposed to do that, you know. Songs are songs ... I don't believe in expecting too much out of any one thing.

Robbins: Whatever happened to Blind Boy Grunt?

Dylan: I was doing that four years ago. Now there's a lot of people writing songs on protest subjects. But it's taken some kind of a weird step. Hey, I'd rather listen to Jimmy Reed or Howlin' Wolf, man, or the Beatles, or Francois Hardy, than I would listen to any protest song singers -- although I haven't heard all the protest song singers there are. But the ones I've heard -- there's this very emptiness which is like a song written "Let's hold hands and everything will be grand". I see no more to it than that. Just

because someone mentions the word "bomb", I'm not going to go "Aalee!" and start clapping.

Robbins: Is it that they just don't work any more?

Dylan: It's not that it don't work, it's that there are a lot of people afraid of the bomb, right. But there are a lot of other people who're afraid to be seen carrying a MODERN SCREEN magazine down the street, you know. Lot of people afraid to admit that they like Marlon Brando movies... Hey, it's not that they don't work anymore but have you ever thought of a place where they DO work? What exactly DOES work?

Robbins: They give a groovy feeling to the people who sing them, I guess that's about it. But what does work is the attitude, not the song. And there's just another attitude called for.

Dylan: Yeah, but you have to be very hip to the fact about that attitude -- you have to be hip to communication. Sure, you can make all sorts of protest songs and put them on a Folkways record. But who hears them? The people that do hear them are going to be agreeing with you anyway. You aren't going to get somebody to hear it who doesn't dig it. People don't listen to things they don't dig. If you can find a cat that can actually say "Okay, I'm a changed man because I heard this one thing -- or I just saw this one thing ...". Hey it don't necessarily happen that way all the time. It happens with a collage of experience which somebody can actually know by instinct what's right and wrong for him to do. Where he doesn't actually have to feel guilty about anything. A lot of people can act out of guilt. They act because they think somebody's looking at *them*. No matter what it is. There's people who do anything because of guilt ...

Robbins: And you don't want to be guilty?

Dylan: It's not that I'm NOT guilty. I'm not any more guilty than you are. Like, I don't consider any elder generation guilty. I mean, they're having these trials at Nuremberg, right? Look at that and you can place it out. Cats say "I had to kill all those people or else they'd kill me" Now, who's to try them for that? Who are these judges that have got the right to try a cat? How do you know they wouldn't do the same thing?

Robbins: This may be a side trip, but this thing about the Statute of Limitations running out and everybody wants to extend it? You remember, in AMIMAL FARM, what they wrote on the wall? "All animals are equal." But later they added "... but some are more equal than others." It's the same thing in reverse. That some are

less equal than others. Like nazis are *really* criminals, so let's *really* get them; change any law just to nail them all.

Dylan: Yeah, all that shit runs in the same category. Nobody digs revenge, right? But you have these cats from Israel who, after TWENTY years, are still trying to catch these cats, who're OLD cats, man, who have escaped. God knows they aren't going to go anywhere, they're not going to do anything. And you have these cats from Israel running around catching them. Spending twenty years out of their lives. You take that job away from them and they're no more or less than a baker. He's got his whole life tied up in one thing. It's a one-thought thing, without anything between: "That's what it is, and I'm going to get it". Anything between gets wiped all away. I can't make that, but I can't really put it down. Hey: I can't put ANYTHING down, because I don't have to be around any of it. I don't have to put people down which I don't like, because I don't have to be around any of those people. Of course there is the giant great contradiction of What Do You Do. Hey, I don't know what you do, but all I can do is cast aside all the things NOT to do. I don't know where it's at once in a while, all I know is where it's NOT at. And as long as I know that, I don't really have to know, myself, where's it at. Everybody knows where it's at once in a while, but nobody can walk around all the time in a complete Utopia. Dig poetry. You were asking about poetry? Man, poetry is just bullshit, you know? I don't know about other countries, but in this one it's a total massacre. It's not poetry at all. People don't read poetry in this country -- if they do, it offends them; they don't dig it. You go to school, man, and what kind of poetry do you read? You read Robert Frost's "The Two Roads", you read T.S. Eliot -- you read all that bullshit and that's just bad, man, It's not good. It's not anything hard, it's just soft-boiled egg shit. And then, on top of it, they throw Shakespeare at some kid who can't read Shakespeare in high school, right? Who digs reading, HAMLET, man? All they give you is IVANHOE, SILAS MARINER, TALE OF TWO CITIES -- and they keep you away from things which you should do. You shouldn't even be there in school. You should find out from people. Dig! That's where it all starts. In the beginning -- like from 13 to 19 -- that's where all the corruption is. These people all just overlook it, right? There's more V.D. in people 13 to 19 than there is in any other group, but they ain't ever going to say so. They're never going to go into the schools and give shots. But that's where it's at. It's all a hype, man.

Robbins: Relating all this: if you put it in lyrics instead of poetry, you have a higher chance of hitting the people who have to be hit?

Dylan: I do, but I don't expect anything from it, you dig? All I can do is be me -- whoever that is -- for those people that I do play to,

and not come on with them, tell them I'm something I'm not. I'm not going to tell them I'm the Great Cause Fighter or the Great Lover or the Great Boy Genius or whatever. Because I'm not, man. Why mislead them? That's all just Madison Avenue selling me, but it's not really selling ME, 'cause I was hip to it before I got there.

Robbins: Which brings up another thing. All the folk magazines and many folk people are down on you. Do they put you down because you changed or...

Dylan: It's that I'm successful and they want to be successful, man. It's jealousy. Hey, anybody, with any kind of knowledge at all would know by instinct what's happening here. Somebody who doesn't know that, is still hung up with success and failure and good and bad ... maybe he doesn't have a chick all the time ... stuff like that. But I can't use comments, man. I don't take nothing like that seriously. If somebody praises me and say "How groovy you are!", it doesn't mean nothing to me, because I can usually sense where that person's at. And it's no compliment if someone who's a total freak comes up and says "How groovy you are!" And it's the same if they don't dig me. Other kinds of people don't HAVE to say anything because, when you come down to it, it's all what's happening in the moment which counts. Who **cares** about tomorrow and yesterday? People don't live there, they live now.

Robbins: I have a theory, which I've been picking up and shaking out every so often. When I spoke with the Byrds, they were saying the same thing as I am saying -- a lot of people are saying -- you're talking it. It's why we have new so-called rock & roll sound emerging, it's a synthesis of all things a ...

Dylan: It's further than that, man. people know nowadays more than before. They've had so much to look at by now and know the bullshit of everything. People now don't even care about going to jail. So what? You're still with yourself as much as if you're out on the streets. There's still those who don't care about anything, but I got to think that anybody who doesn't hurt anybody, you can't put that person down, you dig, if that person's happy doing that.

Robbins: But what if they freeze themselves into apathy? What if they don't care about anything at all anymore?

Dylan: Whose problem is that? Your problem or theirs? No, it's not that, it's that nobody can learn by somebody else showing them or teaching them. People got to learn by themselves, going through something which relates. Sure, you say how do you make somebody know something ... people know it by themselves; they

can go through some kind of scene with other people and themselves which somehow will come out somewhere and it's grind into them and be them. And all that just comes out of them somehow when they're faced up to the next thing.

Robbins: It's like taking in until the times comes to put out, right. But people who don't care don't put anything out. It's a whole frozen thing where nothing's happening anywhere; it's just like the maintenance of status quo, of existing circumstances, whatever they are ...

Dylan: People who don't care? Are you talking about gas station attendants or a Zen doctor, man? Hey, there's a lot of people who don't care; a lot don't care for different reasons. A lot care about some things and not about others, and some who don't care about anything -- it's just up to me not to let them bring me down and not to bring them down. It's like the whole world has a little thing: it's being taught that when you get up in the morning, you have to go out and bring somebody down. You walk down the street and, unless you've brought somebody down, don't come home today, right? It's a circus world.

Robbins: So who is it that you write and sing for?

Dylan: Not writing and singing for anybody, to tell you the truth. Hey, really, I don't care what people say. I don't care what they make me seem to be or what they tell other people I am. If I did care about that, I'd tell you; I really have no concern with it. I don't even come in contact with these people. Hey, I dig people, though. But if somebody's going to come up to me and ask me some questions which have been on his mind for such a long time, all I can think of is "Wow, man, what else can be in that person's head besides me? Am I that important, man, to be in a person's head for such a long time he's got to know this answer?" I mean, can that really straighten him out -- if I tell him something? Hey, come on ...

Robbins: A local disc jockey, Les Claypool, went through a whole thing on you one night, just couldn't get out of it. For maybe 45 minutes, he'd play a side of yours and then an ethnic side in which it was demonstrated that both melodies were the same. After each pair he'd say, "Well, you see what's happening ... This kid is taking other people's melodies; he's not all that original. Not only that", he'd say, "but his songs are totally depressing and have no hope".

Dylan: Who's Les Claypool?

Robbins: A folk jockey out here who has a long talk show on Saturday nights and an hour one each night, during which he plays highly ethnic sides?

Dylan: He played THOSE songs? He didn't play something hopeful?

Robbins: No, he was loading it to make his point. Anyway, it brings up an expected question: why do you use melodies that are already written?

Dylan: I used to do that when I was more or less in folk. I knew the melodies; they were already there. I did it because I liked the melodies. I did it when I really wasn't that popular and the songs weren't reaching that many people, and everybody around dug it. Man. I never introduced a song, "Here's the song I've stole the melody from, someplace". For me it wasn't that important; still isn't that important. I don't care about the melodies, man, the melodies are all traditional anyway. And if anybody wants to pick that out and say "That's Bob Dylan", that's their thing, not mine. I mean if they want to think that. Anybody with any sense at all, man, he says that I haven't any hope ... Hey, I got FAITH. I know that there are people who're going to know that's total bullshit. I know the cat is just up tight. He hasn't really gotten into a good day and he has to pick on something. Groovy. He has to pick on me? Hey, if he can't pick on me, he picks on someone else, it don't matter. He doesn't step on me, 'cause I don't care. He's not coming up to me on the street and stepping on my head, man. Hey, I've only done that with very few of my songs, anyway. And then when I don't do it, everybody says they're rock & roll melodies. You can't satisfy the people -- you just can't. You got to know, man; they just don't care about it.

Robbins: Why is rock & roll coming in and folk music going out?

Dylan: Folk music destroyed itself. Nobody destroyed it. Folk music is still here, if you want to dig it. It's not that it's going in or out. It's all the soft mellow shit, man, that's just being replaced by something that people know there is now. Hey, you must've heard rock & roll long before the Beatles, you must've discarded rock & roll around 1960. I did that in 1957. I couldn't make it as a rock & roll singer then. There were too many groups. I used to play piano. I made some records, too.

Robbins: Okay, you got a lot of bread now. And your way of life isn't like it was four or five years ago. It's much grander. Does that kind of thing tend to throw you off?

Dylan: Well, the transition never came from working at it. I left where I'm from because there's nothing there. I come from Minnesota, there was nothing there. I'm not going to fake it and say I went out to see the world. Hey, when I left there, man, I knew one thing: I had to get out of there and not come back. Just from my senses I knew there was something more than Walt Disney movies. I was never turned on or off by money. I never considered the fact of money as really that important. I could always play the guitar, you dig, and make friends -- or fake friends. A lot of other people do other things and get to eat and sleep that way. Lot of people do a lot of things just to get around. You can find cats who get very scarred, right? Who get married and settle down. But, after somebody's got something and sees it all around him, so he doesn't have to sleep out in the cold at night, that's all. The only thing is he don't die. But is he happy? There's nowhere to go. Okay, so I get the money, right? First of all, I had to move out of New York. Because everybody was coming down to see me -- people which I didn't really dig. People coming in from weird-ass places. And I would think, for some reason, that I had to give them someplace to stay and all that. I found myself not really being by myself but just staying out of things I wanted to go to because people I knew would go there.

Robbins: Do you find friends -- real friends -- are they recognizable anymore?

Dylan: Oh, sure, man, I can tell somebody I dig right away. I don't have to go through anything with anybody. I'm just lucky that way.

Robbins: Back to protest songs. The IWW's work is over now and the unions are pretty well established. What about the civil rights movement?

Dylan: Well, it's okay. It's proper. It's not "Commie" anymore. Harper's Bazaar can feature it, you can find it on the cover of Life. But when you get beneath it, like anything, you find there's bullshit tied up in it. The Negro Civil Rights Movement is proper now, but there's more to it than what's in Harper's Bazaar. There's more to it than picketing in Selma, right? There's people living in utter poverty in New York. And then again, you have this big Right to Vote. Which is groovy. You want all these Negroes to vote? Okay, I can't go over the boat and shout "Hallelujah" only because the want to vote. Who're they going to vote for? Just politicians; same as the white people put in their politicians. Anybody that gets into politics is a little greaky anyway. Hey, they're just going to vote, that's all they're going to do. I hate to say it like that, make it sound hard, but it's going to boil down to that.

Robbins: What about the drive for education?

Dylan: Education? They're going to school and learn about all the things the white private schools teach. The catechism, the whole thing. What're they going to learn? What's this education? Hey, the cat's much better off never going to school. The only thing against him is he can't be a doctor or a judge. Or he can't get a good job with the salesman's company. But that's the only thing wrong. If you want to say it's good that he gets an education and goes out and gets a job like that, groovy. I'm not going to do it.

Robbins: In other words, the formal intake of factual knowledge ...

Dylan: Hey, I have no respect for factual knowledge, man. I don't care what anybody knows, I don't care if somebody's a walking encyclopedia. Does that make him nice to talk to? Who cares if Washington was even the first president of the United States? You think anybody has actually ever been helped with this kind of knowledge?

Robbins: Maybe through a test. Well, what's the answer?

Dylan: There aren't any answers, man. Or any questions. You must read my book ... there's a little part in there about that. it evolves into a thing where it mentions words like "Answer". I couldn't possibly rattle off the words for these, because you'd have to read the whole book to see these specific words or Question and Answer. We'll have another interview after you read the book.

Robbins: Yeah, you have a book coming out. What about it? The title?

Dylan: Tentatively, "Bob Dylan Off the Record". But they tell me there's already books out with that "off the record" title. The book can't really be titled, that's the kind of book it is. I'm also going to write the reviews for it.

Robbins: Why write a book instead of lyrics?

Dylan: I've written some songs which are kind of far out, a long continuation of verses, stuff like that -- but I haven't really gotten into writing a completely free song. Hey, you dig something like cut-ups? I mean, like William Burroughs?

Robbins: Yeah, there's a cat in Paris who published a book with no pagination. The book comes in a box and you throw it in the air and, however it lands, you read it like that.

Dylan: Yeah, that's where it's at. Because that's what it means, anyway. Okay, I wrote the book because there's a lot of stuff in there I can't possibly sing ... all the collages. I can't sing it because it gets too long or it goes too far out. I can only do it around a few people who would know. Because the majority of the audience -- I don't care where they're from, how hip they are - - I think it would just get totally lost. Something that had no rhyme, all cut up, no nothing, except something happening, which is words.

Robbins: You wrote the book to say something?

Dylan: Yeah, but certainly not any kind of profound statement. The book don't begin or end.

Robbins: But you had something to say. And you wanted to say it to somebody.

Dylan: Yeah, I said it to myself. Only, I'm lucky, because I could put it into a book. Now somebody else is going to be allowed to see what I said to myself.

Robbins: You have four albums out now, with a fifth any day. Are these albums sequential in the way that you composed and sung them?

Dylan: Yeah, I've got about two or three albums that I've never recorded, which are lost songs. They're old songs; I'll never record them. Some very groovy songs. Some old songs which I've written and sung maybe once in a concert and nobody else ever heard them. There are a lot of songs which would fill in between the records. It was growing from the first record to the second, then a head change on the third. And the fourth. The fifth I can't even tell you about.

Robbins: So if I started with Album One, Side One, Band One, I could truthfully watch Bob Dylan grow?

Dylan: No, you could watch Bob Dylan laughing to himself. Or you could see Bob Dylan going through changes. That's really the most.

Robbins: What do you think of the Byrds? Do you think they're doing something different?

Dylan: Yeah, they could. They're doing something really new now. It's like a danceable Bach sound. Like "Bells of Rhymney". They're cutting across all kinds of barriers which most people who sing aren't even hip to. They know it all. If they don't close their minds, they'll come up with something pretty fantastic.





BOB DYLAN TALKING by Joseph Haas

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Bob Dylan, one of the most talented and controversial figures in American entertainment, will perform tonight in the second of two concerts in Arie Crown Theater of McCormick Place. When the 24-year-old performer sings his original compositions, in his highly distinctive way, millions of young people listen--at concerts and on his best-selling long-playing albums and single recordings. Wise parents, who want to understand what the younger generation is thinking, would do well to listen to him, too. Dylan is a difficult performer to classify--is he a protest singer, leader of the folk-rock cult, a rock'n'roller, or a natural progression in American folk music? He has been called all of these things, and perhaps the wisest course is not to try and classify him at all, but to let him speak for himself, about himself, at length and informally. This is what Panorama has done, and this is Dylan talking:

Q: Will you sing any of the so-called folk-rock music in your concerts here?

A: No, it's not folk-rock, it's just instruments . . . it's not folk-rock. I call it the mathematical sound, sort of Indian music. I can't really describe it.

Q: Do you dislike folk-rock groups?

A: No, no, I like what everybody else does, what a lot of people do. I don't necessarily like the writing of too many songwriters, but I like the idea of, look, like they're trying to make it, you know, to say something about the death thing. Actually I don't know many of them. I'm 24 now, and most of them playing and listening are teenagers. I was playing rock'n'roll when I was 13 and 14 and 15, but I had to quit when I was 16 or 17 because I couldn't make it that way, the image of the day was Frankie Avalon or Fabian, or this whole athletic supercleanness bit, you know, which if you didn't have that, you couldn't make any friends. I played rock'n'roll when I was in my teens, yeah, I played semi- professionally, piano with rock'n'roll groups. About 1958 or 1959, I discovered Odetta, Harry Belafonte, that stuff, and I became a folk singer.

Q: Did you make this change so you could "make it"?

A: You couldn't make it livable back then with rock'n'roll, you couldn't carry around an amplifier and electric guitar and expect to survive, it was just too much of a hangup. It cost bread to make enough money to buy an electric guitar, and then you had to make more money to have enough people to play the music, you need two or three to create some conglomeration of sound. So it wasn't an alone kind of thing, you know. When you got other things dragging you down, you're sort of beginning to lose, crash, you know? When somebody's 16 or 25, who's got the right to lose, to wind up as a pinboy at 65?

Q: By "making it," do you mean making commercial success?

A: No, no, that's not it, making money. It's being able to be nice and not hurt anybody.

Q: Did you go into the folk field, then, because you had a better chance of "making it"?

A: No, that was an accidental thing. I didn't go into folk music to make any money, but because it was easy, you could be by yourself, you didn't need anybody. All you needed was a guitar, you didn't need anybody else at all. I don't know what's happened to it now. I don't think it's as good as it used to be. Most of the folk music singers have gone on, they're doing other things. Although they're still a lot of good ones around.

Q: Why did you give up the folk sound?

A: I've been on too many other streets to just do that. I couldn't go back and just do that. The real folk never seen 42nd street, they've never ridden an airplane. They've got their little world, and that's fine.

Q: Why have you begun using the electric guitar?

A: I don't use it that much, really.

Q: Some people are hurt because you've used one at all.

A: That's their fault, it would be silly of me to say I'm sorry because I haven't really done anything. It's not really all that serious. I have a hunch the people who feel I betrayed them picked up on me a few years ago and weren't really back there with me at the beginning. Because I still see the people who were with me from the beginning once in a while, and they know what I'm doing.

Q: Can you explain why you were booed at the Newport Folk Festival last summer when you came on stage with an electric guitar and began singing your new material?

A: Like I don't even know who those people were, anyway I think there's always a little boo in all of us. I wasn't shattered by it. I didn't cry. I don't even understand it. I mean, what are they going to shatter, my ego? And it doesn't even exist, they can't hurt me with a boo.

Q: What will you do when the success of your present kind of music fades?

A: I'm going to say when I stop, it just doesn't matter to me. I've never followed any trend, I just haven't the time to follow a trend. It's useless to even try.

Q: In songs like "The Times They Are A-Changin'," you made a distinction between young and old thinking, you talked about the older generation failing to understand the younger?

A: That's not what I was saying. It happened maybe that those were the only words I could find to separate aliveness from deadness. It has nothing to do with age.

Q: What can you say about when your first book is coming out?

A: Macmillan is the publisher, and the title now is "Tarantula," right now it's called that but I might change it. It's just a lot of writings, I can't really say what it's about. It's not a narrative or anything like that.

Q: Some stories have said that you plan to give up music, perhaps soon, and devote your time to writing?

A: When I really get wasted, I'm gonna have to do something, you know. Like I might never write again, I might start painting soon.

Q: Have you earned enough money so you have the freedom to do exactly what you want?

A: I wouldn't say that. You got to get up and you got to sleep, and the time in between there you got to do something. That's what I'm dealing with now. I do a lot of funny things. I really have no idea, I can't afford to think about tonight, tomorrow, any time. It's really meaningless to me.

Q: Do you live from day to day?

A: I try to. I try not to make any plans, every time I go and make plans, nothing really seems to work. I've given up on most of that stuff. I have a concert schedule I keep, but other people get me there. I don't have to do anything.

Q: Do you ever hope to settle down to a normal life, get married, have kids?

A: I don't hope to be like anybody. Getting married, having a bunch of kids, I have no hopes for it. If it happens, it happens. Whatever my hopes, it never turns out. I don't think anybody's a prophet.

Q: You sound quite pessimistic about everything.

A: No, not pessimistic. I don't think things can turn out, that's all, and I've accepted it. It doesn't matter to me. It's not pessimism, just a sort of sadness, sort of like having no hopes.

Q: What about religion and philosophy?

A: I just don't have any religion or philosophy, I can't say much about any of them. A lot of people do, and fine if they really do follow a certain code. I'm not about to go around changing anything. I don't like anybody to tell me what I have to do or believe, how I have to live. I just don't care, you know. Philosophy

can't give me anything that I don't already have. The biggest thing of all, that encompasses it all, is kept back in this country. It's an old Chinese philosophy and religion, it really was one . . . there is a book called the "I-Ching", I'm not trying to push it, I don't want to talk about it, but it's the only thing that is amazingly true, period, not just for me. Anybody would know it. Anybody that ever walks would know it, it's a whole system of finding out things, based on all sorts of things. You don't have to believe in anything to read it, because besides being a great book to believe in, it's also very fantastic poetry.

Q: How do you spend your time when you're not on a concert tour?

A: I keep a regular bunch of hours. I just do what I have to do, not doing nothing really. I can be satisfied anywhere, I never read too much. Once in a while I write up a bunch of things, and then I record them. I do the normal things.

Q: What about romantic reports about you and Joan Baez?

A: Oh, man, no, that was a long time ago.

Q: On her latest album, about half of her songs are Dylan songs.

A: Heaven help her.

Q: What about the story that you changed your name from Bob Zimmerman to Bob Dylan because you admired the poetry of Dylan Thomas?

A: No, God no. I took the Dylan because I have an uncle named Dillon. I changed the spelling because it looked better. I've read some of Dylan Thomas' stuff, and it's not the same as mine. We're different.

Q: What about your family?

A: Well, I just don't have any family, I'm all alone.

Q: What about a story that you invited your parents to one of your early concerts, paid their way there, and then when they were seated, you said on the stage that you were an "orphan," and then didn't visit them when they were in New York City?

A: That's not true. They came to a concert, they drove there on their own, and I gave them some money. I don't dislike them or anything, I just don't have any contact with them. They live in

Minnesota, and there's nothing for me in Minnesota. Probably sometime I'd like to go back for awhile, everybody goes back to where they came from, I guess.

Q: You talk as if you are terribly separated from people.

A: I'm not disconnected from anything because of a force, just habit, it's just the way I am. I don't know, I have an idea, that it's easier to be disconnected than to be connected. I've got a huge hallelujah for all the people who're connected, that's great, but I can't do that. I've been connected so many times. Things haven't worked out right, so rather than break myself up, I just don't get connected.

Q: Are you just trying to avoid being hurt again?

A: I haven't been hurt at the time, the realization is afterwards. Just looking back on it, thinking about it, it's just like a cold winter.

Q: Do you avoid close relationships with people?

A: I have relationships with people. People like me, also disconnected, there are a lot of disconnected people. I don't feel alienated, or disconnected, or afraid. I don't feel there's any kind of organization of disconnected people. I just can't go along with any kind of organization. Some day I might find myself all alone in a subway car, stranded when the lights go out, with 40 people, and I'll have to get to know them. Then I'll just do what has to be.

Bob Dylan's words are his own. The questions were asked by Joseph Haas of the Panorama staff.



PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: BOB DYLAN

February 1966.

A candid conversation with the iconoclastic idol of the folk-rock set.

As a versatile musicologist and trenchant social commentator, Nat Hentoff brings uniquely pertinent credentials to his dual tasks in this month's issue - as the author of "We're Happening All Over, Baby!" (on page 82) an insightful anatomizing of America's youthful new generation of anti-establishment social activists, and as interviewer of this month's issue - as the author of "We're Happening All Over, Baby!" (on page 82) an insightful anatomizing of America's youthful new generation of anti-establishment social activists, and as interviewer of this month's controversial subject, about whom he writes:

"Less than five years ago, Bob Dylan was scuffling in New York - sleeping in friends' apartments on the Lower East Side and getting very occasional singing work at Gerde's Folk City, an

unprepossessing bar for citybillies in the Village. With his leather cap, blue jeans and battered desert boots - his unvarying costume in those days - Dylan looked like an updated, undernourished Huck Finn. And like Huck, he had come out of the Midwest; he would have said 'escaped.' The son of Abraham Zimmerman, an appliance dealer, he was raised in Hibbing, Minnesota, a bleak mining town near the Canadian border. Though he ran away from home regularly between the ages of 10 and 18, young Zimmerman did manage to finish high school, and went on to spend about six months at the University of Minnesota in 1960. By then, he called himself Bob Dylan - in tribute to Dylan Thomas, according to legend; but actually after a gambling uncle whose last name was similar to Dylan.

"In the fall of that year, he came East to visit his idol, Woody Guthrie, in the New Jersey hospital where the Okie folk-singing bard was wasting away with a progressive disease of the nervous system. Dylan stayed and tried to scrape together a singing career. According to those who knew him then, he was shy and stubborn but basically friendly and, beneath the hipster stance, uncommonly gentle. But they argued about his voice. Some found its flat Midwestern tones gratingly mesmeric; others agreed with a Missouri folk singer who had likened the Dylan sound to that of 'a dog with his leg caught in barbed wire.' All agreed, however, that his songs were strangely personal and often disturbing, a pungent mixture of loneliness and defiance laced with traces of Guthrie, echoes of the Negro blues singers and more than a suggestion of country-and-western; but essentially Dylan was developing his own penetratingly distinctive style. Yet the voice was so harsh and the songs so bitterly scornful of conformity, race prejudice and the mythology of the Cold War that most of his friends couldn't conceive of Dylan making it big even though folk music was already on the rise.

"They were wrong. In September of 1961, a music critic for The New York Times caught his act at Gerde's and hailed the scruffy 19-year-old Minnesotan as a significant new voice on the folk horizon. Around the same time, he was signed by Columbia Records, and his first album was released early the next year. Though it was far from a smash hit, concerts and club engagements gradually multiplied; and then Dylan scored his storied triumph at the Newport Folk Festival in 1962. His next LP began to move, and in the spring of 1963 came his first big single: 'Blowin' in the Wind.' That same spring he turned down a lucrative guest spot on 'The Ed Sullivan Show' because CBS wouldn't permit him to sing a mordant parody he'd written about the John Birch Society. For the nation's young, the Dylan image began to form: kind of a singing James Dean with overtones of Holden

Caulfeld; he was making it, but he wasn't selling out. His concerts began to attract overflow crowds, and his songs - in performances by him and other folk singers - were rushing onto the hit charts. One of them, 'The Times They Are A-Changin', became an anthem for the rebellious young, who savored its message that adults don't know where it's at and can't tell their children what to do.

"By 1965 he had become a major phenomenon on the music scene. More and more folk performers, from Joan Baez to the Byrds, considered it mandatory to have an ample supply of Dylan songs in their repertoires; in one frantically appreciative month - last August - 18 different recordings of Dylan ballads were pressed by singers other than the composer himself. More and more aspiring folk singers - and folk-song writers - have begun to sound like Dylan. The current surge of 'protest' songs by such long-haired, post-beat rock-'n'-rollers as Barry McGuire and Sonny and Cher is credited to Dylan. And the newest commercial boom, 'folk-rock,' a fusion of folk-like lyrics with an r-'n'-r beat and background, is an outgrowth in large part, of Dylan's recent decision - decried as a 'sellout' by folknik purists - to perform with a rock-'n'-roll combo rather than continue to accompany himself alone on the guitar. Backed by the big beat of the new group, Dylan tours England with as much tumultuous success as he does America, and the air play for his single records in both countries is rivaled only by that of the Beatles, Herman's Hermits and the Rolling Stones on the Top 40 deejay shows. In the next 18 months, his income - from personal appearances, records and composer's royalties - is expected to exceed \$1,000,000.

"Withal, Dylan seems outwardly much the same as he did during the lean years in Greenwich Village. His dress is still casual to the point of exoticism; his hair is still long and frizzy, and he is still no more likely to be seen wearing a necktie than a cutaway. But there have been changes. No longer protesting polemically against the bomb, race prejudice and conformity, his songs have become increasingly personal - a surrealistic amalgam of kafkaesque menace corrosive satire and opaque sensuality. His lyrics are more crowded than t!ver with tumbling words and restless images, and they read more like free-verse poems than conventional lines. Adults still have difficulty digging his offbeat language - and its message of alienation - but the young continue to tune in and turn on.

"But there are other changes. Dylan has become elusive. He is no longer seen in his old haunts in the Village and on the Lower East Side. With few exceptions, he avoids interviewers, and in public, he is usually seen from afar at the epicenter of a protective

coterie of tousle-topped young men dressed like him, and lissome, straight-haired young ladies who also seem to be dressed like him. His home base, if it can be called that, is a house his manager owns near Woodstock, a fashionable artists' colony in New York State, and he also enjoys the run of his manager's apartment on dignified Gramercy Park in New York City. There are tales told of Dylan the motorcyclist, the novelist, the maker of high-camp home movies; but except among his small circle of intimates, the 24-year-old folk hero is inscrutably aloof.

"It was only after a long period of evasion and hesitation that Dylan finally agreed to grant this 'Playboy Interview' - the longest he's ever given. We met him on the 10th floor of the new CBS and Columbia Records building in mid-Manhattan. The room was antiseptic: white walls with black trim, contemporary furniture with severe lines, avantgarde art chosen by committee, everything in order, neat desks, neat personnel. In this sterile setting, slouched in a chair across from us, Dylan struck a refreshingly discordant note - with his untamed brownish-blond mane brushing the collar of his tieless blue plaid shirt, in his black jacket, gray vaudevillian-striped pipestem pants and well-worn blue-suede shoes. Sitting nearby - also long-haired, tieless and blackjacketed, but wearing faded jeans - was a stringy young man whom the singer identified only as Taco Pronto. As Dylan spoke - in a soft drawl, smiling only rarely and fleetingly, sipping tea and chain-smoking cigarettes - his unspeaking friend chuckled and nodded appreciatively from the side lines. Tense and guarded at first Dylan gradually began to loosen up, then to open up, as he tried to tell us - albeit a bit surrealistically - just where he's been and where he's going. Under the circumstances, we chose to play straight man in our questions, believing that to have done otherwise would have stemmed the freewheeling flow of Dylan's responses."

PLAYBOY: 'Popular songs,' you told a reporter last year, 'are the only art form that describes the temper of the times. The only place where it's happening is on the radio and records. That's where the people hang out. It's not in books; it's not on the stage; it's not in the galleries. All this art they've been talking about, it just remains on the shell. It doesn't make anyone happier.' In view of the fact that more people than ever before are reading books and going to plays and art galleries, do you think that statement is borne out by the facts?

DYLAN: Statistics measure quantity, not quality. The people in the statistics are people who are very bored. Art, if there is such a thing, is in the bathrooms; everybody knows that. To go to an art

gallery thing where you get free milk and doughnuts and where there is a rock-'n'-roll band playing: That's just a status affair. I'm not putting it down, mind you; but I spend a lot of time in the bathroom. I think museums are vulgar. They're all against sex. Anyhow, I didn't say that people "hang out" on the radio, I said they get "hung up" on the radio.

PLAYBOY: Why do you think rock 'n' roll has become such an international phenomenon?

DYLAN: I can't really think that there is any rock 'n' roll. Actually, when you think about it, anything that has no real existence is bound to become an international phenomenon. Anyway, what does it mean, rock 'n' roll? Does it mean Beatles, does it mean John Lee Hooker, Bobby Vinton, Jerry Lewis' kid? What about Lawrence Welk? He must play a few rock-'n'-roll songs. Are all these people the same? Is Ricky Nelson like Otis Redding? Is Mick Jagger really Ma Rainey? I can tell by the way people hold their cigarettes if they like Ricky Nelson. I think it's fine to like Ricky Nelson: I couldn't care less if somebody likes Ricky Nelson. But I think we're getting off the track here. There isn't any Ricky Nelson. There isn't any Beatles; oh, I take that back: there are a lot of beetles. But there isn't any Bobby Vinton. Anyway, the word is not "international phenomenon"; the word is "parental nightmare."

PLAYBOY: In recent years, according to some critics, jazz has lost much of its appeal to the younger generation. Do you agree?

DYLAN: I don't think jazz has ever appealed to the younger generation. Anyway, I don't really know who this younger generation is. I don't think they could get into a jazz club anyway. But jazz is hard to follow; I mean you actually have to like jazz to follow it: and my motto is, never follow anything. I don't know what the motto of the younger generation is, but I would think they'd have to follow their parents. I mean, what would some parent say to his kid if the kid came home with a glass eye, a Charlie Mingus record and a pocketful of feathers? He'd say, "Who are you following?" And the poor kid would have to stand there with water in his shoes, a bow tie on his ear and soot pouring out of his belly button and say, "Jazz, Father, I've been following jazz." And his father would probably say, "Get a broom and clean up all that soot before you go to sleep." Then the kid's mother would tell her friends, "Oh yes, our little Donald, he's part of the younger generation, you know."

PLAYBOY: You used to say that you wanted to perform as little as possible, that you wanted to keep most of your time to

yourself. Yet you're doing more concerts and cutting more records every year. Why? Is it the money?

DYLAN: Everything is changed now from before. Last spring. I guess I was going to quit singing. I was very drained, and the way things were going, it was a very draggy situation - I mean, when you do "Everybody Loves You for Your Black Eye," and meanwhile the back of your head is caving in. Anyway, I was playing a lot of songs I didn't want to play. I was singing words I didn't really want to sing. I don't mean words like "God" and "mother" and "President" and "suicide" and "meat cleaver." I mean simple little words like "if" and "hope" and "you." But "Like a Rolling Stone" changed it all: I didn't care anymore after that about writing books or poems or whatever. I mean it was some thing that I myself could dig. It's very tiring having other people tell you how much they dig you if you yourself don't dig you. It's also very deadly entertainment wise. Contrary to what some scary people think, I don't play with a band now for any kind of propaganda-type or commercial-type reasons. It's just that my songs are pictures and the band makes the sound of the pictures.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel that acquiring a combo and switching from folk to folkrock has improved you as a performer?

DYLAN: I'm not interested in myself as a performer. Performers are people who perform for other people. Unlike actors, I know what I'm saying. It's very simple in my mind. It doesn't matter what kind of audience reaction this whole thing gets. What happens on the stage is straight. It doesn't expect any rewards or fines from any kind of outside agitators. It's ultra-simple, and would exist whether anybody was looking or not.

As far as folk and folk-rock are concerned, it doesn't matter what kind of nasty names people invent for the music. It could be called arsenic music, or perhaps Phaedra music. I don't think that such a word as folk-rock has anything to do with it. And folk music is a word I can't use. Folk music is a bunch of fat people. I have to think of all this as traditional music. Traditional music is based on hexagrams. It comes about from legends, Bibles, plagues, and it revolves around vegetables and death. There's nobody that's going to kill traditional music. All these songs about roses growing out of people's brains and lovers who are really geese and swans that turn into angels - they're not going to die. It's all those paranoid people who think that someone's going to come and take away their toilet paper - they're going to die. Songs like "Which Side Are You On?" and "I Love You, Porgy" - they're not folk-music songs; they're political songs. They're already dead. Obviously, death is not very universally accepted. I mean, you'd

think that the traditional-music people could gather from their songs that mystery - just plain simple mystery - is a fact, a traditional fact. I listen to the old ballads; but I wouldn't go to a party and listen to the old ballads. I could give you descriptive detail of what they do to me, but some people would probably think my imagination had gone mad. It strikes me funny that people actually have the gall to think that I have some kind of fantastic imagination. It gets very lonesome. But anyway, traditional music is too unreal to die. It doesn't need to be protected. Nobody's going to hurt it. In that music is the only true, valid death you can feel today off a record player. But like anything else in great demand, people try to own it. It has to do with a purity thing. I think its meaninglessness is holy. Everybody knows that I'm not a folk singer.

PLAYBOY: Some of your old fans would agree with you - and not in a complimentary vein - since your debut with the rock-'n'-roll combo at last year's Newport Folk Festival, where many of them booed you loudly for "selling out" to commercial pop tastes. The early Bob Dylan, they felt, was the "pure" Bob Dylan. How do you feel about it?

DYLAN: I was kind of stunned. But I can't put anybody down for coming and booing: after all, they paid to get in. They could have been maybe a little quieter and not so persistent, though. There were a lot of old people there, too; lots of whole families had driven down from Vermont, lots of nurses and their parents, and well, like they just came to hear some relaxing hoedowns, you know, maybe an Indian polka or two. And just when everything's going all right, here I come on, and the whole place turns into a beer factory. There were a lot of people there who were very pleased that I got booed. I saw them afterward. I do resent somewhat, though, that everybody that booed said they did it because they were old fans.

PLAYBOY: What about their charge that you vulgarized your natural gifts?

DYLAN: What can I say? I'd like to see one of these so-called fans. I'd like to have him blindfolded and brought to me. It's like going out to the desert and screaming and then having little kids throw their sandbox at you. I'm only 24. These people that said this - were they Americans?

PLAYBOY: Americans or not, there were a lot of people who didn't like your new sound. In view of this widespread negative reaction, do you think you may have made a mistake in changing your style?

DYLAN: A mistake is to commit a misunderstanding. There could be no such thing, anyway, as this action. Either people understand or they pretend to understand - or else they really don't understand. What you're speaking of here is doing wrong things for selfish reasons. I don't know the word for that, unless it's suicide. In any case, it has nothing to do with my music.

PLAYBOY: Mistake or not, what made you decide to go the rock-'n'-roll route?

DYLAN: Carelessness. I lost my one true love. I started drinking. The first thing I know, I'm in a card game. Then I'm in a crap game. I wake up in a pool hall. Then this big Mexican lady drags me off the table, takes me to Philadelphia. She leaves me alone in her house, and it burns down. I wind up in Phoenix. I get a job as a Chinaman. I start working in a dime store, and move in with a 13-year-old girl. Then this big Mexican lady from Philadelphia comes in and burns the house down. I go down to Dallas. I get a job as a "before" in a Charles Atlas "before and after" ad. I move in with a delivery boy who can cook fantastic chili and hot dogs. Then this 13-year-old girl from Phoenix comes and burns the house down. The delivery boy - he ain't so mild: He gives her the knife, and the next thing I know I'm in Omaha. It's so cold there, by this time I'm robbing my own bicycles and frying my own fish. I stumble onto some luck and get a job as a carburetor out at the hot-rod races every Thursday night. I move in with a high school teacher who also does a little plumbing on the side, who ain't much to look at, but who's built a special kind of refrigerator that can turn newspaper into lettuce. Everything's going good until that delivery boy shows up and tries to knife me. Needless to say, he burned the house down, and I hit the road. The first guy that picked me up asked me if I wanted to be a star. What could I say?

PLAYBOY: And that's how you became a rock-'n'-roll singer?

DYLAN: No, that's how I got tuberculosis.

PLAYBOY: Let's turn the question around: Why have you stopped composing and singing protest songs?

DYLAN: I've stopped composing and singing anything that has either a reason to be written or a motive to be sung. Don't get me wrong, now. "Protest" is not my word. I've never thought of myself as such. The word "protest," I think, was made up for people undergoing surgery. It's an amusement-park word. A normal person in his righteous mind would have to have the hiccups to pronounce it honestly. The word "message" strikes me as having a hernia-like sound. It's just like the word "delicious." Also the word

"marvelous." You know, the English can say "marvelous" pretty good. They can't say "raunchy" so good, though. Well, we each have our thing. Anyway, message songs, as everybody knows, are a drag. It's only college newspaper editors and single girls under 14 that could possibly have time for them.

PLAYBOY: You've said you think message songs are vulgar. Why?

DYLAN: Well, first of all, anybody that's got a message is going to learn from experience that they can't put it into a song. I mean it's just not going to come out the same message. After one or two of these unsuccessful attempts, one realizes that his resultant message, which is not even the same message he thought up and began with, he's now got to stick by it; because, after all, a song leaves your mouth just as soon as it leaves your hands. Are you following me?

PLAYBOY: Oh, perfectly.

DYLAN: Well, anyway, second of all, you've got to respect other people's right to also have a message themselves. Myself, what I'm going to do is rent Town Hall and put about 30 Western Union boys on the bill. I mean, then there'll really be some messages. People will be able to come and hear more messages than they've ever heard before in their life.

PLAYBOY: But your early ballads have been called "songs of passionate protest." Wouldn't that make them "message" music?

DYLAN: This is unimportant. Don't you understand? I've been writing since I was eight years old. I've been playing the guitar since I was ten. I was raised playing and writing whatever it was I had to play and write.

PLAYBOY: Would it be unfair to say, then, as some have, that you were motivated commercially rather than creatively in writing the kind of songs that made you popular?

DYLAN: All right, now, look. It's not all that deep. It's not a complicated thing. My motives, or whatever they are, were never commercial in the money sense of the word. It was more in the don't die-by-the-hacksaw sense of the word. I never did it for money. It happened, and I let it happen to me. There was no reason not to let it happen to me. I couldn't have written before what I write now, anyway. The songs used to be about what I felt and saw. Nothing of my own rhythmic vomit ever entered into it. Vomit is not romantic. I used to think songs are supposed to be

romantic. And I didn't want to sing anything that was unspecific. Unspecific things have no sense of time. All of us people have no sense of time; it's a dimensional hangup. Anybody can be specific and obvious. That's always been the easy way. The leaders of the world take the easy way. It's not that it's so difficult to be unspecific and less obvious; it's just that there's nothing, absolutely nothing, to be specific and obvious about. My older songs, to say the least, were about nothing. The newer ones are about the same nothing - only as seen inside a bigger thing, perhaps called the nowhere. But this is all very constipated. I do know what my songs are about.

PLAYBOY: And what's that?

DYLAN: Oh, some are about four minutes; some are about five, and some, believe it or not, are about eleven or twelve.

PLAYBOY: Can't you be a bit more informative?

DYLAN: Nope.

PLAYBOY: All right. Let's change the subject. As you know, it's the age group from about 16 to 25 that listens to your songs. Why, in your opinion?

DYLAN: I don't see what's so strange about an age group like that listening to my songs. I'm hip enough to know that it ain't going to be the 85-to-90-year-olds. If the 85-to-90-year-olds were listening to me, they'd know that I can't tell them anything. The 16-to-25-year-olds, they probably know that I can't tell them anything either - and they know that I know it. It's a funny business. Obviously, I'm not an IBM computer any more than I'm an ashtray. I mean it's obvious to anyone who's ever slept in the back seat of a car that I'm just not a schoolteacher.

PLAYBOY: Even though you're not a schoolteacher, wouldn't you like to help the young people who dig you from turning into what some of their parents have become?

DYLAN: Well, I must say that I really don't know their parents. I really don't know if anybody's parents are so bad. Now, I hate to come on like a weakling or a coward, and I realize it might seem kind of irreligious, but I'm really not the right person to tramp around the country saving souls. I wouldn't run over anybody that was laying in the street, and I certainly wouldn't become a hangman. I wouldn't think twice about giving a starving man a cigarette. But I'm not a shepherd. And I'm not about to save anybody from fate, which I know nothing about. "Parents" is not

the key word here. The key word is "destiny." I can't save them from that.

PLAYBOY: Still, thousands of young people look up to you as a kind of folk hero. Do you feel some sense of responsibility toward them?

DYLAN: I don't feel I have any responsibility, no. Whoever it is that listens to my songs owes me nothing. How could I possibly have any responsibility to any kind of thousands? What could possibly make me think that I owe anybody anything who just happens to be there? I've never written any song that begins with the words "I've gathered you here tonight . . ." I'm not about to tell anybody to be a good boy or a good girl and they'll go to heaven. I really don't know what the people who are on the receiving end of these songs think of me, anyway. It's horrible. I'll bet Tony Bennett doesn't have to go through this kind of thing. I wonder what Billy the Kid would have answered to such a question.

PLAYBOY: In their admiration for you, many young people have begun to imitate the way you dress - which one adult commentator has called "selfconsciously oddball and defiantly sloppy." What's your reaction to that kind of put-down?

DYLAN: Bullshit. Oh, such bullshit. I know the fellow that said that. He used to come around here and get beat up all the time. He better watch it; some people are after him. They're going to strip him naked and stick him in Times Square. They're going to tie him up, and also put a thermometer in his mouth. Those kind of morbid ideas and remarks are so petty - I mean there's a war going on. People got rickets; everybody wants to start a riot; 40-year-old women are eating spinach by the carload; the doctors haven't got a cure for cancer - and here's some hillbilly talking about how he doesn't like somebody's clothes. Worse than hat, it gets printed and innocent people have to read it. This is a terrible thing. And he's a terrible man. Obviously, he's just living off the fat of himself, and he's expecting his kids to take care of him. His kids probably listen to my records. Just because my clothes are too long, does that mean I'm unqualified for what I do?

PLAYBOY: No, but there are those who think it does - and many of them seem to feel the same way about your long hair. But compared with the shoulder-length coiffures worn by some of the male singing groups these days, your tonsorial tastes are on the conservative side. How do you feel about these far-out hair styles?

DYLAN: The thing that most people don't realize is that it's warmer to have long hair. Everybody wants to be warm. People with short hair freeze easily. Then they try to hide their coldness, and they get jealous of everybody that's warm. Then they become either barbers or Congressmen. A lot of prison wardens have short hair. Have you ever noticed that Abraham Lincoln's hair was much longer than John Wilkes Booth's?

PLAYBOY: Do you think Lincoln wore his hair long to keep his head warm?

DYLAN: Actually, I think it was for medical reasons, which are none of my business. But I guess if you figure it out, you realize that all of one's hair surrounds and lays on the brain inside your head. Mathematically speaking, the more of it you can get out of your head, the better. People who want free minds sometimes overlook the fact that you have to have an uncluttered brain. Obviously, if you get your hair on the outside of your head, your brain will be a little more freer. But all this talk about long hair is just a trick. It's been thought up by men and women who look like cigars - the anti-happiness committee. They're all freeloaders and cops. You can tell who they are: They're always carrying calendars, guns or scissors. They're all trying to get into your quicksand. They think you've got something. I don't know why Abe Lincoln had long hair.

PLAYBOY: Until your abandonment of "message" songs, you were considered not only a major voice in the student protest movement but a militant champion of the civil rights struggle. According to friends, you seemed to feel a special bond of kinship with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which you actively supported both as a performer and as a worker. Why have you withdrawn from participation in all these causes? Have you lost interest in protest as well as in protest songs?

DYLAN: As far as SNCC is concerned, I knew some of the people in it, but I only knew them as people, not as of any part of something that was bigger or better than themselves. I didn't even know what civil rights was before I met some of them. I mean, I knew there were Negroes, and I knew there were a lot of people who don't like Negroes. But I got to admit that if I didn't know some of the SNCC people, I would have gone on thinking that Martin Luther King was really nothing more than some underprivileged war hero. I haven't lost any interest in protest since then. I just didn't have any interest in protest to begin with - any more than I did in war heroes. You can't lose what you've never had. Anyway, when you don't like your situation, you either leave it or else you overthrow it. You can't just stand around and

whine about it. People just get aware of your noise; they really don't get aware of you. Even if they give you what you want, it's only because you're making too much noise. First thing you know, you want something else, and then you want something else, and then you want something else, until finally it isn't a joke anymore, and whoever you're protesting against finally gets all fed up and stomps on everybody. Sure, you can go around trying to bring up people who are lesser than you, but then don't forget, you're messing around with gravity. I don't fight gravity. I do believe in equality, but I also believe in distance.

PLAYBOY: Do you mean people keeping their racial distance?

DYLAN: I believe in people keeping everything they've got.

PLAYBOY: Some people might feel that you're trying to cop out of fighting for the things you believe in.

DYLAN: Those would be people who think I have some sort of responsibility toward them. They probably want me to help them make friends. I don't know. They probably either want to set me in their house and have me come out every hour and tell them what time it is, or else they just want to stick me in between the mattress. How could they possibly understand what I believe in?

PLAYBOY: Well, what do you believe in?

DYLAN: I already told you.

PLAYBOY: All right. Many of your folksinging colleagues remain actively involved in the fight for civil rights, free speech and withdrawal from Vietnam. Do you think they're wrong?

DYLAN: I don't think they're wrong, if that's what they see themselves doing. But don't think that what you've got out there is a bunch of little Buddhas all parading up and down. People that use God as a weapon should be amputated upon. You see it around here all the time: "Be good or God won't like you, and you'll go to hell." Things like that. People that march with slogans and things tend to take themselves a little too holy. It would be a drag if they, too, started using God as a weapon.

PLAYBOY: Do you think it's pointless to dedicate yourself to the cause of peace and racial equality?

DYLAN: Not pointless to dedicate yourself to peace and racial equality, but rather, it's pointless to dedicate yourself to the cause; that's really pointless. That's very unknowing. To say

"cause of peace" is just like saying "hunk of butter." I mean, how can you listen to anybody who wants you to believe he's dedicated to the hunk and not to the butter? People who can't conceive of how others hurt, they're trying to change the world. They're all afraid to admit that they don't really know each other. They'll all probably be here long after we've gone, and we'll give birth to new ones. But they themselves - I don't think they'll give birth to anything.

PLAYBOY: You sound a bit fatalistic.

DYLAN: I'm not fatalistic. Bank tellers are fatalistic; clerks are fatalistic. I'm a farmer. Who ever heard of a fatalistic farmer? I'm not fatalistic. I smoke a lot of cigarettes, but that doesn't make me fatalistic.

PLAYBOY: You were quoted recently as saying that "songs can't save the world. I've gone through all that." We take it you don't share Pete Seeger's belief that songs can change people, that they can help build international understanding.

DYLAN: On the international understanding part, that's OK. But you have a translation problem there. Anybody with this kind of a level of thinking has to also think about this translation thing. But I don't believe songs can change people anyway. I'm not Pinocchio. I consider that an insult. I'm not part of that. I don't blame anybody for thinking that way. But I just don't donate any money to them. I don't consider them anything like unhip; they're more in the rubber-band category.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about those who have risked imprisonment by burning their draft cards to signify their opposition to U. S. involvement in Vietnam, and by refusing - as your friend Joan Baez has done - to pay their income taxes as a protest against the Government's expenditures on war and weaponry? Do you think they're wasting their time?

DYLAN: Burning draft cards isn't going to end any war. It's not even going to save any lives. If someone can be more honest with himself by burning his draft card, then that's great; but if he's just going to feel more important because he does it, then that's a drag. I really don't know too much about Joan Baez and her income-tax problems. The only thing I can tell you about Joan Baez is that she's not Belle Starr.

PLAYBOY: Writing about "beard-wearing draft-card burners and pacifist income-tax evaders," one columnist called such protesters

"no less outside society than the junkie, the homosexual or the mass murderer." What's your reaction?

DYLAN: I don't believe in those terms. They're too hysterical. They don't describe anything. Most people think that homosexual, gay, queer, queen, faggot are all the same words. Everybody thinks that a junkie is a dope freak. As far as I'm concerned, I don't consider myself outside of anything. I just consider myself not around.

PLAYBOY: Joan Baez recently opened a school in northern California for training civil rights workers in the philosophy and techniques of nonviolence. Are you in sympathy with that concept?

DYLAN: If you mean do I agree with it or not, I really don't see anything to be in agreement with. If you mean has it got my approval, I guess it does, but my approval really isn't going to do it any good. I don't know about other people's sympathy, but my sympathy runs to the lame and crippled and beautiful things. I have a feeling of loss of power - something like a reincarnation feeling; I don't feel that for mechanical things like cars or schools. I'm sure it's a nice school, but if you're asking me would I go to it, I would have to say no.

PLAYBOY: As a college dropout in your freshman year, you seem to take a dim view of schooling in general, whatever the subject.

DYLAN: I really don't think about it.

PLAYBOY: Well, have you ever had any regrets about not completing college?

DYLAN: That would be ridiculous. Colleges are like old-age homes; except for the fact that more people die in colleges than in old-age homes, there's really no difference. People have one great blessing - obscurity - and not really too many people are thankful for it. Everybody is always taught to be thankful for their food and clothes and things like that, but not to be thankful for their obscurity. Schools don't teach that; they teach people to be rebels and lawyers. I'm not going to put down the teaching system; that would be too silly. It's just that it really doesn't have too much to teach. Colleges are part of the American institution; everybody respects them. They're very rich and influential, but they have nothing to do with survival. Everybody knows that.

PLAYBOY: Would you advise young people to skip college, then?

DYLAN: I wouldn't advise anybody to do anything. I certainly wouldn't advise somebody not to go to college; I just wouldn't pay his way through college.

PLAYBOY: Don't you think the things one learns in college can help enrich one's life?

DYLAN: I don't think anything like that is going to enrich my life, no - not my life, anyway. Things are going to happen whether I know why they happen or not. It just gets more complicated when you stick yourself into it. You don't find out why things move. You let them move; you watch them move; you stop them from moving: you start them moving. But you don't sit around and try to figure out why there's movement - unless, of course, you're just an innocent moron, or some wise old Japanese man. Out of all the people who just lay around and ask "Why?", how many do you figure really want to know?

PLAYBOY: Can you suggest a better use for the four years that would otherwise be spent in college?

DYLAN: Well, you could hang around in Italy; you could go to Mexico; you could become a dishwasher; you could even go to Arkansas. I don't know; there are thousands of things to do and places to go. Everybody thinks that you have to bang your head against the wall, but it's silly when you really think about it. I mean, here you have fantastic scientists working on ways to prolong human living, and then you have other people who take it for granted that you have to beat your head against the wall in order to be happy. You can't take everything you don't like as a personal insult. I guess you should go where your wants are bare, where you're invisible and not needed.

PLAYBOY: Would you classify sex among your wants, wherever you go?

DYLAN: Sex is a temporary thing; sex isn't love. You can get sex anywhere. If you're looking for someone to love you, now that's different. I guess you have to stay in college for that.

PLAYBOY: Since you didn't stay in college, does that mean you haven't found someone to love you?

DYLAN: Let's go on to the next question.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any difficulty relating to people - or vice versa?

DYLAN: Well, sometimes I have the feeling that other people want my soul. If I say to them, "I don't have a soul," they say, "I know that. You don't have to tell me that. Not me. How dumb do you think I am? I'm your friend." What can I say except that I'm sorry and I feel bad? I guess maybe feeling bad and paranoia are the same thing.

PLAYBOY: Paranoia is said to be one of the mental states sometimes induced by such hallucinogenic drugs as peyote and LSD. Considering the risks involved, do you think that experimentation with such drugs should be part of the growing up experience for a young person?

DYLAN: I wouldn't advise anybody to use drugs - certainly not the hard drugs; drugs are medicine. But opium and hash and pot - now, those things aren't drugs; they just bend your mind a little. I think everybody's mind should be bent once in a while. Not by LSD, though. LSD is medicine - a different kind of medicine. It makes you aware of the universe, so to speak; you realize how foolish objects are. But LSD is not for groovy people; it's for mad, hateful people who want revenge. It's for people who usually have heart attacks. They ought to use it at the Geneva Convention.

PLAYBOY: Are you concerned, as you approach 30, that you may begin to "go square," lose some of your openness to experience, become leery of change and new experiment?

DYLAN: No. But if it happens, then it happens. What can I say? There doesn't seem to be any tomorrow. Every time I wake up, no matter in what position, it's always been today. To look ahead and start worrying about trivial little things I can't really say has any more importance than looking back and remembering trivial little things. I'm not going to become any poetry instructor at any girls' school; I know that for sure. But that's about all I know for sure. I'll just keep doing these different things, I guess.

PLAYBOY: Such as?

DYLAN: Waking up in different positions.

PLAYBOY: What else?

DYLAN: I'm just like anybody else; I'll try anything once.

PLAYBOY: Including theft and murder?

DYLAN: I can't really say I wouldn't commit theft or murder and expect anybody to really believe me. I wouldn't believe anybody if they told me that.

PLAYBOY: By their mid-20s, most people have begun to settle into their niche, to find a place in society. But you've managed to remain inner-directed and uncommitted. What was it that spurred you to run away from home six times between the ages of ten and eighteen and finally to leave for good?

DYLAN: It was nothing; it was just an accident of geography. Like if I was born and raised in New York or Kansas City, I'm sure everything would have turned out different. But Hibbing, Minnesota, was just not the right place for me to stay and live. There really was nothing there. The only thing you could do there was be a miner, and even that kind of thing was getting less and less. The people that lived there - they're nice people; I've been all over the world since I left there, and they still stand out as being the least hung-up. The mines were just dying, that's all; but that's not their fault. Everybody about my age left there. It was no great romantic thing. It didn't take any great amount of thinking or individual genius, and there certainly wasn't any pride in it. I didn't run away from it; I just turned my back on it. It couldn't give me anything. It was very void-like. So leaving wasn't hard at all; it would have been much harder to stay. I didn't want to die there. As I think about it now, though, it wouldn't be such a bad place to go back to and die in. There's no place I feel closer to now, or get the feeling that I'm part of, except maybe New York; but I'm not a New Yorker. I'm North Dakota-Minnesota-Midwestern. I'm that color. I speak that way. I'm from someplace called Iron Range. My brains and feeling have come from there. I wouldn't amputate on a drowning man; nobody from out there would.

PLAYBOY: Today, you're on your way to becoming a millionaire. Do you feel in any danger of being trapped by all this affluence - by the things it can buy?

DYLAN: No, my world is very small. Money can't really improve it any; money can just keep it from being smothered.

PLAYBOY: Most big stars find it difficult to avoid getting involved, and sometimes entangled, in managing the business end of their careers. As a man with three thriving careers - as a concert performer, recording star and songwriter - do you ever feel boxed in by such noncreative responsibilities?

DYLAN: No, I've got other people to do that for me. They watch my money; they guard it. They keep their eyes on it at all times;

they're supposed to be very smart when it comes to money. They know just what to do with my money. I pay them a lot of it. I don't really speak to them much, and they don't really speak to me at all, so I guess everything is all right.

PLAYBOY: If fortune hasn't trapped you, how about fame? Do you find that your celebrity makes it difficult to keep your private life intact?

DYLAN: My private life has been dangerous from the beginning. All this does is add a little atmosphere.

PLAYBOY: You used to enjoy wandering across the country - taking off on openend trips, roughing it from town to town, with no particular destination in mind. But you seem to be doing much less of that these days. Why? Is it because you're too well known?

DYLAN: It's mainly because I have to be in Cincinnati Friday night, and the next night I got to be in Atlanta, and then the next night after that, I have to be in Buffalo. Then I have to write some more songs for a record album.

PLAYBOY: Do you get the chance to ride your motorcycle much anymore?

DYLAN: I'm still very patriotic to the highway, but I don't ride my motorcycle too much anymore, no.

PLAYBOY: How do you get your kicks these days, then?

DYLAN: I hire people to look into my eyes, and then I have them kick me.

PLAYBOY: And that's the way you get your kicks?

DYLAN: No. Then I forgive them; that's where my kicks come in.

PLAYBOY: You told an interviewer last year, "I've done everything I ever wanted to." If that's true, what do you have to look forward to?

DYLAN: Salvation. Just plain salvation.

PLAYBOY: Anything else?

DYLAN: Praying. I'd also like to start a cookbook magazine. And I've always wanted to be a boxing referee. I want to referee a

heavyweight championship fight. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine any fighter in his right mind recognizing me?

PLAYBOY: If your popularity were to wane, would you welcome being anonymous again?

DYLAN: You mean welcome it, like I'd welcome some poor pilgrim coming in from the rain? No, I wouldn't welcome it; I'd accept it, though. Someday, obviously, I'm going to have to accept it.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever think about marrying, settling down, having a home, maybe living abroad? Are there any luxuries you'd like to have, say, a yacht or a Rolls-Royce?

DYLAN: No, I don't think about those things. If I felt like buying anything, I'd buy it. What you're asking me about is the future, my future. I'm the last person in the world to ask about my future.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying you're going to be passive and just let things happen to you?

DYLAN: Well, that's being very philosophical about it, but I guess it's true.

PLAYBOY: You once planned to write a novel. Do you still?

DYLAN: I don't think so. All my writing goes into the songs now. Other forms don't interest me anymore.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any unfulfilled ambitions?

DYLAN: Well, I guess I've always wanted to be Anthony Quinn in "La Strada". Not always - only for about six years now; it's not one of those childhood-dream things. Oh, and come to think of it, I guess I've always wanted to be Brigitte Bardot, too; but I don't really want to think about that too much.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever have the standard boyhood dream of growing up to be President?

DYLAN: No. When I was a boy, Harry Truman was President; who'd want to be Harry Truman?

PLAYBOY: Well, let's suppose that you were the President. What would you accomplish during your first thousand days?

DYLAN: Well, just for laughs, so long as you insist, the first thing I'd do is probably move the White House. Instead of being in

Texas, it'd be on the East Side in New York. McGeorge Bundy would definitely have to change his name, and General McNamara would be forced to wear a coonskin cap and shades. I would immediately rewrite "The Star-Spangled Banner," and little school children, instead of memorizing "America the Beautiful," would have to memorize "Desolation Row" [one of Dylan's latest songs]. And I would immediately call for a showdown with Mao Tse-tung; I would fight him personally - and I'd get somebody to film it.

PLAYBOY: One final question: Even though you've more or less retired from political and social protest, can you conceive of any circumstance that might persuade you to reinvolve yourself?

DYLAN: No, not unless all the people in the world disappeared.



THE MAURA DAVIS INTERVIEW IN BUFFALO FEBRUARY 1966

Published in Cavalier Magazine Feb 1966 and reprinted in the booklet "Positively Tie Dream".

Davis: Mr. Dye-lan, I'm from the New Buffalo Consolidated High School, and ... uh ... the question that ... all the students want to know is, well, what's the most important thing in the world for you?

Dylan: Oh, my God! Do they really want to know that?

Davis: Yes! They really want to know!

Dylan: Well, I's say ... uh ... I'd say this tie I'm wearing right now.

Davis: The WHAT?

Dylan: This tie I'm wearing right now. It's very important.

Davis: Yee-e-es? Yes, yes!

Dylan: Because. For obvious reasons.

Davis: Oh?

Dylan: Uh-huh. What would your students say if I said that all the students should wear a tie like this?

Davis: Well ... welll, I think some of them would go right out and buy one. Where did you buy that tie, Mr Dye-lan?

Dylan: I got this in Buffalo.

Davis: In Buffalo?

Dylan: Yes, in Buffalo, right down by the school.

Davis: Oh, oh! Uh, well ... this is NEW Buffalo.

Dylan: Oh, NEW Buffalo.

Davis: In Michigan.

Dylan: Oh, this is Michigan! Excuse me!

Davis: Not New York.

Dylan: I must have the wrong town.

Photographer: Excuse me Mr Dylan, I don't want to lose this tie.

Dylan: Oh, are you losing your tie?

Photographer: Mr. Dylan, I'd like to get *your* tie.

Davis: (to Photographer) Dye-lan!

Dylan: (to Photographer) Dye-lan, if you please!

Photographer: (to Dylan) Oh, I am sorry. Thank you very much sir.

Dylan: (to Photographer) That's quite all right. Don't get that cloth over your head, I mean over the lens.

Davis: And the next thing I suppose they would want to know - I mean after I tell them this is ... uh ... just let me ask one question. They'll probably want to know, even though it's rude of me to ask. WHY is that the most important thing in the world that tie?

Dylan: Well. President Johnson used to wear a tie like this - before he got to be president.

Davis: Ooooh!

Dylan: It's a sign of the common man, and I'm a common man.

Davis: I see! I see!

Dylan: So I wear a tie like this - just to get involved.

Davis: Ummmmmm. Do you wear that tie when you write - when you're writing your songs?

Dylan: When I write? No, I usually wear this after I get done - after I finish something very good. To make myself really feel good, I put on the tie, and then I feel much better about it - and usually I have a hit.

Davis: Really? Oh really? Oh, that's great! What songs did you write ...

Dylan: Oh, I wrote ... uh ... I wrote ... well, let's see. Well, after I wrote "Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" I wasn't sure if it was any good. So

I put on the tie and I KNEW I had no problems from there on in.
And it was a hit!

Davis: Gosh!

Dylan: Yeah! Pete Seeger recorded it, yeah, and that was a hit.

Davis: Yeah? Well, what are your plans for the future, Mr Dye-lan?

Dylan: Oh, I ...

Davis: Can I call you Bob?

Dylan: I'd appreciate it if you'd call me Mr Dye-lan.

Davis: Oh, Okay.

Dylan: Most high school students do.

Davis: All right.

Dylan: What was the question?

Davis: Uh .. uh ... oh yes, what are your plans for the future?

Dylan: Well, I'm gonna take off this tie.

Davis: Yes.

Dylan: That's the immediate future, take off the tie.

Davis: Oh, did you just finish writing something?

Dylan: I just finished writing something just before you came.

Davis: I see.

Dylan: I just finished writing something, and you know that's why I got the tie on.

Davis: Oh, I'm so glad! I might never have seen you in a tie if I hadn't come just when you finished writing something.

Dylan: Yeah, most people NEVER get to see me in this tie.

Davis: Really? Really?

Dylan: Yeah, and I have some more ties.

Davis: Different ones? I mean do you have different ones for different kind of songs?

Dylan: Oh, I have a whole lot of ties in my bedroom.

Davis: Yeaaaah?

Dylan: Would you like to go in my bedroom and see some more?

Davis: Oh ... more what?

Dylan: More TIES!

Davis: Oh, oh! Are you going to write some songs?

Dylan: I just might write a song - write a song RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU!

Davis: You mean - wee that is, uh, with your tie off?

Dylan: With my tie off - and I'll put it right back on when I'm done. You'll be very safe.

Davis: Oh, well, well, okay.



The Age (Melbourne), Tuesday, April 19 1966

Reported in "No Ordinary Man Is Dylan" by Alan Trengrove (The Age, Australian newspaper)

THE QUESTIONS FLEW

It was a hot, crowded conference at the airport. Radio interviewers, cameramen and reporters - and many followers who had sneaked in - jostled in suffocatingly on top of Bob Dylan.

Somebody thrust forward a copy of Antoine de Saint Exupery's book "The Little Prince" to be autographed.

One interviewer prattled on about a visit to Healesville Sanctuary. Another wanted "approval" for a technique used by the Beatles. Questions - likes, dislikes, psychological, sociological, racial equality, bourgeois living, pop art and ballads - some silly, some provocative and some just insulting.

Beneath his mop of shaggy hair, Dylan, the acclaimed "king of folk music," rocked backwards and forwards on his feet as if feeling faint from the onslaught. His voice was barely audible.

Some of the queries he threw back at the questioners, others he shrugged off as if they weren't worth the physical effort of answering, and for a few he wove long answers of fairyland fancy from the beat world - nonsensical, but sharply amusing.

PATIENCE

When it was all over, entrepreneur Ken Brodziak breathed deeply: "Thank goodness he kept his patience."

If anybody has been tempted to lose his patience, it was Dylan.

His unusual appearance and thorny individualism make him the butt for conservative censure.

On the other hand, he finds himself subject to many long and far too "clever" analytical profiles in the glossier magazines.

Dylan tries without conceit to explain that he's a "watcher," embroiled in nothing. He's a talented writer, composer and singer with a sensitive touch for interpreting the feelings of the moment. But the publicity people these days demand non-conformists who are conforming non-conformists.



THE KLAS BURLING INTERVIEW APRIL 29, 1966

Broadcast May 1 1966 and later by Swedish radio program

Interviewer: We're now in Stockholm with Bob Dylan and I wonder now when you're in Stockholm if you could explain a bit more about yourself and your kind of songs. What d'you think of the kind of protest song tag?

Dylan: I don't ... uh ... my ... oh God. No. (Laughs) No. I'm not ... I'm not gonna sit here and and do that. I've uh, you know, I've been up all night, I've taken some pills, I've eaten bad food and I've read about wrong things and I've been out for a hundred miles an hour car ride and, uh, I'm just not gonna sit here and talk about myself as a protest singer or anything like that.

I: So, but the first things you did, I mean which got really famous on singles and things like that - for example in England they released 'The Times They Are A-Changin'' - that was supposed to be a protest song - no?

Dylan: Oh, my God! How long ago was that?

I: A year ago.

Dylan: Yeah, well I mean, come on, a year ago! I'm not trying to be a bad fellow or anything, but I just, you know, I'd just be a liar or a fool to go on with all this, all this business. I just can't help it if you're a year behind you know.

I: No, but that's the style - that's the style you had then and then suddenly you changed to 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', the electric guitar and those things. Is there a special reason, I mean the way you would tell about it yourself.

Dylan: No.

I: No?

Dylan: No.

I: What would you call yourself, a poet or a singer, or do you think that you write poems and then you put music to it?

Dylan: No ... I don't know ... It's so silly! I mean you can't ... You wouldn't ask those questions of a carpenter, would you? Or a plumber?

I: It would not interesting in the same way, would it?

Dylan: I guess it would be. I mean if it's interesting to me, it should be just as interesting to you.

I: Well, not as being a disc-jockey anyhow.

Dylan: What do you think Mozart would say to you if you ever come up to him and ask him the questions that you've been asking? What kind of questions would you ask him, you know, 'Tell me, Mr Mozart ...'

I: Well, first of all I wouldn't do it.

Dylan: Well, how come you do it to me?

I: Well, because I'm interested in your records and I think the Swedish audiences are as well.

Dylan: Well, I'm interested in the Swedish audiences too, Swedish people and all that kind of stuff, but I'm sure they don't wanna know all these dumb things, you know.

I: No, well they've read a lot of dumb things about you in the papers I suppose, but I thought you could straighten them out yourself.

Dylan: I can't straighten them out. I don't think they have to be straightened out. I know ... I believe that they know. They know. Don't you know the Swedish people? I mean, they don't have to be told, they don't have to be explained to, I mean, you should know that. I mean Swedish people just don't have to be explained to. You can't tell Swedish people something which is self-explanatory. Swedish people are smarter than that.

I: Do you think so?

Dylan: Oh, oh of course.

I: Do you know any Swedes?

Dylan: I know plenty. I happen to be a Swede myself.

I: Oh yeah, certainly.

Dylan: I happen to come from not too far from here, my friend.

I: Should we try to listen to a song instead?

Dylan: We can try.

I: Yeah? Which one would you suggest then?

Dylan: Uh, you pick one out, any one you say. You realize I'm not trying to be a bad fellow, I'm just trying to make it along and have a nice ... get everything to be straight, you realize that?

I: Yeah, and that's why I asked you, and you had a chance to do it yourself.

Dylan: I don't want to do it myself.

I: OK.

Dylan: I don't wanna do anything by myself ... for what?

I: Or against what?

Dylan: Well, you know what it's against and what it's for. I don't need to tell you you that. It's for, you know, it's for well, it's for ... well you know my songs are all mathematical songs. You know what that means so I'm not gonna have to go into that specifically here. It happens to be a protest song ... and it borders on the mathematical, you know, idea of things, and this one specifically happens to deal with a minority of, you know, cripples and orientals, and, uh, you know, and the world in which they live, you realize, you know, you understand, you know. It's sort of a North Mexican kind of a thing, uh, very protesty. Very very protesty. And, uh, one of the protestiest of all things I ever protested against in my protest years. But uh...

I: D'you really believe it?

Dylan: Do I believe it?

I: Yeah

Dylan: I don't have to believe it, I know it, I wrote it! I mean, I'm telling you I wrote it! I should know!

I: Yeah. Why that title? It's never mentioned in the song.

Dylan: Well, we never mention things that we love. And that's - where I come from that is ... that's blasphemy. Blas-per-for-me, you know that word? Blas-per-for-me?

I: Yeah.

Dylan: It has to do with God.

I: Shall we have a listen to the song?

Dylan: OK

I: Which is selling quite well in the States. Hoe do you feel about that?

Dylan: It's ... it's ... horrible.

I: It is?

Dylan: Yeah, I don't wanna, uh ... because it's a protest song. A protest song really, shouldn't really really listen to protest songs.

I: Well, I see it in the way that a lot of people buy the record to listen to it, these radio stations and so on. So a lot of people could get the message in that case.

Dylan: Yeah. They do get the message. I'm glad they're getting the message. That was a good record too, huh?

I: How do you feel about earning a lot of money then, if you're not really concerned about it all?

Dylan: I like earning a lot of money.

I: From the start you didn't have much, but now you got a lot. What do you do with it?

Dylan: Nothing.

I: Not concerned?

Dylan: No. I don't really ... Somebody else handles it for me, you know. I just do the same old things.

I: When you write a song, do you write the melody or the words first?

Dylan: Uh, I write it all, you know. I write it all, the melody and the words.

I: At the same time?

Dylan: Yeah. The melody is sort of unimportant really. It comes natural you know.

I: The very start, other artists used your songs and recorded them and got hits and things like that. How do you feel about that?

Dylan: Well, I didn't feel anything really. I felt happy, you know.

I: Do you like to suddenly get famous then, first as a songwriter, and then also as a singer?

Dylan: Uh, yeah, it's sort of all over though, you know? I don't have any interest any more. I did have interest when I was 13, 14, 15 to be a famous star and all that kind of stuff, but, I been playing, you know, on the stage, following tent shows around ever since I've been 10, 10 years old. That's been 15 years I've been doing what I've been doing. I mean, I know I'm doing better than anybody else does.

I: And nowadays, what is it you want to to?

Dylan: Nothing.

I: Nothing?

Dylan: No.

I: Do you enjoy traveling? Performing?

Dylan: Yeah, I like performing. I don't care to travel though.

I: What about recordings?

Dylan: I like to record.

I: You got a group now, which I suppose you didn't have at the very start.

Dylan: Yes, I had a group at the very start. You must realize I come from the United States, you know. I don't know if you know the United States. It's not like England at all. The people at my age now you know, 25, 26, at this age, everybody's grown up, you know, playing rock'n'roll music.

I: You did it?

Dylan: Yes, I mean, cause it's the only kind of music you heard. I mean everybody has done it, cause all you heard was rock'n'roll and country and western and rhythm and blues music. Now at a certain time the whole field got taken over into, into some milk, you know - into Frankie Avalon, Fabian and this kind of thong. That's not bad or anything, but it was just ... there was nobody really, that you could look at, and to really want anything that they had or wanna be like them, you know? So everybody got out of it. And I remember when everybody got out of it. But nobody really lost that whole thing. And then folk music came in as some kind of substitute for a while, but it was only a substitute don't you understand? And that's all it was. Now it's different again, because of the English thing. The English thing ... what the English thing did was, they proved that you could make money, you know, at playing the same old kind of music that you used to play, and that's the truth. You know, that's not a lie. It's not a come on or anything. But, uh, you know the English people can't play rock'n'roll music.

I: How do you feel about the Beatles then?

Dylan: Oh, the Beatles are great, but they don't play rock'n'roll.

I: You met them quite a few times, as well in the States and in England.

Dylan: Yeah, I know the Beatles, they're not playing ...

I: You don't think they play rock'n'roll anyhow?

Dylan: No, they don't play rock'n'roll. They're more like Rock'n'roll is just for ... is an extension of 12-bar blues. And it's a white, you know, white 17-year-old kid music. And it'd kid music, that's all it is. That's what rock'n'roll is. Rock'n'roll is a fake, uh, fake kind of attempt at sex, you know.

I: But what would you call your style then?. The music you sing?

Dylan: I don't know. I've never heard anybody that plays or sings like me, so I don't ...

I: There's no name for it that you would try to put on it yourself?

Dylan: Mathematical music.

I: Yeah? OK, If you would like to choose a last final song for this interview?

Dylan: You choose it.

I: There's none in particular that you would like more than another one?

Dylan: No. Well, I'd rather have you play, you know, Tombstone Blues than Pretty Peggy-O! But, other than that I wish you'd make your own choice.

I: OK. Thanks a lot then.



COPENHAGEN PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 1, 1966

Reported in "NME" 13 May 1966, reprinted in "Occasionally 2"

“How far is the nearest cow?”

In Copenhagen, NME correspondent Sven Wezelenburg had no more luck than Keith Altham [see What was it you wanted #17] when questioning Bob Dylan. It went like this:

S.W.: Are you married and to whom?

Dylan: If I answered that question I'd lie to you. You don't want me to be a liar.

S.W.: Why did you laugh at the start of "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream" on your LP?

Dylan: I don't remember ... well, wait a bit ... yeah ... somebody entered the studio disguised and looking like my mother. Yes, that was it. I just started laughing.

S.W.: How are your friends?

Dylan: Haven't got any. I've always been looking for some. Never found any.

S.W.: Does the large amount of money you get now mean much to you?

Dylan: I don't care about money. Nothing has changed me. I'm not a prophet. I don't care how much money I make, but you do.

Dylan asked reporters questions like "Where's Hamlet's castle?" and "How far is the nearest cow?". He got answers too.



LONDON PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 3 1966

From New Musical Express Friday, May 13, 1966. Reprinted in Occasionally #2.

DYLAN'S PRESS RECEPTION

by Keith Altham

Hair bristling about like a Fijian suffering from a severe electrical shock, wearing a blue suede jacket and white striped trousers, Bob Dylan meandered into a suite of the May Fair hotel last week followed by a squad of cameramen and sound engineers, the latter to record "the press reception".

A large gentleman, with a grey top hat and movie camera permanently affixed to his shoulder, lurched about the room like Quasimodo, alternately scratching his ear and his nose, with the occasional break to "whirr" the machine in the face of perplexed reporters.

A lady in grey denims waved what appeared to be huge grey frankfurters about, but they proved to be microphones attached to tape recorders. We were apparently being taped for posterity.

For some fifteen minutes, photographers exposed innumerable rolls of film at Dylan looking bored on a window sill. Finally he removed his dark glasses as a bonus to the cameramen, but somehow managed to look exactly the same.

Ken Pitt, surely the year's most optimistic publicist, announced that Mr. Dylan now would answer questions.

"Is this a microphone?" enquired Mr. Dylan about a large cylindrical object on the desk under his nose. Having ascertained that it was indeed a microphone, Dylan signified he was ready to begin by giving a slight grunt and shifting his chair a bit.

"Which musicians have you brought with you?"

After this question had been asked again, then rephrased several times, Bob replied: "You want names?".

The reporter said this might be helpful.

"Gus, Frank, Mitch" mumbled Dylan.

POSTERITY?

For posterity's sake I framed a question which might have been construed as "being aware", as Quasimodo aimed his mechanical hump at me. Why is it that the titles of his recent singles, like 'Rainy Day Women # 12 & 35' apparently bore no connections with the lyric?

"It has every significance" returned Dylan. "Have you ever been down in North Mexico?"

"Not recently"

"Well, I can't explain it to you then."

It would appear that the States of Washington, Baltimore and Houston [sic] have worked out the explanation, for they have banned 'Rainy Day Women' as being an alleged approval of LSD and marijuana drugs. A dubious honour that Dylan shares with the Byrds' 'Eight Miles High', also banned in those States last week.

I tried to get him to talk about Paul Simon, whom he phoned recently in the U.S. and about Bob Lind.

"Never heard of them" obliged Mr. Dylan. With that I declared my innings closed and watched with interest as the others got batted about.

"Bob, you hair has got me worried", said one lady reporter, "How do you get it like that?"

"How do I get it like that?"

"Yes, how do you get it like that?"

"I comb it like that"

Some tried shock treatment: "Are you married?"

"I don't want to lie to you. It would be misleading if I told you 'yes', Dylan declared and in the same breath: "I brought my wife over here on the last visit and no one took any notice of her".

A suggestion was made that he was secretly married to Joan Baez.

"Joan Baez was an accident" returned Mr. Dylan.

Dylan's good friend, folk singer Dana Gillespie, was mentioned.

Dylan brightened visibly - he practically tore his face in half in his effort to smile.

"Is Dana here?" he asked. "Bring her out. I got some baskets for her".

Regretfully Dana was not there and the conversation reverted to monotone inanities again.

REVELATIONS !

We discovered in quick succession that

- Dylan cannot see too well on Tuesdays
- his toenails don't fit him
- he considered Peter Lorre the world's greatest folk singer
- all his songs protest about something
- he has just written a book in one week about spiders
- and he didn't know who the gentleman in the top hat was.

"I thought he was with you" he returned, dead-pan.

The lady with the giant frankfurter-mike torpedoed it forward so as not to miss a syllable of this sparkling repartee.

As the reporters filed out of the suite I took one of Dylan's undercover agents to one side (I knew he was a Dylan man as he had dark glasses on) and enquired why a man with Dylan's obvious intelligence bothered to arrange this farce of a meeting. "Man" he extolled "Dylan just wanted us to come along and record a Press reception so we could hear how ridiculous and infantile all reporters are".

I stumbled brokenly back to my plasticine, the sandpit, my chalk slate at the MNE! But you've got to admit there's only one Dylan - thank goodness!



THE AUSTIN INTERVIEW

22 Sep 1966 Austin Texas

Published in "Retrospective" ed. by Craig McGregor as "An interview in Austin Texas" Reprinted in "Bob Dylan" by Miles; also reprinted in "Positively Tie Dream" (Ashes and Sand 1979)(date given as Summer 1965)

Reporter: What do you consider yourself? How would you classify yourself?

Bob Dylan: Well, I like to think of myself in terms of a trapeze artist.

Reporter: Speaking of trapeze artists, I've noticed in some of your recent albums a carnival-type sound. Could you tell me a little about that?

Bob Dylan: That isn't a carnival sound, that's religious. That's very real, you can see that anywhere.

Reporter: What about this "Ballad of a Thin Man"? This sounds as though it might have been dedicated to a newspaper reporter or something.

Bob Dylan: No, it's just about a fella that came into a truckstop once.

Reporter: Have the Beatles had any influence on your work?

Bob Dylan: Well, they haven't influenced the songs or sound. I don't know what other kind of influence they might have. They haven't influenced the songs or the sound.

Reporter: In an article in "The New Yorker," written by Nat Hentoff, I believe, you said you sang what you felt and you sang to make yourself feel good, more or less. And it was implied that in your first two albums you sang "finger-pointing songs," I believe.

Bob Dylan: Well, what he was saying was, I mean, I wasn't playing then and it was still sort of a small nucleus at that time and by the definition of why do you sing, I sing for the people. He was saying, "Why do you sing?" and I couldn't think of an answer except that I felt like singing, that's all.

Reporter: Why is it different?

Bob Dylan: Come on, come on.

Reporter: What is your attitude toward your "finger-pointing" songs? He implied that you thought they were just superficial.

Bob Dylan: No, it's not superficial, it's just motivated. Motivated. Uncontrollable motivation. Which anyone can do, once they get uncontrollably motivated.

Reporter: You said before that you sang because you had to. Why do you sing now?

Bob Dylan: Because I have to.

Reporter: Your voice in here is soft and gentle. Yet in some of your records, there's a harsh twang.

Bob Dylan: I just got up.

Reporter: Could you give me some sort of evaluation as far as your own taste is concerned, comparing some of the things you did, like old music, say, "Girl from the North Country," which I

consider a very beautiful- type ballad? Perhaps some of the things that have come out in the last couple of albums--do you get the same satisfaction out of doing this?

Bob Dylan: Yeah, I do. I wish I could write like "Girl from the North Country." You know, I can't write like that any more.

Reporter: Why is that?

Bob Dylan: I don't know.

Reporter: Are you trying to accomplish anything?

Bob Dylan: Am I trying to accomplish anything?

Reporter: Are you trying to change the world or anything?

Bob Dylan: Am I trying to change the world? Is that your question?

Reporter: Well, do you have any idealism or anything?

Bob Dylan: Am I trying to change the idealism of the world? Is that it?

Reporter: Well, are you trying to push over idealism to the people?

Bob Dylan: Well, what do you think my ideas are?

Reporter: Well, I don't exactly know. But are you singing just to be singing?

Bob Dylan: No, I'm not singing to be singing. There's a much deeper reason for it than that.

Reporter: In a lot of the songs you sing you seem to express a pessimistic attitude toward life. It seems that "Hollis Brown" gives me that feeling. Is this your true feeling or are you just trying to shock people?

Bob Dylan: That's not pessimistic form, that's just statement. You know. I'm not pessimistic.

Reporter: Who are your favorite performers? I don't mean folk, I mean general.

Bob Dylan: Rasputin . . . Hmmm . . . Charles de Gaulle . . . the Staple Singers. I sort of have a general attitude about that. I like just about everybody everybody else likes.

Reporter: You said just a minute ago you were preparing to go to classical music. Could you tell me a little about that?

Bob Dylan: Well, I was going to be in the classical music field and I imagine it's going right along. I'll get there one of these records.

Reporter: Are you using the word classical perhaps a little differently than we?

Bob Dylan: A little bit, maybe. Just a hair.

Reporter: Could you explain that?

Bob Dylan: Well, I'm using it in the general sense of the word, thumbing a hair out.

Reporter: Any attention to form?

Bob Dylan: Form and matter. Mathematics.

Reporter: What is your belief in God? Are you a Christian?

Bob Dylan: Well, first of all, God is a woman, we all know that. Well, you take it from there.





THE ISLE OF WIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE

August 27, 1969.

Source: 'Fourth Time Around', #3 page 13. (What was it you wanted? #2)

Ronnie Burns from BBC TV South asks questions below.

Burns: Why did you come to the Isle of Wight?

Dylan: I wanted to see the home of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Burns: Why?

Dylan: Just curious.

Burns: Can I have your general views on the situation of drug taking among teenagers and young people these days?

Dylan: I don't have any of those views ... I wish I did, I'd be glad to share them with you, but I ... I think everyone should lead their own lives you know.

Burns: You used to, I believe, make public pronouncements on your views on things, like Vietnam, and it has been noticed in certain quarters you haven't been doing that recently, making your views known on big political and international issues. Is this deliberate policy on your part?

Dylan: No ... I think that's more a rumor than a fact. You check your old newspapers, you won't be able to find too many statements I've made on those issues.

Burns: I've heard it said here today by some of your fans that the new Bob Dylan is a bit of a square ... Is that true?

Dylan: You'll have to ask the fans (amidst general laughter)

Press: Do you feel that your days of protesting are over?

Dylan: I don't want to protest any more. I never said I'm an angry young man.

Press: Can you tell us exactly what happened when you suffered an accident a while ago?

Dylan: Rikki ... where are you? ... (silence from Dylan for a moment) It's true I suffered a broken neck. It's awful hard to explain. I have to take it easy sometimes.

Press: Bob.

Dylan: Yes, Ken (general laughter from press).

Press: Do you think you have changed very much since we last saw you in London? Your clothes and hair have changed?

Dylan: I believe there's a conscious thing since the accident. I haven't really changed ... It had more to do with the show I was doing than anything else. It really had nothing to do with me personally ... that stuff was all for publicity. I don't do that kind of thing any more.

Press: Can you tell us what songs you will be performing?

Dylan: Everything we will do is on record. I'm not going to sing anything new ... Things you will have heard before but with new arrangements

Press: Because of your lack of public appearances, do you still like doing shows?

Dylan: We appeared a month ago in St Louis ... the more shows the better.

Press: Who are you looking forward to meeting while you're here?

Dylan: I'm hoping to meet anybody who's around. I'd like to meet The Who and maybe Georgie Fame.

Press: What about the Beatles?

Dylan: George Harrison has come to visit me. The Beatles have asked me to work with them. I love the Beatles and I think it would be a good idea to do a jam session.

Press: What about reports that various people will perform with you on stage?

Dylan: Great, great.

Press: Do you feel that cameras are like guns?

Dylan: I don't know.

Press: Do you feel this change that has come over you and your music is due to domestic effects? Are you chiefly a family man now?

Dylan: I would think so.

Press: There is a very large crowd expected here for your performance. Any comments on that?

Dylan: I just hope it's a good show.

Press: Do you have a personal message for the kids today?

Dylan: Take it easy and do your job well

Press: What exactly then is your position on politics and music?

Dylan: My job is to play music. I think I've answered enough questions.