

= My Back Pages =

" My Back Pages " is a song written by Bob Dylan and included on his 1964 album Another Side of Bob Dylan . It is stylistically similar to his earlier folk protest songs and features Dylan 's voice with an acoustic guitar accompaniment . However , its lyrics ? in particular the refrain " Ah , but I was so much older then / I 'm younger than that now " ? have been interpreted as a rejection of Dylan 's earlier personal and political idealism , illustrating his growing disillusionment with the 1960 's folk protest movement with which he was associated , and his desire to move in a new direction . Although Dylan wrote the song in 1964 , he did not perform it live until 1978 .

" My Back Pages " has been covered by artists as diverse as Keith Jarrett , the Byrds , the Ramones , the Nice , Steve Earle , and the Hollies . The Byrds ' version , initially released on their 1967 album Younger Than Yesterday , was also issued as a single in 1967 and proved to be the band 's last Top 40 hit in the U.S.

= = Writing , recording and performance = =

Bob Dylan wrote " My Back Pages " in 1964 as one of the last songs ? perhaps the last song ? composed for his Another Side of Bob Dylan album . He recorded it on June 9 , 1964 under the working title of " Ancient Memories " , the last song committed to tape for the album . The song was partly based on the traditional folk song " Young But Growing " and has a mournful melody similar to that of " The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll " from Dylan 's previous album , The Times They Are a @-@ Changin ' . As with the other songs on Another Side , Dylan is the sole musician on " My Back Pages " and plays in a style similar to his previous protest songs , with a sneering , rough @-@ edged voice and a hard @-@ strumming acoustic guitar accompaniment .

In the song 's lyrics , Dylan criticizes himself for having been certain that he knew everything and apologizes for his previous political preaching , noting that he has become his own enemy " in the instant that I preach . " Dylan questions whether one can really distinguish between right and wrong , and even questions the desirability of the principle of equality . The lyrics also signal Dylan 's disillusionment with the 1960s protest movement and his intention to abandon protest songwriting . The song effectively analogizes the protest movement to the establishment it is trying to overturn , concluding with the refrain :

Ah , but I was so much older then
I 'm younger than that now

Music critic Robert Shelton has interpreted this refrain as " an internal dialogue between what he [Dylan] once accepted and now doubts . " Shelton also notes that the refrain maps a path from Blakean experience to the innocence of William Wordsworth . The refrain has also been interpreted as Dylan celebrating his " bright , new post @-@ protest future . "

Dylan 's disenchantment with the protest movement had previously surfaced in a speech he had given in December 1963 when accepting an award from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (ECLC) in New York . Author Mike Marqusee has commented that " No song on Another Side distressed Dylan 's friends in the movement more than ' My Back Pages ' in which he transmutes the rude incoherence of his ECLC rant into the organized density of art . The lilting refrain ... must be one of the most lyrical expressions of political apostasy ever penned . It is a recantation , in every sense of the word . "

In an interview with the Sheffield University Paper in May 1965 , Dylan explained the change that had occurred in his songwriting over the previous twelve months , noting " The big difference is that the songs I was writing last year ... they were what I call one @-@ dimensional songs , but my new songs I 'm trying to make more three @-@ dimensional , you know , there 's more symbolism , they 're written on more than one level . " In late 1965 , Dylan commented on the writing of " My Back Pages " specifically during an interview with Margaret Steen for The Toronto Star : " I was in my New York phase then , or at least , I was just coming out of it . I was still keeping the things that are really really real out of my songs , for fear they 'd be misunderstood . Now I don 't care if they are . " As Dylan stated to Nat Hentoff at the time that " My Back Pages " and the other songs on Another

Side of Bob Dylan were written , " There aren 't any finger pointing songs [here] ... Now a lot of people are doing finger pointing songs . You know , pointing to all the things that are wrong . Me , I don 't want to write for people anymore . You know , be a spokesman . "

Dylan did not play " My Back Pages " in concert until June 11 , 1988 , during a performance in Mountain View , California . The arrangement he used eliminated some of the song 's verses and included an electric guitar part performed by session musician G. E. Smith . Since 1988 , Dylan has played the song in concert many times in both electric and semi @-@ acoustic versions , and sometimes as an acoustic encore . At the 30th Anniversary Tribute Concert to Dylan at Madison Square Garden in 1992 , Dylan performed " My Back Pages " , in the Byrds ' arrangement , with George Harrison , Eric Clapton , Tom Petty , Neil Young , and Roger McGuinn . This performance , which featured vocals from all six musicians , along with guitar solos by Clapton and Young , was released on The 30th Anniversary Concert Celebration album in 1993 .

In addition to its initial appearance on Another Side of Bob Dylan , " My Back Pages " has also appeared on a number of Dylan compilation albums . In the United States and Europe , it appeared on the 1971 album Bob Dylan 's Greatest Hits Vol . II (aka More Bob Dylan Greatest Hits) and on the 2007 album Dylan . In Australia , the song was included on the 1994 compilation album Greatest Hits Vol . 3 .

= = Cover versions = =

= = = The Byrds ' version = = =

The American rock band The Byrds released a recording of " My Back Pages " on February 6 , 1967 , as part of their fourth album , Younger Than Yesterday . The title of Younger Than Yesterday was itself directly inspired by the song 's refrain of " Ah , but I was so much older then / I 'm younger than that now . " " My Back Pages " was subsequently issued as a single by The Byrds on March 13 , 1967 , with the version included on the single being a radio edit that omitted the song 's second verse , in order to reduce the playing time from 3 : 08 to 2 : 31 . The single reached # 30 on the Billboard Hot 100 but failed to chart in the United Kingdom . " My Back Pages " was the last single by The Byrds to reach the Top 40 of the U.S. charts .

The song was initially suggested as a suitable vehicle for the band by their manager Jim Dickson . Lead guitarist Jim McGuinn felt that it would make an effective cover version , but David Crosby , the band 's rhythm guitarist , felt that covering another Dylan song was formulaic . The Byrds had already released a total of six Dylan covers on their first two albums , Mr. Tambourine Man and Turn ! Turn ! Turn ! , enjoying particular success with their recordings of " Mr. Tambourine Man " and " All I Really Want to Do " . In spite of Crosby 's objections , the band recorded " My Back Pages " between December 5 and December 8 , 1966 , during the recording sessions for their fourth album . Upon its release , this cover was received well by the critics and is today regarded as one of The Byrds ' strongest Dylan interpretations . Following its release on Younger Than Yesterday , the song would go on to become a staple of The Byrds ' live concert repertoire , until their final disbandment in 1973 . On December 4 , 1968 , a later line @-@ up of The Byrds re @-@ recorded an excerpt of " My Back Pages " as part of a medley that was included on their 1969 album , Dr. Byrds & Mr. Hyde . The song was also performed live by a reformed line @-@ up of The Byrds featuring Roger McGuinn , David Crosby , and Chris Hillman in January 1989 .

In addition to its appearance on the Younger Than Yesterday album , The Byrds ' original version of " My Back Pages " appears on several of the band 's compilations , including The Byrds ' Greatest Hits , History of The Byrds , The Byrds Play Dylan , The Original Singles : 1967 ? 1969 , Volume 2 , The Byrds , The Very Best of The Byrds , The Essential Byrds , and There Is a Season . In 1996 , a previously unreleased alternate version of " My Back Pages " (which had been considered for release as a single in 1967) was included as a bonus track on the Columbia / Legacy reissue of Younger Than Yesterday .

= = = Other covers = = =

The song has been covered by numerous artists , including The Ramones , Po ! , The Hollies , The Nice , Eric Johnson , The Box Tops , Carl Verheyen , Jackson Browne & Joan Osborne , Marshall Crenshaw , Keith Jarrett , Steve Earle , La Mancha de Rolando , and the Scottish folksinger Dick Gaughan . Austrian singer @-@ songwriter Wolfgang Ambros recorded a version of the song named " Alt und Jung " (" Old and Young ") . In 1995 , the German rock musician Wolfgang Niedecken recorded a German @-@ language (Kölsch language) cover of the song with the title " Vill Passiert Sickher " for his album Leopardefell . In addition , a Japanese @-@ language cover by The Magokoro Brothers is included in the soundtrack of the Dylan film Masked and Anonymous .