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## Singles: A Playlist for Framing Dylan's Recording Art

Keith Negus

Bob Dylan began his career as a performing musician during a period when the vinyl LP was being adopted as a medium for creating an atmosphere and ambience. Frank Sinatra's themed albums that evoked specific moods began appearing as 78rpm disc collections from 1946.<sup>1</sup> The more robust 12-inch, 33 1/3 rpm record was introduced by Columbia Records in June 1948, and allowed Sinatra to introduce albums on one long player (LP) with a series of acclaimed collections during the 1950s. Dylan has acknowledged Sinatra's work throughout his career, even paying homage by performing "Restless Farewell" at the older performer's 80th Birthday Celebrations in 1995, and releasing *Shadows in the Night* in 2015. The album featured renditions of songs popularized and defined by the interpretations of Sinatra and his imaginative arrangers and it was followed by *Fallen Angels* (2016) and *Triplicate* (2017) with further selections from the "Great American Songbook" (see Chapter 11).

Like Sinatra's collections, Dylan's individual albums are characterized by an overall feel and ambience rather than a concept or a narrative. This is partly why he has omitted the recordings of critically acclaimed songs from albums – tracks that have appeared on later official bootlegs. For example, the austere piano and acoustic guitar version of "Blind Willie McTell" would have been incongruous on *Infidels* if placed amongst the bland lite reggae and soft rock textures of the album, regardless of its quality as a song. A Dylan album typically takes shape not around a unity of narrative, but a sound world and ambience: whether the casual vocals, loose acoustic guitar strumming and irregular pulses throughout *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (1964) or the claustrophobic and murky amalgam of saxophone, trumpet, keyboards, percussion, electric and acoustic guitar, mandolin and gospel vocals pervading *Street Legal* (1978). Dylan's approach was unlike those rock musicians that adapted the album as a frame for

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<sup>1</sup> Granata, Charles *Sessions With Sinatra: Frank Sinatra and the Art of Recording*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004.

conceptual ideas and narrative suites of songs, such as the Who's "rock opera" *Tommy* (1969), and Genesis's *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (1974) – the latter indebted to Leonard Bernstein's and Stephen Sondheim's *West Side Story*. The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) has sometimes been presented as a concept album. Yet, the fictional Edwardian brass band was merely a mask to distance the group from their Beatles personas. It was not so much a concept than "a convenient way of packaging twelve randomly collected tracks."<sup>2</sup>

Dylan neither had the repertoire of a variety entertainer nor the inclinations of a conceptual rock musician. His well-known response to *Sgt. Pepper* was to accentuate his place in an "old weird America"<sup>3</sup> of country, blues and folk with a series of plainly recorded and unadorned songs, populated by mysterious or marginal characters in Southern gothic settings on the album *John Wesley Harding* (1967), followed by reveries of domestic contentment and rural tranquility on *Nashville Skyline* (1969), *New Morning* (1970), and *Self Portrait* (1970). This was a rejection of the album as concept, the trend towards rock as art, and the use of the studio for baroque ornamentation and sonic effects. Dylan has never sought to be an innovator of studio recording techniques, release formats, or cultural trends. He has either followed the prevailing technologies and ethos of recording at the time, or simply ignored them. Yet, his late 1960s recordings introduced a casual and convivial recording aesthetic that has influenced generations of folk-rock, lo-fi, and Americana musicians.

When recording songs, Dylan has sought to capture a tone and a groove, rather than to trouble with the technicalities of precise arrangements, to separate instruments in a mix, or to find the flawless definitive version. When recordings have circulated of Dylan performing or rehearsing songs – whether through official releases or bootlegs – it is clear that the aim is to create an atmosphere and a sound world. He has spoken of this often in interviews over a period of years, from his desire to create a "thin, wild mercury sound" that is

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<sup>2</sup> Gillett, Charlie *The Sound of the City* London: Souvenir Press, 1983, p267.

<sup>3</sup> Marcus, Greil *Invisible Republic, Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*, Henry Holt: New York, 1977.

“metallic and bright gold”<sup>4</sup> – a sound that characterized few actual recordings; and his belief that “the old Chess records, the Sun records. I think that’s my favorite sound for a record ... I like the mood of those records – the intensity. The sound is uncluttered. There’s power and suspense. The whole vibration feels like it’s coming from inside your mind.”<sup>5</sup>

This search for a favored sound guided his approach and directions to band members and engineers under the pseudonym of producer Jack Frost on *Love and Theft* (2001) and *Modern Times* (2006). Dylan has clearly attempted to evoke contrasting moods, from the slickly recorded *Slow Train Coming* (1979) with its funk gospel organ and brass textures (produced by Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett), to the reverb heavy, multi-layered and “swampy” (Dylan’s term) murk of guitars and keyboards on *Time Out of Mind* (produced by Daniel Lanois). His most consistent sound has been a blend of the smoother metallic bright timbres of country, the directness and irregularities of folk, and the abrasive blues sonorities of electric guitar and harmonica.<sup>6</sup> Sound, tone and feel are more important than variety or concept. Dylan has never been an album artist in the way some of his contemporaries, such as The Beach Boys or Marvin Gaye who aspired to make coherent thematic musical statements, or in the way that the album as idea was developed by artists such as Prince or Rubén Blades, Kate Bush or Kendrick Lamar or Björk. Even Dylan’s most critically acclaimed albums – *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965), *Blood on the Tracks* (1974), *Oh Mercy* (1989) or *Time Out of Mind* (1997) - are collections of songs with an overall ambience rather than thematic or conceptual links connecting tracks.

And, there are alternatives to the album as a way of framing Dylan’s songs and recordings. Paul Williams argued that Dylan should be appreciated as foremost a performer rather than a recording artist, constructing his argument

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<sup>4</sup> Shelton, Robert *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* New York: Da Capo, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Flanagan, Bill. 2009. “Bob Dylan Talks About Together Through Life With Bill Flanagan”, [www.bobdylan.com](http://www.bobdylan.com) np

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Dylan’s production in the studio see Negus, *Bob Dylan* London: Equinox Publishing, 2008 and Negus “Bob Dylan’s Phonographic Imagination”, *Popular Music*, Vol 29 No 2, 2010, pp213-228.

through set lists, live shows and analysis of different renditions of the same song. Dylan's songs can also be framed as poetry, in book collections of lyrics arranged as printed verse on a page or subject to analysis by scholars of poetry.<sup>7</sup> In 2018, his songs appeared as an exhibition of framed handwritten lyrics with graphite illustrations on the walls of the upmarket Halycon Gallery in London's Mayfair (a suitably elitist cultural space for a winner of the Nobel prize for literature). All of these frames influence how Dylan is understood as an artist and perceived by listeners, readers, and viewers, and guide the way his life and work are interpreted. In this chapter, I take a different approach by framing his songs with an argument that the recorded single (now accessed as a track) can afford a distinctive cluster of insights into Dylan's creative life.

Singles have been important to Dylan since he grew up listening to radio in the late 1940s and 1950s. He remembered this experience when presenting *Theme Time Radio Hour*, broadcast from 2006 to 2008 and comprised of themed programs featuring recordings of songs about different subjects, including weather, drinking, mothers, cars, radio, moon, and hair. These programs illustrate Dave Marsh's point that "Singles are the essence of rock'n'roll. They occupy the center of all the pop music that came after it. They're the stuff of our everyday conversations and debates about music, the totems that trigger our memories."<sup>8</sup> The first 7-inch 45-rpm single was released by RCA in March 1949, and although a key to understanding so much popular music, it has generally been neglected by critics and academics. The single reached listeners who only liked one or two songs and who were not devoted fans of any artist. Many people's single collections were as eclectic as the charts in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Marsh's comment about albums is entirely applicable to Dylan's discography: "most albums (including many of the most successful and creative in history) remain singles separated by varying amounts of filler, though nobody likes to admit it."<sup>9</sup> Singles can be arranged into playlists, a way of organizing

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<sup>7</sup> Ricks, Christopher *Dylan's Visions of Sin* London: Viking, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Marsh, Dave *The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made*, Penguin: London, 1989, pix

<sup>9</sup> Marsh pix

music that forms a continuous thread linking pre-rock'n'roll radio programming to streaming platforms. Dylan's career has traversed the epoch from broadcast radio list to the digitally streamed list. His recorded songs now appear on playlists set up by curators, corporate bots and consumers according to their own preference for mood and activity – 70s Road Trip, Love Songs, Rock'n'Roll All Night, Coffee Morning Vibes, and Chillout found within minutes of a quick spin through one streaming platform. Such lists are a useful way of succinctly and pragmatically conveying aspects of a 50-year plus career as a recording artist. Here, then, is my Dylan playlist: ten singles that give an insight into his recording art.

#### “Mixed Up Confusion” (1962)

“Mixed Up Confusion” was the first single released by Dylan in December 1962, and produced by John Hammond. It is evidence that neither he, his management, nor his record label, Columbia, had a clear idea that he was to be a “folk” singer or even a “protest” singer. In some ways it is a deceptively throwaway track. Yet, Dylan and the band of two guitars, bass, drums, and piano managed to create a harmonica driven amalgam of rockabilly, country boogie, blues holler, and bar room jazz piano that suits the shout and fall vocal delivery of a minimalist list of clichés (taken in turn from other songs) about people being too hard to please, looking for a woman, and feeling like a stranger. It would take Dylan a little longer to grasp how to resuscitate such lyrical clichés (which he would use again). Although it would be two and half years before he faced condemnation for “going electric” at the Newport Folk Festival, he was electric on his first single. In fact, he was electric since his performances with rock'n'roll bands at school. The electric performance of r'n'b and that blurry mixture of country and blues became a continual thread running throughout his recording life.

#### “Blowin’ in the Wind” (1963)

“Blowin’ in the Wind” has defined Dylan for many people, thanks initially to a cover by Peter, Paul and Mary who had a chart hit with it in 1963. Dylan's own recording is intimate, with casually played acoustic guitar and harmonica, and conversational tone reinforced by the repeated “yes, and ...” in the delivery of the

lyrics. It has been sung solemnly by choirs in Christian cathedrals, bellowed at school assemblies, and endlessly adapted to comment upon and satirize politicians. Lyrically it conveys stoic acceptance of the impossibility of changing a world of war and conflict, whilst offering vague hope that an “answer” is out there somewhere – blowin’ in the wind. Like many of Dylan’s creations, it is based on an existing song, the tune of “No More Auction Block” from the spiritual or slave songs tradition. Dylan was impressed by Odetta’s recording of the song, and inspired more generally by the way she fused folk, blues and gospel into her powerfully strummed guitar style. Sung by freed slaves in Canada after the abolition of slavery in 1833, to a melody traceable to the Ashanti tribe of West Africa, the lyrics were printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1867 after the US completely abolished slavery in 1865.<sup>10</sup> It is just one enduring testament to the profound influence of slavery on US culture and popular music more generally.

#### “Subterranean Homesick Blues” (1965)

“Subterranean Homesick Blues” combines two of the most common melodic vocal patterns of blues-inspired, rhythmically driven lyrics - the chant on one pitch, with occasional drops down to a minor third below. Dylan has often mentioned the inspiration for this song: “It’s from Chuck Berry... A bit of ‘Too Much Monkey Business’ and some of the scat singers of the ‘40s.”<sup>11</sup> Dylan tried an acoustic guitar version and then recorded it with a band of guitars, bass, drums, and electric piano. He took Berry’s country r’n’b arrangement and reworked complaints about mundane jobs, obligations to conform, and debt into a paranoid, absurdist rant inspired by Beat poetry. Distrustful and vaguely defiant of authority - whether institutional, counter-cultural, or street wisdom - the moral is “don’t follow leaders.” This structured rhyming architecture has endured in Elvis Costello’s “Pump It Up” and REM’s “End of the World as We Know It.” The single is also notable for the way it was integrated into the opening

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<sup>10</sup> Trager, Oliver *Keys to the Rain, The Definitive Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*, Billboard Books: New York, 2004

<sup>11</sup> Hilburn, Robert “When I Paint My Masterpiece’, *Mojo*, September, No 142, 2005, pp72-74, p74

scene of the film *Don't Look Back* (1967), featuring Dylan in an alleyway holding up cards containing words from the song. This short clip was used to promote the song and has inspired many homages and parodies in music video and advertising.

#### “Like A Rolling Stone” (1965)

“Like A Rolling Stone” was based on a rage driven poem Dylan had edited down, experimenting with a 6/8 piano-based ballad version in Db before recording it as a snare drum backed 4/4 rock song in C. It builds on an oceanic blend of metallic electric guitar, hesitant swirling organ, insistent harmonica, and barroom bluesy piano indebted to Phil Spector’s “wall of sound” technique. The song contains a character type that features in quite a few Dylan songs: the person (by implication, a woman) that has done him wrong, betrayed him, misunderstood him, wanted too much from him - another walking dead cliché constantly reworked in blues and rock music - sardonically addressed as “doll,” “Miss Lonely” and “babe.” The recording is nearly six and a quarter minutes long and was released to radio split over two sides of a 7-inch single, but available publicly as unedited on the A side. Once it started appearing in concert (it’s his second most performed song), “Like A Rolling Stone” became less a howl of bile directed at someone unable to deal with their own decline, than a redemptive anthem of belonging. During Dylan’s 1974 tour, Betsy Bowden heard the audience singing along with “how does it feel?” as “reinforcing the feeling that each listener is not alone but rather part of a community all of whom know how it feels.”<sup>12</sup> Of the stately large band performance recorded in Tokyo for *Live at Budokan* Wilfrid Mellers observed that the song “transformed from a gleeful song of rejection into a powerful, almost hymnic paeon which has only a vicarious connection with the words.”<sup>13</sup> “Like A Rolling Stone,” more than any

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<sup>12</sup> Bowden, Betsy *Performed Literature, Words and Music by Bob Dylan*, University Press of America: Lanham, Md, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Mellers, Wilfrid *A Darker Shade of Pale, A Backdrop to Bob Dylan*, Oxford University Press, 1984, p219.



other Dylan composition , demonstrates the way a musician tangibly and audibly connects with an audience in the here and now of the concert.

#### “All Along the Watchtower” (1968)

“All Along the Watchtower” is based on a familiar repeated loop of three chords (C#m, B, A) and circular verses that Dylan called a “cycle of events.” It allows us to hear two important characteristics of Dylan’s recorded songs and provides the only significant example of another musician profoundly changing the way Dylan performed his own songs. First, is the influence of the Christian Bible on his lyrics. Dylan has used phrases from the Bible to evoke the way narrators and characters seek redemption in their unfilled quest for salvation.<sup>14</sup> “All Along the Watchtower” draws its verses from Isaiah 21 and the Book of Revelation. The second characteristic illustrates Dylan’s skill at using the harmonica as a mournful comment on the bleak landscapes conveyed by the minimal lyrics, and to subtly echo the “wind began to howl” with the sonic stylization of howling wind on the harmonica. The original released recording was musically sparse (featuring acoustic guitar, bass and drums) with a conversational, understated vocal. Jimi Hendrix put out a recording of the song a month or so after Dylan’s and removed the frailties, ambiguities, and ominous mood, thereby turning it into an assertive and defiantly declamatory rock anthem.<sup>15</sup> The subtleties and nuances of the original disappeared in concert as Dylan follows Hendrix by playing it as bombastic stomp of crowd-pleasing mainstream rock. It has become Dylan’s most performed song, with 2268 performances by February 2020.

#### “If Not For You” (1970)

“If Not For You” is one of Dylan most relaxed and celebratory love songs, aptly described by Clinton Heylin as a serenade to his then wife Sara. The recording provides glimpses of another narrative about the singer’s important connections with the Beatles, and especially George Harrison. The Beatles and Dylan had

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<sup>14</sup> Gray, Michael *Song and Dance Man III: The Art of Bob Dylan* London: Continuum, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Heylin, Clinton *Revolution In The Air: The Songs of Bob Dylan, 1957-1973* Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009.

influenced each other, and musically commented on each other's work throughout the 1960s. Dylan and Harrison were spending considerable time together during the period when this song was being composed and the two musicians recorded a version together (unreleased at the time), before Dylan included the laidback, downhome bluesy country shuffle that appears on *New Morning*. That same year (1970), Harrison released a slower rendition, with the blissful quality of contented love expressed through his characteristically melodic slide guitar. When Harrison died in 2001, Dylan began including a moving performance of "Something" in his live shows. Like so many of his songs, "If Not For You" was performed by many other artists and illustrates his ability to take everyday phrases and remove them from the mundane when expressing ordinary human sentiments, as well as his grasp of the value of singable melodies in popular song.<sup>16</sup> "If Not For You" was released as a single by Olivia Newton John the following year, with a recording that drew from both Dylan's and Harrison's versions. It was an important hit for Newton John who was named Country Music Association vocalist of the year in 1974 and had a big influence on the style of the country pop mainstream during this period. This sometimes overlooked single is part of yet another story about the importance of country music in Dylan's artistic life.

#### "Tangled Up In Blue" (1974)

"Tangled Up in Blue" is also musically grounded in country, folk and blues, and Dylan recorded it using an open tuned guitar played higher up the neck to create a shimmering, bright and ringing sonority. He initially set the song in E at a series of New York sessions that were characterized by a melancholic and restrained ambience. The released version was recorded later in Minneapolis with different musicians and raised to the key of A, the higher pitch allowing Dylan's voice to reach upwards and outwards, addressing an epic tale to an audience rather than confiding in a more confessional manner. The relaxed urgency of the recording, propelled by the constantly returning suspended 4th chord motif, allowed Dylan

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<sup>16</sup> See Stefani, Gino "Melody: A Popular Perspective", *Popular Music*, Vol 6 No 1, 1987, pp21-35.

to adopt a more upbeat storyteller's voice to deliver what is widely acclaimed as his most accomplished narrative lyric. The song draws from old ballads, with its familiar opening line of "early one morning" and in the technique of shifting perspectives with verses that can tell a story by being delivered in different sequences. Yet Dylan had also been reflecting on perspective in painting following art lessons with Norman Raeben and this inspired him to write lyrics in a way that allowed for the viewpoints of multiple protagonists and for constant shifting between present and past. The released single is narrated in the first person singular and plural (I, us/ we). In later live performances, however, Dylan would stretch the song in different directions, changing the scenes and settings while narrating it in first and third person, as if he – the Bob Dylan persona – is both telling the tale and observing himself from outside. In "Tangled Up In Blue" past events are not simply memories evoked through sentiment or nostalgia, but experiences profoundly present in the here and now – a vivid illustration of how the apparently simple sing form can profoundly convey how we experience the past in the present moment.

#### "Gotta Serve Somebody" (1979)

"Gotta Serve Somebody" caused controversy and seemed to challenge many of the principles that people assumed Dylan held. It was a pivotal song during a period of about two years (1979-80) when the songwriter became committed to an evangelical strand of Christianity. Dylan was brought up in a Jewish household and had his bar mitzvah at 13. Ever since his earliest songs, he had drawn on biblical imagery to evoke moods, emotional landscapes and paint characters. After a course of Christian study, he now used and embraced the Bible in his songs in a much more literal way. The lyrics dispensed with wordplay, subtleties, absurd or grotesque juxtapositions, evocations of the inner self and the clever use of ambiguity. "Gotta Serve Somebody" was a message to his listener, addressed in the second person "you." It doesn't matter who you are - ambassador, gambler, champion boxer, rock star poseur or thief - you are going to have to "serve somebody." That "somebody" is not open to debate, it's either the "devil" or "the lord": good or evil. Yet, the stark lyrical choice is undercut by uplifting funk rhythms, bright horns, warm devotional organ motifs, slick bluesy

guitar, and a crisp production that allows specific instruments to shine as the move in and out of the mix. Dylan had asked Jerry Wexler to produce his recordings during this period due to the sound he had created with Aretha Franklin and Wilson Pickett at Atlantic Records, and Wexler (with co-producer Barry Beckett) brought in the Muscle Shoals Horns, acclaimed for their brass playing on numerous rock, pop and soul recordings. The unease in the lyrics about human corruption, futility and sin is alleviated and almost redeemed with a soulful, danceable groove set in a joyful gospel arrangement. Dylan himself used the song as a vehicle for some passionate performances and a statement of belief as the opening number in concert, and it again inspired outstanding covers, as can be heard on recordings by Etta James and Mavis Staples. This single illustrates the importance of the sonorities of gospel as yet another musical thread in Dylan's career as a recording artist (see Chapter 7).

#### "Make You Feel My Love" (1997)

"Make You Feel My Love" draws its lyrical and musical inspiration from the Tin Pan Alley ballad, the Great American songbook and nineteenth-century protestant hymns (the three are all musically related). It is a song of devotional love in which the protagonist lists the sacrifices offered for their feelings to be sensed and accepted. It has a prominent, yet slightly understated, descending chromatic pattern characteristic of laments and songs of unrequited love (and also found in "Simple Twist of Fate"), falling in semitones from the note Db to F throughout each verse. The chords also waver between their major and minor form in keeping with the singer's uncertainty about their love being felt (itself an old songwriting trick). The song is in Db/C#, consistent with Dylan's preference for the black notes when composing on the piano, and the production is informed by Sun and Chess recordings. Produced in collaboration with Daniel Lanois, the vocals have a sixteenth note delay with delicate reverb applied to accentuate the singer's lone voice calling out across empty space (and perhaps the resonance of an old church). The song was dismissed by rock critics, mainly (but not only) for its words, with variants of the phrase "greeting card lyrics" that originated in a review by Greg Kot in *Rolling Stone*. But this is not a greeting card. Even if, ironically, the words have become incorporated into romantic

valentine presents and wedding gifts, these offerings of sacrificial love only exist because it is heard as sung words. It is another illustration of how, despite the world's poetry, most of the time we use ordinary language to express our most profound feelings, emotions and desires. Regardless of the critics, acclaimed popular songwriters recognized its value and released their own versions - notably Billy Joel, Garth Brooks and Adele. As Johnny Borgan has written, "Make You Feel My Love" was pivotal in Dylan's re-exploration of the "pre rock'n'roll American song tradition," a thread that Borgan traces back to his appreciation of Willie Nelson's 1978 album *Stardust* and to a songs Dylan recorded in the late 1960s.<sup>17</sup> "Make You Feel My Love" is central to Dylan's re-engagement with the Great American songbook, and links back to the earlier Sinatra influence and forward to *Shadows in the Night* (2015).

#### "Things Have Changed" (2000)

"Things Have Changed" was written as a commission - and won an Oscar - for the film *Wonder Boys* featuring Michael Douglas as the lead character Grady Tripp, a professor with anxieties about writing a new novel, messy intimate relationships, and a liking for marijuana. Director Curtis Hanson approached Dylan as an admirer of his work and, according to various accounts, believed the songwriter would be able to empathize with the lead character. Having viewed rough cuts of the movie, Dylan did indeed become "a worried man with a worried mind," narrating the song from the first person and demonstrating once more his ability to well-worn musical patterns and lyrical clichés ("Worried Man Blues" being one of various references to older songs) and use them to inhabit characters. The lyrics to the song, and the accompanying promotional video, cleverly fuse and play with aspects of both Dylan's persona and Grady Tripp's onscreen identity. The video shifts from Dylan to Douglas, merging Tripp with Dylan's voice and guitar playing. Too often these subtle nuances were lost when critics predictably assumed that the song's sentiment "I used to care but things

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<sup>17</sup> Borgan, Johnny "Bob Dylan + The Great American Songbook = True!" *JohnnyBorganBlog* 21 July - <https://johnnyborgan.blog/2017/07/21/bob-dylan-the-great-american-songbook-true/> accessed 9 March 2019.

have changed” is being voiced by the “I” of Bob Dylan and not a character inhabited by the persona of Dylan in a song. The song was produced quickly by Dylan as Jack Frost during a day off with his touring band. The production and performance contribute to the characterization and narrative of the film. The vocals give the impression of the singer addressing himself (and whoever will listen) from within a murky and uncertain physical and existential place. Engineer Chris Shaw recalled that Dylan did not like an initial mix of the song and instructed the engineer that “everything was too clear” and to “mush it up.”<sup>18</sup> At Dylan’s request the vocal was run through a guitar amplifier and Shaw routed the signal via a fuzz box, mixing this into the vocal track to heighten the vaguely distant, murky vocal mood. The “mushed up” ambience was further crafted by allowing leakage of drums into the vocal microphone and by raising the percussive guitar and mandolin to levels unusually and unnaturally loud in relation to the drums and bass. The deceptively quirky production of a lilting, minor key, country blues shuffle enhances the way Dylan delivers the lyrics in keeping with the character’s world weariness and increasingly stoned and cynical outlook. As the song progresses it’s as if the narrator is becoming too tired to finish a phrase, leaving a pregnant pause before dropping the final words - but, then again, Dylan may also be adopting a trick perfected by Sinatra when stretching lines and hesitating before singing the final word or phrase.

This list of 10 singles offers a way of thinking about the range, qualities and depth of Dylan’s recordings. They allow us to hear the *stories in songs* – the tales told by narrators, the scenes, the action, the drama, the emotions. They allow us to hear the *stories about songs* – the influences on Dylan, the deliberate way in which he constructed and recorded the tracks. And, they allow us to hear the *songs in stories* - the way Dylan’s recorded songs embed themselves in our lives, histories, memories and futures, becoming part of a narrative about who “we” are, where we came from, and what we might become.

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<sup>18</sup> Daley, Dan (2008) “Recording Bob Dylan” *Electronic Musician* 31 December - <https://www.emusician.com/gear/recording-bob-dylan> - accessed 9 April 2019.