

## Laying Down the Bones

The night of February 25, 1964, in Denton, Texas, I was standing in a college apartment with four buddies, all of us about to leave and out-the-door to turn-in for the night, when Bob Dylan came on the TV. We had never heard of him. He sang, "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carrol." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qUfTVtFTa8>) It was an awkward song and unlike anything we had ever heard, musically speaking. "Hattie Carroll" was Dylan's choice instead of the more popular songs on the album, "The Times They Are A-Changing."

The four of us were stunned. Nobody could move, just standing there, a bit confused with conflicting notions about what we had just seen and heard. Who was this guy? I declared him a genius, then and there, and never looked back to say otherwise. My buddies took awhile to eventually come around to the same conclusion.

Sixty years after he burst on the scene, Bob Dylan is not and never was for everybody, a troubadour with ten minute twenty-verse songs sung in a nasal hillbilly voice. His diction and phrasing is a one-of-a-kind locution, often making his lyrics difficult to discern. He slurs and diverges with accented syllables, spitting out the greatest song lyrics ever written with novelty, fluency, and ease, a master of the English language and the 2016 Nobel Prize laureate for literature.

Now 80, Bob Dylan keeps filling large halls worldwide and topping Billboard pop charts. In 2021 and 2022, every issue of Rolling Stone Magazine sports a Bob Dylan article or quip. The protean man continues to reinvent himself.

I've bootleg recorded a multitude of Bob Dylan concerts over the last forty years. Bootlegging comes at great inconvenience. I've had two tape recorders confiscated in Dylan concerts. Some years ago, I went through my bootlegged tapes and mixed a limited edition audio cassette entitled, "Laying Down The Bones," in tribute to magnetic recording tape in general and to the cassette tape in particular. Cassette tapes played a huge role in furthering accessibility to and appreciation of music. I made a dozen copies of "Laying Down The Bones," giving them to Dylan fans who could still play a cassette in an automobile.

Friends and I sometimes argue the issue of bootlegging and copyright infringement. I defend the practice. Bob Dylan has produced a series of albums he calls, "Bootlegs." He also named an album, "Love and Theft," which sort of says it all. I'm an authority on Bob Dylan. I can listen to five versions of "Tangled Up In Blue" and fix on the best version in a New York minute. My love and theft appreciation for Dylan captured the best version that exists, in my opinion, of his groundbreaking song, "Like A Rolling Stone," (Bob Dylan and the Alpha Band, at the L.A. Forum, 1979.) Dylan's camp failed to capture this one in his archives.

In 2011, at the Dallas Convention Center, a friend and I attended the Bob Dylan "Love and Theft Tour." I had my trusty Sony TC-55 cassette recorder. When Dylan sang, "Visions of Johanna," I was astonished at the version of this favorite Dylan song, a slow ballad in the key of G instead of the original 1966 upbeat version in the key of E. We were seated on the side in the first balcony, above and in close proximity to the stage and to one of the house PA speakers. You could hear a pin drop in the concert hall. I couldn't believe I was getting this on tape. Suddenly, my friend lights a joint during the song. Security arrived in an instant with a flashlight, saw my tape recorder, and confiscated it. I was crushed. This was absolutely a best version of "Visions of Johanna," and with perfect sound.

Dylan was performing 200 miles south in Austin, Texas two days later. I bought another tape recorder, purchased tickets and made arrangements to be at the Irwin Center on the University of Texas campus for the sole purpose of recording, "Visions of Johanna." Far from ideal

conditions compared to the Dallas concert, I managed to capture the song. It cost me \$500, a bargain at twice the price. Bootlegging is the ultimate compliment.

