



THE UNSEEN PHOTOS OF
JOE ALPER
1961-1965

dylan
before
DYLAN

Wall Of Sound Gallery

dylan before DYLAN

FOR THE FIRST TIME,
A EUROPEAN EXCLUSIVE,
THE UNSEEN PHOTOS OF
JOE ALPER
1961-1965

WALL OF SOUND GALLERY

Cristina Pelissero
Via Gastaldi, 4
12051 Alba (CN), Italy
+39-0173-362324
info@wallofsoundgallery.com
www.wallofsoundgallery.com

Hours: Tuesday / Saturday
10.30-12.30 / 15.30-19.30
Sunday 15.30-19.30
Closed Monday

Press office:
Clarart Claudia Ratti
+39-039-2721502
claudiaratti@clarart.com
www.clarart.com

16.05 | 21.07.13

This exhibition is included
in the City of Alba's event
"Primavera di Bellezza"

©2013 Wall Of Sound Gallery / HRR Edizioni
The Joe Alper Photo Collection LLC

Graphic design:
GUIDO HARARI e ANNA FOSSATO

Acknowledgments:
EDWARD ELBERS and the JOE ALPER PHOTO
COLLECTION LLC, GEORGE ALPER, LEN CHARNEY,
ERIC PERSON for starting the ball, DONALD PERSON
for saving the show from shipwrecking.

This catalogue cannot be reproduced in whole or in part
in any form without the written authorization of the
copyright owners and publisher.





Celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Blowin' in the Wind*

Wall Of Sound Gallery is proud to present, for the first time ever and as a European exclusive, the “DYLAN BEFORE DYLAN” exhibition with the historic photographs by Joe Alper.

Like last year with the Art Kane show, the editing, the restoration of the original negatives as well as the printing have been made at our gallery, in Alba, with the loving supervision of Edward Elbers, manager of the Joe Alper Photo Collection LLC.

May 1961. Bob Dylan barely turned 20 and has arrived in New York four months earlier. After roaming all around America, from his native Minnesota through Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, North Dakota, New Mexico, and taking on an unspecified number of identities (“You can go anywhere when you’re somebody else”), he starts building a reputation in the folk clubs of the Greenwich Village, like Gerde’s Folk City. Since the Twenties the Village has become the mecca for any bohemian, poet, artist and misfit looking for freedom from conventions and bad tra-

ditions. At the time the Village is also one of a few interracial melting pots.

Being a huge fan of Woody Guthrie, the great folk legend who’s dying at the Brooklyn State Hospital, Dylan sports a business card that says “I ain’t dead yet”, signed WG. But, as his friends way back in Minneapolis would say, he’s standing at the same mystic crossroads where they say thirty years earlier Robert Johnson has sold his soul to the Devil in order to become a music genius. How could you explain otherwise Dylan’s stunning metamorphosis when, during the same Spring, he’ll return home for a brief visit, with a surprisingly new voice and a sudden mastery with the guitar?

Truth is, that time had erased every trace of his past and the future is just pure imagination. “I didn’t have a past to talk about, nothing to go back to, nobody to count on”, Dylan says to director Martin Scorsese in his *No Direction Home* film. “Only folk music could communicate to me something that was in synch with my feelings towards life, people, institutions, ideologies.

Opposite and next page:
Newport Folk Festival, 1963.



At that time everything that counted for me was learning as many folk songs as possible, but the majority of the people I knew thought it was stuff from the past, really archaic. I don't know why, but to me it seemed that those songs were nailing the present better than anything else".

In the same month of May 1961, in Branford, Connecticut, where Dylan is due to perform at the Montowese Hotel, there's also a photographer waiting for him. His name is Joe Alper. 37 years old, a jazz and folk fan, Alper is already shooting a variety of important record covers for artists like John Coltrane, Charlie Mingus and Pete Seeger, but never fails to shoot and support, with a fervor shared with his wife Jackie, the young upcoming folkies that get to perform in the local clubs and cafes, like the historic Caffè Lena in Sarasota Springs. The Alper's are in the right milieu. Jackie works as secretary to the legendary ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax and, like Joe, is a close friend of Pete Seeger, another hero of folk music and civil conscience. Joe has only recently devoted himself to photography, certainly to follow his passion for music, but also hoping to find a way out from his dramatic

financial situation. Unfortunately a more serious problem is looming large: his battle, just begun, with ADPKD is bound to end tragically with his death in just a few years, in 1968.

Alper often follows Dylan with his camera, at the Indian Neck Folk Festival in 1961 or more north, in January 1962, at Caffè Lena or at the San Remo in Schenectady. On these occasions Dylan will gladly stay at the Alper's house in Brandywine Avenue. Therefore the historic value of Joe's photos of Dylan at this early stage in his career is invaluable, not only because they record fundamental passages, from his first steps until the electric revolution at Newport 1965, but most of all because they show an artist in progress, informally, without the masks he's already wearing in the same period when posing for other photographers like Barry Feinstein, David Gahr, Ted Russell or John Cohen. Captured in an unusual domestic bliss, often with his fiancée Suze Rotolo (the same immortalized by Don Hunstein on the cover of the *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* album), or playing with constructions with Alper's kids, or singing for Pete Seeger and an asleep Rev. Gary Davis at Gil Turner's wedding (another key fig-

ure in the Village's folk scene), Joe Alper really records a "Dylan before Dylan" with simplicity and immediacy. The same can be said of when, in April 1962, Alper gives a ride with his car to Dylan going to Columbia Studios for his first recording session for what will become *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* album, the one that features *Blowin' in the Wind*.

Although never exhibited before, some of these images have been seen by the general public as they've been featured on Dylan's *The Witmark Demos: 1962 and 1964* album as well as in Scorsese's *No Direction Home* film and related soundtrack album booklet. This exhibition, which showcases over 50 photographs printed in various sizes from 11x14 to 30x40, is made even more precious with a selection of images, also historic and rarely seen, of some jazz, blues and folk greats like Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, Muddy Waters, Thelonious Monk, Joan Baez with her sister Mimi and her husband Richard Farina, Pete Seeger, John Coltrane in the recording studio with producer Bob Thiele,

Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie with Quincy Jones, Ray Charles in a rare image of him soloing on tenor sax, Charlie Mingus with Max Roach, Howlin' Wolf, Joe Zawinul, Mississippi John Hurt and Elizabeth Cotton, Big Joe Williams. Alper's camera makes the intensity of these artists' performances and their magnetism palpable, capturing them in a dimension that – be it the stage of the first big folk and jazz festivals of the time, or the aseptic intimacy of a recording studio – seems even more miraculously friendly and livable. This is a unique record of an unrepeatable era when, as Dylan puts it, "the performers I saw and I wanted to be shared the same thing: it was in their eyes and it seemed to want to say: 'We know something that you don't know'. That's the kind of performer I wanted to be".

GUIDO HARARI, Wall Of Sound Gallery



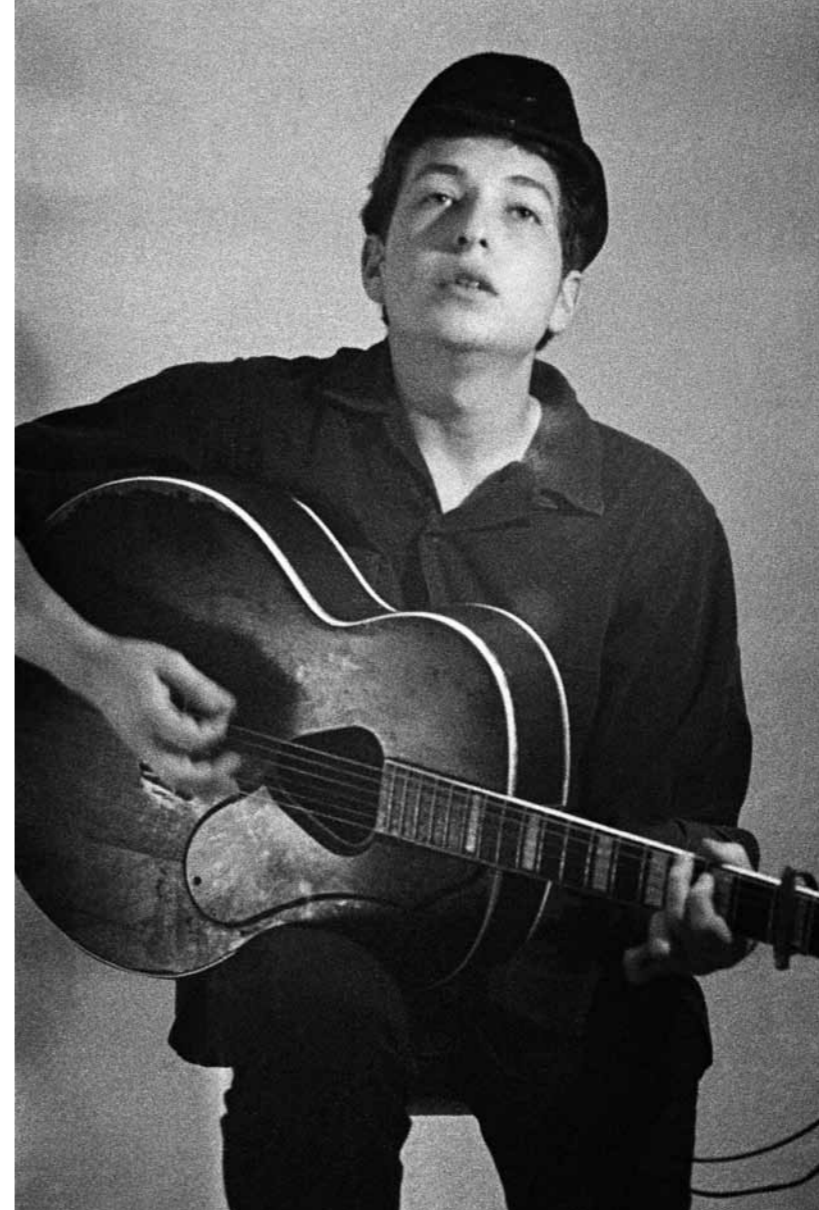
Ramblin' outa the wild West,
Leavin' the towns I love the best.
Thought I'd seen some ups and down,
'Til I come into New York town.
People goin' down to the ground,
Buildings goin' up to the sky.

BOB DYLAN, *Talkin' New York*.

3.



4.





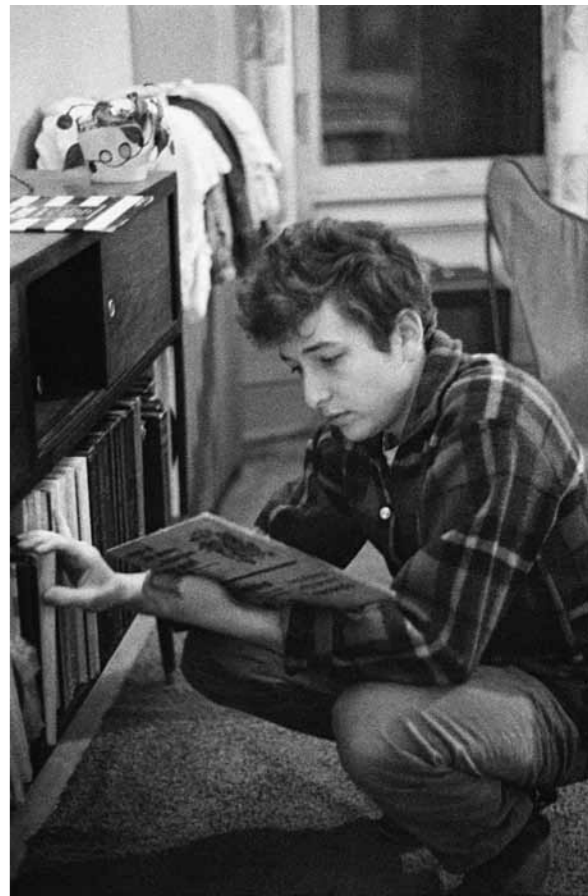
5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.

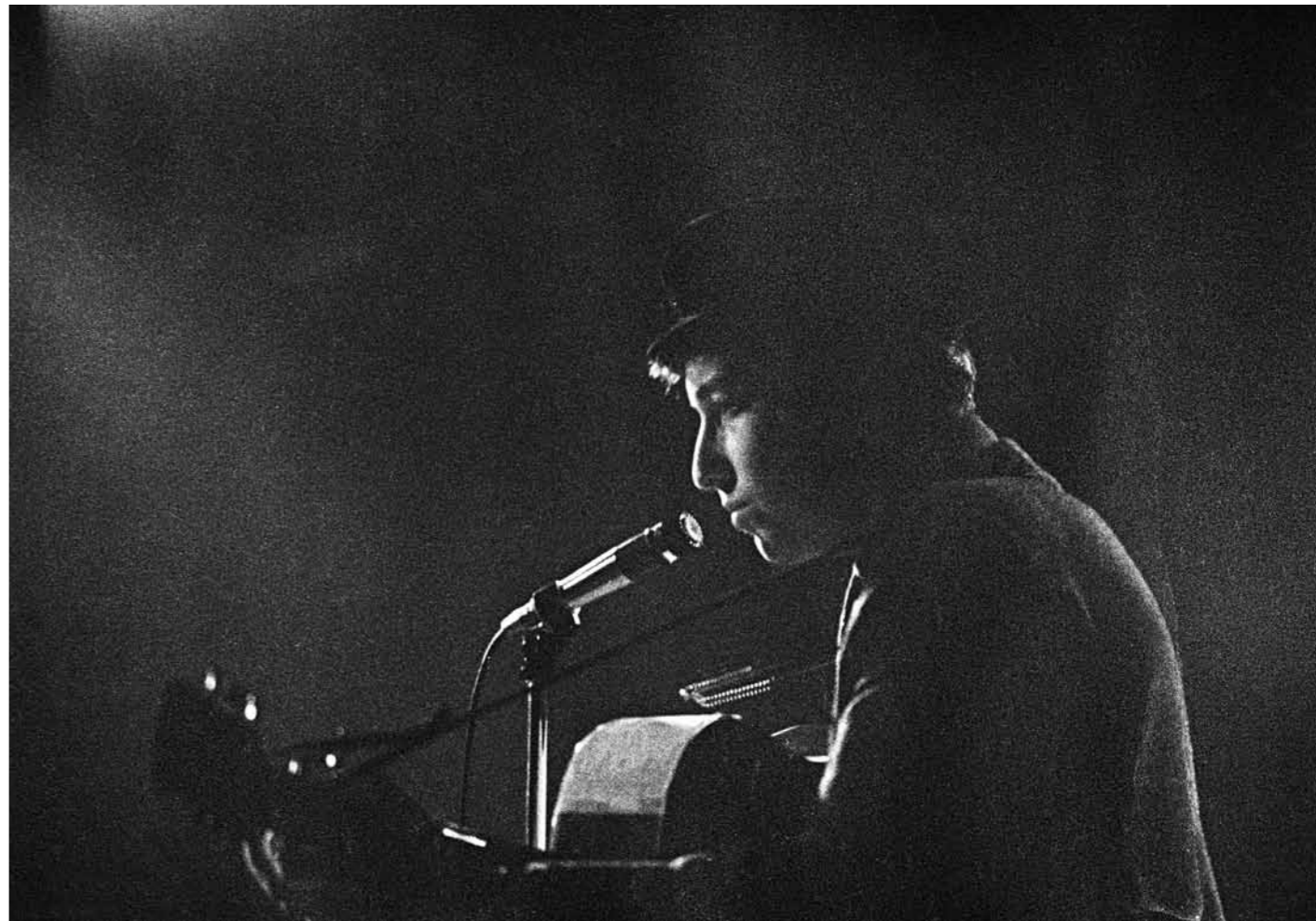


12.



13.

14.





15.



16.



17.



18.



19.



20.



21.



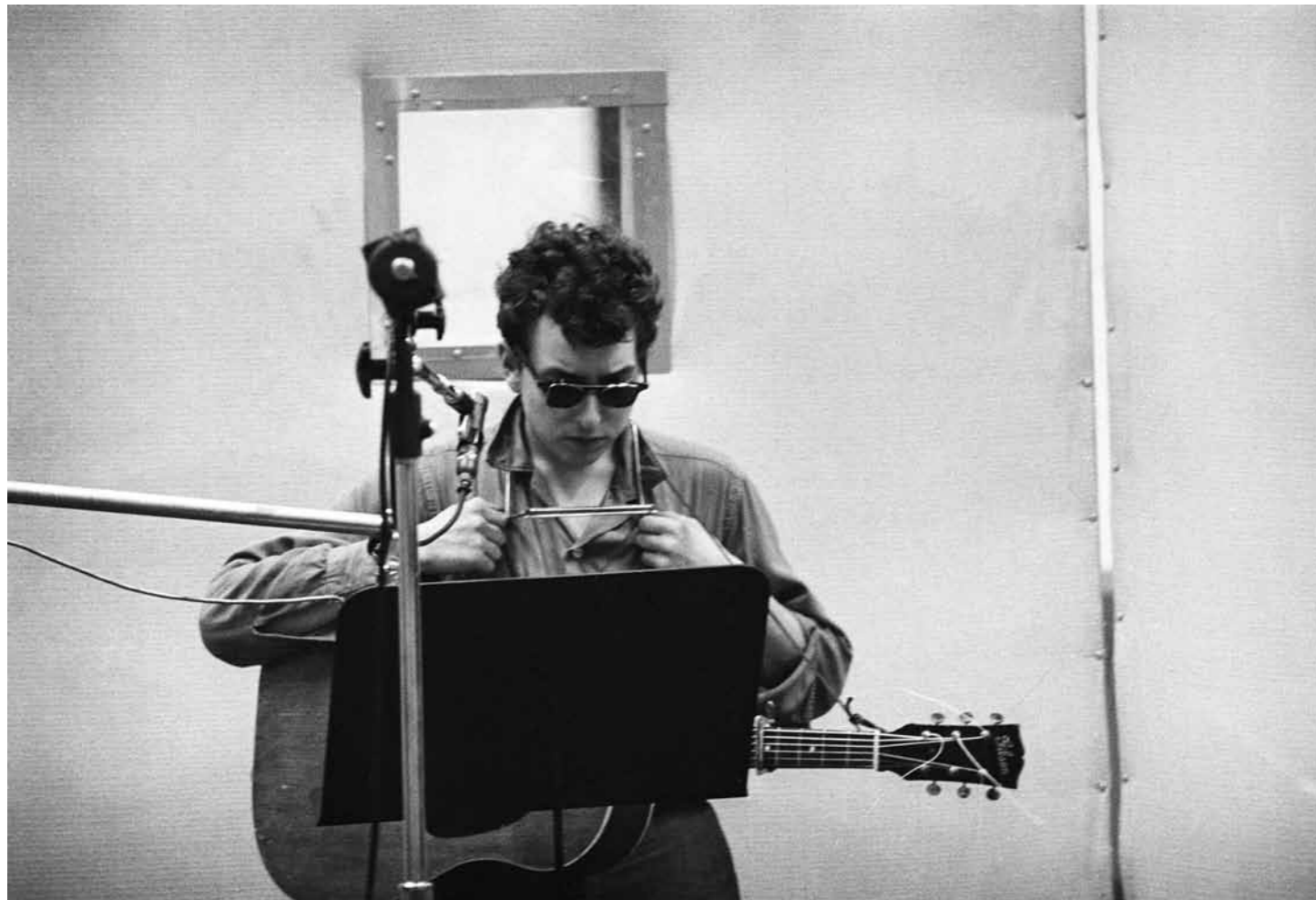
22.



23.

24.





25.



26.



27.



28.



29.



30.

... and all that jazz, blues, folk...



31.



32.



33.



34.



35.



36.



37.



38.



39.



40.



41.



42.



43.





46.



47.



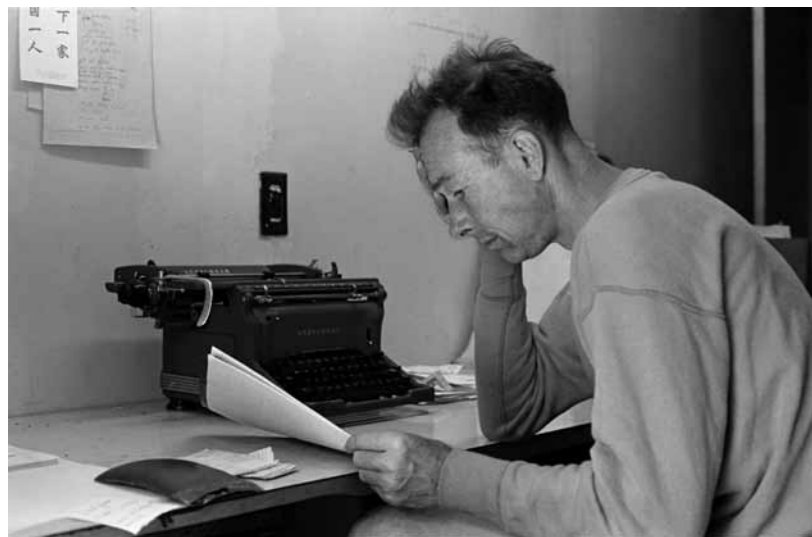
49.



48.



50.



51.



52.



53.

CAPTIONS TO PHOTOS

01.
BOB DYLAN writing songs at the Alper’s house, 520 Bran-
dywine Avenue (second floor), Schenectady, NY, January
1962.
02.
BOB DYLAN, Indian Neck Folk Festival, May 6, 1961.
03. 04.
BOB DYLAN at the Alper’s house, Sept. 25, 1961.
05. 06.
BOB DYLAN in the attic at the Alper’s house,
Jan. 15, 1962.
07.
BOB DYLAN, breakfast at the Alper’s house, Jan. 15, 1962.
08.
BOB DYLAN checks out the Alper’s record collection,
Jan. 14, 1962.
09. 10.
BOB DYLAN with his fiancée SUZE ROTOLO, January 1962.
11.
BOB DYLAN, SUZE ROTOLO and GUY MCKENZIE at the
Alper’s house, January 1962.
12.
BOB DYLAN at the Alper’s piano, January 1962.

13.
BOB DYLAN plays with constructions with Joe Alper's son
GEORGE, Jan. 13, 1962.
14.
BOB DYLAN in concert at the Caffè San Remo,
Schenectady, NY, January 1962.
15.
BOB DYLAN live at Gerde’s Folk City, in New York’s
Greenwich Village, Sept. 26, 1961.
16.
BOB DYLAN, SUZE ROTOLO and LENA SPENCER with cat
Pasha at Caffè Lena, Sarasota Springs. Founded in 1960,
Caffè Lena is to this day the longest running “coffee hou-
se” in America.
17. 18.
BOB DYLAN playing Caffè Lena, Jan. 14, 1962.
19. 21.
BOB DYLAN sings at the wedding of LORI and GIL TURNER.
Folk singer-songwriter, political activist and key figure
of the Village’s folk scene, Turner was MC at Gerde’s Folk
City as well as copublisher of the “Broadside” magazine
and collaborator of “Sing Out!”. He was the first to play
Blowin’ in the Wind live on April 16, 1962, the very same
evening that Dylan completed the song. He was also the
first ever to record it, with the New World Singers.

20.
BOB DYLAN at Turner’s wedding. Sitting, at the fore-
front, is PETE SEEGER.
22. 25. 26.
BOB DYLAN in the Columbia Studios recording *The Fre-
ewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, 1962.
23. 24.
BOB DYLAN n the Columbia Studios recording *The Fre-
ewheelin’ Bob Dylan* album. With him is legendary produ-
ce JOHN HAMMOND SR, who discovered and launched Bil-
lie Holiday, Robert Johnson, Pete Seeger, Aretha Franklin,
Bruce Springsteen and many others.
27. 29.
BOB DYLAN at Newport Folk Festival, 1964. In photo 25,
with his characteristic straw hat, is LEN CHANDLER,
protest songwriter, antiwar activist with the civil rights
movement.
28.
BOB DYLAN and JOAN BAEZ, at Newport Folk Festival,
1964.
30.
HOWLIN’ WOLF, Newport Folk Festival, 1964.
31.
RICHARD FARIÑA, JOAN BAEZ and MIMI FARIÑA, Newport
Folk Festival, 1965.

32.
MAX ROACH and CHARLIE MINGUS, Newport Jazz Festival,
1962.
33.
THELONIOUS MONK, Newport Jazz Festival, 1965.
34.
MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT and ELIZABETH COTTEN,
Newport Folk Festival, 1964.
35.
MUDDY WATERS, Newport Jazz Festival, 1965.
36.
ARETHA FRANKLIN, Newport Jazz Festival, 1965.
37.
NINA SIMONE, Newport Jazz Festival, 1962.
38.
DUKE ELLINGTON, Newport Jazz Festival, 1962.
39.
ELLA FITZGERALD and DUKE ELLINGTON, Newport Jazz
Festival, 1966.
40.
RAY CHARLES, 1963.

41.
MILES DAVIS, Newport Jazz Festival, 1966.
42.
SONNY ROLLINS, 1961.
43.
ROLAND KIRK, Newport Jazz Festival, 1962.
44.
JOHN COLTRANE, Newport Jazz Festival, 1965.
Alternate frame to the one used for the *Impressions*
album cover.
45.
THELONIOUS MONK, Newport Jazz Festival, 1965.
46.
JOE ZAWINUL recording Ben Webster’s *Soulmates* album,
1963.
47.
DIZZY GILLESPIE and QUINCY JONES in the recording
studio, 1965.
48.
JOHN COLTRANE and producer BOB THIELE recording the
John Coltrane And Johnny Hartman album, 1963.
49.
CHARLIE MINGUS in the studio recording *Mingus Mingus
Mingus Mingus Mingus*, 1963.

50.
JOHN COLTRANE recording the *John Coltrane And Johnny
Hartman*, 1963.
51.
PETE SEEGER at his house, 1961.
52.
PETE SEEGER, Newport Folk Festival, 1965.
53.
BIG JOE WILLIAMS serenading secretaries at the WMHT TV
headquarters, 1964.
54.
BOB DYLAN and SUZE ROTOLO at the Alper’s house,
Schenectady, NY, January 1962.

JOE ALPER (1925-1968)



J. Alper
c/o
Education St. Schol N.Y. 12204
518-374-8809



Newport Folk Fest.
1965
Bob Dylan
Len Chandler
Ronnie Gilbert

Joe Alper's images of folk, jazz and blues greats have been published on countless record covers, magazines and books. Musicians appreciated his talent in not standing in the way of the audience with his imposing height (7'50!), or shooting in time with the music, or even avoiding to shoot during the most delicate music passages of a live performance (the 35mm Minoltas that Joe loved and used were quite noisy at the time). Black and white images shot exclusively in available light, the intimacy of many photographs due to Joe's admiration for his subjects and their art, captured in moments of intense emotion and copious sweat, his darkroom technique and his use of unconventional print sizes – everything confirms Alper's greatness as an artist photographer. If you own folk, jazz or blues records from the Sixties, you quite likely already own a piece of his work.

His career ended prematurely when he died at only 43, after having just established a photo dept at SUNY, the University of Albany. Joe Alper also has taught photography at the Nova Gallery in Sarasota Springs, at YWCA in Schenectady, at the Union College, and has been an art lecturer and consultant at State University in Albany. In

1962 he also won the International Jazz Photo Competition in Poland.

He shot countless record covers for prestigious labels such as Impulse!, Vanguard, Mercury, Riverside, RCA-Victor and ABC-Paramount. His photos have been published in magazines like "Down Beat", "Cavalier", "Cash Box", "Jazz Magazine", "US Camera", "New York Times" and "National Observer". In just ten years, from 1958 to 1968, Alper shot over 80.000 negatives. About 30.000 cover the greatest jazz and folk artists of his time. An equally important part of his archive has been devoted to the civil rights movement, which he documented both as active member and as collaborator of the SNCC Freedom Singers. Many of these images are featured in the book and film *Eyes On The Prize*.

Proof sheet, Newport Folk Festival, 1964. Top row: JOHNNY CASH with MAVIS, POPS and PERVIS STAPLES and unidentified person. Bottom row: BOB DYLAN with POPS STAPLES.





54.

Wall Of Sound *Gallery*

FINE ART MUSIC PHOTOGRAPHY

Established by photographer Guido Harari, Wall Of Sound Gallery is a small time capsule where the collective unconscious can reconnect with the visual emotions of 60 years of music. Here aficionados and collectors can appreciate and purchase their favorite images in numbered and signed editions, as well as a great selection of rare books and original poster art. The love and passion for music, photography and, why not, great wine and food can now converge in the city of Alba, the magic heart of the Langhe area of Piedmont. All our photographs can be ordered via our website and will be shipped worldwide with a courier.

Pelissero
enigme, design, vendemmia, natura

environment.

AGANAHUEI
arte, grafica, design, architettura

spesso tecnologia
EPSON
EXCEED YOUR VISION

DIGI
GRAPHIE
by Epson

il Busto Mistero

OBERTOallerino[®]

