

The Grouse House Gazette

Thoughts and Observations on Music, Nature, and Politics, from the Catskill Mountains

ISSUE #123 – JANUARY 27th, 2016 www.GHGAZETTE.com www.GILBERTHETHERWICK.com

THE GREATEST MUSIC “BOX SET” OF ALL TIME...

BOB DYLAN’S 18 DISC SET OF EVERY NOTE THAT HE RECORDED IN 1965 AND 1966 IS SIMPLY ASTOUNDING!

I was thirteen years old in 1965...

I was already into The Beatles and other “British Invasion” bands (as well as folk music) and had dreams of writing songs.

But when I bought music books for The Beatles’ songs to learn the guitar parts... I found most of their music beyond my reach as a beginner. It didn’t help that back then music songbooks usually didn’t even print the correct chords above their standard rudimentary piano charts... Which I couldn’t understand anyway.

Then one day I was visiting my friend George Franklin and had what I would call a moment of “divine inspiration”.

George’s parents were liberal minded... and they allowed George to subscribe to The Village Voice... which to a teenager living in Shreveport, Louisiana in the mid-60s was like a secret doorway into an entirely alien world of new ideas... art... politics... and MUSIC!

George also had a subscription to Playboy at the time... which was a MAJOR motivator for me to visit him often (along with learning about a lot of new music).

One day George told me that he had a new album that I HAD to hear... as he pulled out the new Bob Dylan LP “Bringing It All Back Home”... and guided “the needle” to the song “Gates of Eden”.

I was riveted by the lyrics but also by the song’s simplicity as I realized that I might actually be able to PLAY a song like this.

George then played me “Mr. Tambourine Man”... and I became a Dylan fan for life.

Keep in mind that Dylan was writing “Mr. Tambourine Man” at the same time The Beatles were writing “A Hard Days Night”.

But it was The Beatles that inspired the electric instruments that first appeared on “Bringing It All Back Home” as Dylan understood the power of rock and roll to reach a much broader audience than he had achieved with his earlier four acoustic “solo” albums.



And in turn... Dylan GREATLY inspired The Beatles... primarily John and George... in the closely following release of their “Help” and “Rubber Soul” albums.

They fed off of each other. Just as George Harrison’s usage of an electric 12 string guitar in the “Hard Days Night” film inspired a young Roger McGuinn to pick up the instrument when he formed The Byrds... whose own version of Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man” went on to be a #1 hit in both America and the UK with its legendarily distinctive 12 string sound.

We can all thank George Harrison for that.

At the time that I first heard “Bringing It All Back Home” I was certainly already aware of Dylan’s songwriting through my sister’s Joan Baez and Peter Paul and Mary albums. As I was always a fanatic for reading ALL of the technical details on LPs... who wrote what... who “produced” it... and who played on the songs.

But I’m sure I had never actually heard Dylan’s first four albums. How could I?

As in 1965 radio in Shreveport was limited to station KEEL’s top 40 “countdown”.

I quickly bought “Bringing It All Back Home”... and pretty much every Dylan album since. I’ve been a fan for 50 years!

That album changed my life and also inspired me to write songs of my own.

Though you certainly wouldn’t want to hear ANY of the songs I wrote back then!

To hear my music go to www.HETHERWICK-MUSIC.com

“Bringing It All Back Home”... along with “Highway 61 Revisited” and “Blonde on Blonde”... form what I call the “Dylan Holy Trinity” of recordings. Although my all-time favorite album is probably still “Blood On The Tracks” (due to the emotional content)... these three albums showed a musical progression on the part of Dylan that easily compares to The Beatles and is perhaps the single most powerful burst of creativity in the least amount of time in popular music history.

Bob Dylan was 24 at the time.

And the three albums were all recorded in the amazing span of only 14 MONTHS!

The sessions also produced a couple of singles, including “Positively Fourth Street.”

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of this “Dylan Holy Trinity”... Sony Music... through their terrific Legacy division... has released the 1965 and 1966 material in THREE different sized editions as part of their “Dylan Bootleg” series with the appropriate title of “The Cutting Edge”.

There is a TWO CD set which Legacy considers a “best of” the material that Dylan recorded over those 14 months. All alternate versions of the final songs that made it onto the original historic LPs. It is also available online or as vinyl LPs.

Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Best-Cutting-Edge-1965-Bootleg/dp/B015JX1A2W/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1453758344&sr=8-1&keywords=Amazon:dylan:cutting:edge

HIGH DEF DOWNLOADS: <http://www.hdtracks.com/the-best-of-the-cutting-edge-1965-1966-the-bootleg-series-vol-12>

And there is also a SIX CD set which goes even deeper into the historic material.

Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Cutting-Edge-1965-Bootleg-Deluxe/dp/B015JX1A4K/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1453758805&sr=1-1&keywords=hob:dylan:cutting:edge

HIGH DEF DOWNLOADS: <http://www.hdtracks.com/bootleg-series-vol-12-dduxe>

But it is the EIGHTEEN CD set... that considering the importance of this music in my own life... I simply HAD to own!

It is only sold on Dylan’s own web site and it contains EVERY SINGLE NOTE recorded in the fourteen-month period.

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Everything is sequenced in exact chronological order... which lets the listener experience the evolution of Dylan's creative process in a way that I have never experienced with any other music box set. It is like a novel unfolding before your ears... and easily the most exciting listening experience I have had in years.

Everything is there... FALSE STARTS... BAD TAKES... EVERYTHING!

The set also comes with TWO gorgeous books as well as actual vinyl "45s" of all of the singles released in 1965 and 1966.

As well as a "45 adaptor" which appropriately looks like "leopard skin" (if ANYONE remembers "45 adaptors")!

And if THAT isn't enough... The set comes with an original mounted piece of a strip of film from the D. A. Pennebaker 1967 documentary called "Don't Look Back".

BUT WAIT... THERE'S MORE!

By buying the set they also sent me a download link for the ENTIRE 18 CD set as HIGH DEFINITION downloads! Which of course sound even better than the CDs!

And then as the final "icing on the cake"... a couple of weeks after getting my copy... they sent out another link to download 208 ADDITIONAL "live" concert tracks from the same period as FREE MP3s!

They only produced 5,000 copies of the 18 CD set... and they are now all sold out.

So unfortunately you will be left with only EBAY to find one for yourself.

Each edition is numbered and they won't be making any more.

And yes... \$600 is the most I have EVER paid for a recording. But for me personally... IT IS WELL WORTH IT!

Complete Track Listing: http://www.bobdylan.com/us/thecuttingedge_completetracklisting

To hear EVERY TAKE and note from "Like a Rolling Stone" is amazing. Starting out with Dylan on piano and the song as a waltz... you hear it evolve until suddenly exploding out of the speakers in the first snare drum crack with all of the magical glory that we have known for half a century. After the famous take... you hear producer Tom Wilson give his approval as the musicians go on to try to "top" the released version. But not only can't they "top it"... They can't even come close!

It was a single moment of pure musical magic that now stands as a part of history.

You may think that you don't need to hear EVERY TAKE of "Like a Rolling Stone"... but trust me... YOU DO!

It is like opening King Tut's Tomb!

These sessions were primarily recorded on four track machines... so they ALSO included the four individual "raw" tracks of the final released version of "Like a Rolling Stone". Which lets you hear Mike Bloomfield's amazing guitar part alone!

Incidentally... you DO get the entire "Rolling Stone" sessions in the SIX CD set.

Dylan did VERY LITTLE overdubbing so essentially EVERYTHING is "live" in the studio with Dylan singing with the various musicians. It's as "real" as music gets.

As most of the material was never mixed or mastered before... and has now been produced using today's 50 years of technological advances... the sonic results are tremendous. YOU ARE THERE!

Like I said... it unfolds like a novel (or a great documentary)... as you hear Dylan "tip toe" into the world of electric instruments at the beginning and then eventually reach the apex of what he called the "wild mercury sound" of "Highway 61" and "Blonde on Blonde".

Due to union rules at the time... they only hit the "record" button when they were planning to lay something down. So you rarely hear rehearsals. And it is sometimes jarring when a song isn't working at all and then suddenly it leaps forward toward the version of which Dylan fans are totally familiar. So they obviously took breaks and worked things out.

But you do hear A LOT of "evolution".

Some songs had as many as a dozen takes while some were done in one quick pass... including "Gates of Eden"... which first blew my fragile young mind 50 years ago.

You hear the first sessions with "The Hawks"... later to become "The Band"... only a few weeks after meeting Dylan as he began the sessions for "Blonde on Blonde" in New York (before moving to Nashville).

They were rehearsing as his "road band" and he brought them into the studio with him to begin the album. It didn't work.

It sounds like "The Band" wasn't really ready... or didn't yet understand Dylan's crazy recording process... and you can hear it in the recordings as only ONE song ("One of Us Must Know") from those sessions was chosen before frustrated producer Bob Johnson moved the sessions to Nashville. Johnson brought along guitarist Robbie Robertson and organist Al Kooper... for continuity... but also probably to make Dylan feel more at home.

There was ENORMOUS pressure on Dylan and everyone involved. As not only did he record three of the greatest albums of all time in this 14-month period... but he also toured extensively at the same time.

Manager Albert Grossman (who fought the successful Nashville transition) was lining up a MAJOR world tour to follow-up the release of "Blonde on Blonde" in a quest to elevate Dylan's sales levels to equal his cultural impact. Dylan was selling records... but NOTHING compared to The Beatles or other "pop stars" of the time.

But how could Dylan keep up this insane momentum in a world that was looking to him as some kind of musical prophet?

The answer was... he couldn't.

After completing "Blonde on Blonde" he had his infamous and mysterious motorcycle accident (although some believe it never happened).

Dylan then went into his period of recovery and seclusion in Woodstock New York with his wife and kids as Grossman's grand touring plans were cancelled.

It probably saved his life.

Dylan was as far out "on the edge" as any sane person could possibly go... and the pace and lifestyle simply couldn't continue forever. He critically needed a break.

In his Woodstock sabbatical Dylan would join up with "The Band" to write and record the famous "Basement Tapes" before returning nearly two years later with the basically acoustic LP "John Wesley Harding". Which was AGAIN a complete change in direction to a simpler sound... with more personal and spiritual lyrics.

Bob Dylan's "wild mercury sound" was now a part of musical history.

But these "Cutting Edge" collector sets assure us that the "sound" and the incredible songs will live on forever.

A TERRIFIC JOB by everyone involved.

These sets were released back in September and I've been meaning to write about this for months. But it has taken a long time to work my way through all of it. And for the first time in decades... I am listening to an "album" over and over again...

Just like when I was thirteen!

Gilbert Hetherwick

Write to me at... hetherwick@me.com

& CHECK OUT THESE WEB LINKS!

[BACK ISSUES OF THE GAZETTE](#)

[DIRECTORY OF MY WEB SITES](#)

[MY OWN MUSIC](#)

And check out my own 4 song EP of Dylan covers (ALL from this period). Available on CD at...

[TWISTING BOB!](#)

& [CLICK HERE FOR A WEEKEND OF ROMANCE OR RELAXATION!](#)