“There are other things in this world besides love and sex that’re important” – Bob Dylan
Songs of Protest
The Folk Revival
Civil Rights on a New Frontier
Bob Dylan: The Music of Protest
Joan Baez
Singer-Activists
Dylan’s Disenchantment
Folk-Rock
“AS civil rights marchers protested in Birmingham and as President John F. Kennedy announced plans for a New Frontier, [young America] heard the stirring message of Bob Dylan, who leveled his guitar at racism and the hypocrisy of corporate America. By 1963, the first baby boomers had entered college and were starting to become aware of the world around them.” - Szatmary
I. Bob Dylan & the New Frontier

A. Songs of Protest

1. foundations at turn of the century
   • IWW the *Little Red Songbook* 1909 in Spokane, WA

2. Woody Guthrie [1912-1967]
   • a. Left Oklahoma and “drifted” until 1937
   • b. Recorded by Alan Lomax in 1940
   • c. Penned over 1000 songs in NYC

• “I don’t sing any songs about the nine divorces of some millionaire play gal or the ten wives of some screwball...and I wouldn’t sing them if they paid me ten thousand dollars a week. I sing the songs of the people that do all the little jobs and the mean and dirty hard work in the world and of their wants and their hopes and their plans for a decent life.” – Woody Guthrie
I. Bob Dylan & the New Frontier

A. Songs of Protest

   a. Quit Harvard in 1938 to join Lomax team
   b. Founded the Almanac Singers [with Guthrie]
   c. Debuted the Weavers in 1949

4. Senator Joseph McCarthy: McCarthyism
   a. Protest singers such as Guthrie, Seeger, and sundry others fell into disrepute during the McCarthyite witch hunts.
   b. Fifties until Senate censure in late ’54
   c. Ruthlessly pursued communist sympathizers
      i. Many accused were high profile public figures
      ii. Created a hysterical, crisis atmosphere
      iii. Ostracized and blacklisted artists (most folk)

   “In the summer of 1950, “Goodnight Irene” was selling 2 million copies. The biggest hit record since the end of World War II. We were offered a coast-to-coast network TV program sponsored by Van Camp’s Pork and Beans… the next day, when they were supposed to sign, an outfit called the Red Channels came out with an attack on us. Called us ‘commie fellow-travelers,’ and Van Camp’s never signed the contract. The jobs started vanishing, and pretty soon we were down to singing at Daffy’s Bar and Grill on the outskirts of Cleveland.” – Pete Seeger of the Weavers
B. The Folk Revival

1. Folk music reappeared around 1960 when the number of college students increased
   - 1954, 3 million students to 4 million in 1960

2. College-age youths searched for an alternative to the popular, romanticized hit singles of Don Kirshner’s songwriters
   - “Weary of the more and more juvenile level of ‘pop’ music, frustrated by the dearth of good Broadway show tunes, and slightly befuddled by the growing complexity of jazz, college students were ready to turn solidly folknik.” – Look Magazine, 1961

3. Kingston Trio started the folk revival [1958 “Tom Dooley”]
   - a. surpassed even Frank Sinatra as Capital’s number one selling artist
   - b. “Reckless, rock less and rich” – Time
   - c. well dressed, well groomed trio with wives

4. Kingston Trio’s success spurned other apolitical, clean-cut folkies to form singing groups
   - Limelighters, New Christy Minstrels, etc…
B. The Folk Revival

5. Ironically, the commercial folk boom led to the rediscovery of traditional folk
   a. “Commercialization has actually helped folk music” – Pete Seeger
   b. Odetta, Jean Ritchie, Bill Monroe, Doc Watson, John Lee Hooker, and Howlin’ Wolf

6. Coffee houses began to open in major urban college centers

7. College-age folk fans, having more money than young teens, abandoned 45rpm hit singles for long-playing albums of their favorite groups
   a. doubled LP sales form ’56 to ’61
   b. Hootenanny
C. Civil Rights on a New Frontier

1. The growing outcry of African Americans for civil rights coincided with and shaped the burgeoning folk music scene

2. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and passive resistance
   a. 1960 - North Carolina lunch counter
   b. 1960 – Magnolia Room of Rich’s Dept store in Atlanta [sit-ins]
      • opened restaurants and previously segregates beaches
   c. 1961 – Freedom Rides
   d. 1963 – fair employment and desegregation in Birmingham, Alabama
      • i. police unleash dogs, electric cattle prods, and fire hoses
      • ii. riots ensued in several cities
   e. 1963 (August) – 200,000 of all races converged on Washington, D.C.
      • *I Have a Dream* speech/Dylan
C. Civil Rights on a New Frontier

3. President John F. Kennedy

a. offered civil rights crusaders the hope that King’s dream could become a reality

b. “a new frontier…a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils – a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats” that was “not a set of promises – but a set of challenges” – JFK

c. 1962 – sent federal troops to University of Mississippi

d. 1963 – sent federal troops to University of Alabama

  • “race has no place in American life or law”

e. perceived to be energetic visionary

  • “the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans”

4. student civil rights activism led to one of the first major campus protests, the free speech movement

  • “Don’t trust anyone over 30” – Jack Weinberg
D. Bob Dylan: The Music of Protest

1. the convergence of the civil rights movement and folk music on the college campuses led to the mercurial rise of Bob Dylan and his brand of protest folk music

   - “I see things other people don’t see. I feel things other people don’t feel. It’s terrible. They laugh. I felt like that my whole life…I don’t even know if I’m normal” – Bob Dylan

3. listened to Hank Williams, then Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Jonny Reed, and Howlin’ Wolf from Shreveport radio [country and R&B]

4. saw *Rock Around the Clock* “Hey that’s our music! That’s written for us”

5. turned to folk music when he reached the Midwest
   - a. began to perform folk and bluegrass at University of Minnesota
   - b. used the name Dillon, then Dylan
     - “I heard Woody Guthrie. And when I heard Woody Guthrie, that was it, it was all over…He really struck me as an independent character. But no one ever talked about him. So I went through all his records I could find and picked all that up by any means I could…Woody was my god”

6. travels to NYC in December 1960 to visit the dying Woody Guthrie
D. Bob Dylan: The Music of Protest

- 7. begins playing in Greenwich Village
- 8. begins dating Suzie Rotolo
  - “she wanted him to go Pete Seeger’s way. She wanted Bobby to be involved in civil rights and all the radical causes Seeger was involved in” - friend
- 9. By 1962, Dylan began singing songs about current social issues such as civil rights rather than singing traditional or commercialized folk
  - a. *Freewheelin’* in May ’63 “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall,” “Talkin’ World War Three Blues,” and “Masters of War”
  - b. “There are other thing in this world besides love and sex that’re important, too. People shouldn’t turn their backs on them just because hey ain’t pretty to look at. How is the world ever going to get better if we’re afraid to look at these things?” – Bob Dylan
- 10. continued protest theme on following album, *The Times They Are A-Changing* in February of 1964
- 11. reinforced politicized music via public demonstrations
  - a. refused to play *Ed Sullivan Show* in ’63 over censorship of “Talkin’ John Birch Society Blues
  - b. concert for African American voter registration in Mississippi
  - c. D.C. civil rights march with MLK
I. Bob Dylan & the New Frontier

E. Joan Baez

1. Bob Dylan's counterpart in folk protest
2. daughter of a Mexican-born physicist and a Scotch-Irish mother
   - dark-skinned, faced racial discrimination at an early age
3. performed traditional folk in Boston coffee houses
   a. began selling out Carnegie Hall
   b. boycotted “Hootenanny” and rejected $100,000 in concert dates
      i. “folk music depends on intent. If someone desires to make money, I don’t call it folk music” – Joan Baez
      ii. “I feel very strongly about things...Like burning babies with fallout and murdering spirits with segregation. I love to sing, and by some quirk, people like to hear me. I cannot divide things. They are all part of me” – Joan Baez

F. other singer-activists inspired such as:

1. Phil Ochs
2. Tom Paxton
I. Bob Dylan & the New Frontier

G. Dylan’s Disenchantment

1. folk protest movement began to fragment in late 1963 with JFK’s assassination on November 22nd in Dallas
   - “a definite flowering-out of positive feelings when JFK was elected…civil rights was giving off good vibrations. There was a great feeling of reform, that things could be changed, that the government cared…Then came the Bay of Pigs, the beginning of Vietnam and the assassination.” – Phil Ochs

2. Dylan, though depressed over the Kennedy assassination, started to become more commercially successful
   - he delivered “his songs in a studied nasal that has just the right clothespin-on-the-nose honesty to appeal to those who most deeply care.” Time

3. attracted national prominence after he signed with manager Albert Grossman (helped create Peter, Paul, and Mary – played Seeger and Dylan tunes)
G. Dylan’s Disenchantment

4. Dylan becomes disillusioned with political activism
   a. “I agree with everything that’s happening, but I ain’t no part of no movement. If I was, I wouldn’t be able to do anything else but be in ‘the movement.’ I just can’t sit around and have people make rules for me…Those [protest] records I already made. I’ll stand behind them but some of that was jumping on the scene to be heard and a lot of it was because I didn’t see anybody else doing that kind of thing. Now a lot of people are doing finger-pointing songs. You know—pointing to the things that are wrong. Me, I don’t want to write for people anymore. You know—be a spokesman”
   b. “I’ve never written a political song. Songs can’t save the world. I’ve gone through all that. When you don’t like something, you gotta learn to just not need that something.” – Newsweek

5. Dylan leaves social protest for crafted, complex, and highly personal and cryptic songs
   a. “Once I wrote about Emmett Till in the first person…from now on, I want to write what’s inside of me.”…Another Side of Bob Dylan – summer ’64
   b. “I think it is very destructive music. I think he doesn’t want to be responsible for anybody, including himself” – Joan Baez
I. Bob Dylan & the New Frontier

G. Dylan’s Disenchantment

6. early 1965, *Bringing It All Back Home*
   - abandoned folk rock protest for an electrified rock
     - “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” “She Belongs to Me,” “Maggie’s Farm,” “Gates of Eden,” and “It’s Alright Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)

7. late 1965, *Highway 61 Revisited*
   - impressionistic, beat-inspired poetry of “Desolation Row,” “Queen Jane Approximately,” “Ballad of a Thin Man,” and “Like a Rolling Stone”

8. July 25, 1965 unveils new electric sound and songwriting at Newport Folk Festival

9. though ridiculed by old-time folksters, Dylan secured a national audience with the new electric sound
   - a. #2 hit with “Like a Rolling Stone”
   - b. *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited* neared the top
   - c. cracked top ten again with ’66’s *Blonde on Blonde*

10. Bob Dylan had become a commercial success with a sound that would inspire a folk-rock boom
I. Bob Dylan & the New Frontier

H. Folk Rock

1. many groups added vocal harmonies to Dylan’s electrified folk sound and sometimes even used his songs to create what critics termed folk-rock
   a. The Byrds with “Mr. Tambourine Man,” “Spanish Harlem Incident,” “All I Really Want to Do,” and “Chimes of Freedom” as well as “Turn, Turn, Turn” from Pete Seeger
   b. Turtles “It Ain’t Me Babe” [after switching from Surf Rock]
   c. Sonny and Cher “All I Really Want to Do” and the Dylan-sounding “I Got You Babe”
   d. Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel [appeared on American Bandstand] covered “Don’t Think Twice” and Simon’s “Sounds of Silence”
   e. Donovan Leitch of Scotland becomes the British Dylan
      i. “this guitar kills” message
      ii. “Catch the Wind” resembled “Blowin’ in the Wind”
   f. The Lovin’ Spoonful “Do You Believe in Magic” and “Summer in the City”

2. by the end of 1965, various folk-rockers had covered 48 different Dylan songs, most of them concerned with topics other than protest
3. The folk rock explosion, epitomized by the Byrds, also exhibited an influence from across the Atlantic.

- “The Beatles came out and changed the whole game for me. I saw a definite niche, a place where the two of them blended together. If you look at Lennon and Dylan and mixed them together, that was something that hadn’t been done.” Roger McGuire of the Byrds

4. though believing “Dylan was real and the Beatles were plastic,” the Byrds grafted the Beatles’ harmonies onto Dylanesque folk.