

1 – You declared that it took 40 years for you to pay back your artistic debts to Bob Dylan. Did you listen to Bob Dylan from the sixties, the folk revival years? And just Dylan or you had any personal or artistic interest in the folk music and protest singers?

In the sixties we listened to a lot of different folk musicians -- I particularly liked Dave Van Ronk and Leadbelly -- and also blues artists like Sonny Boy Williamson and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee. But of course Dylan was special.

2 – And what your artistic debts to Dylan are?

Dylan's freedom with the English language, his use of historical and Biblical images, his tough sound and his sympathy with social issues made him special. And also he was the same age as the rest of us and came from a similar background. He seemed to speak for us all.

3 – The repertoire you choose from *Dylan Different* spans through the first 25 years of Dylan's career (if I'm not wrong the most recent song is the opening *Everything is Broken*, which is from 1989). It's by chance or in the last 20 years Dylan did not write anything to match his first half of career?:-) More seriously, how did you choose, from his huge songbook, the 12 Dylan's songs

I started with about 30 of his songs and in the end came down to 12. I chose them on the basis of songs I felt comfortable singing and also songs that still had a message that I wanted to deliver. It was actually very easy in the end -- the songs that worked stepped forward.

4 – An album of cover songs may be the easiest one to record, or the opposite. And when you walked down the path of a songwriter like Dylan, I guess this is not the easiest kind. How do you approach, in general, the whole project?

It was difficult in the sense that I knew it had to be special -- I had to find original, unique ways to do each song, something different (which is why I called it DYLAN DIFFERENT). There is no reason to do a Bob Dylan cover if you can't add something new. So I focused on the harmony (putting the songs into my own harmonic vocabulary) and the vocal space (singing from deep within myself) to make the music my own.

5 – In your career there are few other cover album projects, the Alec Wilder one and, probably more close to *Dylan Different*, the Van Morrison album *Tell Me Something*, covering the Mose Allison songbook. This may be on the easiest side of the cover album, since your collaborations with Allison. How different, compared to that album, was *Dylan Different*?

They were actually very different. With the Mose Allison songs, I tried to arrange them as closely to the originals as possible. I have produced Mose often and know his songs and arrangements intimately. And also, Van wanted to do the songs in the same way that Mose did them. With Dylan, from the beginning, I knew it had to be a completely original approach to the material.

6 – You reinvented the songs of *Dylan Different*. The jazzy *Ballad Of A Thin Man*, the jazz rap of *Subterranean...*, the slow down piano ballad of *All I Really Want To Do*...how did you approach these songs in particular?

I think in some cases I tended to go in the opposite direction of the originals -- like *Blowin In the Wind* which I did as a somber song as opposed to an upbeat folk song -- or at least found a different idiom for them. Like *Ballad of a Thin Man* I did as a kind of tango simply because it seemed to fit the mysterious aspect of the story line. *All I Really Want to Do* was just harmonically comfortable for me as a kind of jazz ballad; the lyrics suggested this to me. I let each song tell me which way to go.

7 – You also covered *Blowin' In The Wind*, **the** pacifist anthem of the last century, written from the point of view of a young folk artist in the cold war/nuclear threat, 47 years ago. And you remodelled the song into a beautiful, evocative, solemn slow march. You choose this song because is still relevant, politically speaking, or why?

I felt I had to do this song; it is iconic, perhaps the most important Dylan song, and one that he wrote very early and very quickly (he says he wrote it in 20 minutes). We tried it several different ways, and in the end, we decided to do it as simply and plainly as possible, and we thought of the "slow march" (as you say) as a kind of civil war dirge; a tribute to all those who have gone before us.

8 – Another historical page from Dylan's songbook, featured in your *Dylan Different*, is *Maggie's Farm*. All the electric fury of the 1965 Newport Folk Festival is washed away, but there's a subtle tension that runs behind the singing (with the organ that reminds me of Santana's *Black Magic Woman...*, the saxophone...). Impatience turns out into determination...?

I have always loved this song from the first time I heard it so many years ago. It always made me think of the possibility of freedom and the senselessness of working for people you don't like. There is a kind of dark humor in the lyrics and the determination you hear is simple me coming to terms with the idea of taking responsibility for all my own personal decisions.

9 - Did you hear any feedback from Dylan's entourage about your album?

I don't know about his entourage but his publishing company loves it!