



The Essential Interviews

Bob Dylan , Jonathan Cott (Editor)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Essential Interviews

Bob Dylan , Jonathan Cott (Editor)

The Essential Interviews Bob Dylan , Jonathan Cott (Editor)

Direct from the mouth of America's most celebrated street poet comes a rare and diverse collection of intimate interviews. Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews features 31 of the most significant and revealing conversations with the singer, gathered in one definitive collection. Among the highlights are the seminal Rolling Stone interviews -- anthologized here for the first time -- by Jann Wenner, Jonathan Cott, Kurt Loder, and Mikal Gilmore, as well as Nat Hentoff's legendary 1966 Playboy interview. Surprises include Studs Terkel's radio interview in 1963 on WFMT in Chicago, the interview Dylan gave to screenwriter Jay Cocks when he was a student at Kenyon College in 1964, a 1965 interview with director Nora Ephron, and an interview Sam Shepard turned into a one-act play for Esquire in 1987. Dylan expert Jonathan Cott writes an introduction to this must-have collection of the artist in his own words.

The Essential Interviews Details

Date : Published May 17th 2006 by Wenner Books

ISBN : 9781932958096

Author : Bob Dylan , Jonathan Cott (Editor)

Format : Hardcover 447 pages

Genre : Music, Nonfiction, Biography

 [Download The Essential Interviews ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Essential Interviews ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Essential Interviews Bob Dylan , Jonathan Cott (Editor)

From Reader Review The Essential Interviews for online ebook

blakeR says

I approached this book as a big Bob Dylan fan (*Highway 61 Revisited*, *Blood on the Tracks*, *Desire* and *Planet Waves* being my favorite albums) but as a relative novice of his personal life and development. In fact the majority of what I know of his personal life came from my viewing of (and subsequent research concerning) the recent movie "I'm Not There." Long story short, I was aware of Dylan's reputation as an enigma and intrigued by the possibility of dispelling some of the mystery.

There's good news and bad news: this book does dispell a lot of the Dylan mystique, but it turns out that the self-concocted enigma was mostly smoke and mirrors hiding a pretty vacuous core.

Full disclosure: ever since I learned of Dylan's abrupt turn to fundamentalist Christianity (again, from the movie "I'm Not There") in the late 70's, I had harbored misgivings about his integrity. It seems like those misgivings were mostly confirmed in these interviews. Dylan first comes off as a brilliant but obfuscating trickster. But then around the mid-70's, particularly in the interviews concerning his movie "Renaldo and Clara," he just seems full of you-know-what. These are followed by the bizarre articles from his born-again period, after which he just comes across as kind of burned out, until a revival around the *Time Out of Mind* release. The main impression I had from these later interviews was that he was pretty much just agreeing with whatever the interviewer posited, but dressing it up to seem like he was saying something original.

The exceptions are the '97-and-after interviews, probably the most valuable of the book in terms of showing an honest Dylan making a sincere effort to explain himself; in fact, the two *L.A. Times* interviews with Robert Hillburn are probably the best in the entire book.

The grand impression I took away from the the collection was that Dylan started out following his passion (you don't memorize Woody Guthrie's entire catalog just to fit in), then created a mysterious persona to stand out from the crowd once he started writing his own songs. This takes brains, talent and ambition. Then he began repeating the facts of "Bob Dylan" and playing the character of "Bob Dylan" to the public so often that he gradually convinced himself that that was who he was. He developed a combative personality with the "Mr. Jones's" of the world and played word games and riddles on anyone who asked him a legitimate question, mostly in order to hide the fact that he had no idea what he was talking about.

All the while, at least part of him remained cognizant of not actually being any of those things, creating a tension which ultimately escalated into his spiritual crisis of the late 70's. In the aftermath of this episode, the early 80's, it was pretty much too late to figure out who he actually was so he gave up trying, instead leaning on the persona that he had spent years cultivating so fastidiously, hoping that it would support him for as long as he needed it. That position became untenable in the mid-90's when he finally gave in and stopped putting forth effort to nourish that persona, which is coincidentally when he started to produce his best music once more.

It is telling to me that Dylan is by far at his most earnest when he's discussing a) Christianity and b) "Renaldo and Clara," perhaps the only two ventures in which he ever fully invested himself, and both equally misguided. I plead guilty to charges of armchair psychology, but this smacks to me of someone who was always searching for fulfillment, never content with his own identity. Additionally, you have to feel a pretty spectacular void in order to turn to such a drastic solution as born-again Christianity.

This is further borne out just by looking at the "Renaldo" movie, which seems to be an amazingly narcissistic vanity project. It is basically a movie about "Bob Dylan" in which Bob, who may or may not be Bob

(because there's another guy playing "Bob Dylan" who's not Bob), must decide between two beautiful goddesses who love him and are striving for his affection. This is a project that only could have been brought to fruition by someone with a complete cult of personality surrounding him. There is a palpable bitterness in his 11/16/78 *Rolling Stone* interview when Dylan expresses irritation at the unkind critics who would dare to not understand his movie. He even utters the cliché "I'd like to see any one of those assholes try and do what I do." (p.265)

I used to think of Dylan as a chameleon, but now I think that maybe a mockingbird would be a better analogy. A chameleon tries to blend in, whereas a mockingbird succeeds by standing out, loudly imitating as many different birds as it can. Dylan is a beautiful mockingbird, perhaps the best and most amazing ever, but there is something sad and vaguely troubling about an organism whose strength lies in its ability to dress itself as something else. He essentially admits that he does this in his most recent interviews, where he talks blatantly about robbing melodies and snippets from other traditional songs.

Yet through all the BS, I don't appreciate Dylan's music any less. His songs, lyrics and melodies are unforgettable, even if nobody (including him) knows what they mean. In fact, I think he does himself and his fans a disservice by trying to explain any of them either to us or to himself. His music is most evocative on an instinctive, intuitive and archetypal level. Dylan himself admitted that his best writing occurs as inspiration, very quickly and without him actually knowing how he's getting the idea.

Perhaps this is his strongest legacy: he is the best example of a well-oiled but ultimately empty funnel through which inspiration may flow in the most unimpeded way possible. I do not say this to belittle him; there is great value in such a talent. It's songwriting on an instinctive level, and he's the best at it. He is the artist who least gets in the way of the music he plucks from the ether. He is very much like Jerry Garcia/Robert Hunter, or to a lesser extent The Band, in that ability to tap into the primal, ancient sensibilities that move us all.

It's strange that my feelings while reading this book changed and adapted almost as often as did Dylan himself. Three quarters of the way through I found myself thinking poorly of the artist, just another pretentious dick. But at the end, post-'97, he genuinely seems to come to grips with his shortcomings and actually get past most of his earlier hang ups, something which is damn impressive to witness over the course of a handful of interviews and several years.

Not Bad Reviews

@blakerosser1

Wiara says

The book is nice it's very interesting to read Dylan's interviews during the years. But I don't like the man... and at some point when somebody sees Jesus everywhere it's disturbing and hard to take him seriously... I don't think Dylan is a nice man but he is trying to be a better person with the religion he choose...

Steve Peifer says

Thoughts:

1. Why no one beat him with a stick in his 20's will always be a mystery.
 2. Journalists came in with a point of view and never listened to an answer; they had their next statement to make.
 3. Number 2 made the behavior in the first point make perfect sense.
-

Robin Strugats says

Nothing new revealed...just a consolidation of past interviews

Bradley says

Cott, a contributing editor for Rolling Stone, compiled 34 of Dylan's most intriguing, eloquent, and bewildering interviews presented in full-length. Chronically ordered and ranging from 1961 through 2007, the story of Dylan's life and career is presented as complete as you'll ever get with the enigmatic and private troubadour. The reader follows a path starting with Dylan's arrival and rise in the Greenwich Village folk music scene and his own exaggerated and untruthful upbringing then continues with such milestones such as going electric, living a quiet life out of the public eye after a near fatal motorcycle crash, dismissing being the voice of a generation, a mid-70s comeback, converting to Christianity, hitting career lows in the 80s, toying with the idea of never making another album in the early 90s, and kicking-off an ongoing late career renaissance in 1997. Depending on his mood, the types of questions, and the motive of the interviewer, Dylan can be playful, open, or defensive at a moment's notice. Featured interviewers in this collection include Kurt Loder, Sam Shepard, Jann Wenner, and Nora Ephron. This collection is a great profile on the 20th century's most elusive and enigmatic songwriter.

Ji?í says

bliblabli

Mark says

Nobody explains Dylan better than Dylan, and maybe nobody oughta try.

Chris Meloche says

My copy is the UK hardcover edition which is titled Dylan on Dylan.

M. Sarki says

Amazing body of work selected here. Fascinating autobiography at times both flabbergasting and frustrating,

but as Mr. Dylan has aged his honesty has issued forth on a more regular basis. Not that he outright lied about things as a younger man, he just seemed to delight in pulling our puppet strings and showing to a fault what fools we were for believing he may have the answers. It is obvious to me in this chronicle of his life through certain interviews that Dylan was searching as hard as anyone for answers, and for a time looked outside himself for Jesus to save him. He is not alone as many others have done the same thing. It all depends on the extent of the fire in ones ass as to what or who we may turn to in our horrendous hour of pain. Dylan has much to teach us now that he is definitely an elder. His autobiography Chronicles Vol. I is a good companion piece to this fine book. And not to be remiss it might be important to mention the interviews of Bonnie Prince Billy as a book in which to compare these titles to. Dylan does not like to be compared to himself but instead to other artists. It is there he will take his chances as to where he stands in the hierarchy of the performing artist as songwriter.

Dave Moyer says

Some very real highlights and a couple of duds. Interesting to revisit some of things things, many of which I have read before but now are compiled in this one place. One can really tell when Bob is either taking things seriously and/or coherent vs. when he is jacking around and perhaps not quite . . . concentrating. Definitely worth it for Bob fans.

Justin Walshaw says

Always carry a light-bulb when you find yourself taking a hike with a donkey in the mountains.

Jocelyn Flowers says

This book are so beautiful, The main character are so amazing and very well developed and the secondary characters are well developed, the plot is so amazing, i love this book.

Rick says

The interviews gathered in this collection begin in 1961 and end in 2004, from barely 20 through his early 60s. They are remarkably consistent in certain respects, though the tone ranges from unguarded to prickly, merely elusive to intentionally opaque or contradictory. They are all stubbornly resistant to any kind of analysis of his work, of any attempts to pigeon hole either his work with labels or his influences with anything like a cause and effect simplicity. So Dylan is not a protest singer or a rock and roll singer. He is not a spokesman for his generation. He has no claim to be a leader of any kind for any group. He is not anyone's answer man. Nor does any song have a simple origin in a political motive or a personal narrative. They might capture feelings. They come out of the air or from somewhere Dylan can no longer recall. His standard response is I don't know about that. He could have coached the Watergate crew on obfuscation. When he is relaxed or trusts the interviewer, he will talk more and be less belligerent but will hold to his basic reticence about his role, his songs, their meaning and origins. He will generously credit many

colleagues past and present but back peddle from any assumptions that there is any kind of straight line from their work to his work, with few exceptions. He is, as he says, a song and dance man.

Cory says

The more I read about Dylan and listen to him, the more mysterious and mythological he becomes. It's so backwards. The way he talks reveals how he thinks, which is unlike anyone I've ever even heard about. It is both illuminating and disorienting at the same time. This book of carefully selected interviews from 1962 through 2001 confirmed one big thing for me: Dylan is one of the most inspired and inspiring people in the past few centuries. A must-read.

Michael Lisk says

Like his recordings, some periods are more interesting than others. I preferred the smartass kid and the cranky elder statesman phases. This was my favorite exchange in the entire book:

Interviewer: You're not going to change drastically like Joan Baez has on her last album, more towards funk?

Dylan: I didn't think it was all that funky. Oh, maybe for her.... Funk is not something that you capture on record, funk is a way of life. It's a way you feel, you can't just make a funky sounding record. But I know what you mean. Funk has to do with throwing coins into the coffin, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Throwing coins into the coffin?

Dylan: Yeah, funk has to do with different beliefs.
