

# Bob Dylan's Existential Journey

*By Jeffrey D. Breshears*

In an October, 2004 *Newsweek* cover story featuring excerpts from Bob Dylan's newly-released autobiography, *Chronicles*, writer David Gates referred to Dylan rather matter-of-factly as "the most influential cultural figure now alive." At first thought, it seems a rather startling and absurd claim for someone whom most people would regard as irrelevant since the sixties. Even in his prime, Dylan was nowhere near as popular as The Beatles, and over the past forty years there have been many others who seemingly have been far more influential. So one's first reaction is to dismiss David Gates as a hopeless Dylanophilic crank stuck in a sixties time warp.

But consider: if not, Dylan, then who? Who else has influenced popular culture and contemporary values more than he? Beginning with Elvis and the advent of rock 'n' roll in the mid-fifties, popular music became the single-most influential cultural force in American life, and Dylan has been the premier songwriter and the single-most influential musical force over the span of the rock age. Elvis was a voice but primarily an image, and that image is forever frozen in the fifties. The Beatles dominated popular music and culture in the sixties, and at the time their influence seemed to dwarf Dylan's, but over time their exalted status has faded. Few study their music anymore, and stylistically they were passe by the mid-seventies. Dylan's influence, however, has not abated. To an unprecedented extent, he attracts far more attention by serious musicologists and other scholars than any other singer, songwriter, or recording artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Dylan changed song writing and popular music forever. By fusing original, poetic lyrics with traditional acoustic folk music and, later, electronic rock, he transformed popular music from adolescent-oriented banal entertainment into a true art form. By all accounts, he influenced The Beatles as much as they did him, and together they permanently altered the popular music landscape.



Over the course of a 40-year career, this enigmatic and erratic genius established himself as the most prolific and influential songwriter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Given the pervasive influence of popular music in American culture, Dylan's

prodigious career as a songwriter and a recording artist constitutes a formidable legacy. But more significant has been his general influence on American culture – i.e., his philosophical legacy. Dylan is not, of course, any kind of formal philosopher, nor is he a particularly original thinker. But he *has* been an influential purveyor of a particular philosophical orientation, which is unprecedented for someone who is essentially just a professional entertainer. Elvis, like Sinatra before him, left no philosophical legacy. The Beatles represented uninhibited youthful hedonism and artistic indulgence – neither of which is particularly original or noteworthy. The Rolling Stones, like other pop icons such as

Marlon Brando and James Dean, studiously cultivated a rebellious and nihilistic image, but such immature, anti-social posturing impresses no one but naive adolescents and adults stuck in a perpetual state of arrested development.

Likewise, the erotic exhibitionism of a Madonna or a Britney Spears may offer a window to their souls but contributes nothing to the realm of thought. But it is ideas that drive culture, and it is in the realm of ideas that Dylan's major contribution lies.

Bob Dylan was the progenitor of a peculiar phenomenon in entertainment history. Prior to him, entertainers typically maintained a strict separation between their public persona and their private life. Movie stars, authors, athletes, recording artists, and celebrities from Charlie Chaplin to Liberace often lived decadent private lives, but their public image was properly sanitized for mass consumption in keeping with the dominant social and moral values of the day. Indeed, many were masters of deception. Their private lives might be scandalously sordid, but their public performances were (generally and relatively) clean and respectable. Society expected it, and many celebrities perfected it. Even The Beatles were caught up in the charade, at least until their egotism as pop icons reached a point that they felt they could say or do most anything with impunity. (Eventually, John Lennon would even proclaim, "We're more popular than Jesus.")

With Dylan, though, there was no major disconnect between the public and the private person. From the outset, what he wrote and sang reflected pretty clearly who and what he was. Due in part to his success and influence, which was perfectly attuned to the spirit of the times, celebrities in all areas of popular culture were liberated from the confines of social convention.

From the outset, Dylan manifested the image of the existential anti-hero – a cultural rebel certainly, but a rebel with a cause. Initially, the cause was the standard politically-correct left-wing folk music agenda of the early sixties: peace, social justice, and civil rights. Later, his cause would become his own personal freedom. Although some of his music and lyrics in the mid-sixties seemed to celebrate chaos, he was never a philosophical nihilist. He was, however, a militantly independent existentialist who charted his own course in life and answered to no higher authority. As the definer of his own

values, he personified the proto-postmodern *zeitgeist* that emerged in the late-sixties and has gained ascendancy ever since.

. . . . .

Talkin' New York

Robert Zimmerman was born in 1941 to Abe and Beatty Zimmerman, a middle-class Jewish couple who owned a furniture store in Hibbing, Minnesota. Despite a conventional home life young Bobby grew up sullen and introverted, a loner in school, and he turned to music as his creative outlet and primary means of self-expression. Robert Shelton, one of Dylan's biographers, writes that "His guitar became his cane, weapon, status symbol, security blanket and swagger stick."

As an intense and impressionable fifties-era teen attuned to the youth culture of the day, his earliest cultural icons included Marlon Brando and James Dean. Musically, his seminal influence was Hank Williams. Dylan liked his voice and sought to imitate it, but ol' Hank was not long for this world, and soon the restless young neophyte musician moved on to discover the "race music" of bluesmen like Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, Howlin' Wolf and B.B. King. When *The Blackboard Jungle* premiered at the local theater featuring Bill Haley & the Comets and "Rock Around the Clock," Dylan got hooked on rock 'n' roll. Later, he became enthralled by the rockabilly sounds of Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis, and his first guitar was an electric Silvertone from Sears. In high school he formed several short-lived bands, but by the time he graduated the first phase of rock 'n' roll was fading and folk music was the new in-thing.

In 1959 Dylan enrolled at the University of Minnesota and lived for a time in a Jewish frat house. Soon, like the proverbial moth drawn to a flame, he gravitated instinctively toward Dinkytown, the bohemian enclave in Minneapolis, to hang with the local music crowd. He listened to popular folkies like The Kingston Trio, The Weavers, and Odetta, devoured John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Woody Guthrie's autobiography, *Bound for Glory*, and soon took on the persona of a scruffy folksong troubadour, even inventing an apocryphal past for himself. He became a Woody Guthrie imitator, replete with bluejeans and workshirt and a hick Okie drawl, and many of the first

songs he wrote were Depression-style talking blues tunes. A quick study, he mastered the intricate art of blowing the harmonica while playing guitar by watching bluesman Jesse Fuller perform. And for a final touch he changed his last name to Dylan after the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas (or perhaps because he liked the way it sounded – he was typically vague on the matter).

In January, 1961 Dylan dropped out of college and set off for Greenwich Village, the folk culture Mecca of the early sixties. Trying to break into the highly competitive music scene and establish a name for himself, he nearly starved and froze to death that frigid winter before the spring thaw revived his spirits and reinvigorated his fledgling career. A few months later he related these early misadventures in “Talkin’ New York,” a semi-autobiographical talking blues tune that recounted his initial observations and subsequent cynicism with indomitable wit and prescient insight. The tone of “Talkin’ New York” is more whimsical than angry, but the nascent Dylanesque bite and sarcasm are nonetheless only barely suppressed:

I landed up on the downtown side:  
Greenwich Village.  
I walked down there and ended up  
In one of them coffeehouses on the block  
I'd get on the stage and sing and play  
The man there said, “Come back another day  
You sound like a hillbilly...  
We want folksingers here.”  
Well, I got a harmonica job – gotta play  
Blowin’ my lungs out for a dollar a day.  
I blew inside-out and upside-down  
The man there said he loved my sound –  
He was ravin’ about he loved my sound –  
A dollar a day’s worth!  
....  
Now a very great man [Woody Guthrie] once  
said  
That some people rob you  
With a fountain pen  
It don’t take too long to find out  
Just what he was talkin’ about.

Dylan’s talent was irrepressible, yet he might still have languished in prolonged obscurity had not the *New York Times* music critic Robert Shelton discovered him in a Village coffee house in September ‘61 and featured him in an article:

**Bob Dylan:  
A Distinctive Folk-Song Stylist  
20-Year-Old Singer Is Bright New  
Face At Gerdes Club**

A bright new face in folk music is appearing at Gerdes Folk City. Although only twenty years old, Bob Dylan is one of the most distinctive stylists to play in a Manhattan cabaret in months.

Resembling a cross between a choir boy and a Beatnik, Mr. Dylan has a cherubic look and a mop of tousled hair he partly covers with a Huck Finn black corduroy cap. His clothes may need a bit of tailoring but when he works his guitar, harmonica, or piano, and composes new songs faster than he can remember them, there is no doubt that he is bursting at the seams with talent....

Once exposed, Dylan quickly became a hot commodity in folk music circles. Already an accomplished opportunist and self-promoter (as well as a natural-born con artist), he was welcomed into the upper stratas of the folk music pantheon by the likes of Pete Seeger and other self-appointed guardians of the sacred flame. Writing in the January, 1962 issue of *Sing Out!* magazine, Gil Turner lauded Dylan as a brilliant and powerful new ally in the folk crowd’s music crusades for peace, social justice, and civil rights.

In short order John Hammond of Columbia Records heard of Dylan through the grapevine, liked what he heard, and forthwith signed him to a contract. Dylan cut his first record in February, 1962 at age 20. The album was a bare-bones production, completed in only four hours at a cost of \$400, and it sounded like it. But for all its limitations, the album aptly highlighted his musical virtuosity. Two songs were original compositions, the aforementioned “Talkin’ New York” and a fitting tribute to Woody Guthrie entitled “Song to Woody,” while the rest were traditional folk ballads, mostly about death and dying. The album received generally positive reviews from folk music critics, but it had a raw, noncommercial sound and sold barely 5,000 copies. Dylan’s vocals were raspy and nasal, prompting one critic to liken his voice to the sound of a dog whose leg has gotten tangled up in barbed wire. Still, he sang with passion and urgency, demanding (and seemingly expecting) to be heard. What he had was that relatively rare

and intangible quality of “soul” – an innate expressiveness that commanded attention and set him apart from countless other singers with prettier, more melodic voices.

#### A-Changin' With the Times

The liner notes on his debut album hailed Dylan as “a major new figure in American folk music,” but in fact the folksinger persona was only the first in a series of Dylanesque self-creations, and in reality the album constituted little more than an opening farewell to traditional folk music. Uncannily, he seemed to sense instinctively what others would realize later – i.e., that traditional acoustic folk music, essentially a confining art form, was fundamentally incompatible with the hyper-kinetic sixties. Already, he was in the process of transforming himself from Bob Dylan, Folksinger, into the prototypical early-sixties Protest Singer, a phase that would take him through the next two years and three notable LPs: *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, and *Another Side of Bob Dylan*.

Then, having mastered the genre, he proceeded to a-change with the times. In 1965, keying off the success of The Beatles and The Byrds, he put down his acoustic guitar, strapped on a Fender Stratocaster, and recast himself as Bob Dylan, Rock Star. The result was, well, *electrifying* – classic albums like *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde*, and astonishing songs such as “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” “Like a Rolling Stone,” and “Positively 4<sup>th</sup> Street.” In the process he outraged some old folkies but garnered legions of new fans. Three years later, at the height of Flower Power psychedelia, he underwent another metamorphosis, re-emerging after a period of isolation as a sober and simple Contemplative Balladeer via *John Wesley Harding*. Then, just as briefly, he passed through a Country Gentleman phase – sort of a bohemian Johnny Cash – with the release of *Nashville Skyline*.



Throughout the early seventies Dylan played the role of the Reclusive Domesticated, although he reemerged occasionally for extravaganzas such as the Isle of Wight Festival in 1969 and George Harrison's Concert for Bangla Desh in 1971. Then in 1974 he embarked upon a major tour with The Band, and followed with his own Rolling Thunder Review tour in 1975-76. Near the end of the decade he declared himself born-again and recast himself as a Christian Prophet, yet another transitory phase. Since the early eighties he has seemingly drifted in a self-absorbed haze as the quintessential Rolling Stone With No Direction Home. His own self-assessment of his ever-changing public persona has been typically nondirective and noncommittal: “God, I'm glad I'm not me!”

#### Voice of a Generation

Dylan's second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, was released in May 1963. Unlike the mostly derivative collection on his debut LP, all but one of the songs on *Freewheelin'* were original compositions, including passionate love ballads, whimsical social commentaries, apocalyptic visions of doom, and traditional-style protest songs and talking blues. “Blowin' in the Wind” was the album's premier feature and one of the most recorded songs of the sixties. Inspired in part by the anti-war doomsday movie, *On the Beach*, it exploded on the music scene like the proverbial bombshell (although a more pacifistic metaphor would perhaps be more appropriate), effectively exposing the latent dissension underlying the surface-level domestic tranquility of the Eisenhower and Kennedy years. As the first big hit protest song, it established anti-Establishment music as the newest rage. Other notable compositions included two anti-war diatribes, the acerbic “Masters of War” and the harrowingly apocalyptic “A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall,” along with “Don't Think Twice, It's All Right,” a restless commentary on disposable relationships that presaged the sixties' sexual revolution. The arrangements were simple and Dylan's singing was plaintive and passionate – certainly not polished or pretty – and commercially the album was a modest success, selling 200,000 copies the first year.

To say the least, not all the critics were impressed. The mainstream press criticized his “skinny little voice” and dubbed him “a dime-store philosopher.” *Time* remarked that there was

“something faintly ridiculous about such a citybilly,” while *Life* dismissed him as a “sloppy, disheveled, unshaven” young tramp who “talks angrily and irreverently.” But that was just bourgeois Establishment thinking, and in avant-garde and fashionable left-wing circles Dylan was certifiably cool. Colleagues such as Phil Ochs were in awe, calling Dylan “perhaps the greatest common poet ever.” *Broadside* magazine invited him in as a contributing editor, where he hobnobbed with folk/protest aristocrats like Pete Seeger, and soon he was on the road performing with Joan Baez, the charismatic Madonna of folk with whom he had a brief and stormy romantic relationship (Ten years later, Baez memorialized the affair in her wistful ballad, “Diamonds and Rust”).



Dylan on stage with Joan Baez in 1963

Quick to capitalize on his breakthrough success, Dylan played the Newport Folk Festival in July '63 where he was billed as “the most important folk artist in America today.” A follow-up LP, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, came out in November just prior to JFK's assassination. Even stronger than the previous album, it featured several Dylan classics such as the melodic “North Country Blues,” the sardonic “With God on Our Side,” and “When the Ship Comes In,” a song rich with biblical imagery, divine judgment and social justice themes. The highlight of the album was a strident, provocative rendering of the title cut, one of the definitive protest songs of the era. Dylan had mastered the folk/protest idiom with ease, and after only two years of commercial exposure and a couple of noteworthy albums his reputation in popular music was already approaching legendary status.

When The Beatles landed in America the following February they immediately picked up copies of *Freewheelin'* and *Times A-Changin'*, and later that summer they linked up with Dylan in a New York City hotel where he reportedly turned them on to pot.

Meanwhile, Dylan scheduled a tour of England that turned out to be a resounding success. The Fleet Street press was effusive, even touting him as “a modern-day Homer in denim.” Later that fall a subsequent British tour was filmed by D.A. Pennebaker and released as the documentary, *Don't Look Back*. Like the Fab Four, Dylan was now a movie star in his own right.

Understandably, Dylan's ardent fans expected more of the same, so when *Another Side*

*of Bob Dylan* was released in August '64 it left many of them perplexed and dismayed. By now the mainstream media was hailing him as “The Voice of a Generation,” but on this, his first post-JFK album, there was scarcely a trace of socio/political commentary. In the wake of Kennedy's assassination Dylan had concluded that politics was “bullshit,” and for the rest of his career, with rare exceptions, he generally ignored it. (In a 1984 *Rolling Stone* interview he was adamant that “politics is an instrument of the Devil.”) Most of the songs on *Another Side* dealt with introspective themes and interpersonal relationships such as “All I Really Want To Do” and “Chimes of Freedom.” Two songs in particular, “It Ain't Me, Babe” and “My Back Pages,” were calculated renunciations of the role others had assigned him as the political prophet of the youth culture, and the accompanying liner notes served to amplify these sentiments:

i know no answers an no truth  
for absolutely no soul alive...  
so go joshua  
go fit your battle  
i have t go t the woods for awhile  
i hope you understand....

### Like a Rolling Stone

So with nary a wistful glance backward, Dylan left not only protest music but the whole folk idiom behind. It had served him well, but he was going with the flow, and the flow was amplified music. Besides, folk music was an intrinsically traditionalistic art form and far too restrictive for a hip young man-on-the-make, and he didn't intend to be held up by anyone's hang-ups or stifled by anyone's expectations. And he certainly owed no allegiance to any musical tradition. So without missing a beat he forged fearlessly into the realm of rock, inspired in part by The Beatles and the popular L.A. folk/rock band, The Byrds, who had recently recorded an electrified version of his new song, "Mr. Tambourine Man." Working manically over the next several months, he created his own unique stylistic synthesis, and in March 1965 he released *Bringing It All Back Home*, his first million-seller and one of the great albums in rock history. There was a frenetic energy about this music, and it ignited a firestorm of experimental progressive rock music that defined the latter half of the sixties. But reminiscent of bluesman Robert Johnson's legendary bargain with the Devil, Dylan's emersion into rock came at a price, as biographer Alan Rinzler notes:

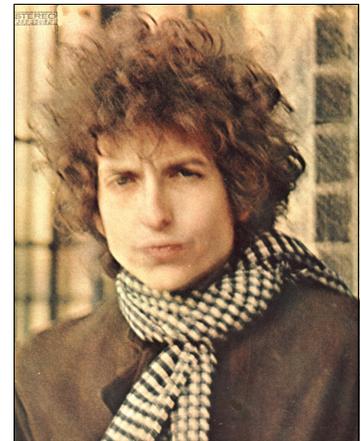
Dylan was accelerating at a blinding speed: writing, performing, recording, concertizing, touring, traveling constantly. It was a period of tremendous productivity but also of huge expenditures of energy.... There's a crazy manic flavor to this album that's almost out of control.

Expressing the spirit of the times, Dylan wrote in the liner notes: "I accept chaos.... I don't understand too well myself what's really happening. I do know that we're all gonna die someday."

But before he draws his last breath Dylan has a lot to get off his mind, and hence the free-association Dadaesque rap that punctuates the bouncy, infectious melody of "Subterranean Homesick Blues," the self-indulgent ranting of "Maggie's Farm," the trippy jingle-jangle surrealism of "Mr. Tambourine Man," the apocalyptic esoterica of "Gates of Eden," and the poetic sensitivity of "Love Minus Zero/No Limit." A truly spectacular package, but only the first in a trilogy of high-intensity rock albums. In August 1965 he released another *tour de force*, *Highway 61 Revisited*. Recorded with the help of

virtuoso musicians – guitarist Michael Bloomfield, keyboardist Al Kooper, and drummer Charlie McCoy – the album featured cacophonous, boisterous barrages of melodic sound mixed with rapid-fire, surrealistic lyrics that often come in polysyllabic chunks (best line: "I need a dump truck, baby, to unload my head"). The highlight of the album was "Like a Rolling Stone," some six minutes of the best rock music ever laid down. (In a 2004 *Rolling Stone* magazine poll, "Like a Rolling Stone" was voted the greatest rock song of the past 50 years.) Incredibly, the song was recorded in one take, and it went on to become Dylan's first hit on the pop charts. Three months later he released another classic in the same mode, "Positively 4th Street." Angry and defiant, Dylan spews forth a steady stream of sardonic accusations in this diatribe on a dysfunctional relationship that has degenerated into bitter recriminations. The ultimate put-down song, it was, as one critic described it, "verbiage run wild, venom run amok."

In May of '66 Dylan followed up with a double album with the enigmatic title, *Blonde on Blonde*. From the out-of-focus cover photo of a stoned and bleary-eyed Dylan in his trademark Jewish Afro (or "electric halo," as one writer called it) to the barely-controlled, hyper-kinetic music inside, the album marked the apex of his career as a rock superstar. This was Napoleon in Rags in full force, savoring every sly and snide line of



"I Want You" and every sensuous simile in "Just Like a Woman," releasing any lingering latent restraints in the pulsating "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35," and ravishing every romantic reference to his "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands." Producer Bob Johnston was in awe, remarking that "Dylan is a perfectionist – he is so intense, he is quite unlike any other artist I've ever worked with."

Meanwhile, between *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited* Dylan stopped off at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival and managed to

antagonize the purists one last time. Ever since the release of *Another Side* some of the more doctrinaire folkies had attacked him as an opportunist, a sellout, and a betrayer of The Revolution. Even the normally-sanguine Tom Paxton ripped Dylan's new music as "folk/rot." In part, some of the animosity was personal: Dylan's rise to stardom had not been graceful, many thought him excessively ambitious, and he had a notorious reputation for exploiting people. Nonetheless, undaunted by the criticism and hell-bent on breaking all the established rules, he sauntered on stage to face his accusers, dressed in a black leather jacket and motorcycle boots, carrying a Fender electric guitar and backed by The Butterfield Blues Band. Dylan assaulted the crowd with a barrage of deafening rock that rattled the teeth of old folkies like Pete Seeger, who reportedly had to be restrained from pulling the plug on the amplifiers. This was the music of rebellion, not revolution, and the leftwing ideologues in the crowd were irate. Finally, amid boos and catcalls, Dylan took up his acoustic guitar and sang fare-thee-well to his former comrades with a biting rendition of "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue."

All this conflict and controversy, along with maintaining the frenetic lifestyle of an international rock superstar, proved to be a mental and physical drain, so it was probably fortuitous that Dylan had a motorcycle wreck in July 1966 that put him out of commission for a year. For one thing it forced him to slow down a while and think, and it also brought this manic and self-destructive phase to a screeching halt. Dylan took advantage of the time off to indulge in daily jam sessions with his back-up band, The Hawks (later renamed The Band), and throughout the spring and summer of '67 they recorded scores of songs including some new Dylan originals such as "I Shall Be Released," "Quinn the Eskimo," "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere," and "Sign on the Cross," a gospel-flavored tune in which Dylan appears haunted by the idea of Jesus hanging on the cross under the sign, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Unlike the high-intensity rock of *Highway 61* and *Blonde on Blonde*, much of this material had a laid-back, down-home feel in keeping with The Hawks' countryfied roots, and soon word leaked out about the "basement tapes." By the summer of '68 some of this music appeared in a custom-produced bootleg album entitled the *Great White*

*Wonder*, and for several years various underground recordings circulated until Columbia Records finally released *The Basement Tapes* in 1975.

A major domesticating influence at the time was Dylan's marriage to Sara Lownds. The two first met in the summer of '62 when he was playing the folk clubs of Greenwich Village, and Sara was the main reason why he later cooled his relationship with Joan Baez. They moved in together and lived for a year or so in the Chelsea Hotel in Greenwich Village before buying a house near Woodstock in upstate New York in July 1965, and the following November they were married in a small, private ceremony (even Dylan's parents were not invited). His public persona notwithstanding, Dylan settled comfortably into married life, and by most accounts he was a devoted and faithful husband. Sara already had a child by a previous marriage, and over the next six years they had four more. When Dylan finally reappeared in public in January of '68 at a memorial concert for Woody Guthrie he seemed like a changed man, more mature and reflective. The difference was apparent on his next LP, *John Wesley Harding*, a disarming collection of simple acoustic ballads. Recorded in Nashville, it contrasted sharply with the trend in mainstream rock in the late sixties. This was the age of ambitious and grandiose productions such as The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and *John Wesley Harding* seemed quite quaint by comparison. Essentially a collection of musical parables on themes such as greed, pride, lust and injustice, it featured plaintive ballads such as "John Wesley Harding," "As I Went Out One Morning," "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine," and "All Along the Watchtower." There was nothing particularly outstanding about the album, but as Ralph J. Gleason noted in his *Rolling Stone* review, "the album has a quality of serenity about it which is not only charming [but] entrancing."

Early in 1969 Dylan returned to Music City to record *Nashville Skyline*, a laid-back album of mostly country-flavored tunes. Once again he was a step or so behind Roger McGuinn and The Byrds, the original pioneers in both the folk/rock and country/rock genres, but still ahead of most of his other contemporaries. Many critics panned it, and the album *did* come across as confusingly irrelevant considering the times, but none of this seemed to phase the iconoclastic Dylan. As for

the Nashville music establishment in the sixties – Johnny Cash's endorsement notwithstanding – Bob Dylan represented nearly everything they feared and loathed. Dylan would go on to incorporate elements of country into some of his subsequent material, but for the most part his foray into America's Southland was little more than a brief respite in his on-going journey as an artist. Curiously, the album's only exceptional song, "Lay Lady Lay," wasn't even country, being more compatible stylistically with the sound and mood he created on *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited*.

In some respects a modern-day Thoreau, Dylan was an individualist who marched to the beat of his own drum. As with the civil rights and anti-war movements, he bristled at the suggestion that he should be "the voice" of any social or political agenda, including the counterculture of the late sixties. Although an exalted member of the sacred Trinity of countercultural demigods along with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, he felt no kinship to the counterculture movement and studiously distanced himself from it. Far from being a hippie, his values were surprisingly mainstream and conventional, as he remarked in a 1989 interview in *USA Today*:

From '66 on, I was trying to raise a family, and that was contrary to the whole epidemic of the '60s. Most people were running away from home and trying to get away from their parents. That was never intentional on my part, trying to run away from anything. My family was more important to me than any kind of generational '60s thing. Still is. To find some meaning in the '60s for me is real far-fetched. The '60s will be forgotten. Nostalgia for the '60s is more of a mental thing. It has no ring of reality.

Apparently, his antipathy for the sixties was genuine – a point he reiterated years later in his autobiography, *Chronicles*:

I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of.... I really was never any more than what I was – a folk musician who gazed into the gray mist with tear-blinded eyes and made up songs that floated in a luminous haze.... Reporters would shoot questions at me and I would tell them repeatedly that I was not a spokesman for anything or anybody and that I was only a musician.

In truth, he was more of a entrepreneurial capitalist than a radical socialist, and his taste for luxury was certainly out-of-synch with the anti-materialism of hippiedom. Dylan spurned all invitations to perform at the rock mega-festivals of the late sixties, and the hordes of hippies who converged near his home in Woodstock caused him great consternation. The reclusive Dylan did, however, agree to play one giant festival. In a rare public appearance, he headlined the Isle of Wight concert in August 1969. With The Beatles and other music luminaries in attendance, he sang for an hour and picked up a check for \$50,000 plus expenses. But other than that, he blithely ignored the social and political whirlwind swirling about at the time, except selectively and on his own terms.

### Rolling Thunder

Dylan drifted through the seventies, generally out of synch with the times and no longer a dominant artistic or cultural force. Musically, the decade began with a dreadful album of covers ironically titled *Self-Portrait*. (Greil Marcus began his review in *Rolling Stone* by asking incredulously, "What is this shit?") As Dylan's first certified flop, both artistically and commercially, *Self-Portrait* was a serious blow to his reputation, as was *Dylan* (1973), another mistitled (and ill-conceived) album of third-rate covers. Other LPs in the early '70s, *New Morning* (1970) and *Planet Waves* (1973), were mediocre offerings that generated little enthusiasm. "If Not for You," co-written with George Harrison, is a lilting and tender love song, but Dylan's rendition sounds rough and rushed and uninspired. In retrospect, the most interesting thing about these early '70s albums is his subtle but unmistakable interest in spiritual matters expressed in songs such as "Father of Night," "Forever Young," and "Wedding Song."

In June 1971 Dylan celebrated his thirtieth birthday at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, wearing a yarmulke and reportedly searching for his "Jewish identity." That August he performed at George Harrison's benefit concert for Bangladesh, his first live performance since the Woody Guthrie tribute over two years earlier, and the following year he appeared in the Sam Peckinpah film, *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, for which he also wrote a musical score that included one of his classics, "Knockin' On Heaven's Door."

Two major tours in the mid-seventies helped revive his sputtering career. In 1974 he embarked with The Band on a 40-city tour that was highly-acclaimed. A highlight of each concert was a 30-minute acoustic solo set, featuring "It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding." Coming in the midst of the Watergate scandal, crowds roared when he delivered the memorable line, "And even the president of the United States must sometimes have to stand naked." At one stop early on the tour, between the end of the regular set and the obligatory encore, hundreds in the audience, as if on cue, began holding aloft lit matches and cigarette lighters in a spontaneous demonstration of solidarity. The practice caught on and became a regular ritual at subsequent shows, and then standard fare at rock concerts in general for many years thereafter.



The following year Dylan organized The Rolling Thunder Review, a concert extravaganza featuring old friends like Roger McGuinn, Joan Baez, Ramblin' Jack Elliott and others. Conceived as a high-energy rock 'n' roll vaudeville show, Rolling Thunder

was, among other things, a Dylanesque version of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *Magical Mystery Tour* all rolled up into one, and although it turned into a bit of chaotic fiasco, it did generate a lot of energy. The creative juices were flowing once again, and his next two albums, *Blood on the Tracks* (1974) and *Desire* (1977), featured flashes of brilliance not seen since *Blonde On Blonde*, including classic compositions such as "Tangled Up In Blue," "Simple Twist of Fate," "Idiot Wind," "Shelter From the Storm," "Sara," and "Hurricane."

Meanwhile, life on the home front was unraveling, which ironically generated the kind of interpersonal conflict, inner turmoil, and pent-up emotions that inspired many of his best songs during this time. It takes a certain amount of aggression to write high-energy rock music, and despite his public image, Dylan had lived a fairly

quiet and conventional life with his wife and children since his motorcycle accident in 1966. He and Sara were apparently deeply in love, and they sought to be conscientious parents who tried to provide a stable home life for their children.

All that domestic tranquility began to change, however, around the time they left New York in 1973 and settled in California. The couple began building an extravagant beachfront mansion north of Malibu (a 20-room wood-frame monstrosity with a Russian-style onion dome that looked like something out of a twisted fairy-tale), and about the same time Dylan took off on the road, first with The Band and then with his Rolling Thunder cronies. Friction between Bob and Sara had been slowly intensifying, but it reached the boiling point when the Rolling Thunder tour turned into a rock 'n' roll bacchanalia that Sara could neither ignore nor tolerate. Dylan's sexual infidelities raged out of control, and for a couple of years the couple struggled to work things out. In the midst of the chaos, Dylan wrote "Sara," a tender tribute to his estranged wife and a plea for forgiveness and reconciliation. The song seemed to touch everyone who heard it -- except Sara. She finally filed for divorce in June 1977, citing mental and physical abuse and irreconcilable differences. For his part, Dylan, who had always thrived creatively in the midst of chaos and turmoil, poured his energies into his song writing and produce another fascinating album, the soul-tinged *Street-Legal*.

Saved!

Dylan's divorce and the subsequent child-custody battle did, eventually, lead to some sober introspection. In 1978 he toured extensively with an entourage that included various disposable groupies, including several black back-up vocalists. (The newly-divorced Dylan was acquiring quite an affinity for all things black -- he had even taken to eating a regular diet of soul food). One of the singers, Mary Alice Artes, had recently been "saved" and was actively involved in the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, a non-denominational charismatic church near Dylan's home in Malibu. At her suggestion, Dylan began attending Bible study classes at the church, and early in 1979 he was baptized and announced publicly that he had become a Christian. (Years later he would deny that he ever described himself as "born-again," but in a 1980 interview

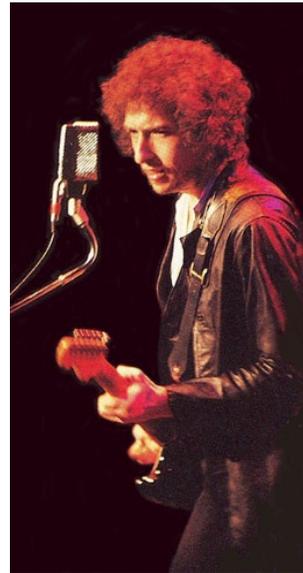
in the *L.A. Times* he was quoted as saying, "I truly had a born-again experience, if you want to call it that.")

His new-found faith had a revolutionary impact on his career for a couple of years and resulted in three remarkable albums: *Slow Train Coming* (1979), *Saved!* (1980), and *Shot of Love* (1981). Raised a nominal Jew, Dylan had always incorporated biblical themes into his music in songs such as "Long Ago, Far Away," "I'd Hate To Be You on That Dreadful Day," "When the Ship Comes In," "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," "Father of Night," "Forever Young," and others. Now, however, he was writing material that was explicitly Christian and fervently evangelistic. Even as a young songwriter Dylan held a spiritual view of inspiration, contending that he was merely a medium through which the songs were channeled. In an early interview in *Sing Out!* he had stated, "The songs are there [i.e., in the metaphysical realm]. They exist all by themselves just waiting for someone to write them down." Now, he was merely more personally attuned to the Cosmic Muse of the Universe.

*Slow Train Coming* received mixed reviews, usually depending upon the religious biases of the reviewers. Surprisingly, the normally cynical *Rolling Stone* was fairly positive, noting that "Faith is the message, and faith is the key to understanding this record." Conversely, *Sojourners* magazine, a leftwing Christian publication, expressed one of the strangest reactions. It almost seemed to lament his conversion, assuming that his association with charismatic evangelicalism signified that he had sold out to a right-wing political agenda. (For those who politicize everything, nothing is sacred. Incapable of clear, objective thinking, they judge even a Spirit-inspired, life-changing conversion by its political implications.)

Artistically, several songs from Dylan's Christian trilogy were particularly notable, including "Slow Train Coming," "Precious Angel," "I Believe in You," and the 1979 hit, "Gotta Serve Somebody," which remains his last single to reach the top forty charts. Another composition, "Every Grain of Sand," was a veritable masterpiece, equal to virtually anything he ever wrote. When Dylan toured with this material he often met hostile resistance from hardcore fans, many of whom were unreformed counterculture-types who showed up stoned, sullen, and cynical. Typical of the opposition was

a scathing review in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of his opening night performance under the headline, "Bob Dylan's God-Awful Concert."



Dylan in 1980: "You Gotta Serve Somebody"

But for his Christian fans and others who were more objective, these concerts were some of the most inspired shows of his entire career. Initially, Dylan seemed resolute in the face of some rather ferocious criticism, even refusing to play some of his more libertine songs of the past such as "Lay Lady Lay," "I Want You" and "Rainy Day Women." During one show at the University of Arizona he told the unruly

crowd that if they wanted to hear rock music they should go see KISS and "rock 'n' roll all the way down to the pit!"

Eventually, however, he seemed unnerved by the extent of the reaction, or perhaps his zeal began to cool, or maybe this was just another transitional phase in his existential journey through life. How deeply his Christian faith impacted his life is hard to gauge, although most who witnessed his live performances during this period would find it virtually inconceivable that he was anything but totally sincere. On the other hand, by all accounts his Christian conversion had no apparent effect on either his materialistic lifestyle or his hedonistic sex life. In time, he might have concluded that the Jesus connection was having a negative impact on his career. Pressured by declining record and concert revenues, intense hostility from fans, and a loss of status in the music industry – not to mention a costly divorce settlement and astronomical expenses – perhaps he reasoned that he simply couldn't afford to be a Christian. So forced to choose between his faith and career, he sacrificed the former for the sake of the latter.

There is, of course, another possibility: i.e., he never abandoned his faith but no longer felt the need to be overtly evangelistic about it. He had made his statement of faith, and as he related in an *L.A. Times* interview in December, 1980, there

was nothing more to be said:

I've made my statement, and I don't think I could make it any better than in some of those songs. Once I've said what I need to say in a song, that's it. I don't want to repeat myself.

According to this interpretation, Dylan remained a Christian but retreated once again into privacy. As he later implied, perhaps he sincerely believed that he could share universal truths more effectively by avoiding explicitly religious references. Whether this was heartfelt or merely a rationalization, only God and Dylan know -- although one might wonder if Dylan himself really even knows, as he confessed in a 1989 song, "Shooting Star":

Seen a shooting star tonight  
And I thought of me  
If I was still the same  
If I ever became what you wanted me to be  
Did I miss the mark or overstep the line  
That only you could see?

In a similar vein, "It's Not Dark Yet," off his 1997 CD, *Time Out of Mind*, is riddled with angst and despair:

Feel like my soul has turned into steel  
I've still got the scars that the sun (Son?)  
didn't heal....  
Well, my sense of humanity has gone down  
the drain  
Behind every beautiful thing there's been  
some kind of pain...  
Sometimes my burden seems more than I  
can bear  
It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.  
I was born here and I'll die here against  
my own will  
I know it looks like I'm moving, but I'm  
standing still  
Every nerve in my body is so vacant and  
numb  
I can't even remember what it was I came  
here to get away from  
Don't even hear the murmur of a prayer  
It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.

In 1983 the mercurial songster took another fork in the road, this time identifying with the Lubavitcher Hasidim, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect, and later that year he visited Jerusalem to celebrate his son Jesse's bar mitzvah. He also released a new album, *Infidels*, a strange brew of quasi-Christian apocalypticism ("Man of Peace"), populist politics ("Sundown on the

Union"), pro-Zionist sentiment ("Neighborhood Bully"), eccentric moralizing ("License to Kill"), sensitive romanticism ("Don't Fall Apart on Me Tonight") and patented Dylanesque slight-of-hand mysticism ("Jokerman"). For those who were looking for signs that Dylan had abandoned his Christian faith, *Infidels* and the Lubavitchers seemed to confirm their suspicions. Conversely, some Christians saw nothing alarming about it, viewing his renewed interest in Judaism as a further step in his evolving self-identity as a Jewish Christian.

### No Direction Home

For the next 14 years Dylan struggled creatively and, one might assume, personally. Certainly, his production during this time was unimpressive. "Emotionally Yours," off 1985's *Empire Burlesque*, was a rare reminder that he was still capable of writing a beautiful melody and touchingly sentimental lyrics, and *Oh Mercy!* (1989) included several social and religious commentaries that were lyrically interesting: "Political World," "Everything Is Broken," "Ring Them Bells," "Man In the Long Black Coat," "What Good Am I," "Disease of Conceit," and "Shooting Star." But as a recording artist, Dylan sounded uninspired and sloppy, and his raspy voice continued to deteriorate from years of chain-smoking. In concert he often appeared uninspired, inebriated, or just plain washed up, and his guitar playing was sometimes as bad as his singing.

In March 1984 he gave an incoherent performance on *Late Night With David Letterman* that left everyone mystified -- including his own bandmates. The following year he headlined the premier music event of the 1980s, the Live Aid benefit concert, with actor Jack Nicholson introducing him to the Gen X crowd with typical Hollywood hyperbole:

Some artists' work speaks for itself. Some artists' work speaks for a generation. It's my deep personal pleasure to present to you one of America's great voices of freedom...  
THE TRANSCENDENT BOB DYLAN!

Dylan took the stage to the roar of the crowd as a billion people watched on TV via global satellite links. Striking up the band, he proceeded to deliver a disappointingly transcendless performance, unaided by the sloppy guitar work of sidemen Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood of

The Stones. (Dylan later explained that the stage monitors weren't working and they couldn't hear themselves play, which threw off their timing.) Regardless, the one redeeming aspect of the fiasco was Dylan's off-hand comment that maybe they could "take a little bit of the money" raised and help pay the mortgages for American farmers who had fallen on hard times. Some considered the remark inappropriate, but it inspired Willie Nelson, Neil Young and friends to organize a Farm Aid benefit concert later that year at which Dylan also appeared.

One positive note in the midst of this mid-eighties malaise was Dylan's contribution to the 1985 hit single, "We Are the World." Written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, produced by Quincy Jones, and featuring more than forty singers, the song served as a fund-raiser for the ad hoc humanitarian organization, USA for Africa. In the midst of a galaxy of recording stars, Dylan's vocals and charismatic countenance clearly stood out as a highlight of the song.

A more sour note was struck in the summer of 1987 when Dylan joined The Grateful Dead on a tour that, in retrospect, could have been billed as Dead On Arrival. Understandably, The Dead were initially awed by the prospects of playing with a living legend, but their enthusiasm soon turned to embarrassment. Using the group as the back-up band for his set, Dylan played poorly, sang worse, and often forgot the words to his songs. The experience was a major disappointment for Jerry Garcia and company, although they managed to cobble together a CD, *Dylan and the Dead*, from among the least bad performances. A couple of years later, Dylan showed up at a Dead concert in California and insisted on accompanying them on stage for part of a set. The collaboration was a mess, prompting one band member to remark as they left the stage, "What the [blank] is *he* doing here?" Reportedly, Dylan offered to join the group on a full-time basis but was politely, and delicately, rebuffed.

In October 1992 the Sony Corporation sponsored a "Bob Dylan Thirtieth Anniversary Tribute Concert" featuring live renditions of Dylan tunes by George Harrison, Eric Clapton, The Clancy Brothers, Roger McGuinn, Neil Young, Tom Petty, Johnny Winter, Johnny and June Carter Cash, and many others. Other than the spectacle of an impromptu temper tantrum by Sinéad O'Connor, who was booed off the stage in response to a recent stunt on *Saturday Night Live*

in which she ripped up a picture of the pope to protest his stand on contraception and abortion, the worst thing about the concert was Dylan's own performance that closed out the show. For those who hadn't seen or heard him in years, he sounded more like a self-parody than a living legend. On a night marked by quirky and eccentric performances, the great irony was that most everyone on the bill did a better Dylan than Dylan.

Apparently, Dylan's off-stage personal life was about as erratic as his on-stage performances. He usually maintained three or four regular girlfriends at a time, supplemented by a parade of one-night stands, and in 1986 he secretly wed one of his back-up singers, Carolyn Dennis, after she gave birth to the couple's child. Although married, he didn't let it interfere with either his career or his social life as he continued dating other women and carrying on numerous affairs until Carolyn finally tired of the charade and filed for divorce four years later. Now, with another multi-million-dollar divorce settlement to contend with, his financial obligations included two ex-wives and at least six children along with several former mistresses.

To make ends meet and maintain his lavish lifestyle, Dylan embarked on The Neverending Tour – a nearly constant schedule of concerts. He also resorted to prostituting himself and his songs for everything he could get. In 1994 he licensed the use of two of his songs for the motion picture, *Forrest Gump*, and the following year he allowed both a Canadian bank and an American accounting firm to use "The Times They Are A-Changin'" in their advertisements. In 1996 he reportedly gave a private show in Phoenix for the employees and guests of Nomura Securities Company, for which he picked up a check for \$300,000. The times had indeed a-changed, with Dylan now just another shill for corporate capitalism – the same evil empire that he had castigated throughout his career from "Masters of War" (1963) to "Union Sundown" (1983).

Throughout the nineties Dylan maintained his manic tour schedule, playing about a hundred dates a year and usually traveling from venue-to-venue via bus. No more private airplanes and luxury hotel suites, and being far past his prime and without a hit CD for years, he played venues that would have been unthinkable in the past. (On one swing through California in 2000 he played on consecutive dates a movie theater, a

college gymnasium, a hockey arena, and a small civic auditorium.) His performances were predictably unpredictable, ranging from good to deplorable. Given his inability to sing anymore and an annoying habit of constantly altering the arrangements and melodies of his songs to suit his current mood, audiences oftentimes were clueless what he was playing until a familiar lyric emerged. Audiences almost always greeted him enthusiastically, but one has to wonder exactly what they were applauding. Certainly not the barely recognizable arrangements or the mumbled, unintelligible vocals. Biographer Howard Sounes writes that “Bob was capable of giving simply terrible shows that ended, like train wrecks, in a tangle of discordant sounds, leaving audience members struggling to remember why they were applauding.” There comes a time in most every performer’s career when, frankly, he or she is just not important anymore, except perhaps as a curio of the past or a touchstone for nostalgia, and on the rock circuit Dylan was clearly *passe*.

By the late nineties Dylan’s artistic creativity, if not OPD, was undeniably comatose. Few people expected much out of him – hence the pleasant surprise when he released *Time Out of Mind* in 1997, a remarkably interesting album that marked a brief resurgence in his flagging career. His voice hadn’t improved – still as raspy and grating as ever – and the album generally conveyed a dark, heavy, world-weary tone. But several of these songs were *good* – particularly the album’s four ballads: “Standin’ In the Doorway,” “Trying’ To Get to Heaven,” “Not Dark Yet,” and “Make You Feel My Love.” These songs confirmed once again what Dylan aficionados have always known and appreciated about Bob Dylan the songwriter – i.e., that his forte throughout his career has not been his lyrics so much as his melodies, many of which are exquisitely beautiful. Not surprisingly, given the talent-starved state of contemporary rock, *Time Out of Mind* was voted Best Album of the Year. One hoped that it wasn’t just the last gasps of a dying artist, but the follow up CD, *Love and Theft*,

seemed to signal a return to the doldrums of mediocrity.

### Legacy

For fifty years Bob Dylan has kept on the move, continuously reinventing himself and defying easy categorization. As one music critic once observed, “Dylan has so many angles, he’s round.” During a tour of England in the sixties, about the time he was being hailed as “the voice of a generation,” he responded flippantly to a journalist’s naive query by labeling himself a song-and-dance man. Whether prophetic or pathetic, he rocks ‘n’ rolls on, rarely looking

back, as he declared in a 1995 *Newsweek* interview: “I’d rather live in the moment than some kind of nostalgia trip, which I feel is a drug.... It’s outrageous. People are mainlining nostalgia like it was morphine. I don’t want to be a drug dealer.” Unfortunately, though, nostalgia is just about all Dylan has to offer anymore. His comments could be sage advice from a mature voice of reason, but are more likely the ramblings of a guy who has burned a lot of bridges behind him and become, for all his pretentious bravado



notwithstanding, the kind of person he once ridiculed in song: a rolling stone with no direction home.

Yet despite a career that has been, by Dylan’s own admission, on a downward spiral artistically ever since the late sixties, he remains, as David Gates wrote in *Newsweek*, “the most influential cultural figure now alive.” Gates goes on to observe, “There’s always been something uniquely strange about Dylan’s fame, the often-creepy intensity with which people have been drawn to him – or rather, to his mystique.” I agree. But music has been the defining force in popular culture ever since the advent of rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s, and Bob Dylan, for better or worse, has been the single-most significant and influential force in that particular art form. That’s quite a legacy. But in the case of Dylan there’s considerably more to it than that. For ours is an age marked by postmodern cynicism and a society that idolizes rolling stones with no direction home -- provided they’ve attained the

necessary celebrity status. In the midst of a contemporary culture that prefers materialism, hedonism, and existential self-gratification to simplicity, moderation, and authoritative revelation – while still yearning for spiritual and transcendent connectivity – Bob Dylan seems to be the representative man of our time.

---

### The Essential Bob Dylan A Selected Discography

---

#### *Bob Dylan* (1961)

- Talkin' New York
- Song To Woody

#### *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1962)

- Blowin' In the Wind
- Girl From the North Country
- Masters of War
- A Hard Rain's A- Gonna Fall
- Don't Think Twice, It's All Right
- Talking World War III Blues
- I Shall Be Free

#### *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (1963)

- The Times They Are A- Changin'
- With God On Our Side
- One Too Many Mornings
- Only a Pawn In Their Game
- Boots of Spanish Leather
- When the Ship Comes In
- The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll

#### *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (1964)

- All I Really Want To Do
- Chimes of Freedom
- I Shall Be Free No. 10
- Motorpsycho Nitemare
- My Back Pages
- Ballad In Plain D
- It Ain't Me Babe

#### *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965)

- Subterranean Homesick Blues
- She Belongs To Me
- Maggie's Farm
- Love Minus Zero / No Limit
- Mr. Tambourine Man
- Gates of Eden
- It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleedin')
- It's All Over Now, Baby Blue

#### *Highway 61 Revisited* (1966)

- Like a Rolling Stone
- Tombstone Blues
- Ballad of a Thin Man
- Queen Jane Approximately
- Highway 61 Revisited
- Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues
- Desolation Row

#### *Blonde on Blonde* (1966)

- Rainy Day Women #12 & 35
- One of Us Must Know
- I Want You
- Stuck Inside of Mobile With the Memphis Blues Again
- Just Like a Woman
- Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands

#### *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits* (1967)

- Positively 4th Street

#### *John Wesley Harding* (1968)

- John Wesley Harding
- As I Went Out One Morning
- I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine
- All Along the Watchtower
- I'll Be Your Baby Tonight

#### *Nashville Skyline* (1969)

- Lay Lady Lay

#### *New Morning* (1970)

- If Not for You
- Father of Night

#### *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits, Volume II* (1971)

- The Mighty Quinn
- I Shall Be Released
- You Ain't Goin' Nowhere

#### *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* soundtrack (1973)

- Knockin' On Heaven's Door

#### *Blood on the Tracks* (1974)

- Tangled Up in Blue
- Idiot Wind
- Shelter From the Storm

#### *Planet Waves* (1974)

- Forever Young

#### *Desire* (1975)

- Hurricane
- Sara

#### *Street-Legal* (1978)

- Changing of the Guards
- No Time To Think
- Baby Stop Crying
- Is Your Love In Vain?
- Senor (Tales of Yankee Power)

#### *Slow Train Coming* (1979)

- Gotta Serve Somebody
- Precious Angel
- I Believe In You
- Slow Train

#### *Saved* (1980)

- A Satisfied Mind/Saved
- Covenant Woman
- Pressing On
- Saving Grace

#### *Shot of Love* (1981)

- Property of Jesus
- The Groom's Still Waiting At the Altar
- In the Summertime
- Every Grain of Sand

*Infidels* (1983)

- Jokerman
- Neighborhood Bully
- License To Kill
- Man of Peace
- Union Sundown
- I and I
- Don't Fall Apart On Me Tonight
- When the Night Comes Falling

*Empire Burlesque* (1985)

- Emotionally Yours

*Down In the Groove* (1988)

- Death Is Not the End

*Oh Mercy* (1989)

- Political World
- Everything Is Broken
- Ring Them Bells
- Man In the Long Black Coat
- Most of the Time
- What Good Am I?
- Disease of Conceit
- Shooting Star

*Time Out of Mind* (1997)

- Standin' In the Doorway
- Tryin' To Get To Heaven
- Not Dark Yet
- Make You Feel My Love

*Gods and Generals* soundtrack (2003)

- 'Cross the Green Mountain

## Addenda -- not included on commercial LPs:

- Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues
- I'd Hate to be You on That Dreadful Day
- Whatcha Gonna Do?
- Farewell, Angelina
- Seven Days
- Ye Shall Be Changed
- You Changed My Life
- Lord, Protect My Child