







CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

BLOWING IN THE WIND

Inspired by folk, Bob Dylan changed music, and America, forever

.

CHAPTER 1

PILGRIMAGE TO New York

Dylan went to the right place—at the right time—to launch his career 20

CHAPTER 2

MAKING A Masterpiece

Dylan's writing outpaced recording, resulting in too many good songs

30



CHAPTER 3

A CLASSIC COVER

One image showed an entire generation what "growing up" could look like 42

CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Freewheelin'
wasn't a charttopper, but it won
rave reviews
52

CHAPTER 5

A REPUTATION TO UPHOLD

To his dismay,

Freewheelin' made

Dylan the "voice of his generation"

64

CHAPTER 6

THE OTHER TRACKS

Dylan's second album showcased a wide range of brilliance 76

CHAPTER 7

A LASTING Impact

Sixty years after its release, Dylan's album still redefines what music can do

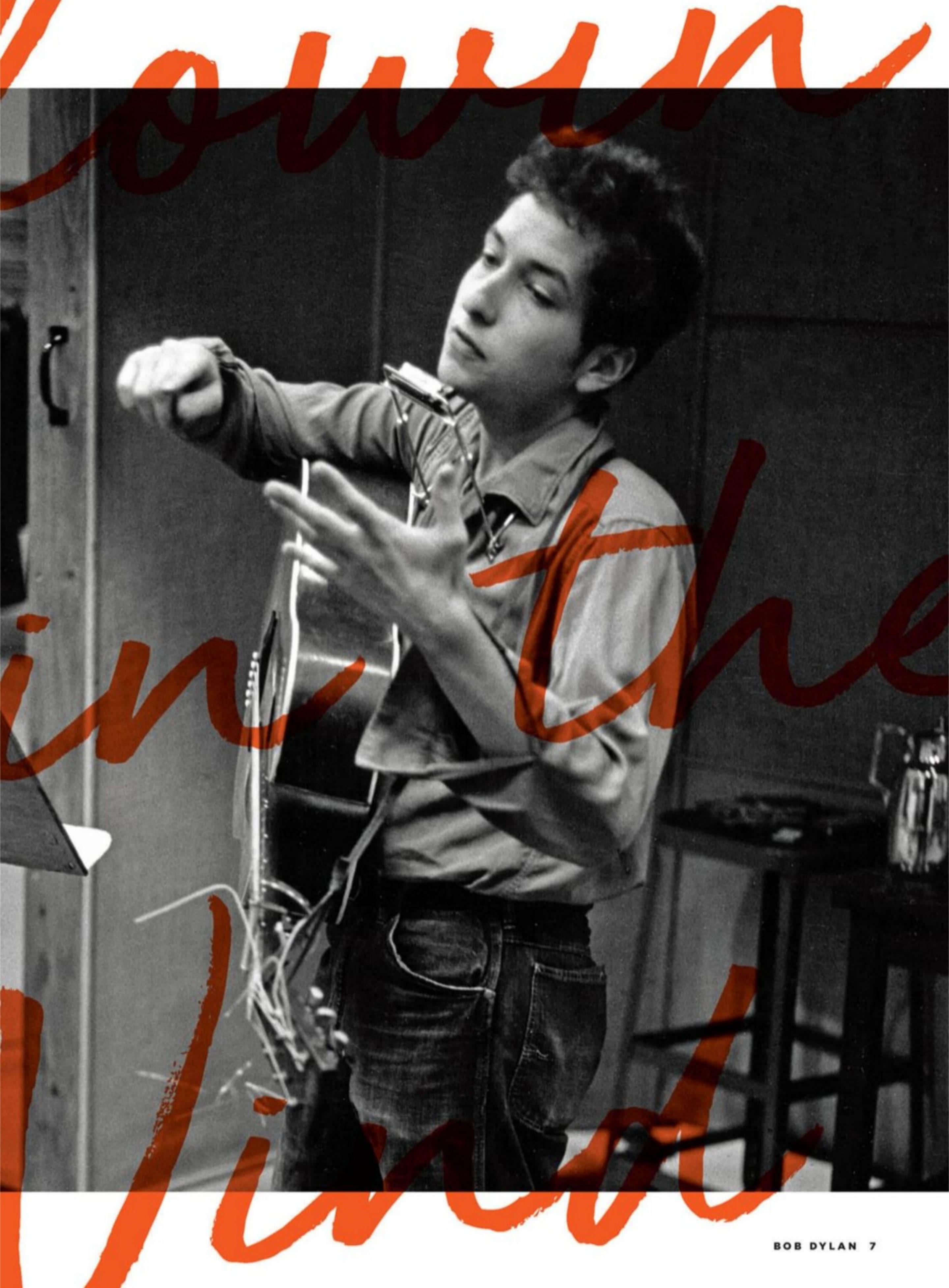
Introduction

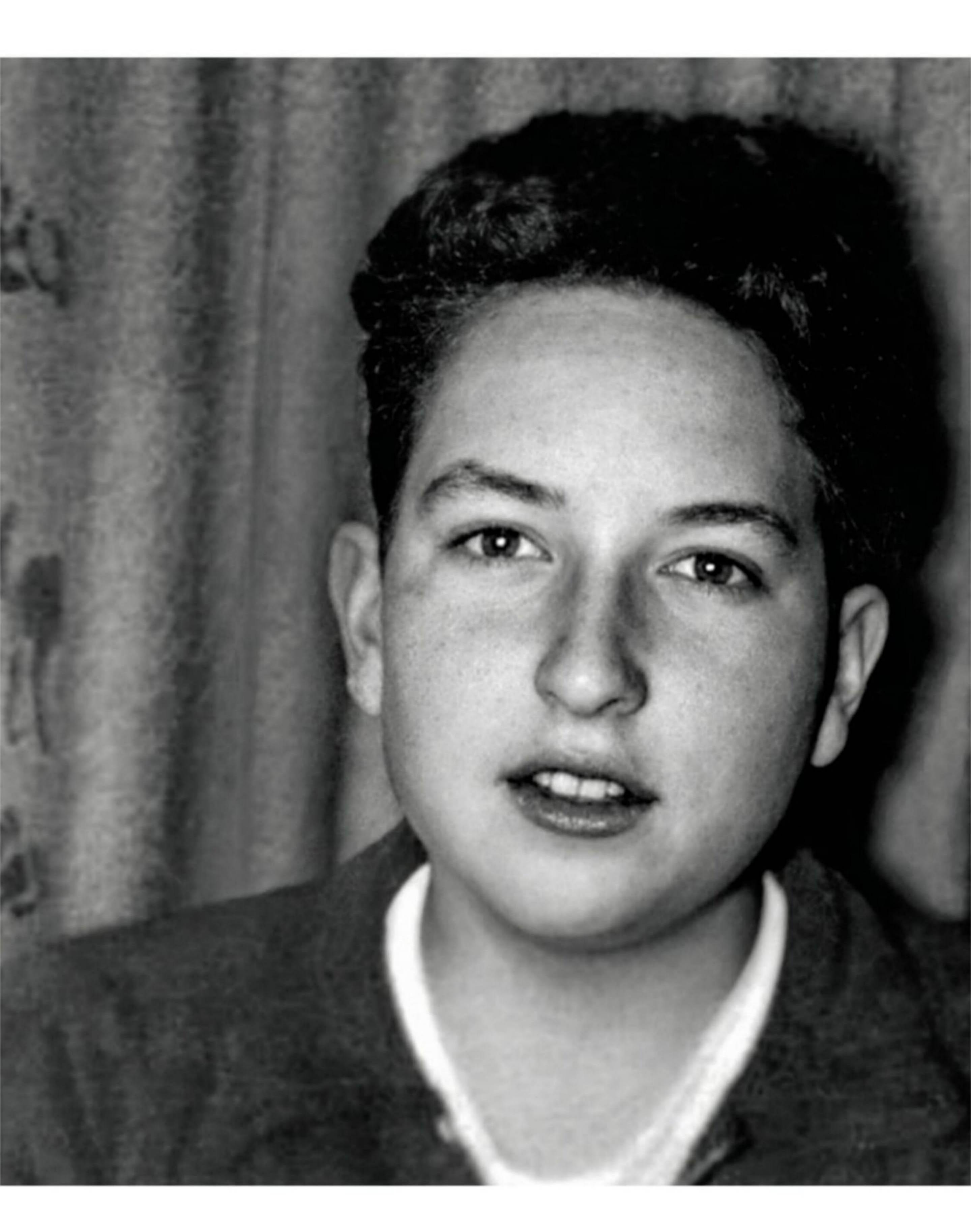
BLOWING

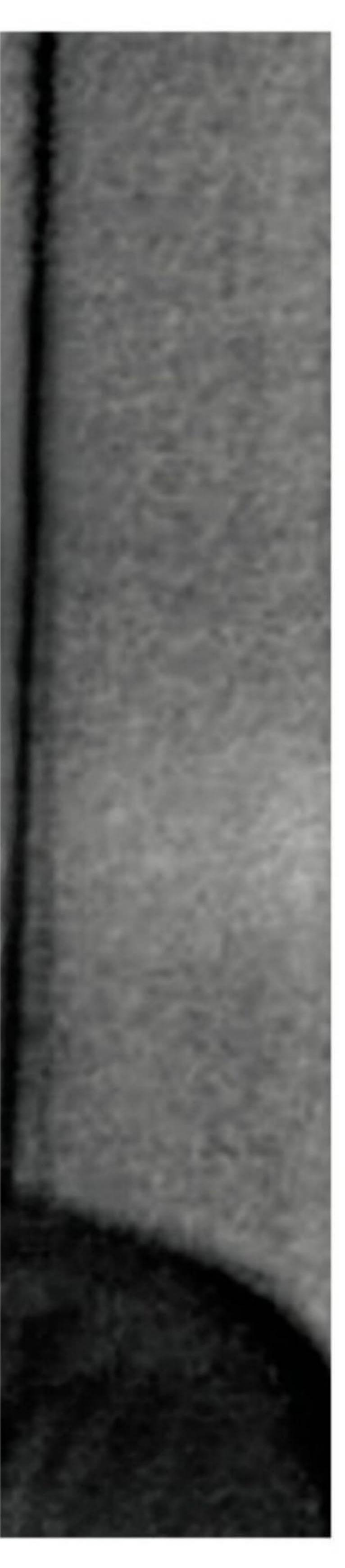
Bob Dylan changed music and America—forever



MUSICAL DIRECTION By November 1961, when he was just 20 years old, Dylan was already recording his first album, for Columbia Records in New York.







A cherub-faced Dylan at age 15 in 1956. He was still living and going to school in his hometown of Hibbing, Minnesota, at the time.

Like many great heroes, Robert Allen Zimmerman was an unlikely one. The Minnesota native was not born an obvious performer or musical icon, let alone the person who would bring a consciousness to popular music or usher in a unique storytelling style that also produced industry-altering commercial success.

The one thing that did make sense—given when he was born (1941) and what was happening in the world around him—was a dream he shared with countless other impressionable kids: In the beginning, he wanted to be like Elvis.

But what steered Dylan off that path—and toward musical immortality—was dissatisfaction. He liked early rock 'n' roll just fine, but he soon wanted more meaning than the typical rock or pop song could offer, which led him to folk music, particularly the work of Woody Guthrie.

"He was so poetic and tough and rhythmic.

There was so much intensity, and his voice was like a stiletto. He was like none of the other singers I ever heard, and neither were his songs," Dylan wrote of Guthrie in his autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume One.* "I said to myself I was going to be Guthrie's greatest disciple."

Guthrie's own story was hardscrabble. He fell into music as he traveled the country searching for work to support his family. Natural ability combined with a talent for social commentary brought Guthrie attention and success in California. He presented

HE LIKED EARLY ROCK 'N' ROLL

just fine, but Dylan soon wanted more meaning than the typical rock or pop song could offer.

GUTHRIE OPENED HIS MIND

and imagination to what Dylan described as "an infinite sweep of humanity," all brought to life in songs.

himself to audiences as an outsider, and took on people in power through his songwriting—making him not only one of the most influential folk musicians of all time, but also something profound: a symbol.

Dylan's own upbringing was by all accounts more comfortable. In the liner notes to the 1985 record set *Biograph*, he described Hibbing, Minnesota—where he grew up—as "not a rich town or a poor town; everybody had pretty much the same thing." Guthrie opened his mind and imagination to far greater diversity, what Dylan described as "an infinite sweep of humanity," all brought to life in songs.

"It was like I had been in the dark and someone had turned on the main switch of a lightning conductor," Dylan wrote.

Emulating his new idol, Dylan assumed an outsider persona himself and worked to weave together literature and poetry with pop music. Fame, awards, a fair bit of controversy, and legendary status would all follow after his creative vision was released to the world, most memorably with his second studio album—1963's *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. And it all happened fast, a testament to his talent and the power of his work.

But before Dylan could change the course of American musical history, he needed to start with a much smaller step forward. He needed to leave his home, and his personal history, behind.

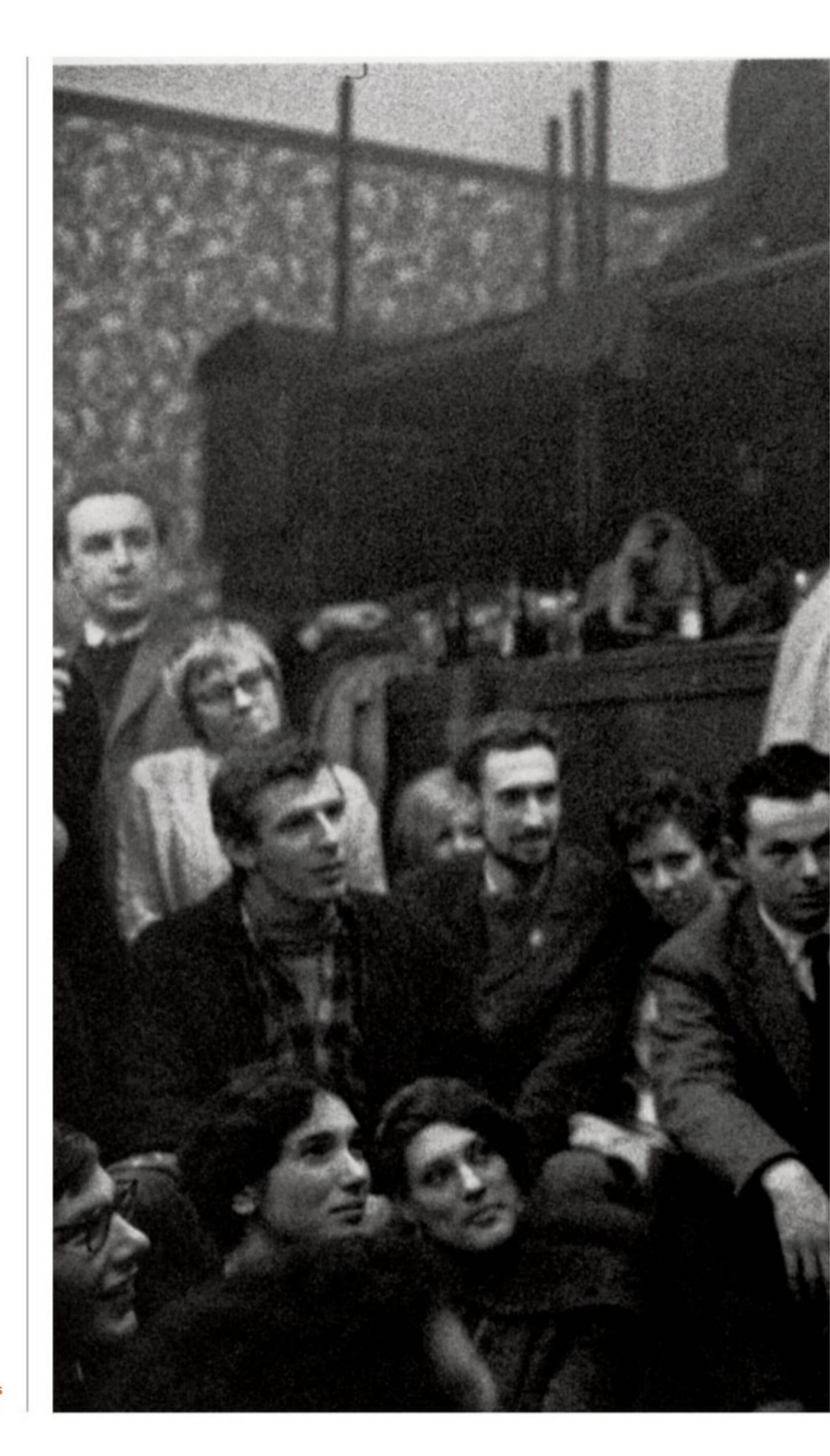


HAT TRICK

Dylan plays his guitar during
a September 1961 session at
Columbia Recording Studio
in New York (right).







SINGING LONDON On Dec. 22, 1962, during his first visit to Great Britain, Dylan performed at London's Singers Club Christmas party.





LIGHT SHOW Dylan performs onstage with his harmonica and acoustic guitar at the Newport Folk Festival in Newport, Rhode Island, in July 1963.



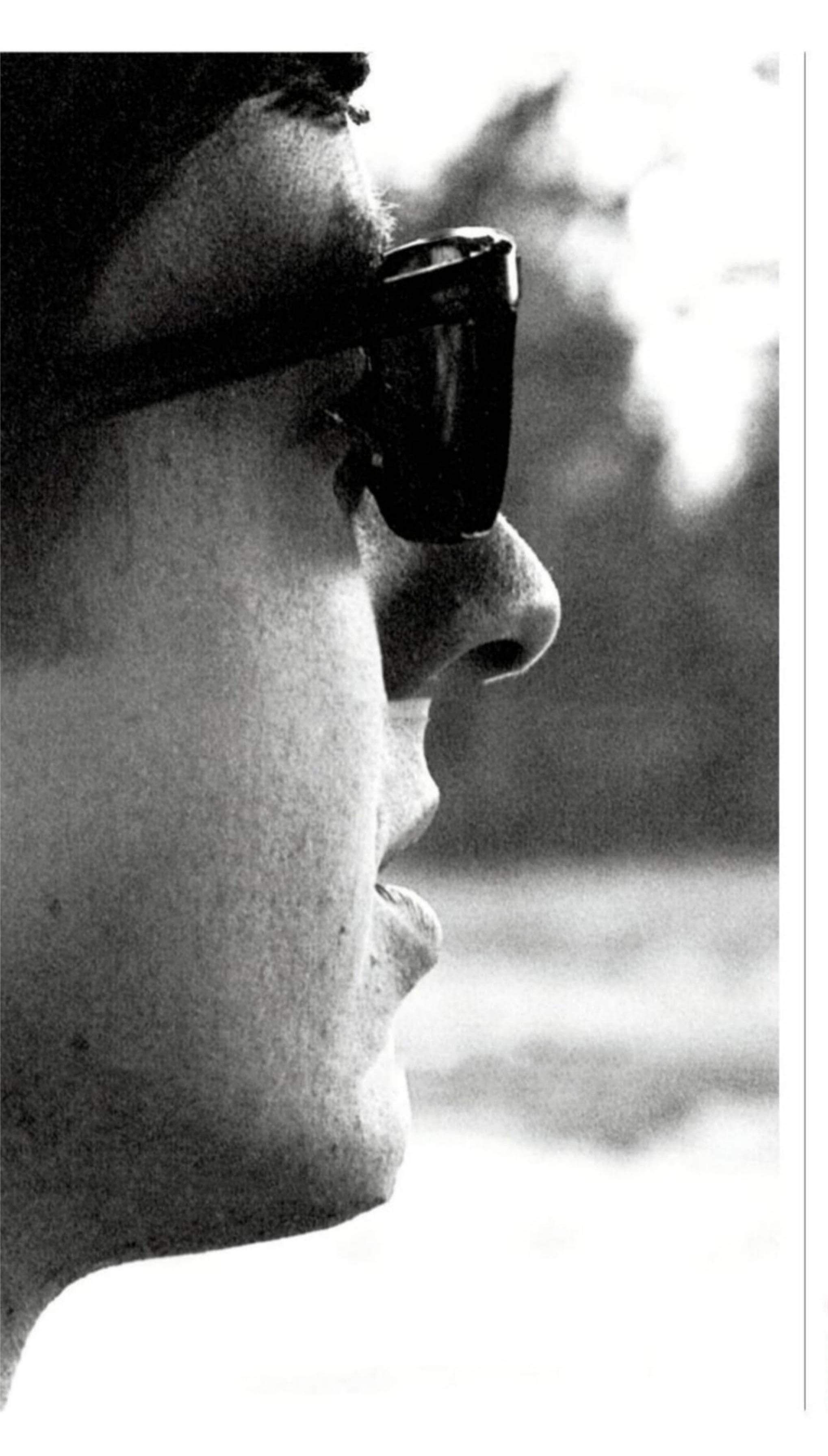


POWER COUPLE

Dylan and Joan Baez (near left)—then the king and queen of the folk movement—at New York's Philharmonic Hall on Oct. 31, 1964.







DRIVE TIME

Dylan watches the world rushing past during a car trip through Massachusetts in April 1964.









Jan. 24, 1961

is not of particular note in most history books. But for music historians and Bob Dylan fans, it is monumental. On that day, a Tuesday, Dylan completed his move from Minnesota to New York City. Dylan was 19, a dropout from the University of Minnesota and its local folk scene.

"The Twin Cities had gotten a little too cramped, and there was only so much you could do," Dylan wrote in his autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume One.*"The world of folk music was too closed off and the town was beginning to feel like a mud puddle."

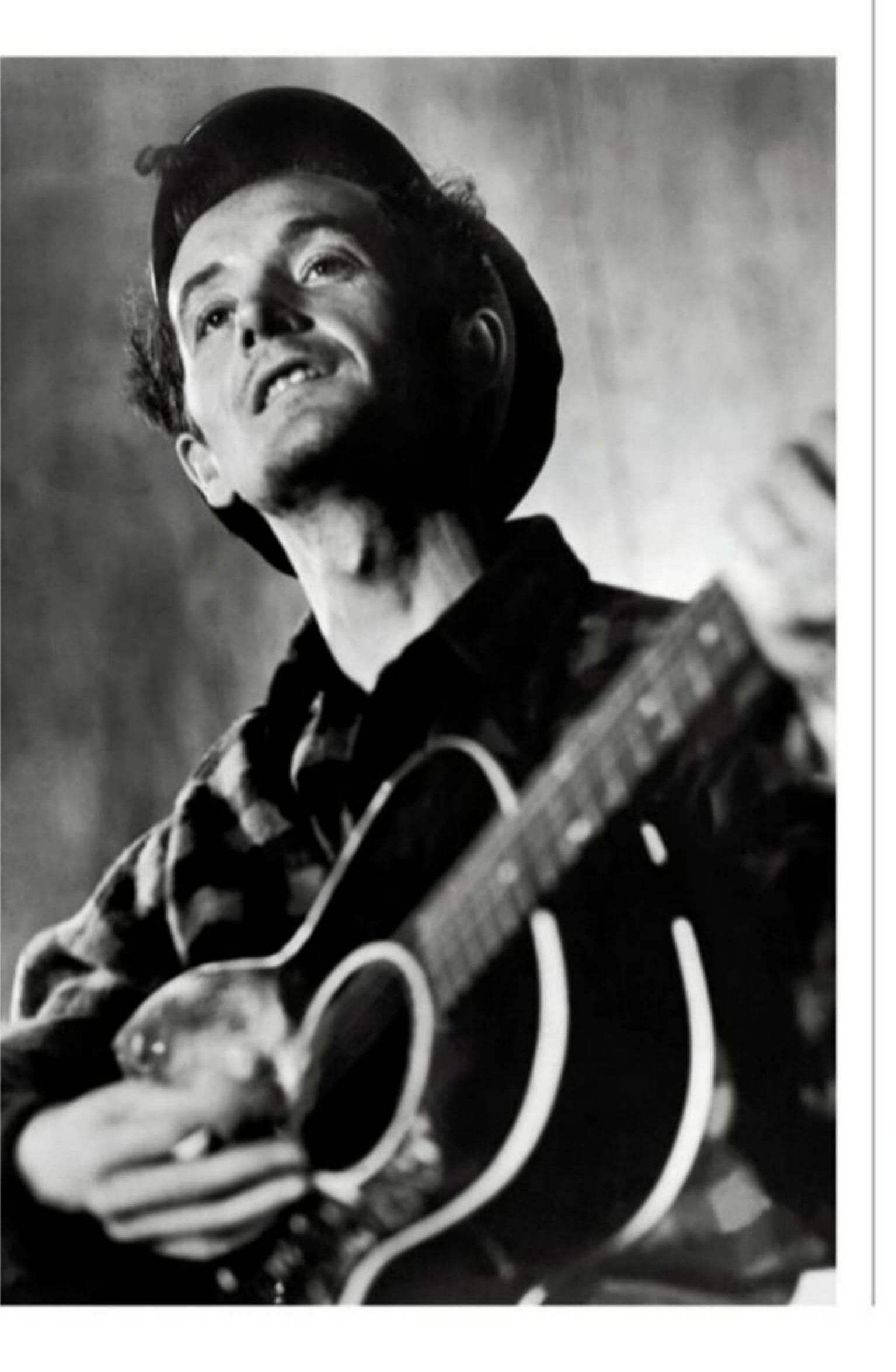
Most stories say Dylan headed east with two friends from Minnesota, but in *Chronicles* he doesn't mention anyone else on the trip as he recaps his journey toward a new life.

"With only a few tattered rags in a suitcase and a guitar and harmonica rack, I stood on the edge of

In 1961, just a few months after moving to New York from Minnesota, Dylan performed at The Bitter End club in Greenwich Village.

HUB CLUB Dylan was a regular performer at The Gaslight (right, top and bottom), a Greenwich Village beatnik headquarters.

FOLK HERO One of Dylan's goals when he moved to New York was to meet his idol, Woody Guthrie (below), and he eventually did.

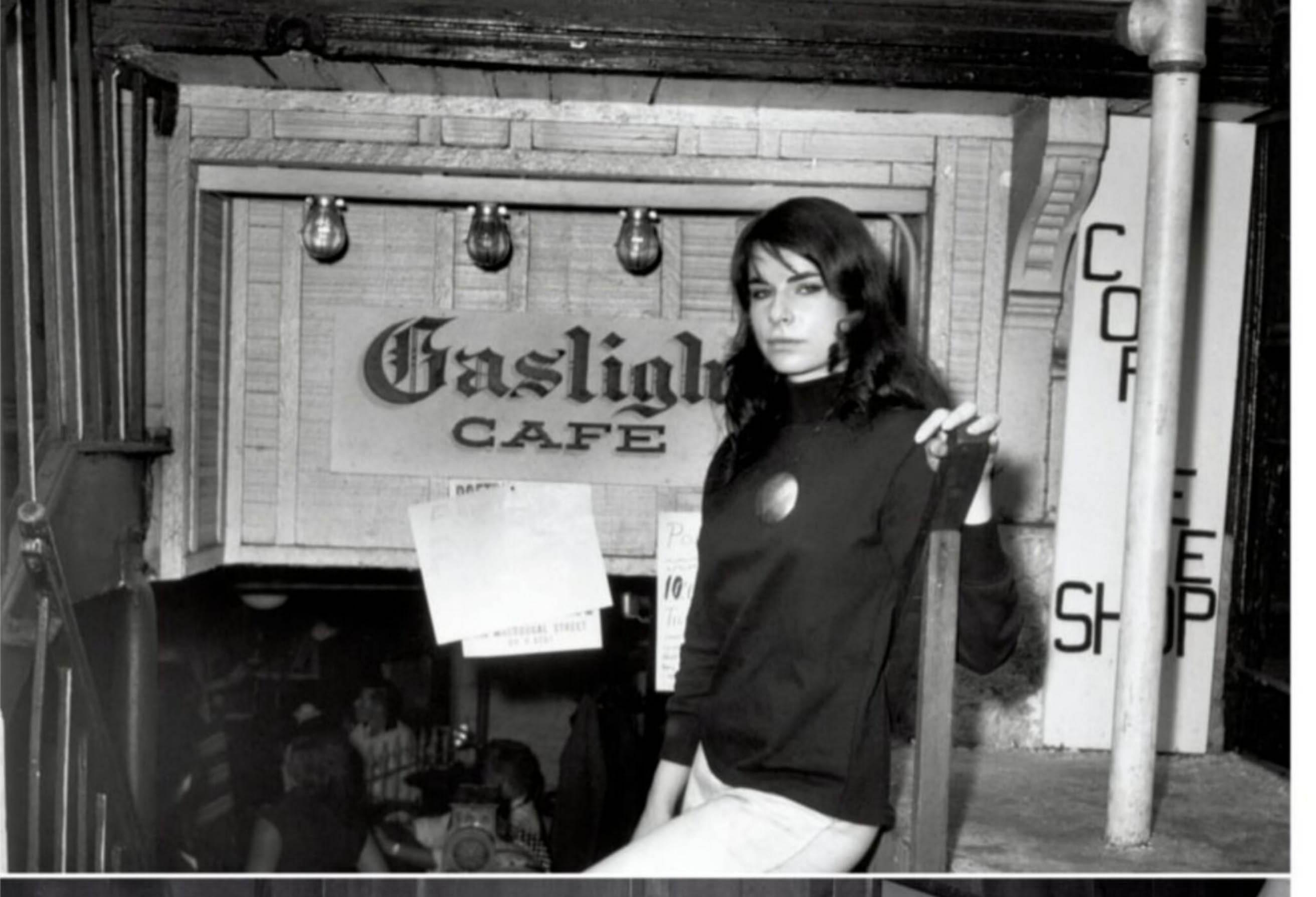


in honor of Dylan Thomas," Dylan said. "I've done more for Dylan Thomas than he's

town and hitchhiked east to find Woody Guthrie. He was still the man," Dylan wrote. "It was freezing and although I might have been slack in a lot of things, my mind was ordered and disciplined and I didn't feel the cold."

Dylan arrived with two goals: to perform in the Greenwich Village coffeehouses and clubs that defined the apex of American folk music, and to meet his ailing idol, Woody Guthrie. He set about achieving both with total confidence that he would succeed. Despite appearing disheveled and living off the kindness of others most days, Dylan managed to make a mark in Greenwich Village, becoming a regular at The Gaslight. Perhaps more unbelievably, he met Guthrie just as he'd planned.

From his early days in Minnesota, Robert Zimmerman had performed under a pseudonym, allowing himself to fully take on the character he wanted to become and leave personal responsibility and consequences behind. He thought he would end up using the name Robert Allen, which were his given first and middle names. But over time, he settled on Bob Dylan-though not, as the legend goes, as a tribute to poet Dylan Thomas. ("I didn't change my name in honor of Dylan Thomas, that's just a story," he said in 1966. "I've done more for Dylan Thomas than he's ever done for me.") The hardest part of assuming his new identity, according to Dylan, was responding to people calling him "Bob" since he had grown up as "Bobby."







IN MARCH 1962,

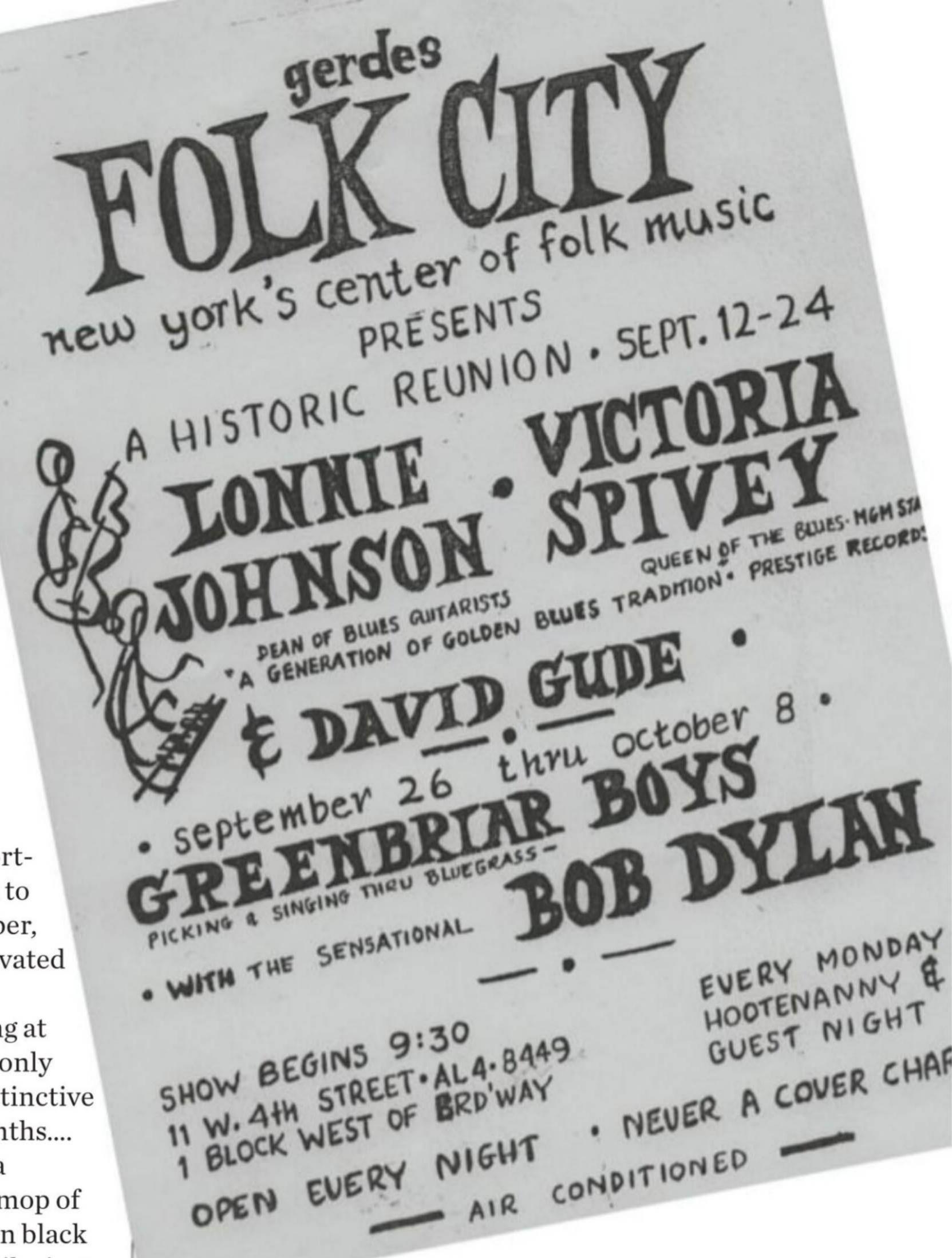
just over a year after he'd come to New York, Columbia released Dylan's first album, Bob Dylan.

Within a year of arriving in New York, reportedly with only \$10 in his pocket and nowhere to stay, his career started to take off. In September, the *New York Times* critic Robert Shelton elevated interest in Dylan with a glowing review.

"A bright new face in folk music is appearing at Gerde's Folk City," Shelton wrote. "Although only 20 years old, Bob Dylan is one of the most distinctive stylists to play in a Manhattan cabaret in months.... Resembling a cross between a choir boy 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 review did "warn" audiences of something that has lingered ever since—a barrier that would come to separate the enlightened from those who simply didn't have the capacity to understand. "Mr. Dylan's voice is anything but pretty," wrote Shelton. "He is consciously trying to recapture the rude beauty of a Southern field hand musing in melody on his porch. All the 'husk and bark' are left on his notes and a searing intensity pervades his songs."

That month, Dylan also played harmonica on folk singer Carolyn Hester's album. Between the twin breaks of Shelton and Hester, Dylan came to the attention of producer John Hammond, who



POSTER BOY

In September and October 1961, Dylan was on the bill to play a series of dates at Gerdes Folk City in Greenwich Village (above).

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

It was in September 1961 that Dylan (left, at Gerdes Folk City) earned positive notice for his club act from a New York Times critic.



signed the Village's choir boy/beatnik to a deal with Columbia Records.

In March 1962, just over a year after he'd come to New York with a suitcase and a dream, Columbia released Dylan's first album, *Bob Dylan*. The collection was mainly covers of folk, blues and gospel songs. It sold just 5,000 copies. There weren't many at Columbia who felt Dylan would fulfill the potential that had inspired Hammond to sign him.

Dylan wasn't happy with his debut release either. *Bob Dylan* was rushed, recorded in just two days. And with only two original songs, the eponymous album didn't capture what the young songwriter had to say. Dylan wanted another chance. He didn't necessarily know if it would sell any better, but he was certain that it would be different.

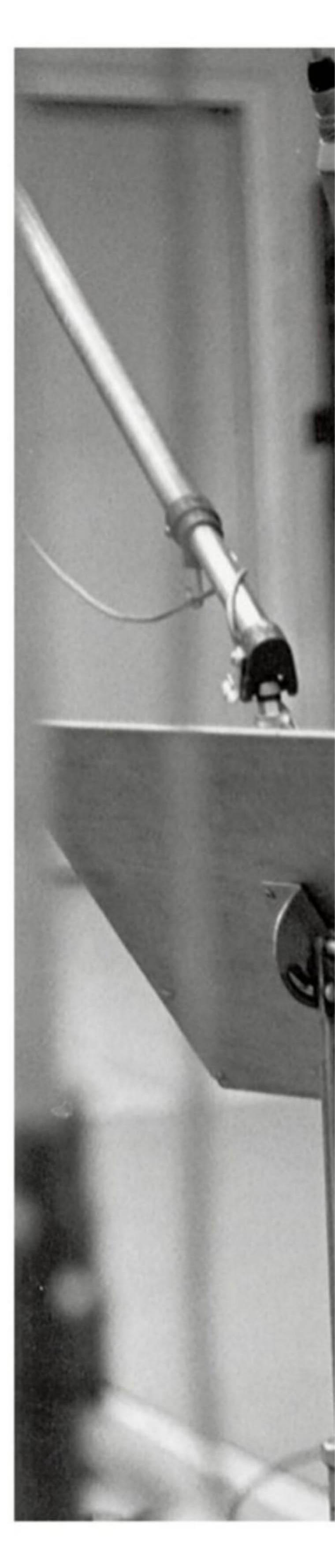


HIT MEN

Dylan in the studio in 1961 with producer John Hammond (above), who'd signed him to a deal with Columbia Records.

RECORD MAKER

By November 1961—less than a year after he'd arrived in New York—Dylan was in a studio recording his debut album, *Bob Dylan* (right).





Chapter

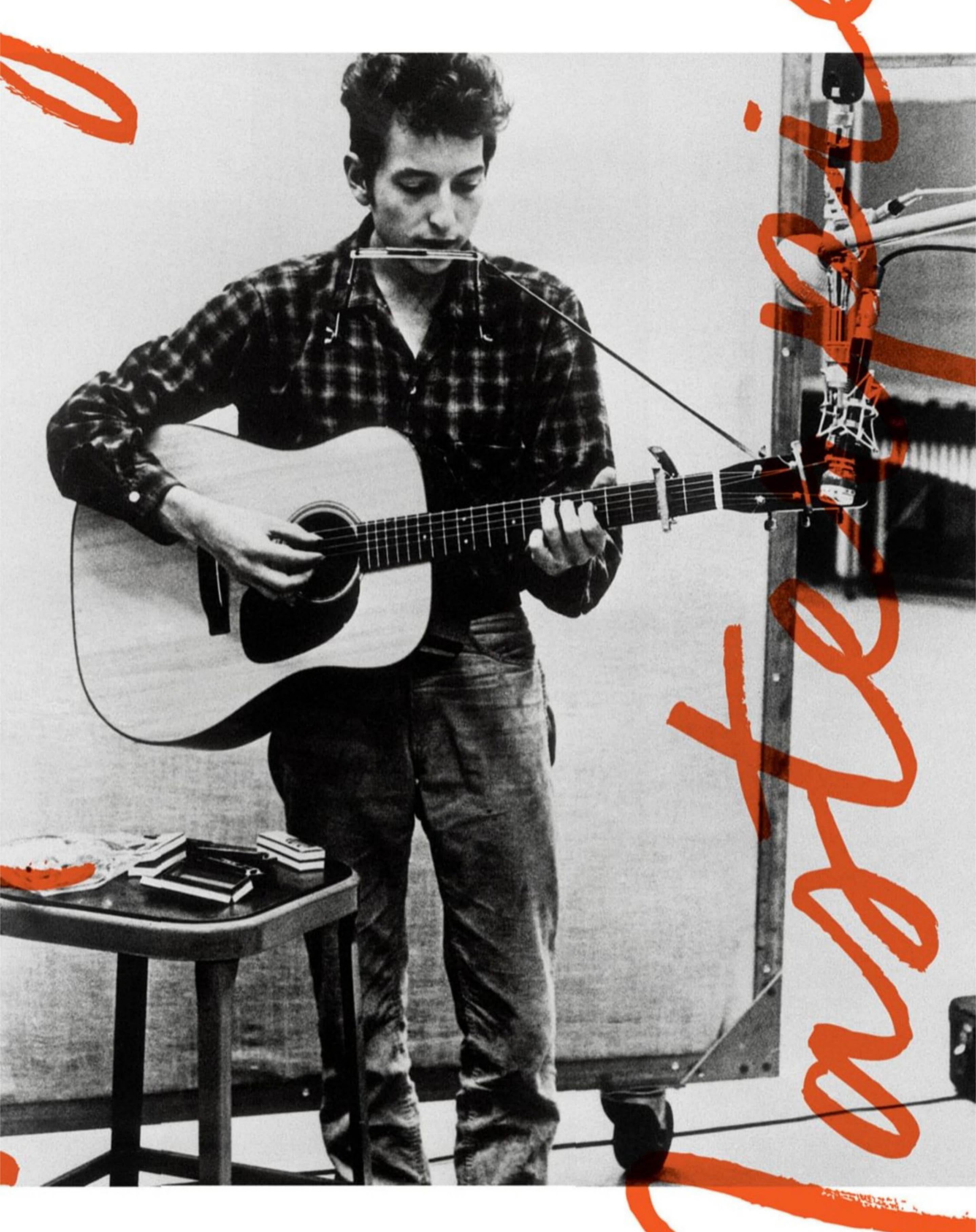
MAKING A

MAKING A MASTERPIEGE

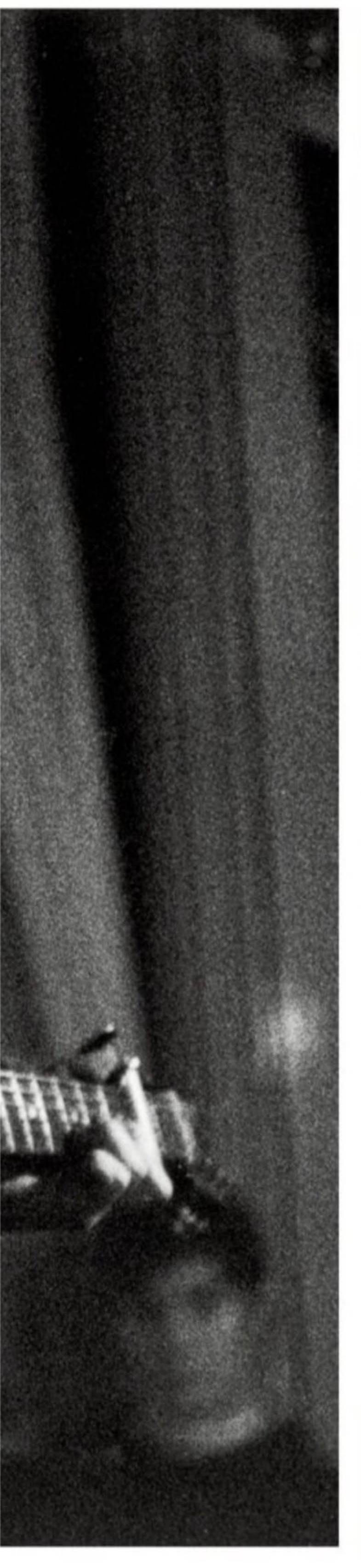
Dylan's songwriting outpaced recording, resulting in too many good songs

CREATIVE PROCESS

Dylan (in the studio, circa 1962) wrote so many indelible songs for *The Freewheelin'*Bob Dylan that recording—and rerecording—took 12 months.







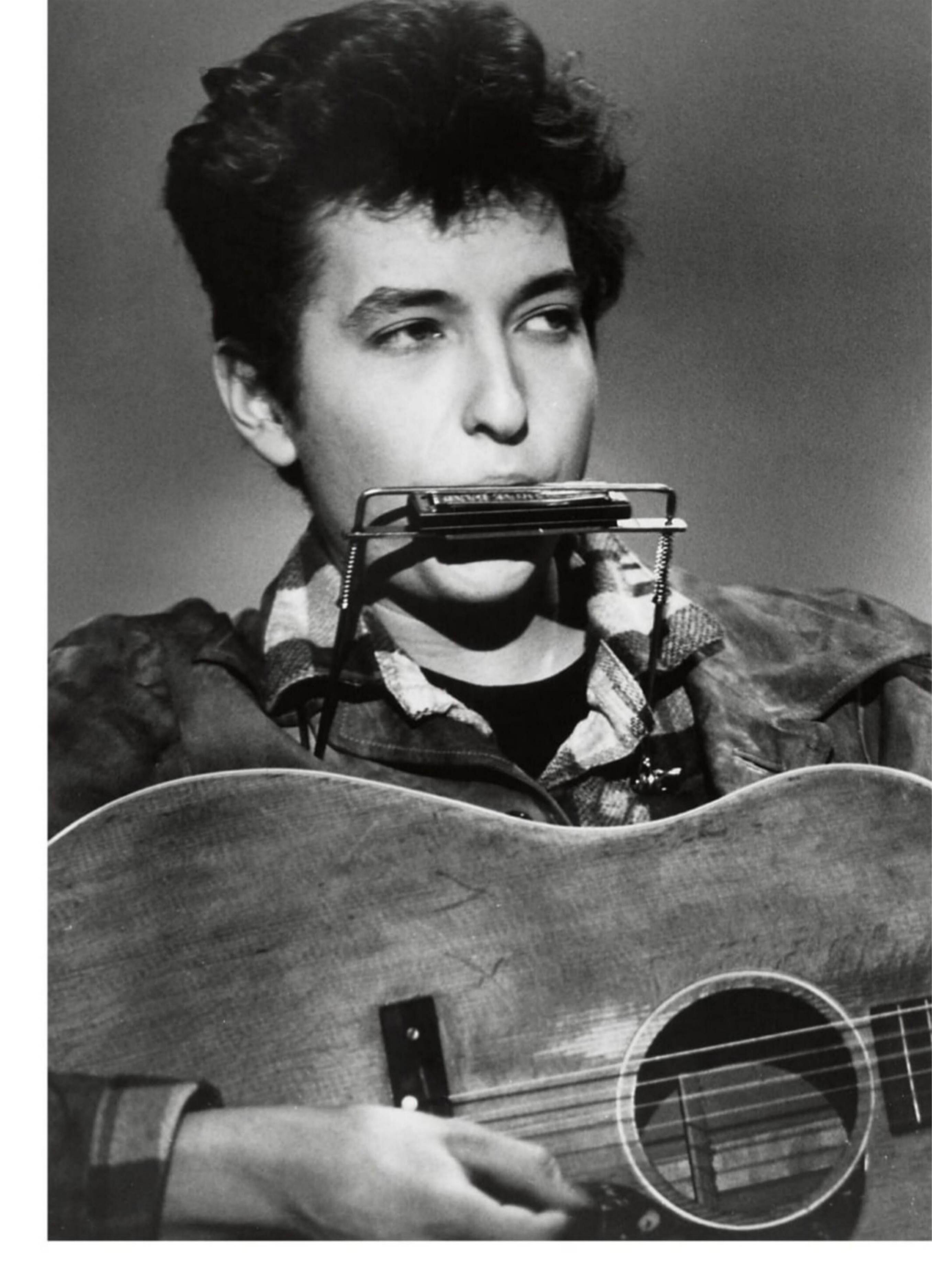
BASED ON A PRODUCTION process alone,

it wouldn't have been wrong to call Dylan's debut album *The Fast & Furious Bob Dylan*. His second release was much different—it developed over time, giving him room to grow, to pick and choose material and, most significantly, to write and rewrite original songs. Dylan recorded the tracks that made the final cut for *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* over eight sessions from April 1962 through April 1963, a particularly prolific period for the young artist.

"I wrote a lot of songs in a quick amount of time," Dylan told *Rolling Stone* in 2016. "I could do that then because the process was new to me. I felt like I'd discovered something no one else had ever discovered, and I was in a sort of an arena artistically that no one else had ever been in before ever."

The recording for what was then being called

On Dec. 21, 1962, during his first trip to Great Britain, Dylan performed a live set at London's famed King & Queen Club.





"Bob Dylan's Blues" began on April 24, 1962, in Columbia's Studio A in New York. Dylan recorded four of his own compositions and two traditional folk songs. The next day, he went back to the studio and recorded seven more songs plus new attempts at one from the day before. Nothing from those sessions ended up on the album—not because the material was bad, but because Dylan was creating better work every day. In short, good recordings were surpassed by very good ones, only to be overridden by excellence.

Dylan was back at it on July 9 in a notable session that included "Blowin' in the Wind," "Bob Dylan's Blues," "Down the Highway" and "Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance," along with another selection that didn't make the final cut.

After playing Carnegie Hall in September, Dylan returned to the New York studio on Oct. 26 and recorded for the first time with a backing band. Of the songs laid down that day, only "Corrina, Corrina" made it onto the album.

At the next sessions on Nov. 1 and 14, the band was back with some replacement players but only "Don't

Think Twice, It's All Right" would be selected. Dylan returned to Studio A on Dec. 6 in a session that produced "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," "Oxford Town" and "I Shall Be Free."

Through most of the recording process, a power struggle was brewing between returning producer John Hammond—Dylan's champion at Columbia—and Albert Grossman, who became Dylan's manager in August 1962. Because of these issues, Columbia removed Hammond for the final session and replaced him with jazz producer Tom Wilson, who was not even a fan of folk music.

"I thought folk music was for the dumb guys," Wilson recalled in Clinton Heylin's *Bob Dylan: A Life in Stolen Moments Day by Day, 1941–1995.* "[Dylan] played like the dumb guys, but then these words came out. I was flabbergasted."

At the eighth and final recording session—exactly a year removed from the first, on April 24, 1963—Dylan recorded "Girl from the North Country," "Masters of War," "Talkin' World War III Blues," "Bob Dylan's Dream" and "Walls of Red Wing," which didn't make the album.

CHAPTER 2



SOLO SHOWMAN

Dylan playing his acoustic guitar and singing at the Newport Folk Festival in July 1963, in Newport, Rhode Island.







MAN OF PRINCIPLE

Dylan rehearses "Talkin' John
Birch Paranoid Blues" for *The*Ed Sullivan Show on May 12,
1963. When CBS told him to
cut the song, he walked out.

"I WROTE A LOT OF SONGS

in a quick amount of time,"
Dylan said. "I felt like I'd
discovered something no one
else had ever discovered."

That's when things changed again, thanks in part to the overabundance of outstanding material. The original lineup had four tracks—"Rocks and Gravel," "Let Me Die in My Footsteps," "Gamblin' Willie's Dead Man's Hand" and "Talkin' John Birch Blues" that were replaced by songs from the final recording session: "Girl From the North Country," "Masters of War," "Talkin' World War III Blues" and "Bob Dylan's Dream." The reason for such a significant lineup change so late in the process remains open to debate. Some believe that after CBS censors wouldn't let Dylan perform "Talkin' John Birch Blues" on The Ed Sullivan Show (causing Dylan to walk out), Columbia insisted the track be pulled. Others note that the timing doesn't exactly align. An alternate explanation is that the new tracks that were recorded with Wilson at the board after the album was already "completed" were just too good to not include.

Whatever the reason, the result was a scramble. New master recordings were made with the new lineup of songs, which also impacted the artwork on the jacket. Things were so rushed that a small number of albums using the original lineup had already been pressed and released—a mistake. Less than a handful of stereo copies with that lineup and fewer than 20 mono copies have surfaced over the years. According to the collector site recordmecca.com, a stereo version sold for \$35,000, while a mono version in mint condition is worth an estimated \$15,000.

CHAPTER 2

FREEWHEELIN'
CLOSE-UP:

"BLOWIN' IN THE WIND"

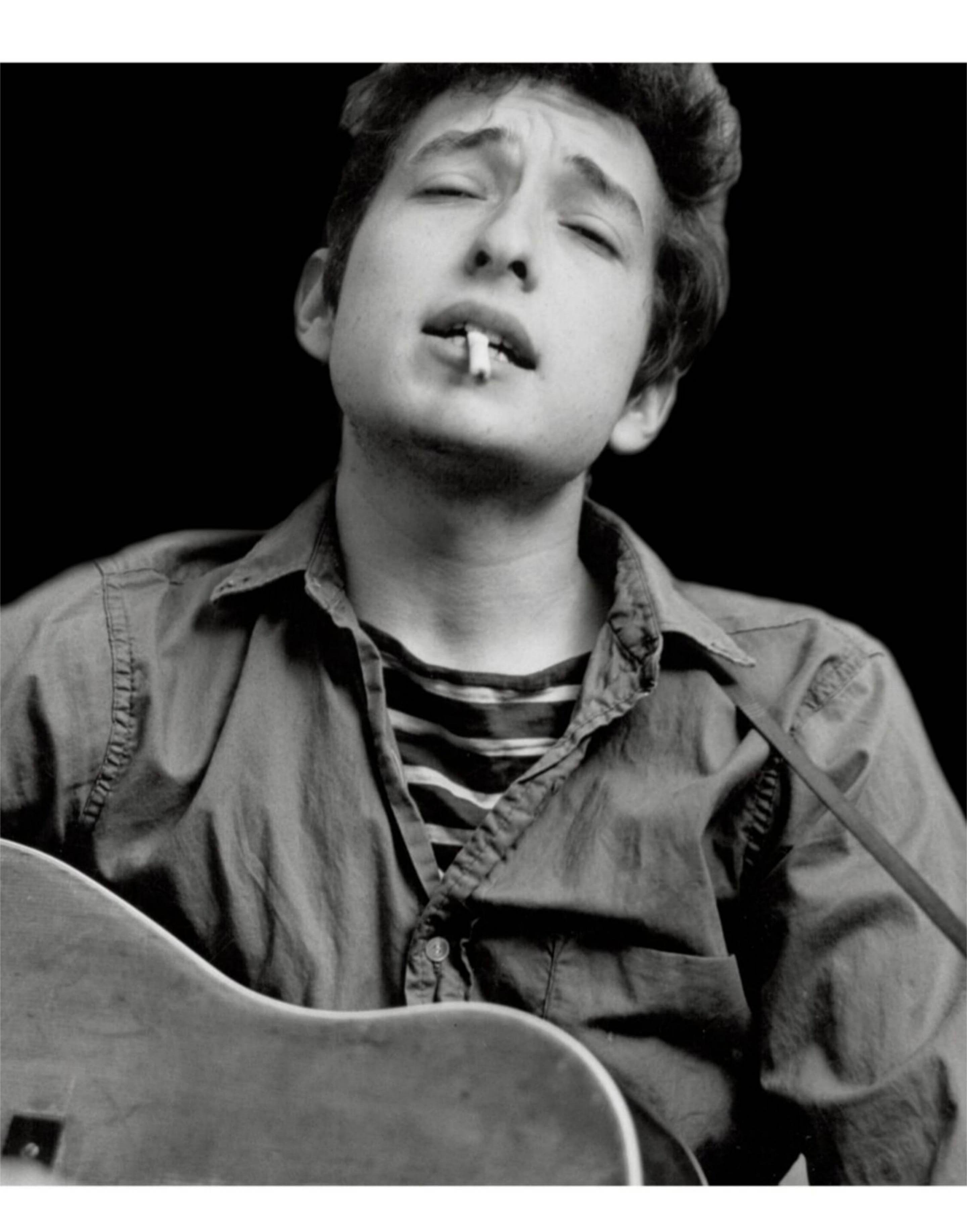
ARTISTIC STATEMENT
Dylan's timeless "Blowin' in
the Wind" was the first track
on Freewheelin', and let
listeners know they were in
for something special.

The first track on the album, "Blowin' in the Wind," announced to listeners that they were in for something special. An adaptation of the old slave spiritual "No More Auction Block," the iconic composition was reportedly written in a café in just 10 minutes. The lasting impact comes from the general nature of the rhetorical questions posed by Dylan.

In the June 1962 edition of the folk journal Sing Out!, Dylan said, "There ain't too much I can say about this song except that the answer is blowing in the wind.... It ain't in no book or movie or TV show or discussion group."

Unlike some other tracks on the album, this song is unique in its timelessness. References are not about any specific event, era or issue—but about lingering concerns that long predated the 1960s, and every decade since. The result is powerful, melancholy—and a thoughtful reminder of how "progress" isn't always what it seems. As a result, "Blowin' in the Wind" has been covered by hundreds of artists and co-opted for various causes, especially in the realm of social justice.

While Dylan's version is beloved, the song became an international hit when Peter, Paul and Mary released it as a single a few weeks after Freewheelin' dropped.







Chapter



One image showed an entire generation what "growing up" could look like

WONDER YEARS

The composition of the photograph and the body language of its youthful subjects made the Freewheelin' cover immediately appealing while also ingraining it with several social cues.

WITH MORE TECHNOLOGY at their disposal

than previous generations, baby boomers looked to the media for clues about how life might be lived in a better and more modern way. This not only applied to the details of fashion, but also how to present yourself as different and "special"—unique from all the young people who came before you, especially your parents.

The cover of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* captures all of this in a single photograph. It features a 21-year-old Dylan huddled against the New York City winter with his then girlfriend, Suze Rotolo, holding on as they walk on a snow- and slush-covered Jones Street. Simple. But the image encodes so much more.

For one, Dylan and Rotolo appear to be models for "young love." It works because they really were—they'd met at a folk concert in 1961. She was 17 and he was 20. Dylan was smitten.

Before they went out, Dylan and Rotolo posed for some portraits in their apartment on West 4th Street in New York's Greenwich Village.





"Meeting her was like stepping into the tales of 1,001 Arabian nights," Dylan wrote in his memoir, Chronicles: Volume One. "She had a smile that could light up a street full of people and was extremely lively, had a particular type of voluptuousness."

Columbia Records photographer Don Hunstein captured their connection despite less than ideal circumstances. Hunstein started the photo shoot in the couple's West 4th Street apartment. Not knowing what exactly he was after, the photographer took shots of Dylan sitting with his guitar in the place where he often wrote his songs. Then he took some of Dylan with Rotolo-because she was his inspiration, and because she was there.

Looking to change things up, Hunstein then suggested moving outside. Rotolo was already bundled in multiple sweaters and a coat—not because of the snow-covered streets, but because the flat she shared with her boyfriend wasn't warm.

"Our apartment was always cold, so I had a sweater on, plus I borrowed one of his big, bulky sweaters," she told *The New York Times* in 2008. (Rotolo died

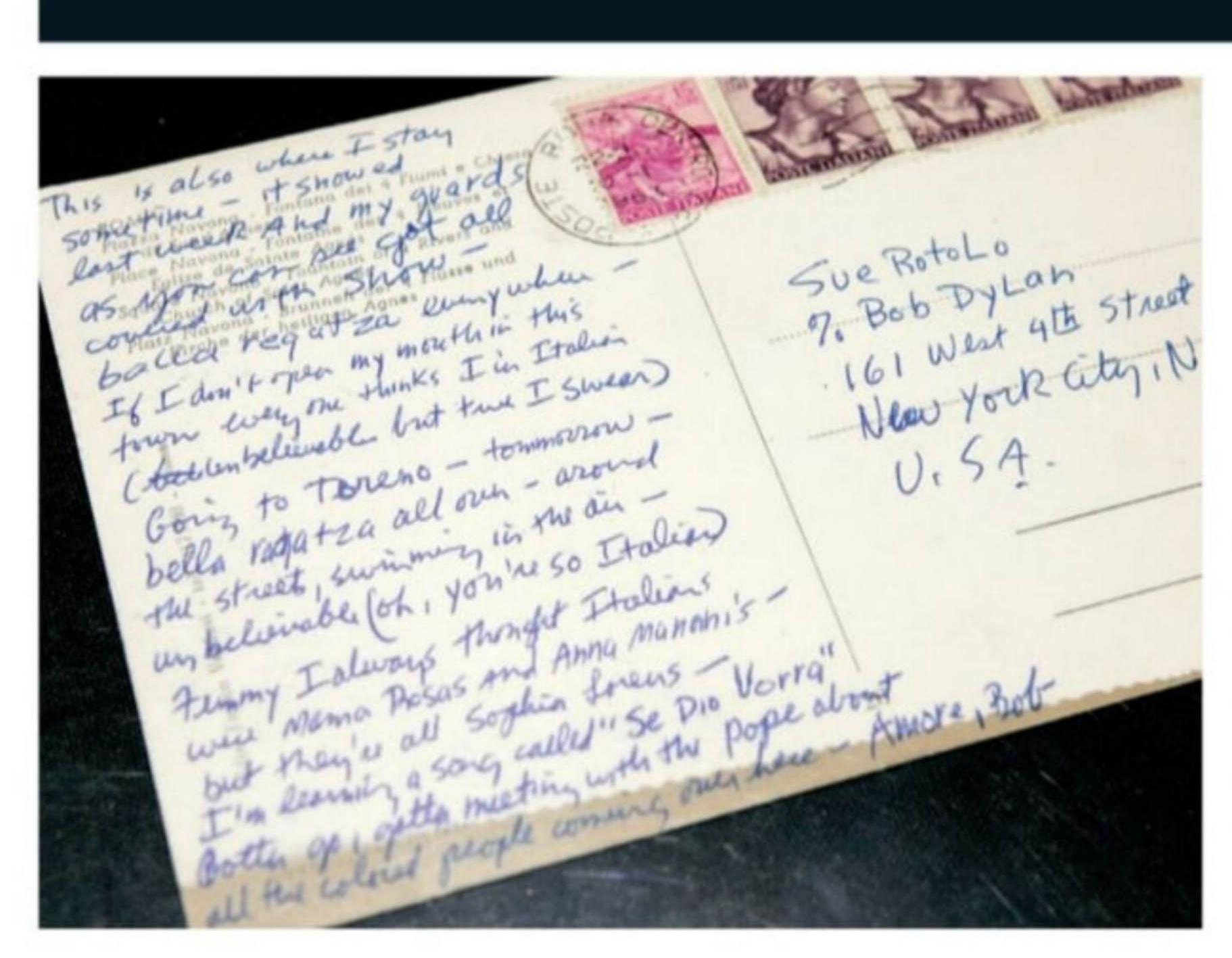
in 2011 at age 67.) "On top of that I put on a coat. So I felt like an Italian sausage."

Did Dylan, who wore a light jacket, feel more comfortable? Likely not. But he wasn't about to layer up because, as Rotolo put it, "Image was all."

Furthermore, Dylan had a specific image he wanted to emulate: that of actor James Dean. Apart from a slight build, Dylan and Dean had almost nothing in common as far as appearances went. But Dylan all but recreated the 1955 photo by Dennis Stock of Dean walking through the rain in an empty Times Square—right down to his rounded shoulders.

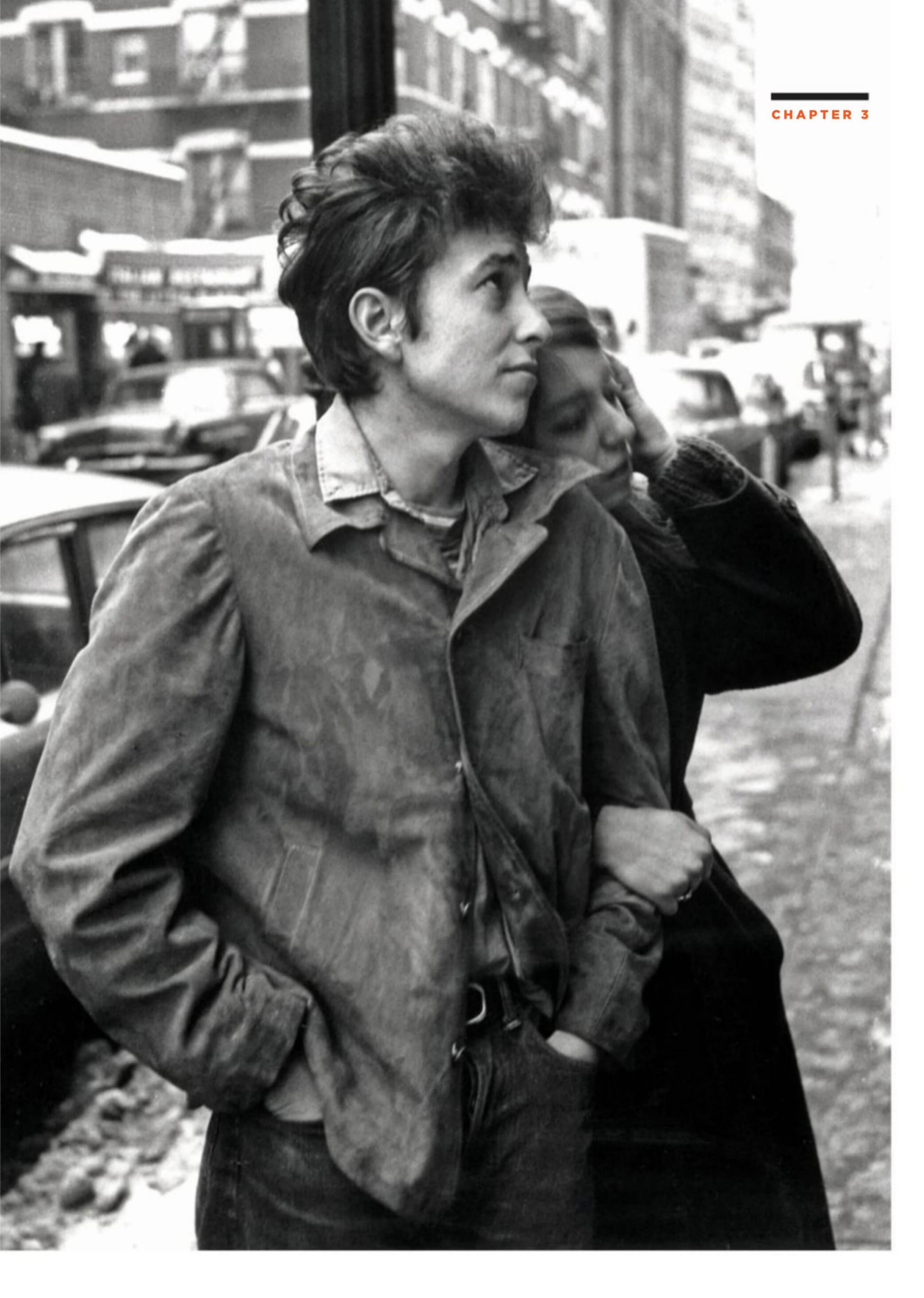
In the photo of Dean, shot in black and white, the actor is very much by himself-creating a portrait of romantic solitude. In Dylan's version, the rebel is flanked by his adoring love: romantic in the entirely opposite way because it validates that being cool doesn't have to mean a life of loneliness.

The image was perfectly composed. Hunstein only took credit for working quickly so his subjects didn't have to endure the winter weather. "We were lucky to get what we got," he said.



THAT'S AMORE A postcard of Rome's Piazza Navona that Dylan sent to Rotolo (left). He ends by telling her he's going to meet the Pope.

HOLDING CLOSE Dylan and Rotolo do some window shopping for photographer Don Hunstein during their walk around Greenwich Village (right).







In another portrait taken by Hunstein in their apartment, Dylan and Rotolo strike another pose that recreates "young love."

THE IMAGE WAS PERFECTLY

composed. Hunstein only took credit for working quickly so his subjects didn't have to endure the winter weather.

When Rotolo saw the album cover, she was "stunned" to be featured so prominently. She assumed it would be one of the images of Dylan alone—but Bob chose the shot himself. To him, it made sense. Rotolo was the inspiration for the album's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" and "Down the Highway." Dylan also acknowledged his girlfriend's influence in opening his eyes to political issues and social activism. He further credited Rotolo with helping him grow as an artist and a man.

The image became a symbol for a generation and the times they were marching toward with uncertainty, but also with hopefulness: a casual young couple braced against the cold together, smiling. The shot embodies freedom, us against the world, and—to borrow a saying that wouldn't come into vogue until 1967—all you need is love.

In real life, Dylan and Rotolo's relationship did not survive the year. Dylan's fame took off with the release of the album in May 1963. Sucked into his orbit, Rotolo felt unable to create a life of her own. She was an artist herself—a poet and painter—and, despite what the photo seemed to suggest, she was not going to be happy trudging through life clinging to Bob Dylan's arm. In August '63, she moved out of the couple's shared apartment.

But Dylan never forgot Rotolo, or her influence on his life and his breakthrough record. "The cover," he later told friends, according to *Rolling Stone*, "is the most important part of the album." CHAPTER 3

FREEWHEELIN'
CLOSE-UP:

"GIRL FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY"

Who is the girl from the north country? The one of whom Dylan writes, "Remember me to one who lives there, she once was a true love of mine."

The mystery remains. Was he writing about Echo Helstrom, from his hometown, or Bonnie Beecher, his college girlfriend at the University of Minnesota, or Suze Rotolo, for whom he was searching while she traveled in Italy as he finished writing the song? Only Dylan knows. And he still isn't telling.

He wrote it on his own trip to Europe, which started in England and ended with him trying to find Rotolo in Italy, not knowing she had already returned to the United States. With tune and theme adapted from "Scarborough Fair," the song is nearly identical in composition to Dylan's "Boots of Spanish Leather."

Guitarist Keith Richards told Rolling Stone: "It's got all the elements of beautiful folk writing without being pretentious. In the lyrics and the melody, there is an absence of Bob's later cutting edge. There's none of that resentment."

Girl From the North Country would later become the name of the 2022 Tony Award-winning Broadway musical by Conor McPherson, which featured 20 reimagined Dylan songs telling the story of a group of wanderers who end up in the same full house in Duluth, Minnesota, circa 1934.

No one knows the identity of the girl from the north country of whom Dylan sings—and he's never let anyone in on the secret.



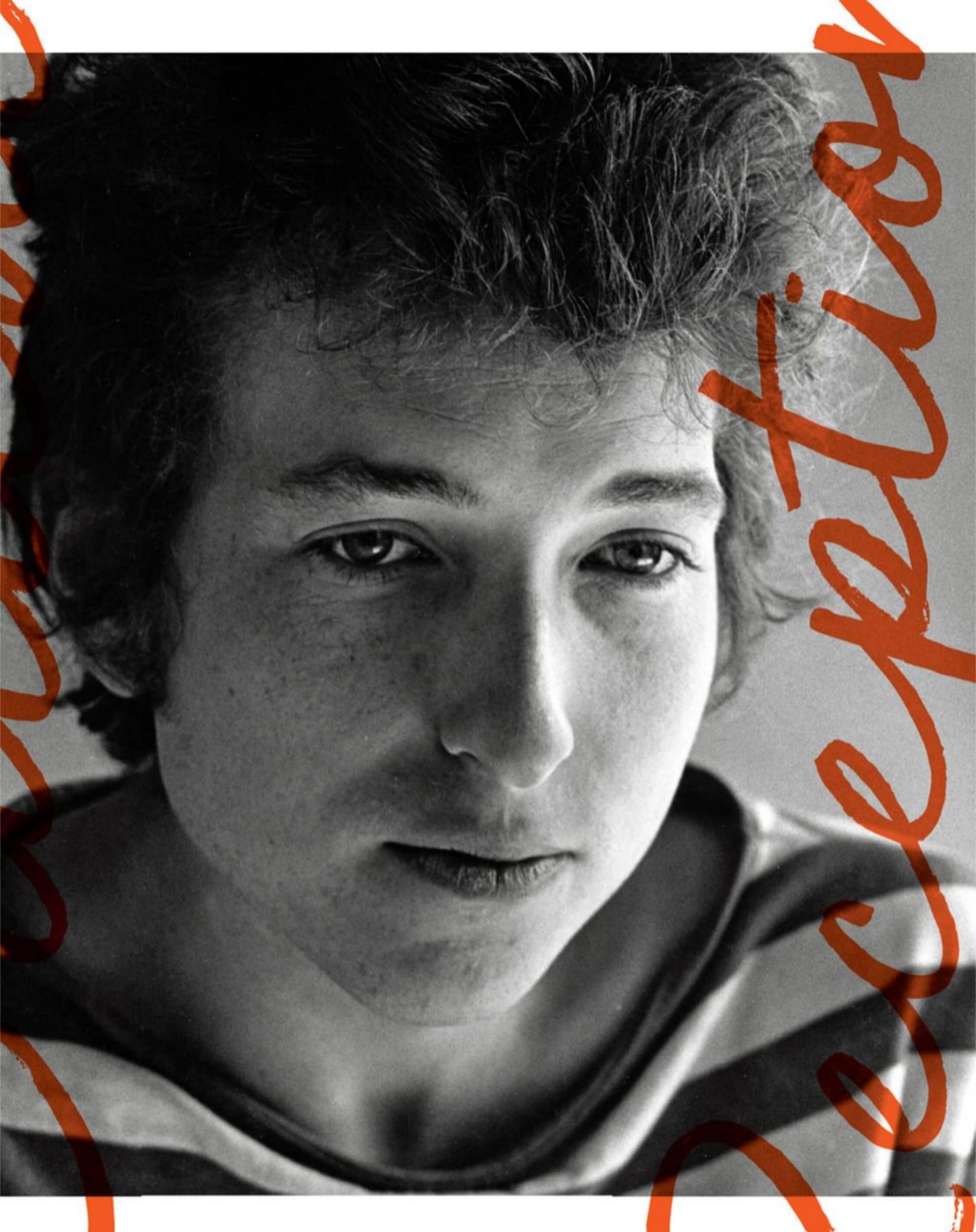
Chapter

CRITICAL

It wasn't a chart-topper but *Freewheelin* won rave reviews—and has influenced generations

MAN OF HIS TIME

Young, thoughtful and socially conscious, Dylan's music and character defined the 1960ssomething that all began with the release of The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.



Upon its release, THE FREEN'S

Bob Dylan was a critical and commercial success. While it only reached No. 22 on the charts, it eventually went platinum and is seen as a seminal work in the history of folk and rock, not to mention Bob Dylan's career.

Referencing the trove of originally written songs, one critic wrote: "In barely over a year, a young plagiarist had been reborn as a songwriter of substance, and his first album of fully realized original material got the 1960s off their musical starting block."

After its release, *San Francisco Chronicle* critic Ralph Gleason called Dylan "a genius, a singing conscience and moral referee, as well as a preacher."

It wasn't a hit with everyone, though. This new version of Dylan didn't seem to sit well back home in Minnesota where it had all begun for young Robert

FOLK DUO
On April 27, 1965, the day
after he arrived in England
for his tour, Dylan posed
with Joan Baez in London's
Embankment Gardens.







Zimmerman. A Minneapolis folk music newsletter called it a "great disappointment," saying that Dylan's performance on the album was "affected" and "pretentious."

Ironically, the lyrics that some heard as pretentious were the same ones that earned him the reputation—and burden—of being the "voice of a generation."

Joan Baez was a passionate champion of what Dylan had accomplished. The queen of the Greenwich Village folk scene, Baez took a liking to Dylan's music when she met him in 1961 and often had him play with her. The appearances raised Dylan's profile and album sales and furthered his growing fame.

The two would perform at the second Newport Folk Festival in July 1963, just a couple of months after the release of *Freewheelin*'. Their professional



LOVE MATCH

By the time Dylan and Baez met up in London in 1965 (above), their romantic relationship was nearing its end.

POETIC CHAMPIONS Baez went out of her way to promote Dylan and his

to promote Dylan and his music. At right, they sing together at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival.







Dylan with Van Morrison (far left) and The Band's Robbie Robertson (near left) at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom on Nov. 25, 1976.

EVERY POP ARTIST

took notice. This wasn't just folk. It was the present and the future.

collaboration evolved into a romantic relationship, but their love couldn't survive the trappings of Dylan's fame and success that Baez had helped to create. He went from a favorite local musician in downtown Manhattan to a global icon—his boyhood idol, Elvis, reimagined and evolved.

Every pop artist took notice. This wasn't just folk. It was the present and the future.

In March 2000, Van Morrison talked about *Freewheelin*'s impact on him. He still remembered where he was when he first discovered it. "I think I heard it in a record shop in Smith Street," he told the Irish rock magazine *Hot Press*. "And I just thought it was incredible that this guy's not singing about 'moon in June' and he's getting away with it. That's what I thought at the time. The subject matter wasn't pop songs, ya know, and I thought this kind of opens the whole thing up... Dylan put it into the mainstream that this could be done."

The Beatles were in Paris with plenty of reasons why they might have missed *Freewheelin'*—they themselves were busy enjoying the first blush of Beatlemania. Still, John Lennon said they listened to nothing else for three weeks straight. When the Beatles finally met Dylan in person, Paul McCartney recalled feeling like he was climbing a spiral staircase as they were talking.

"I felt like I was figuring it all out, the meaning of life," he said.

Not surprisingly, the album's biggest songs would be covered or sampled by other artists across genres, genders and generations, including Johnny Cash, Stevie Wonder, Neil Young, Dolly Parton and Pearl Jam. Freewheelin' was one of the first 50 recordings chosen by the Library of Congress to be added to the National Recording Registry in 2002. The citation read: "This album is considered by some to be the most important collection of original songs issued in the 1960s."

Forty years after its release, Rolling Stone praised the album's "poetry" and "articulate fury," saying Dylan's "grip on grit, truth and beauty ... still changes everyone who hears this album."





JAM SESSION Dylan plays onstage alongside former Beatle George Harrison (far left) at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on Jan. 20, 1988.

FACE IN THE CROWD On his way to meet the Beatles, Dylan makes his way through a throng of fans outside the band's New York hotel in August 1964.





CHAPTER 4

FREEWHEELIN'
CLOSE-UP:

"A HARD RAIN'S A-GONNA FALL"

"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" is believed to be about the war in Vietnam, but Dylan has said it could apply to any injustice or travesty.

This epic, seven-minute protest anthem is perhaps the most complex song in Dylan's entire collection. And, according to him, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" was many songs merged into one.

"Every line in it is actually the start of a whole song," Dylan says in the liner notes. "But when I wrote it, I thought I wouldn't have enough time alive to write all those songs, so I put all I could into this one."

For many listeners, the song is about (and against) the war in Vietnam. But Dylan says the lyrics could equally apply to any injustice, wrongdoing or coming apocalypse.

Dylan is believed to have first performed the song at the Gaslight Café in New York City, leaving the crowd speechless when he was done. He soon impressed with it again in a 1962 Carnegie Hall concert organized by Pete Seeger. The music and lyrics inspired his peers and, at 21, cemented his place as a powerful voice for the generation.

"It's beyond genius," said Bob Weir of the Grateful Dead. "I think the heavens opened and something channeled through him." Rolling Stone deemed it "the greatest protest song by the greatest protest songwriter of his time."





Chapter

Freewheelin' made Dylan "the voice of his generation"

VOCAL SUPPORT

After his landmark second album, Dylan's music was expected to be about important things and help boost worthy causes—but he just wanted to write songs.

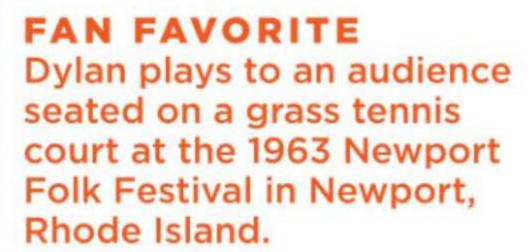




HUUUUU UULIL ofthe 1960s Was popular,

but also insular. The brilliance of *Freewheelin'* vaulted Bob Dylan's recognition, and influence, into the much wider categories of pop and rock—and beyond. The craftsmanship and subject matter of *Freewheelin'* made it impossible for him to be just another hitmaker. His fans became near cult-like—looking to Dylan for answers to an increasingly complex and divisive time in human history. Dylan wanted to speak to the people, but the people now wanted him to speak for them.

Critic Janet Maslin wrote: "These were the songs that established him as the voice of his generation—







The March on Washington in 1963 was symbolic of a time of social upheaval in the U.S.—and many saw Dylan as one of its leaders.

someone who implicitly understood how concerned young Americans felt about nuclear disarmament and the growing Civil Rights movement: his mixture of moral authority and nonconformity was perhaps the most timely of his attributes."

The persona that Dylan always sought was to be an outsider. Now he was being hailed as the leader of all outsiders—and more and more kids lined up to join the ranks because Dylan had made it cool. Not surprisingly, Dylan bristled at his new title as the "voice of his generation" (and sometimes "the poet of his generation") at the time and in the decades that followed.

In a 2004 interview with NPR's Steve Inskeep, Dylan said he never accepted what he considered to be not a compliment, but rather a label and a role that had been forced upon him. "[Voice of a generation] was just a term that could create problems for somebody, especially if someone just wants to keep it simple, write songs and play them," Dylan told Inskeep. "Having these colossal accolades and titles, they get in the way."

The lofty and pretentious status was a burden. There was no way for Dylan to live up to the new demands and expectations of even his biggest fans. Was he supposed to write brilliant songs about

THE LOFTY AND PRETENTIOUS

status was a burden. There was no way for Dylan to live up to the new demands and expectations of even his biggest fans.

"THE PRESS NEVER LET UP,"

Dylan said. "I felt like a piece of meat that someone had thrown to the dogs."

every issue plaguing humanity? Comment on any injustice? Become solely a musician of social commentary? And was he expected to find just the right words to channel the angst of his fellow twenty-somethings as they evolved and changed? It felt like that might be the deal—anything less would be a disappointment.

And what about Dylan the human being? Was he allowed to sing about things that mattered only to him? How did his freedom factor into all of this?

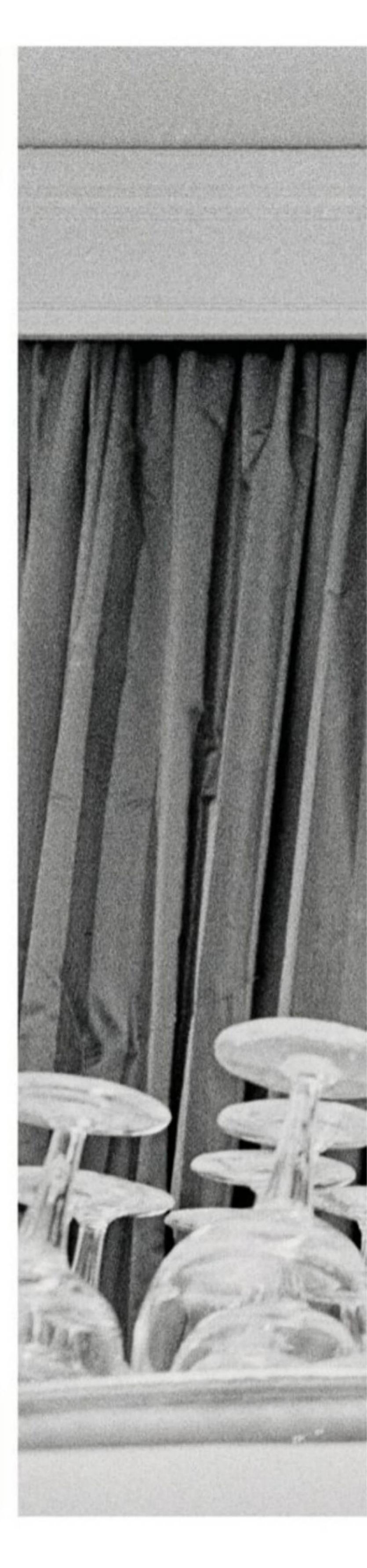
In 1964, Irwin Silber, editor of the folk journal *Sing Out!* criticized Dylan's new music as "all inner-directed now, inner-probing, self-conscious—maybe even a little maudlin or a little cruel on occasion." He also claimed that Dylan had "somehow lost contact with people." (Silber later softened and explained his criticism in a 1968 piece for *The Guardian*.)

Years later, in his autobiography *Chronicles: Volume One*, Dylan wrote about the new labels placed upon him after *Freewheelin'* was released and his fame grew. He squarely blamed his designations on the media.

"The press never let up," he wrote. "Once in a while I would have to rise up and offer myself for an interview so they wouldn't beat the door down. Later an article would hit the streets with the headline 'Spokesman Denies That He's a Spokesman.' I felt like

ANSWER MAN

Dylan regards reporters
and cameramen with weary
amusement at a press
conference at London's
Savoy Hotel in May 1966.







a piece of meat that someone had thrown to the dogs."

The pressures didn't diminish as the years passed. In 2016, Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature for "having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition." After the accolade was announced to a shocked audience, Swedish Academy member Per Wastberg defended the decision by saying of Dylan: "He is probably the greatest living poet."

Dylan was the first—and remains the only—singersongwriter to earn the honor. He declined the invitation to the award banquet but went to Sweden months later to pick up his medal and diploma. And he submitted his Nobel Laureate lecture, which was released to a curious public. In it, Dylan does not rail against the award or the labels thrust upon him. Instead, Dylan dedicates most of his speech to the works of literature he says inspired him the most: *Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Odyssey*.

In describing Herman Melville's epic whaling adventure about obsession, passion and ego, Dylan could just as easily have been talking about the reputation he had earned by crafting his own set of classics: "We see only the surface of things," Dylan wrote. "We can interpret what lies below any way we see fit."



PRIZE PICTURES Murals of Dylan in 2016 in Minneapolis on the day he got the Nobel Prize (left, top), and signs of praise in Las Vegas (left, bottom).

ACADEMY AWARD Sara Danius, the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, announces Dylan's Nobel Prize in Stockholm on Oct. 13, 2016 (right).

FREEWHEELIN'
CLOSE-UP:

"DON'T THINK TWICE, IT'S ALL RIGHT"

With lyrics inspired by his girlfriend Suze Rotolo telling him that she might stay in Italy indefinitely instead of returning to him and the United States, the melody of "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," is a reworking of folk singer Paul Clayton's "Who's Gonna Buy You Ribbons (When I'm Gone)." Dylan was accused of plagiarism by some and eventually settled with Clayton out of court.

Much covered, "Don't Think Twice" is often sung as sentimental. But the lyrics suggest anger and resentment: "You could have done better but I don't mind/You just kinda wasted my precious time."

In the Freewheelin' liner notes, Dylan says: "It isn't a love song. It's a statement that maybe you can say to make yourself feel better. It's as if you were talking to yourself."

In his 2001 biography of Dylan, Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan, author Howard Sounes summarized that the song's ability to be heard many different ways is its strength: "The greatness of the song was in the cleverness of the language. The phrase 'don't think twice, it's all right' could be snarled, sung with resignation, or delivered with an ambiguous mixture of bitterness and regret. Seldom have the contradictory emotions of a thwarted lover been so well expressed, and the song transcended the autobiographical origins of Dylan's pain."

Twice It's All Dight" is its

Twice, It's All Right" is its ambiguity. The song could be angry or sentimental depending on how it's played.



Chapter

Freewheelin'showcased a wide range of brilliance

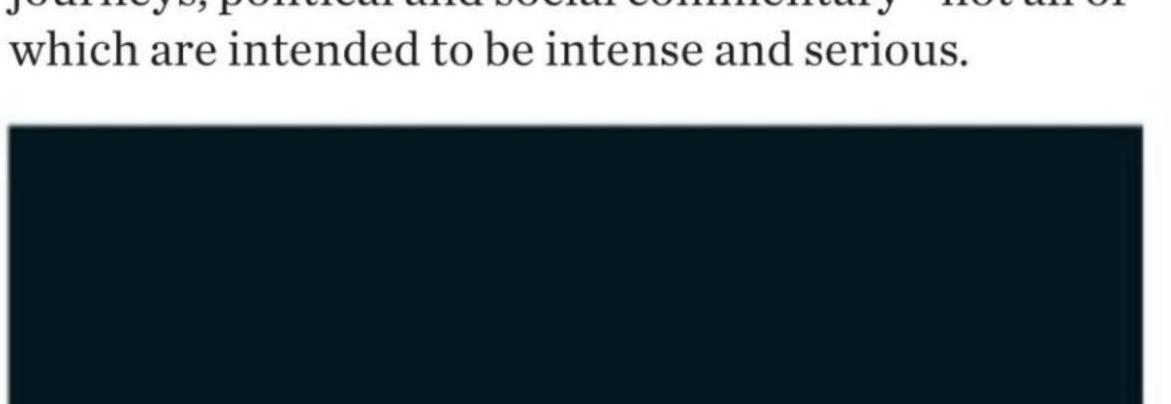
ARTIST AT WORK

Dylan wrote so much music in the year it took to record his second album that he not only had a multitude of songs to choose from, but in some cases many versions of the same song.



tohave

But *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* is so much more than that single all-time great song. The album contains multiple classics that show off Dylan's versatility in musicality and songwriting. The tracks also cover multiple themes—love and loss, personal journeys, political and social commentary—not all of which are intended to be intense and serious



Protesters are seen through a peace sign at a nuclear disarmament march to London from Aldermaston, England, on April 21, 1963.

"Masters of War"

With music based on Jean Ritchie's "Nottamun Town," the lyrics are pure anger and disgust at the nuclear arms race, industrial war machine, the greed of corporate executives profiting off of death, and the utter immorality of it all. Ritchie wanted credit for writing the arrangement and ended up settling with Dylan's lawyers for \$5,000.







PACE OF THE MUSE

Dylan's girlfriend at the time, the artist and writer Suze Rotolo, at the Newport Folk Festival in Newport, Rhode Island, in July 1963.

"Down the Highway"

Another song about Suze Rotolo, this 12-bar blues tune is a love song of loneliness written while she was in Italy. In the sleeve notes, Dylan noted: "What made the real blues singers so great is that they were able to state all the problems they had; but at the same time, they were standing outside of them and could look at them. And in that way, they had them beat."

"Bob Dylan's Blues"

The track begins uniquely with a satirical spoken intro in which Dylan describes the origins of folk songs. In the sleeve notes, Dylan describes the track as "a really off-the-cuff-song. I start with an idea and then I feel what follows. Best way I can describe this one is that it's sort of like walking by a side street. You gaze in and walk on.

GREATEST GRAD

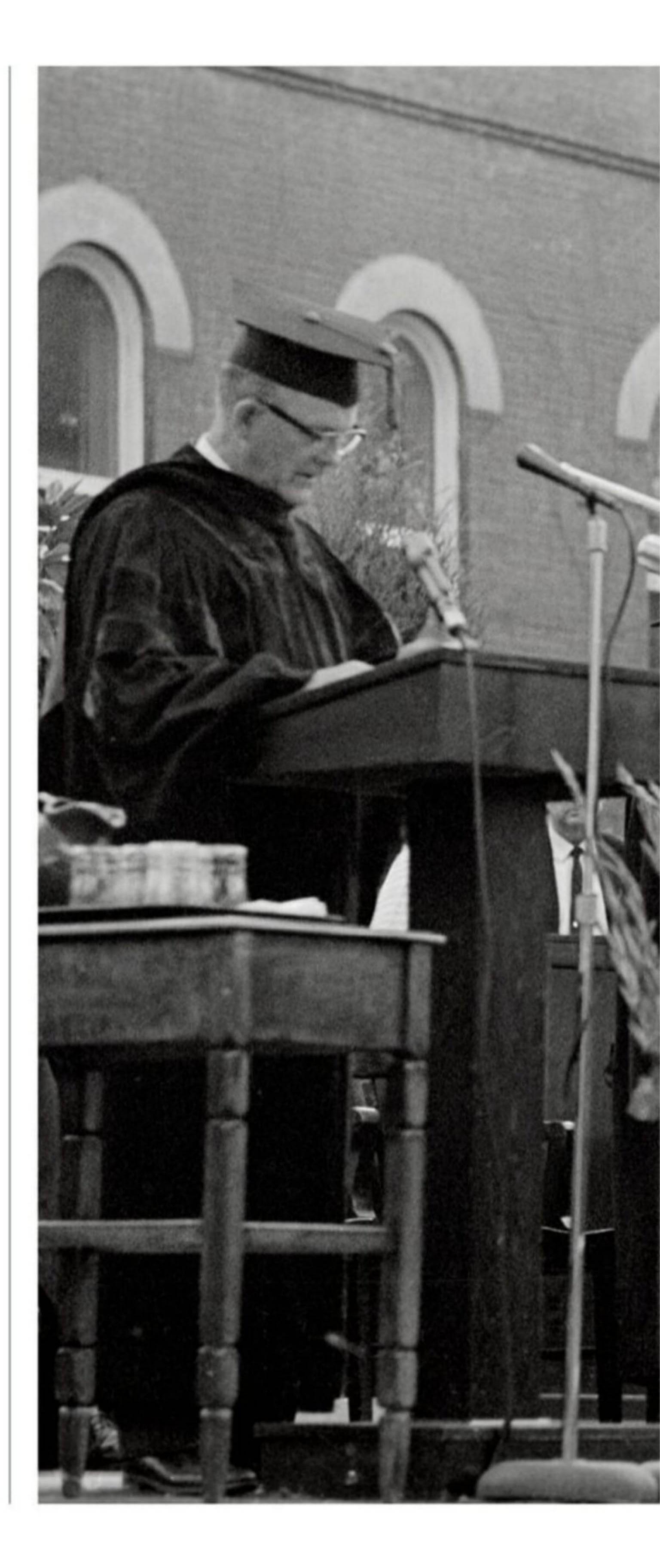
A smiling James Meredith, whose struggle inspired Dylan, accepts his degree from the University of Mississippi on Aug. 18, 1963.



In this ballad, Dylan borrowed "Lady Franklin's Lament" for a song about memories of afternoons with friends who have disappeared down different paths. It is the type of nostalgia usually reserved for middle-aged songwriters, not those barely into their 20s. But Dylan's lyrics of the years gone have listeners of all ages reminiscing about long-lost friends and the carefree afternoons of the past.

"Oxford Town"

This song was a quickly written commentary on the racial unrest and racist response to James Meredith becoming the first Black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. "He went down to Oxford town/Guns and clubs followed him down/All because his face was brown/Better get away from Oxford town." Federal troops were called in to integrate the university and make sure Meredith, an Air Force veteran, could attend class.









WIRED FOR SOUND

Dylan plays his guitar and harmonica in a New York studio during a recording session for his first album, in November 1961.

"Corrina, Corrina"

It's the only song on the album to include a backing band, and Dylan gives the blues standard a new twist with altered lyrics, including lines borrowed from Robert Johnson's "Stones in My Passway." The song was tried during multiple *Freewheelin'* recording dates, with the take from an October session selected for the album.

"Honey, Just Allow Me One More Chance"

Essentially a cover of Henry Thomas' 1928 song, "Honey, Won't You Allow Me One More Chance," Dylan ups the tempo, along with guitar accompaniment and harmonica solos between verses. His lyrics tell the story of a man just looking "to get along" with a woman one more time. It is a bit self-deprecating and decidedly less intense and serious than other work on the album.

"I Shall Be Free"

The final song on Side 2 of *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* is a rewrite of Lead Belly's "We Shall Be Free," which was also performed by Sonny Terry, Cisco Houston and Dylan's idol, Woody Guthrie. It finished the album with a bit of levity, something some critics objected to considering the rest of the material. But it's not completely lighthearted. Even this track works in references to civil rights, Jim Crow and politicians.

FREEWHEELIN'
CLOSE-UP:

"TALKIN' WORLD WAR III BLUES"

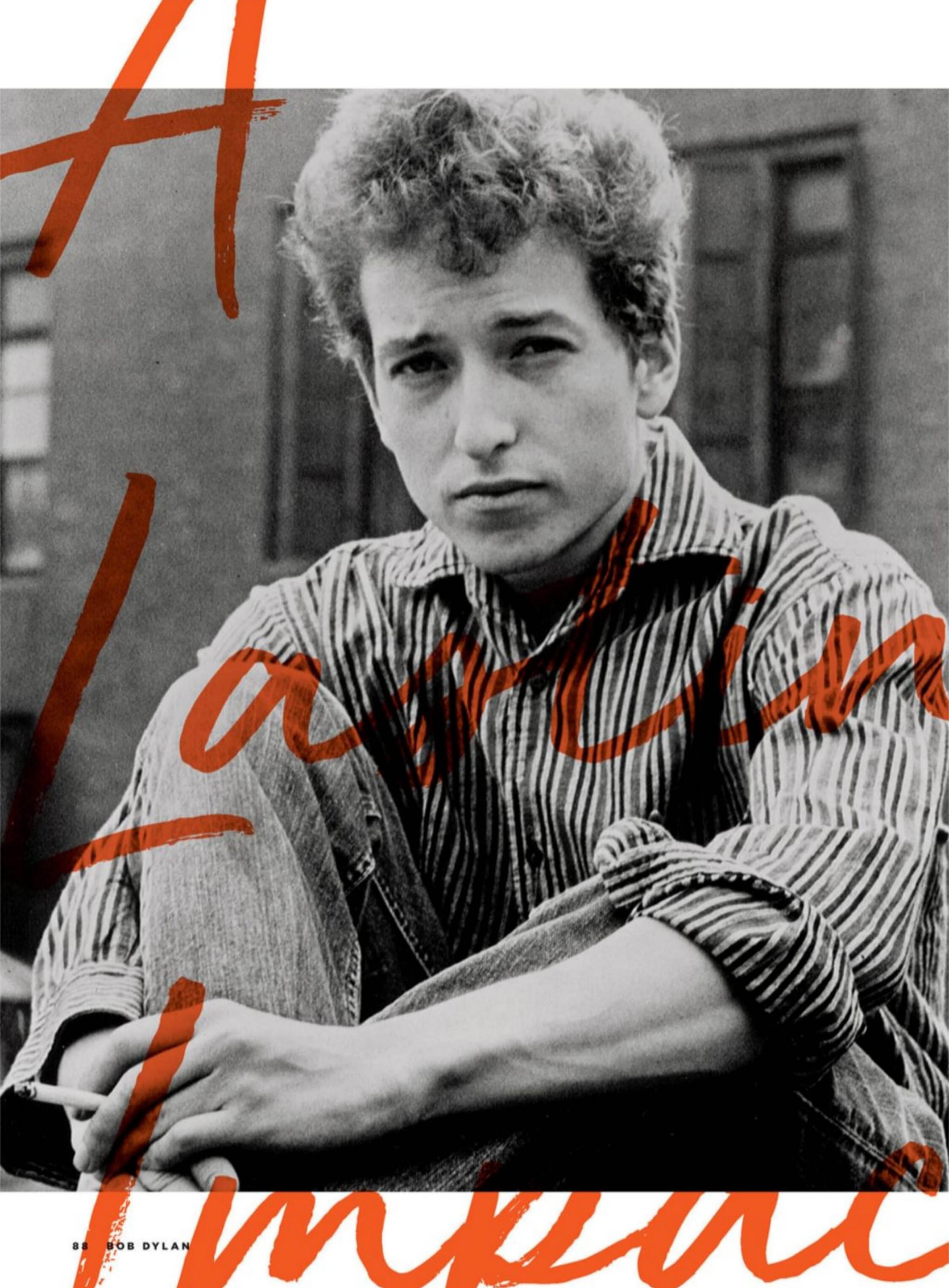
Using the "talkin' blues" improvised songwriting style of Woody Guthrie, Dylan wrote this satirical song spontaneously during the final recording session for The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan. He recorded five versions and the final one was selected for the album when Columbia Records rejected the original choice, "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues."

The song, about the Cold War and anxieties over nuclear weapons and World War III, is a conversation between the singer and his psychiatrist. The lyric "I'll let you be in my dreams if I can be in yours" is the most quoted of the piece, which addresses a very serious subject with biting wit, leaving no one spared from criticism.

The power in this song, a fan favorite at live shows, is in its comedic slant, allowing Dylan to make another important point about the politics of the times but without the intensity and his typical, expected tone. The last song to make the album's final cut, "Talkin' World War III Blues" provides a needed change of pace without taking anything away from the record's overall purpose and impact.

A rumination on Cold War anxieties, "Talkin' World War III Blues," was the final song to make the final cut of The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan.







TO ACCUINT tor every musician, not. artist or thinker

who was influenced by *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. The album made the wide range of topics it touched more personal than other recordings before it, and it tackled many themes that others dared not address—from nuclear war to civil rights to giving a woman your heart when she wants your soul.

LEADING MAN

Dylan sings with, among others, Joan Baez (near left) and Pete Seeger (obscured, third from right) at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival.









DYLAN'S FELLOW MUSICIANS

learned they could write complex songs with serious meaning and still find commercial success.

With the release of *Freewheelin'*, Dylan's fellow musicians learned they could write complex songs with serious meaning and still find commercial success. As a result, folk music reached a wider audience and pop music became infinitely more significant.

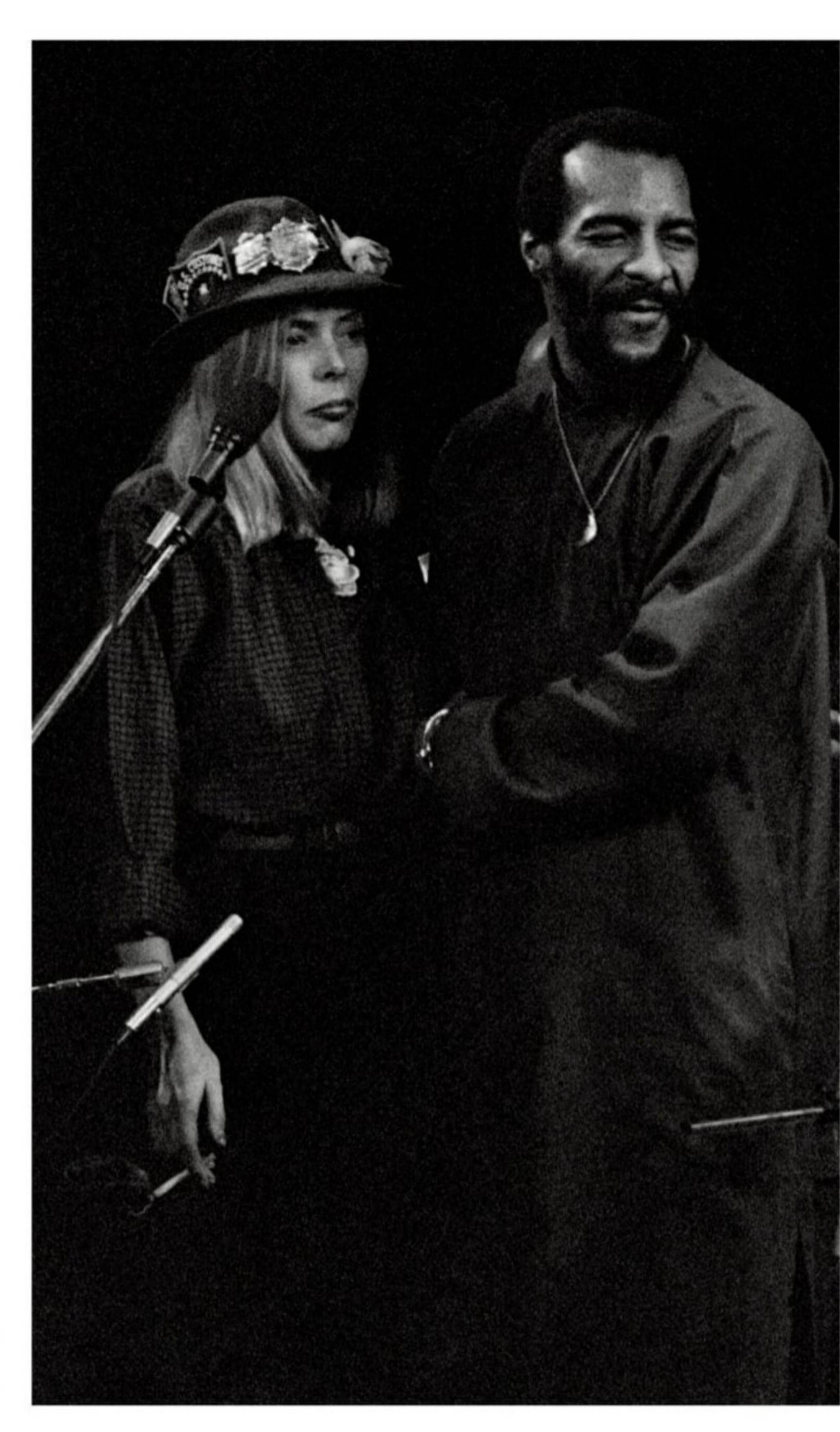
"Of all the precipitously emergent singers of folk songs in the continuing renascence of that selfassertive tradition, none has equaled Bob Dylan in singularity of impact," journalist and critic Nat Hentoff wrote.

"To the extreme, Dylan was the coolest thing in the country," singer Art Garfunkel told *American Songwriter* magazine in 2020. "Who he was and how different and bold his lyrics were, and his look; that was the closest thing the record business had to James Dean."

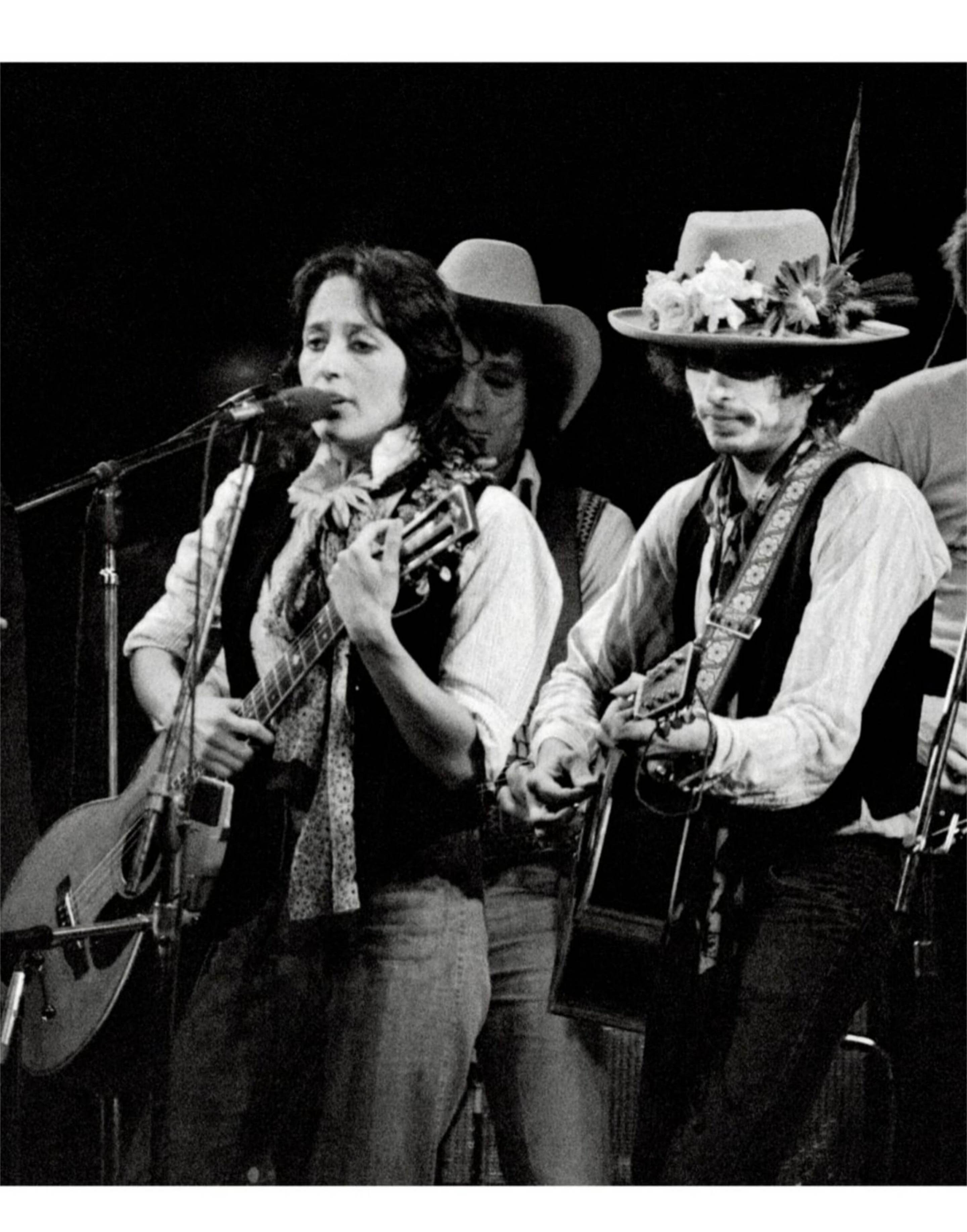
When Freewheelin' took off—at one point it was estimated that 10,000 copies sold each month—millions tried to follow Dylan's lead, including the Beatles, who freely credited Dylan with inspiring them to increase the quality of their own work. John Lennon—a pretty tough critic—once admitted: "We all went potty about Dylan."

"His songs were just the best," Joan Baez told *American Songwriter*. "I was already comfortable with protest songs. But with Dylan's songs it was, 'Aha!' Because they're so good. After he wrote those images, thousands of young kids scribbling on their pads tried to duplicate that."

When he posed for this portrait in 1963, Freewheelin' had already catapulted Dylan to the forefront of American popular music.



At a 1975 benefit at Madison Square Garden, Dylan performed with (from left) Joni Mitchell, Richie Havens and Joan Baez.



That he was able to write so much great material within a year is astounding. There are musicians who go their entire careers—and successful careers at that—without coming close to what Dylan achieved in a single album. Even Dylan knew he was opening up new ground as he went through the process of recording *Freewheelin'*.

"I felt like I'd discovered something no one else had ever discovered," he told *Rolling Stone*. "I was in a sort of an arena artistically that no one else had ever been in before ever."

The rest of Dylan's incredibly successful career has been filled with more triumphs, but even he has never stopped competing with the standard set by his second album. He has acknowledged that sometimes, creative work is guided by a power more mystical than any individual.

In the television series *The Mystery of Creativity*, Dylan discussed the songwriting of Hoagy Carmichael. "Maybe I hadn't written it all," he recounts Carmichael as saying of the song "Stardust." "The recollection of how, when and where it all happened became vague as the lingering strains hung in the rafters in the studio. I wanted to shout back at it, 'Maybe I didn't write you, but I found you."

Dylan concludes the thought with his own personal coda about what Carmichael was describing: "I know just what he meant."

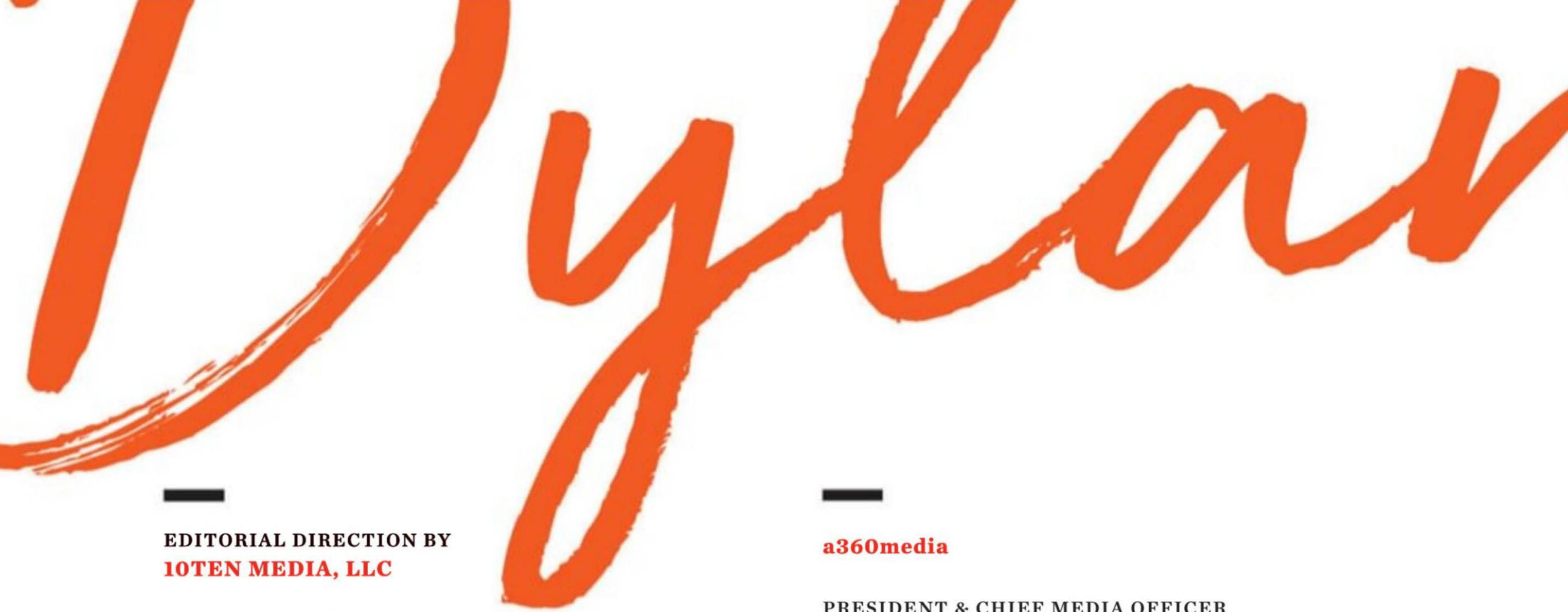
THERE ARE MUSICIANS WHO

go their entire careers ... without coming close to what Dylan achieved in a single album.









MANAGING EDITOR Vickie An

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Ian Knowles

EXECUTIVE EDITORS

Bob Der, Scott Gramling

ART DIRECTOR

Crhistian Rodriguez

SENIOR EDITOR
Mark Beech

PRODUCTION EDITOR
Corinne Cummings

WRITER Kara Yorio

RESEARCHER

Meredith Clark

PRESIDENT & CHIEF MEDIA OFFICER **Doug Olson**

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT Eric Szegda

EVP, CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER & GROUP PUBLISHER Neil Goldstein (ngoldstein@a360media.com)

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS

Ben Harris

Sebastian Raatz

VICE PRESIDENTS
Holly Oakes
Tom Maloney
Brian Theveny

CONSUMER MARKETING DIRECTOR
Melanie Piselli

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Bill Fiakos

Published by A360 Media LLC. All rights reserved.

Reproduction in whole or in part without prior permission of the publisher is prohibited. Printed in the U.S.A.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: AlexandrBognat/iStock/Getty Images Plus; Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P2-3: No credit P4-7: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images (2) P8: Archivio GBB/Alamy Stock Photo P11: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P12-13: Brian Shuel/Redferns/Getty Images P14-15: Rowland Scherman/Getty Images P16-19: John Byrne Cooke Estate/Getty Images (2) P20: Seth Poppel/Yearbook Library P22: Sigmund Goode/Michael Ochs Archive/Getty Images P24: John Springer Collection/Corbis/Getty Images P25: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images (2) P26: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P27: Blank Archives/Getty Images P28-29: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images (2) P31: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images P32: Brian Shuel/ Redferns/Getty Images P34: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P35: Blank Archives/Getty Images P36-37: Rowland Scherman/Getty Images P38: CBS Photo Archive/Getty Images P41: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P42: No credit P38: Don Paulsen/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P40: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P41: Mirrorpix/Getty Images P42-43: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images (2) P45: ABC Photo Archives/ Disney General Entertainment Content/Getty Images P45: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P46: Stan Honda/AFP/Getty Images P47-53: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images (4) P55: Hulton-Deutsch/Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis/Getty Images P56: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images P57: Rowland Scherman/Getty Images P58: United Artists/Getty Images P60: Gary Gershoff/Getty Images P61: Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy Stock Photo P63: Rowland Scherman/Getty Images P64: Jeff Hochberg/Getty Images P66: Rowland Scherman/Getty Images P68: Education Images/Getty Images P71: Fiona Adams/Redferns/Getty Images P72: Zuma Press Inc/Alamy Stock Photo; John Locher/AP/Shutterstock P73: Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP/Getty Images P75: Fiona Adams/Redferns/Getty Images P77: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P79: Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone/Getty Images P80:David Gahr/Getty Images P82-83: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images P84-88: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images (3) P91: Jeff Hochberg/Getty Images P92: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images P94-95: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images P97: © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis/Getty Images P99: No credit P100: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images



