

Bob Dylan. The story so far.

Bob Dylan was twenty years old when his first Columbia album, "Bob Dylan," was released. It caused its biggest stir in New York's Greenwich Village where Bob was a local favorite. The liner notes included a reprint of Robert Shelton's 1961 piece in *The New York Times* entitled, "Bob Dylan: A Distinctive Folk-Song Stylist." It included this memorable description of Bob Dylan: "Resembling a cross between a choirboy 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." The first album contained a few originals like "Talkin' New York" and "Song to Woody" and a lot of traditional and composed folk tunes adapted to the emerging Bob Dylan style, including "House of the Risin' Sun," "Man of Constant Sorrow," "Fixin' to Die," "Pretty Peggy-O," "Gospel Plow" and "Freight Train Blues."



It took Peter, Paul and Mary's recording of "Blowin' in the Wind," a tune from Bob Dylan's second album, to direct some national attention to this new songwriter. Peter, Paul and Mary followed up their biggest hit with another tune from "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" album, "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right." And the movement was under way. As soon as people got Bob Dylan's album and heard songs like "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," "Masters of War," "Oxford Town," "Talkin' World War III Blues," and even the lovely "Girl From the North Country," the word spread. Here was somebody who could put it into words. Someone that had to be listened to. And since there wasn't much of a chance to hear Bob Dylan's most powerful songs on the radio, an underground was born.



The latest words from Bob Dylan disappointed no one. His "The Times They Are A-Changin'" album took the concept of "protest music" still another step farther. And by now the stark Bob Dylan style of guitar, harmonica, half-singing, half-talking, was known and accepted (and was being copied) by people everywhere. The new songs were exciting: "With God on Our Side," "One Too Many Mornings," "Only a Pawn in Their Game," "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," "When the Ship Comes In," "North Country Blues," "Ballad of Hollis Brown" and "Restless Farewell."



In the song "My Back Pages" Bob Dylan questions his role as the guru of young America. He seems intent on changing his image with the explanation, "I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now." Most of the new songs on "Another Side of Bob Dylan" are less political, more personal. "It Ain't Me Babe" drives home the point. "All I Really Want to Do," "Motorpsycho Nitemare," "I Shall Be Free No. 10," "Ballad in Plain D," "Chimes of Freedom," "Black Crow Blues" and "I Don't Believe You" all seem declarations of freedom from his past. Clues to his future. Bob Dylan fans wonder what's next. Little do they suspect...



Bob Dylan's first commercial single, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," and a half-electric, half-acoustic album of enigmatic, rocking, funny, great new tunes. That was next. And with "Bringing It All Back Home," the legend of the ever changing, always pioneering musical force was born. The songs confused a lot of people who thought they knew Bob Dylan. Which is probably the precise effect Bob Dylan wanted. Included are "She Belongs to Me," "Maggie's Farm," "Love Minus Zero/No Limit," "Outlaw Blues," "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Gates of Eden," "It's



Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," and for anybody who still didn't get the hint, "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue."

"Highway 61 Revisited" was Bob Dylan's first all-electric, no-doubt-about-the-kind-of-music-I-choose-to-make album. It contains his first big hit, "Like a Rolling Stone." And it declared for all the world to hear that Bob Dylan wasn't simply a brilliant songwriter, but a magnificent rock vocalist as well. The songs are extensions of the enigmatic Bob Dylan style: "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," "Ballad of a Thin Man," "Queen Jane Approximately," "Desolation Row," "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues," "From a Buick 6," "Tombstone Blues," "With Michael Bloomfield on guitar, Al Kooper on organ and piano, Charlie McCoy on guitar and Russ Savakus on bass."



In a 1976 issue of *Crawdaddy*, Peter Knobler said, "No question about it. 'Blonde on Blonde' is the best rock 'n' roll record ever made." He's not the first to feel that way. Reviewers at the time of its release called "Blonde on Blonde" the definitive Bob Dylan album, the ultimate rock album, and even the ultimate album, period. It's a two-record set, recorded in Nashville with one of the greatest backup bands in recording history: Charlie McCoy, Kenneth Buttrey, Joe South, Al Kooper, Jaime Robertson, Wayne Moss and Jerry Kennedy. And the songs: "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35," "I Want You," "Memphis Blues Again," "Just Like a Woman," "Visions of Johanna," "Leopard-skin Pill-box Hat," "Pledging My Time," "Most Likely You Go Your Way and I'll Go Mine," "Temporary Like Achilles," "Absolutely Sweet Marie," "4th Time Around" and "Obviously 5 Believers." And the longest, and at times most cryptic, of the Bob Dylan classics, "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands." There are probably more worn-out copies of "Blonde on Blonde" in existence than any other album in American music history.



The first album of "Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits" was released during the long interim between "Blonde on Blonde" and "John Wesley Harding." It summed up all that had gone before, including all of Bob Dylan's own hit singles and some of his songs that other people had turned into giant hits. Also, it's the only Bob Dylan album containing his underground classic single, "Positively 4th Street." And it comes complete with another classic: The Milton Glaser/Bob Dylan poster.



"John Wesley Harding" was a return to simpler things for Bob Dylan. And soon after, for the entire music scene. It's a mellow album with some of the best Bob Dylan vocals ever. And some of his most durable songs, including "All Along the Watchtower," "Dear Landlord," "The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest," "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine," "As I Went Out One Morning," "The Wicked Messenger," "I Pity the Poor Immigrant," "Down Along the Cove," "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight," "Drifter's Escape" and "I Am a Lonesome Hobo."



The cover of "Nashville Skyline" tells its story. It's Bob Dylan relaxed, unwound, laying down his latest country-flavored ditties. Once again, the music scene quickly picked up on Bob Dylan's lead and country-influenced music became the right direction to be headed in. On "Nashville Skyline," a new Bob Dylan sings, "Girl From the North Country," with Johnny Cash, "Lay, Lady, Lay," "I Threw It All Away," "Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You" and "Country Pie." All very laid back and enjoyable.



"Self Portrait" tells the story of the conflict between the old Bob Dylan, the new Bob Dylan, and the Bob Dylans in between. They're all here, including new Bob Dylan originals, some Bob Dylan oldies revisited at the Isle of Wight, and, for the first time in years, some non-original material (like Paul Simon's "The Boxer," Gordon Lightfoot's "Early Mornin' Rain," "Copper Kettle," "Alberta," "Gotta Travel On," "Blue Moon" and "Take a Message to Mary"). Songs that fit the story Bob Dylan seems to be telling here. Also on "Self Portrait" (it's a two-record set): "Days of 49," "All the Tired Horses," "Living on the Streets," "Wigwam," "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know," "Little Sadie," "The Mighty Quinn (Quinn the Eskimo)," "Let It Be Me," "Belle Isle," "It Hurts Me Too," "Minstrel Boy," "Take Me as I Am (Or Let Me Go)," among others.



Every Bob Dylan hit that wasn't included on the first "Greatest Hits" album and every hit that came since is included here, in this two-record set, "Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits/Volume II." There are even a bunch of songs never before on any Bob Dylan album: "Watching the River Flow," the single recorded with Leon Russell, "When I Paint My Masterpiece" and "I Shall Be Released," songs recorded by The Band, "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" and "Tomorrow Is a Long Time," recorded by countless people, but never Bob Dylan. And "Down in the Flood," an old favorite from Bob Dylan's concert days. Twenty-one great hits in all. If you have all the other albums it's a beautiful luxury. If you don't, it's a necessity.

In "New Morning" it seems as if the old Bob Dylan has won out. Bob Dylan never sounded more like Bob Dylan. And every song is a jewel: "If Not for You," "Sign on the Window," "Day of the Locusts," "Time Passes Slowly," "Went to See the Gypsy," "Winterlude," "If Dogs Run Free," "One More Week-end," "The Man in Me," "Three Angels" and "Father of Noise." The songs run the Bob Dylan gamut from bitter to romantic...something to make everyone realize that despite a decade of changes, Bob Dylan, and nobody else, is Bob Dylan.



"Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid" heralds a new loosening-up period for Bob Dylan. With this album, the man who shied away from the snooping eye of the public for so long presents his first soundtrack. And it's a soundtrack for a movie that lists among its cast one Bob Dylan, in the role of "Alias." Unlike any other soundtrack in history, this one is completely composed and performed by Bob Dylan, so it's not like any soundtrack you've ever heard. Most of it sounds like Bob Dylan, sitting around with a few friends, making real nice music. And as it turned out, one of the real nice songs turned into one of Bob Dylan's biggest singles, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

No individual in rock has ever heard more different interpretations of his songs than Bob Dylan. On "Dylan," Bob reversed roles with people like Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez, Jerry Jeff Walker and even Elvis, singing songs associated with them...songs nobody would have expected him to sing...and having a good time, making it all sound like...wonder of wonders...a Bob Dylan album! Here's the line-up of tunes: "A Fool Such as I," "Can't Help Falling in Love," "Mr. Bojangles," "Big Yellow Taxi," "Mary Ann," "Spanish Is the Loving Tongue," "Lily of the West," "The Ballad of Ira Hayes" and "Sarah Jane."



"Bob Dylan is back." "Bob Dylan has come home." "Album of the century." The critics couldn't say enough about "Blood on the Tracks," the start of a new period of brutally personal music making for Bob Dylan. All

that talk about Bob Dylan coming home was literally (in addition to spiritually) true. "Idiot Wind," "Tangled Up in Blue," and "Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts," among others, were recorded in Minnesota using local musicians. The owner of a local guitar store dropped by to sell Bob Dylan a guitar and wound up playing on the session. And the bass player had to leave mid-session to play a bar date, so "You're a Big Girl Now" was recorded sans bass. Other classics on the "album of the century" include: "Simple Twist of Fate," "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go," "Meet Me in the Morning," "If You See Her, Say Hello," "Shelter From the Storm" and "Buckets of Rain."



Rolling Stone declared seven albums as "Albums of the Year" in 1975. Two of them are on this page... "Blood on the Tracks" and "The Basement Tapes." Though it was, indeed, released in '75, the legendary "Basement Tapes" were recorded on a home tape recorder during the long hiatus between "Blonde on Blonde" and "John Wesley Harding." Some of the 24 songs recorded in the basement of Big Pink by Bob Dylan and The Band were bootlegged, covered by other artists,



written about...yet until the release of this album, few people realized the magnitude and the quality of these recordings. Twenty-four songs...that's too much to list here, but some of the highlights include: "Odds and Ends," "Million Dollar Bash," "Goin' to Acapulco" (among the songs never even bootlegged), "Lo and Behold!" "Please, Mrs. Henry," "Too Much of Nothing," "Crash on the Levee (Down in the Flood)," "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere," "Don't Ya Tell Henry," "Nothing Was Delivered," "Open the Door, Homer" and "This Wheel's on Fire." You get the idea.

Who could have predicted that the biggest thing to happen to music in 1976 would be Bob Dylan? The Rolling Thunder Revue was headline news as it barnstormed across the country. "Desire," with its haunting new sound, was the #1 album in the nation for a full month. And each of the songs was treated like a separate, special event by reviewers and radio folk. "Hurricane," a hit single and the theme of some benefit concerts that later evolved into the Rolling Thunder Revue. "Joey" about underworld figure Joey Gallo. "Sara" about a girl with the same name as Bob Dylan's wife. "Isis," an enigmatic epic. "Mozambique," the single that was stopped cold in its airplay tracks when a war broke out in the real Mozambique. "Oh, Sister," with the violin of Scarlet Rivera singing co-lead. "One More Cup of Coffee," "Romance In Durango," "Black Diamond Bay" How much more real than this can Bob Dylan be?



"Hard Rain"

is the definitive sound of Bob Dylan in live performance. All the excitement of the headline-making Rolling Thunder Revue is captured for all time. The performances are the best of many, many...including songs from nearly every phase of Bob Dylan's career. Completely revisited are: "Shelter From the Storm," "Lay, Lady, Lay," "Maggie's Farm," "Stuck Inside of Mobile With the Memphis Blues Again," "I Threw It All Away," "One Too Many Mornings," "Oh, Sister," "Idiot Wind" and "You're a Big Girl Now." Let's face it, there have been only a handful of "live" albums in recorded history that have had a real reason for being. "Hard Rain" is not only one of them, it could be the best of them.



If you're missing anything on these pages, you're really missing something.

Bob Dylan on Columbia Records and Tapes