

Music 262: Rock Music, History and Social Analysis, Acoustic Dylan

[Music Playing on Piano]

[Brian Ward]: In the 1960s we have this American artist who is very important. His name is Bob Dylan. He's probably the most important American contributor to rock music. He never was a very commercially staggering artist, but his significance is his art itself and the influence that it had on all the further generations of rock n' roll artists. He started out in folk music in New York in the early 60s, 1962, Greenwich Village. He grew very popular in New York and played on a lot of college campuses playing folk songs and country songs. He was doing the music of Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams mainly. His music really reflects the social awareness of race and human injustice during the 1960s. He was also the first poet of the mass media. He took pure poetry and he got it on the radio. He got it on TV. That's the mass media. That's what Bob Dylan did initially that was really important.

You can break up Bob Dylan's career into two distinctive time periods. The first period is the acoustic period and the second period is the electric period. What we're talking about is the acoustic period saying that would imply that folk music and rock music are two separate things. What Bob Dylan did, is he proved that you take folk music, you put them together and it is still rock music. It's a fusion of country, folk, blues, rock n' roll, and poetry both ancient and new and with this great appeal to people. This music is really raw which is similar to early rock n' roll.

Also, his voice is really nasally and real insistent and not very appealing. There's a certain character to his voice and his music that's undeniably individual and appeals to a lot of people. He would do things on his album covers like print the album notes in lower case letters like the poet E.E. Cummings. A lot of times his lyrics have been discussed in English classes and there have been college courses written about Bob Dylan's music. In his personal writing and his lyrics he refers to a lot of different things. Intellectual things like history, literature, poetry, international affairs and modern art.

So the first album of this acoustic period is the album, *The Times They are a-Changin'*. This came out in 1963 and this was his most overt protest album. This is a really excellent representation of this early acoustic period. He writes these songs, many of them written in the form of news reports where it gives you this feeling of the dust bowl era. A kind of *Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck feeling. This album became an anthem for frustrated youth in the United States. It really summed up the anti-establishment feelings that people had at the time. Those people later became known as hippies. Later, many of these lyrics of the acoustic period are based on the civil rights movement.