

SPECIAL BOB DYLAN SUPPLEMENT

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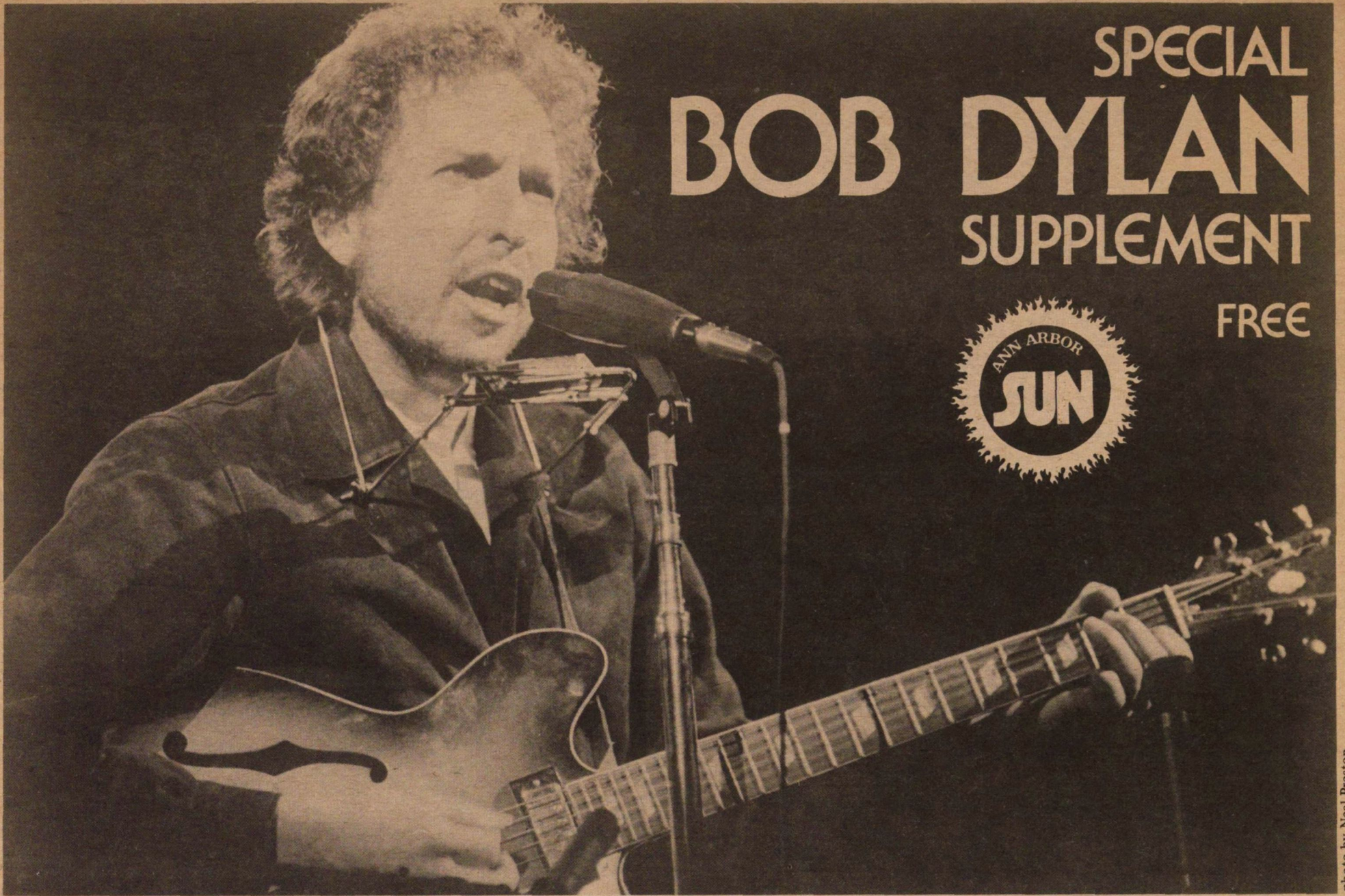


photo by Neal Preston

Dylan Concert Reviews: HIGHWAY 74 REVISITED

CHICAGO

By David Witz

When Bob Dylan stepped to the front of the Chicago Stadium stage and The Band slammed into "Hobo Blues," it wasn't a time for bleary-eyed nostalgia. It was a time for exultation.

For, on the first date of his first major tour in eight years, Chicago did not see the folk-outlaw Dylan. Nor did they see the electric Dylan, the country Dylan or the protesting Dylan. Rather, they saw all of these and more, fused into one Bob Dylan.

His sudden shifts in mood and music over his career have left many followers bewildered, confused, angry and questioning. In the early, early days, his high school rock band emptied dancehalls. His first appearances at the Cafe Wha? in New York in 1961 were raw, impassioned and riveting to those who saw within the crudeness.

When he began singing topical songs of his own composition, an entire folk army rose to the call. And when he appeared at the Newport Folk Festival with a rock band, the purists switched off while yet a newer generation switched on.

More rock, and a stumble (*Self Portrait*), followed by a happy, quick recovery (*New Morning*). Now, with his own label, the Band behind him and encrusted with more myths than any other contemporary figure, Bob Dylan is back.

He wandered around on stage, a pre-

occupied expression on his face and a leather jacket on his back, when the Band played its numbers. Dylan combed his guitar and blew his harp, a stray molecule in one of America's tightest rock and roll units.

And when the stage was his, it was all his: the punk, the James Dean, the rock and roll gangster and his tough-as-horsemeat backup. Roughest bunch on the block, pounding out defiance, venom, joy.

The Chicago Stadium concert was, for all purposes, a dry run. Dylan and the Band worked out the set on stage, never speaking directly to the audience outside of the music. Dylan did a few, the Band did a few, and there was an unplanned encore. Whether the Ann Arbor concert, a month into the tour, will be the final version or another shaping-up session, is impossible to say.

Except for the tunes from the newest album, every song was immediately recognizable to the Stadium audience. A new, electric version of "It Ain't Me Babe," much different from his earlier electric version, threw everyone for a loop until, of course, the first line.

And in the second half, Dylan came out alone with acoustic guitar in hand and harp in holder and launched into "The Times They Are A-Changin'." At that point, some thought the old Dylan had returned. But there was a new edge to his voice; the song had weathered well and now took on entirely new meanings and nuances.

The Band came back, more Dylan from then and now, and "Like A Rolling Stone." Then it was over, and the audience, which had

arrived as a single mass, left one by one — 20,000 individuals who had been touched deeply inside by one man.

What did they get out of it? Well, what were they looking for? Psychic salvation? A direction for the Seventies? A key to their own inner workings? Or just a good, rockin' time?

Those after the last were probably the most easily satisfied, for Dylan is the one performer who can bare himself for over two hours and still remain hidden.

Why is he doing this tour? Why has he

come back now, of all times? Are these questions necessary?

With Bob Dylan, all questions are necessary. And their being asked is more important than their being answered.

PHILADELPHIA

by Matt Darnsker
the Philadelphia Drummer

A great rock & roll concert but caught up in one of those peculiar time-warps: Bob Dylan — poet to an electric generation and prophet to boot — makes his long-awaited return to the stage. Comes to Philadelphia on this Exorcism Eve of the American body politic; comes to climax the sixties a mere four years into the seventies, dressed in a dark rumpled suit and what looks like a Korvette polo, backed by the venerable Band. Comes to sing his songs in an angry (make no mistake) voice, looking his years and savoring the sweet taste of prophecy fulfilled.

Here's the vindicated generation, aware of the IMPEACH NIXON banner that hangs implacably, uncontroversially, from the upper level. And here's The Man, the visionary who told it like it was, whose every song exhibits a genuine hatred of hypocrisy and coupled with a painful and ironic awareness of its pervasiveness. When he sings that line, the line — "even the President of the
(continued on next page)



photo by Neal Preston

HIGHWAY 74 REVISITED

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Yoonited States must sometimes have to stand naked" — the audience reacts predictably, roaring its appreciation like a victorious army at the feast of the spoils. Yes Bob, you were so right. We're going into the eighties and won't we call the tune.

It was a great rock & roll concert. From the opening moment, "Rainy Day Women," The Band and Bob attacking with chunky, full-blooded lubricated Rock. Bob singing aggressively and pointedly. Robbie Robertson's lead guitar screaming throughout the night. Through an exaggerated vocal on "It Ain't Me Babe" and into a riveting "I Don't Believe Her," ending the set at the piano with "Ballad of a Thin Man." The Band follows with a program of favorites from their first three lps and then Bob returns to lead a savage, rousing and ovation-inspiring "All Along the Watchtower," and a good-

humored "Leopard Skin Pillbox Hat," followed by "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" from the Billy The Kid soundtrack. Then the Band takes its leave and Bob is solo for an acoustic set.

A hard-edged vocal on "The Times They Are A-Changin'" softens a bit through emotionally wringing versions of "Baby Blue," "Song to Woody," and "Tambourine Man." Then a new song, the first of the night, called "You." It's one of Dylan's best love ballads ("Everybody wants my attention and everybody's got something to sell, 'cept you, yeah you. . ."). A revival atmosphere for "It's Alright Ma," then the Band returns for four more of their own, and then Bob is back to finish up the night with a few more tunes, ending angrily and loud with "Like a Rolling Stone." The crowd sustains a roar of infinite approval, the encore is "Most Likely You'll Go Your Way" and after three hours of Bob Dylan and the Band that's about the only thing The Man can say to us. Other than the music, not a word. Just a split-second salute of thanks as he leaves the stage.

TORONTO

by Shawn McGrath
Toronto Blade

Bob Dylan, the angry poet of the youth movement, returned to Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens for the first time in eight years and proved he is still a human being. The reluctant messiah of the sixties was, as he admitted, a bit off for the first of his two concerts here Wednesday. Still a technically fine musician, he gave the impression that he just wasn't listening to himself sing.

The crowd, 19,000 strong, were ready for him, but when Dylan appeared, dark-suited and sombre, and began adjusting his electric guitar, their welcoming roar went without

response. He launched in his first song, "Everybody Must Get Stoned", and that set the tone for the first set. It was a safe set, with many Dylan favorites and a few lesser knowns.

Purely as a concert, this was such fantastic music. First of all the evening's generous length—close to three hours—provided a tellingly cumulative history of Dylan's contribution to contemporary music. It's an achievement in the linking of melody with lyrics which only really becomes apparent and overwhelming when Dylan himself sings his work. "All Along the Watchtower" was a real highlight, thanks to the Band's driving beat, with Richard Manuel's spooky electric piano and Robbie Robertson's lead riff that acknowledged the Jimi Hendrix version without imitating it.

However, the disparity between Dylan's non-responsive personality and the savage, sensual, sardonic thrust of his music is like a come-on. You keep waiting for a glimpse of the spirit that wrote the songs which never quite emerges.

The Band itself, too, had solo occasions, which they seized to work through most of their best-known material, most beautifully in a floating transparent version of I Shall Be Released.

Given the exceptional artistic level, then, why did the Dylan concert nevertheless disappoint? I think it's because Bob Dylan is unwilling, or unable, to satisfy us on an emotional level. We respond with such an intensity to his songs, particularly those which we now feel as second nature in ourselves; we want to pay back the debt with our adulation, but Dylan won't have it. A couple of cursory bows were the only indication of our existence.

At times, the audience's need to be acknowledged acquired a manic intensity. Thus, in the finale, when the house-lights were turned out as Dylan and The Band took us through the long unwinding melody of "Like A Rolling Stone", the audience roared—not just because of what Dylan had given to us, but because in the full light, he had at last to admit that we were there with him.



photo by Neal Preston



photo by Randy Leffingwell, Chicago Sun-Times

Dylanology QUIZ

1. *Girl From The North Country* was written for:

- a. Joan Baez
- b. Suze Rotolo
- c. Mimi Farina
- d. Echo Helstrom

2. Which of the following albums does not appear on Dylan's floor on the cover of *Bringing It All Back Home*?

- a. Impressions/Keep On Pushing
- b. The Immortal Dinah Washington
- c. Folk Blues of Eric Anderson
- d. Lotte Lenya

3. And on the same subject, the woman on that cover sitting behind Dylan is:

- a. Albert Grossman's wife, Sally
- b. Clive Davis' mistress, Trixie
- c. John Hammond's daughter, Joanna
- d. Bob Dylan's sister, Gertrude

4. *Song to Woody* is for Woody:

- a. Strobe
- b. Woodpecker
- c. Guthrie
- d. Herman

5. Who of the following has never recorded a Dylan tune?

- a. Four Seasons
- b. Faces
- c. Rita Coolidge
- d. Steve Miller

6. Dylan stole his arrangement of *Baby, Let Me Follow You Down* (1962) from:

- a. Ramblin' Jack Elliot
- b. Woody Guthrie
- c. Dave Von Ronk
- d. Paul Stookey

7. *The Concert for Bangladesh* took place in:

- a. Carnegie Hall, 1970.
- b. Madison Square Garden, 1971.
- c. Lincoln Center, 1969.
- d. New York Coliseum, 1972.

8. Dylan's sometimes pseudonym is:

- a. Patrick Sky
- b. Dirty Rivers
- c. Blind Boy Grunt
- d. Eddie Arnold

9. Dylan plays harmonica behind Harry Belafonte on the album:

- a. Calypso
- b. Belafonte at Carnegie Hall
- c. Belafonte Meets Odetta
- d. The Midnight Special

10. Dylan didn't write:

- a. A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall
- b. Rainy Day Women #21 & 35
- c. What Have They Done To The Rain?
- d. Winterlude

11. Dylan first recorded with a rock band in:

- a. 1965 (*Bringing It All Back Home*)
- b. 1962 (*Mixed Up Confusion/Corrina Corrina*)
- c. 1963 (*Bob Dylan's Dream*)
- d. 1965 (*Highway 61 Revisited*)

12. In 1970, Dylan got an honorary degree from:

- a. Harvard
- b. Boston University
- c. Yale
- d. Princeton

13. Dylan was born:

- a. May 24, 1941 — Duluth, Minnesota
- b. January 11, 1943 — Hibbing, Minnesota
- c. March 30, 1938 — Taos, New Mexico
- d. November 6, 1946 — Brooklyn, New York

14. The first rock group to record Dylan was:

- a. The Byrds
- b. The Animals
- c. The Blues Project
- d. Levon and the Hawks

15. The first rock band to back Dylan was:

- a. The Band
- b. Paul Butterfield's Blues Band
- c. Blues Project
- d. Little Richard

Answers:

- 1. d. 2. b. 3. a. 4. c. 5. d. 6. c. 7. b. 8. c. 9. d. 10. c. 11. b. 12. d. 13. a. 14. a. 15. b.

LOOKING BACK ... Dylan in Retrospect

by Eliot Wald

It is a chilly day in late 1963, and the several thousand assembled marchers are stamping to keep warm. John Kennedy is still President, Civil Rights is the cause of the day, and despite Bull Connors and his Birmingham police dogs, the spirits are high. Near the back of the crowd, a small group of friends begins to sing "Blowin' in the Wind"—"How many roads must a man walk down, before they call him a man?" The song is so perfectly tuned to the feeling of the day that the singing spreads rapidly. Soon, the whole rear half of the line is singing. . . "And how many times must the cannonballs fly, before they are forever banned?" Everyone feels a little warmer and surer of themselves.

* * *

There are three or four thousand work-shirt-and-jeans wearers in Carnegie Hall, listening intently to Bob Dylan's nervous joking from the stage. He launches into "The Times They Are A-Changin'" and when he gets to the line: "All you mothers and fathers throughout the land/Don't criticize what you can't understand/Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command..." the house goes up for grabs. It's as if, by the wildness of their enthusiasm, the message will be carried to the moms and pops who just an hour before, warned their children not to come home late from the Dylan concert. Not exactly beyond your command, Mom, but they're never Coming Home again.

* * *

In a dingy apartment, circa 1965, a nail-thin joint is making the rounds with an audible "whooshhh." ("Hey, don't waste any, man, the nickel we got last week's just about empty.") Meanwhile, the record player is singing "Hey Mr. Tambourine Man," and the words "Take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind. . ." bring a murmur of stoned, knowing laughter. Marijuana, just emerged from the criminal's closet, is a secret giggle shared with Dylan and your friends.

* * *

"You know somethin' is happenin' here, but you don't know what it is. . . Do you, Mr. Jones?" The young black community organizer turns to his friend, an ex-stand-up comic he'd met in college, and says. . . "Hey, this cat really knows what's happenin'!" Some time after the night they listened to "Ballad of A Thin Man," Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and the rest of Oakland's fledgling Black Panther Party hit the national headlines by toting their guns to the California State Capitol in protest of a gun control bill aimed, they felt, at disarming the black

community. Needless to say, the State Legislators inside felt considerably like the aforementioned Mr. Jones.

Two years later, the street-fighting faction of SDS cops a line from "Subterranean Homesick Blues"—"You don't need a Weatherman to know which way the wind blows." Before the year is out, a dozen of these self-proclaimed Weathermen are fugitives from the FBI.

* * *

January 1974: Chicago Stadium. 20,000 Dylan fans all but tear the roof off when Dylan opens the second half of the show clad in a white tunic and acoustic guitar. Unaccompanied, he sings five songs from the early-middle era, including "It's All Right Ma, I'm Only Bleeding." When he reaches the ringing phrase, "But even the President of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked," all 20,000 roar testimony that a naked Richard Nixon in 1974 would be just as satisfying as a bare LBJ was in 1968. As Dylan bows offstage, fully 5,000 of the throng scramble to light matches, candles, cigarettes and any other nearby flammable in ecstatic assent to the past, present and future tense of Bob Dylan.

Studying Bob Dylan as a musical phenomenon is akin to peering at the kitty litter to learn about the cat. Dylan represents the crest of a wave that's been breaking on the coastline of America—and the world—for nearly fifteen years. And the incredible world-wide press coverage that this tour has received is only an indication of how many people got their feet wet when the tide came in.

Spawned by the high energy of Fifties rock and roll and the lyrical voice of Sixties folk music, both the generation and the



photo by Neal Preston

singer have been damned and praised, dissected and dismissed, analyzed, mythologized and misunderstood more often than any other phenomenon in the history of global communications.

Stepping out of the complacent but nerve-racking Eisenhower Years, the generation that Dylan led and followed managed, by word of mouth alone, to all but tear down American Ethic that seven generations of their forbears worked so hard to erect.

Of course, what was termed "protest music" was just the beginning of the line for Dylan and his millions of cohorts. Like an amoeba feeding on the readily apparent hypocrisy of the world outside their parents' door, they outgrew mere political reformism and began calling quite loudly for the radical alteration of the prevailing lifestyle.

All the while, Dylan perched so comfortably on the cutting edge of the thrust that a social history of the Sixties' youth movement could be coherently constructed from nothing more than his song-fragments. And if all the parents who had those fragments thrown in their face by rebellious offspring were gathered together, there would be no room left for the Dylan fans.

Everyone knows by now that this mover and shaker came fidgeting out of Minnesota, hung up on Woody Guthrie and bent on stardom. They know about Greenwich Village, and the booking at Forest Hills when he plugged his guitar into a common electrical appliance. They know about his mysterious disappearance behind the facade of a motorcycle accident, from which he was to emerge married, fatherly and countrified. Thanks to Tony Scaduto's often brilliant biography, we even know that he was as much a son-of-a-bitch as a Son of God. So much the egotist poet, in fact, that most of those songs we thought to be about US were actually about HIM.

He defined his audience and his concerns in "Chimes of Freedom:"

"...the countless confused, accused, misused strung-out ones and worse. . . for every hung-up person in the whole wide universe. . . we gazed upon the chimes of freedom flashin'."

And he never, now that you mention it, made an exception of himself.

Everyone has their own favorite Dylan line; the one that captures their feelings during that period of dawning consciousness. For me, it's that flat, almost-contemptuous line from "My Back Pages" . . .

*"Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now."*

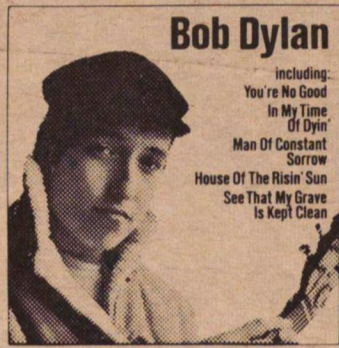
In its own context, I suppose it was meant to be a sneer at the early days of "protest songs; at the smug, too-easy disdain they showed for the real world. For me, it crystallized a rejection of the whole artificial concept of "adulthood"—the school-job-marriage-children-house reflex chain drummed in by parental decree. If getting off that particular train in favor of alternatives based on trust, love, communality, anti-materialism, open sexuality and consciousness expansion constituted immaturity, I voted against growing up.

That period signalled a new direction for Dylan—involuted, dark, magical and very personal—and all that fit right into the innerspace explorations that were to follow. But somehow, that line lingers in my mind as the birth-cry of a generation of reverse-time mutants.

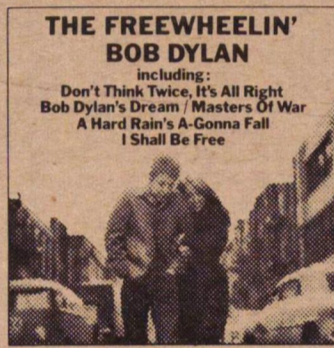
So now, after eight years incognito, Dylan re-emerges to replace the myth with a human quantity. After the stunning impact of first visual contact wears off, it dawns that like all the rest of that Sixties dream stuff, Dylan is real and vulnerable. His guitar, like ours, gets out of tune a lot, and sometimes he has to scratch his butt. Some of the new songs are downright mushy, and some of the very old ones—those crushed under the weight of countless repetitions by lesser talents—sound a bit trite.

But maybe it's all right for the man who became the most important artist of a decade to be a little half-assed sometimes. We have finally succeeded in discarding the age of myth for a real attempt at creating a functioning alternative, and miracles should be confined to Bibles, dreams and poems. So welcome back, Bob. . . get in line and help us push. The times, thankfully, are still a-changin'.

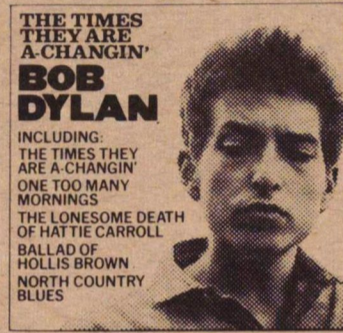
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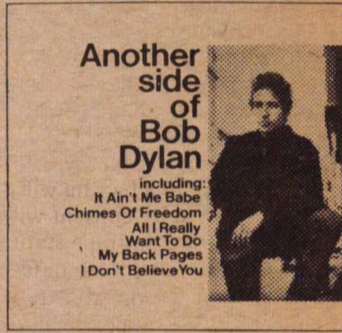
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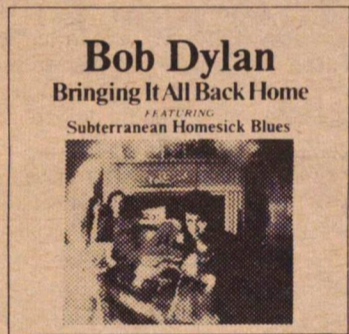
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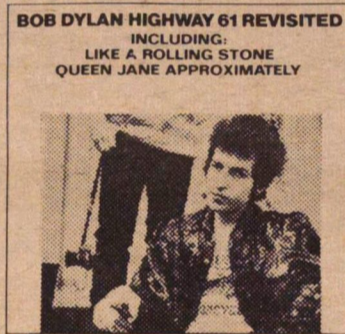
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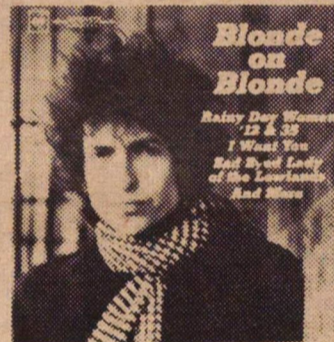
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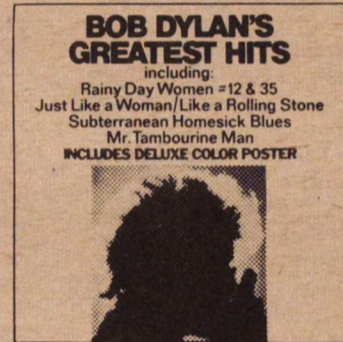
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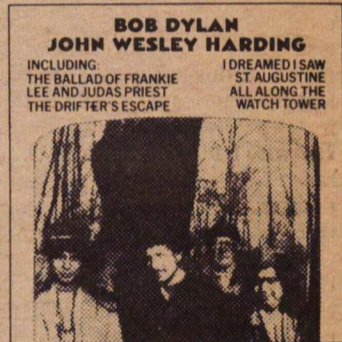
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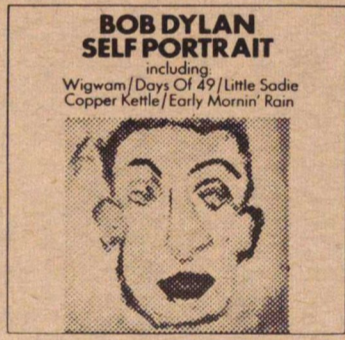
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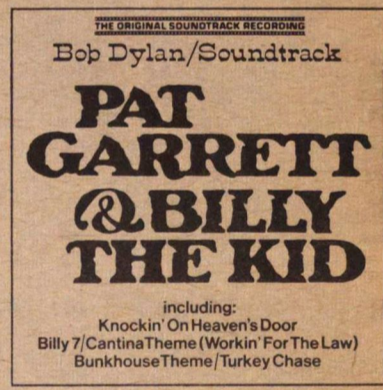
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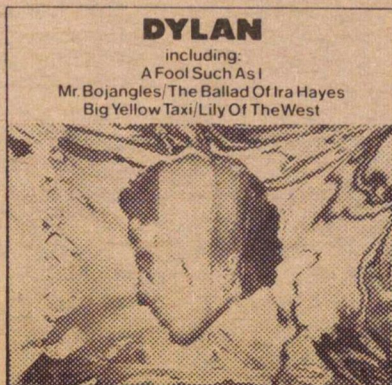
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