

= Like a Rolling Stone =

" Like a Rolling Stone " is a 1965 song by the American singer @-@ songwriter Bob Dylan . Its confrontational lyrics originated in an extended piece of verse Dylan wrote in June 1965 , when he returned exhausted from a grueling tour of England . Dylan distilled this draft into four verses and a chorus . " Like a Rolling Stone " was recorded a few weeks later as part of the sessions for the forthcoming album Highway 61 Revisited .

During a difficult two @-@ day preproduction , Dylan struggled to find the essence of the song , which was demoed without success in 3 / 4 time . A breakthrough was made when it was tried in a rock music format , and rookie session musician Al Kooper improvised the organ riff for which the track is known . However , Columbia Records was unhappy with both the song 's length at over six minutes and its heavy electric sound , and was hesitant to release it . It was only when a month later a copy was leaked to a new popular music club and heard by influential DJs that the song was put out as a single . Although radio stations were reluctant to play such a long track , " Like a Rolling Stone " reached number two in the US Billboard charts ( number one in Cashbox ) and became a worldwide hit .

Critics have described the track as revolutionary in its combination of different musical elements , the youthful , cynical sound of Dylan 's voice , and the directness of the question " How does it feel ? " " Like a Rolling Stone " transformed Dylan 's image from folk singer to rock star , and is considered one of the most influential compositions in postwar popular music . Rolling Stone magazine listed the song at number one in their " 500 Greatest Songs of All Time " list . The song has been covered by numerous artists , from The Jimi Hendrix Experience and The Rolling Stones to The Wailers and Green Day .

At an auction in 2014 , Dylan 's handwritten lyrics to the song fetched \$ 2 million , a world record for a popular music manuscript .

= = Writing and recording = =

In the spring of 1965 , after returning from the tour of England documented in the film Dont Look Back , Dylan was unhappy with the public 's expectations of him , as well as the direction his career was taking , and seriously considered quitting the music business . In a 1966 Playboy interview , he described his dissatisfaction : " Last spring , I guess I was going to quit singing . I was very drained , and the way things were going , it was a very draggy situation ... But ' Like a Rolling Stone ' changed it all . I mean it was something that I myself could dig . It 's very tiring having other people tell you how much they dig you if you yourself don 't dig you . "

The song grew out of an extended piece of verse . In 1966 , Dylan described its genesis to journalist Jules Siegel :

It was ten pages long . It wasn 't called anything , just a rhythm thing on paper all about my steady hatred directed at some point that was honest . In the end it wasn 't hatred , it was telling someone something they didn 't know , telling them they were lucky . Revenge , that 's a better word . I had never thought of it as a song , until one day I was at the piano , and on the paper it was singing , " How does it feel ? " in a slow motion pace , in the utmost of slow motion .

During 1965 , Dylan composed prose , poems , and songs by typing incessantly . Footage in Dont Look Back of Dylan in his suite at London 's Savoy Hotel captures this process . However , Dylan told two interviewers that " Like a Rolling Stone " began as a long piece of " vomit " ( 10 pages long according to one account , 20 according to another ) that later acquired musical form . Dylan has never publicly spoken of writing any other major composition in this way . In an interview with CBC radio in Montreal , Dylan called the creation of the song a " breakthrough " , explaining that it changed his perception of where he was going in his career . He said that he found himself writing " this long piece of vomit , 20 pages long , and out of it I took ' Like a Rolling Stone ' and made it as a single . And I 'd never written anything like that before and it suddenly came to me that was what I should do ... After writing that I wasn 't interested in writing a novel , or a play . I just had too much , I want to write songs . "

From the extended version on paper , Dylan crafted four verses and the chorus in Woodstock , New York . In 2014 , when the handwritten lyrics were put up for auction , the four @-@ page manuscript revealed that the full refrain of the chorus does not appear until the fourth page . A rejected third line , " like a dog without a bone " gives way to " now you ? re unknown " . Earlier , Dylan had considered working the name Al Capone into the rhyme scheme , and he attempted to construct a rhyme scheme for " how does it feel ? " , penciling in " it feels real , " " does it feel real , " " shut up and deal , " " get down and kneel " and " raw deal . " The song was written on an upright piano in the key of G sharp and was changed to C on the guitar in the recording studio .

For the recording session , Dylan invited Mike Bloomfield from the Paul Butterfield Blues Band to play lead guitar . Invited to Dylan 's Woodstock home for the weekend to learn new material , Bloomfield recalled , " The first thing I heard was ' Like a Rolling Stone ' . I figured he wanted blues , string bending , because that 's what I do . He said , ' Hey , man , I don 't want any of that B.B. King stuff ' . So , OK , I really fell apart . What the heck does he want ? We messed around with the song . I played the way that he dug , and he said it was groovy . "

The recording sessions were produced by Tom Wilson on June 15 ? 16 , 1965 , in Studio A of Columbia Records , 799 Seventh Avenue , in New York City . This would be the last song Wilson would produce for Dylan . In addition to Bloomfield , the musicians enlisted were Paul Griffin on piano , Joe Macho , Jr. on bass , Bobby Gregg on drums , and Bruce Langhorne on tambourine , all booked by Wilson . Gregg and Griffin had previously worked with Dylan and Wilson on Bringing It All Back Home .

In the first session , on June 15 , five takes of the song were recorded in a markedly different style ( 3 / 4 waltz time , with Dylan on piano ) from the eventual release . The lack of sheet music meant the song had to be played by ear . However , its essence was discovered in the course of the chaotic session . The musicians did not reach the first chorus until the fourth take , but after the following harmonica fill Dylan interrupted , saying , " My voice is gone , man . You wanna try it again ? " This take was subsequently released on The Bootleg Series Volumes 1 ? 3 ( Rare & Unreleased ) 1961 ? 1991 . The session ended shortly afterward .

When the musicians reconvened the following day , June 16 , Al Kooper joined the proceedings . Kooper , at that time a 21 @-@ year @-@ old session guitarist , was not originally supposed to play but was present in the studio as Wilson 's guest . When Wilson stepped out , Kooper sat down with his guitar with the other musicians , hoping to take part in the recording session . By the time Wilson returned , Kooper , who had been intimidated by Bloomfield 's guitar playing , was back in the control room . After a couple of rehearsal takes , Wilson moved Griffin from Hammond organ to piano . Kooper then approached Wilson and told him he had a good part for the organ . Wilson belittled Kooper 's organ skills but didn 't explicitly forbid him to play . As Kooper later put it , " He just sort of scoffed at me ... He didn 't say ' no ' ? so I went out there . " Wilson was surprised to see Kooper at the organ but allowed him to play on the track . When Dylan heard a playback of the song , he insisted that the organ be turned up in the mix , despite Wilson 's protestations that Kooper was " not an organ player . "

The June 16 session saw 15 recorded takes . By now the song had evolved into its familiar form , in 4 / 4 time with Dylan on electric guitar . After the fourth take ? the master take that was released as a single ? Wilson happily commented , " That sounds good to me . " Despite this , Dylan and the band recorded the song 11 more times .

The recording sessions that produced " Like a Rolling Stone " , including all 20 takes and the individual " stems " that comprise the four @-@ track master , are included on the 6 @-@ disc and 18 @-@ disc versions of The Bootleg Series Vol . 12 : The Cutting Edge 1965 ? 1966 , released in 2015 .

= = Release = =

According to Shaun Considine , release coordinator for Columbia Records in 1965 , " Like a Rolling Stone " was first relegated to the " graveyard of canceled releases " because of concerns from the sales and marketing departments over its unprecedented six @-@ minute length and " raucous "

rock sound . In the days following the rejection , Considine took a discarded acetate of the song to the New York club Arthur ? a newly opened disco popular with celebrities and the media ? and asked a DJ to play it . At the crowd 's insistence , the demo was played repeatedly , until finally it wore out . The next morning , a disc jockey and a programming director from the city 's leading top 40 stations called Columbia and demanded copies . Shortly afterward , on July 20 , 1965 , " Like a Rolling Stone " was released as a single with " Gates of Eden " as its B @-@ side .

Despite its length , the song became Dylan 's most commercially successful release to date , remaining in the US charts for 12 weeks , where it reached number 2 behind The Beatles ' " Help ! " . The promotional copies released to disc jockeys on July 15 had the first two verses and two refrains on one side of the disk , and the remainder of the song on the other . DJs wishing to play the entire song would simply flip the vinyl over . While many radio stations were reluctant to play " Like a Rolling Stone " in its entirety , public demand eventually forced them to air it in full . This helped the single reach its number 2 peak , several weeks after its release . It was a Top 10 hit in other countries , including Canada , Ireland , the Netherlands , and the United Kingdom .

= = Personnel = =

Bob Dylan ? vocals , guitar , harmonica  
Mike Bloomfield ? electric guitar  
Charlie McCoy ? guitar  
Al Kooper ? organ  
Frank Owens ? piano  
Harvey Brooks ? bass guitar  
Bobby Gregg ? drums

= = Themes = =

Unlike conventional chart hits of the time , " Like a Rolling Stone " featured lyrics that were interpreted as expressions of resentment rather than love . Author Oliver Trager characterizes the lyrics as : " Dylan 's sneer at a woman who has fallen from grace and is reduced to fending for herself in a hostile , unfamiliar world . " The song 's subject , " Miss Lonely , " previously opted for easy options in life ? she attended the finest schools and enjoyed high @-@ placed friends ? but now that her situation has become difficult , it appears that she has no meaningful experiences to define her character . The opening lines of the song establish the character 's former condition :

Once upon a time you dressed so fine

Threw the bums a dime in your prime , didn 't you ?

And the first verse ends with lines that seemingly deride her current condition :

Now you don 't talk so loud

Now you don 't seem so proud

About having to be scrounging your next meal

Despite the apparent vitriol , the song 's narrator also seems to evince compassion for Miss Lonely and exclaims joy in regard to the freedom of losing everything . Jann Wenner commented : " Everything has been stripped away . You 're on your own , you 're free now ... You 're so helpless and now you 've got nothing left . And you 're invisible ? you 've got no secrets ? that 's so liberating . You 've nothing to fear anymore . " The final verse ends with the lines :

When you ain 't got nothing , you got nothing to lose

You 're invisible now , you got no secrets to conceal

The refrain seems to emphasize these themes :

How does it feel

How does it feel

To be on your own

With no direction home

Like a complete unknown

Like a rolling stone

Dylan biographer Robert Shelton gave this interpretation : " A song that seems to hail the dropout life for those who can take it segues into compassion for those who have dropped out of bourgeois surroundings . ' Rolling Stone ' is about the loss of innocence and the harshness of experience . Myths , props , and old beliefs fall away to reveal a very taxing reality . "

Dylan humorously commented on the song 's moral perspective at a press conference at KQED television studio on December 3 , 1965 . When a reporter , suggesting that the song adopted a harsh perspective on a girl , asked Dylan , " Are you hard on [ people in your songs ] because you want to torment them ? Or to change their lives and make them know themselves ? " , Dylan replied while laughing , " I want to needle them . "

Commentators attempted to tie the characters in the song to specific people in Dylan 's personal life in 1965 . In his book POPism : The Warhol ' 60s , Andy Warhol recalled that some people in his circle believed that " Like a Rolling Stone " contained hostile references to him ; he was told , " Listen to ' Like a Rolling Stone ' ? I think you 're the diplomat on the chrome horse , man . " The reason behind Dylan 's alleged hostility to Warhol was supposedly Warhol 's treatment of actress and model Edie Sedgwick . It has been suggested that Sedgwick is the basis of the Miss Lonely character . Sedgwick was briefly involved with Dylan in late 1965 and early 1966 , around which time there was some discussion of the two making a movie together . According to Warhol 's collaborator Paul Morrissey , Sedgwick may have been in love with Dylan , and was shocked when she found out that Dylan had secretly married Sara Lownds in November 1965 . However , in The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia , Michael Gray argues that Sedgwick had no connection with " Like a Rolling Stone " , but states " there 's no doubt that the ghost of Edie Sedgwick hangs around Blonde on Blonde " .

Greil Marcus alluded to a suggestion by art historian Thomas E. Crow that Dylan had written the song as a comment on Warhol 's scene :

I heard a lecture by Thomas Crow ... about " Like a Rolling Stone " being about Edie Sedgwick within Andy Warhol 's circle , as something that Dylan saw from the outside , not being personally involved with either of them , but as something he saw and was scared by and saw disaster looming and wrote a song as a warning , and it was compelling .

Joan Baez , Marianne Faithfull and Bob Neuwirth have also been mooted as possible targets of Dylan 's scorn . Dylan 's biographer Howard Sounes warned against reducing the song to the biography of one person , and suggested " it is more likely that the song was aimed generally at those [ Dylan ] perceived as being ' phony ' " . Sounes adds , " There is some irony in the fact that one of the most famous songs of the folk @-@ rock era ? an era associated primarily with ideals of peace and harmony ? is one of vengeance . "

Mike Marqusee has written at length on the conflicts in Dylan 's life during this time , with its deepening alienation from his old folk @-@ revival audience and clear @-@ cut leftist causes . He suggests that the song is probably self @-@ referential : " The song only attains full poignancy when one realises it is sung , at least in part , to the singer himself : he 's the one ' with no direction home . ' " Dylan himself has noted that , after his motorcycle accident in 1966 , he realized that " when I used words like ' he ' and ' it ' and ' they , ' and talking about other people , I was really talking about nobody but me . "

= = Music video = =

In November 2013 , 48 years after the release of the song , Dylan 's website released an official music video for " Like a Rolling Stone " . Created by digital agency Interlude , the video is interactive , allowing viewers to use their keyboards to flip through 16 channels that imitate TV formats , including game shows , shopping networks and reality series . People on each channel appear to lip @-@ sync the song 's lyrics . Video director Vania Heymann stated , " I 'm using the medium of television to look back right at us ? you 're flipping yourself to death with switching channels [ in real life ] . " The video contains an hour and 15 minutes worth of content in all and features appearances from comedian Marc Maron , rapper Danny Brown , The Price Is Right host Drew Carey , SportsCenter anchor Steve Levy , Jonathan and Drew Scott of Property Brothers , and Pawn Stars

cast members Rick Harrison and Austin "Chumlee" Russell . The video was released to publicize the release of a 35 album box set , Bob Dylan : The Complete Album Collection Vol . One , containing Dylan 's 35 official studio albums and 11 live albums . The Guinness Book of World Records recorded it as the longest wait for an official music video .

= = Live performances = =

Dylan performed the song live for the first time within days of its release , when he appeared at the Newport Folk Festival on July 25 , 1965 in Newport , Rhode Island . Many of the audience 's folk enthusiasts objected to Dylan 's use of electric guitars , looking down on rock ' n roll , as Bloomfield put it , as popular amongst " greasers , heads , dancers , people who got drunk and boogied . " According to Dylan 's friend , music critic Paul Nelson , " The audience [ was ] booing and yelling ' Get rid of the electric guitar ' " , while Dylan and his backing musicians gave an uncertain rendition of their new single .

Highway 61 Revisited was issued at the end of August 1965 . When Dylan went on tour that fall he asked the future members of The Band to accompany him in performing the electric half of the concerts . " Like a Rolling Stone " took the closing slot on his setlist and held it , with rare exceptions , through the end of his 1966 " world tour . " On May 17 , 1966 , during the last leg of the tour , Dylan and his band performed at Free Trade Hall in Manchester , England . Just before they started to play the track , an audience member yelled " Judas ! " , apparently referring to Dylan 's supposed " betrayal " of folk music . Dylan responded , " I don 't believe you . You 're a liar ! " With that , he turned to the band , ordering them to " play it fucking loud . "

Since then , " Like a Rolling Stone " has remained a staple in Dylan 's concerts , often with revised arrangements . It was included in his 1969 Isle of Wight show and in both his reunion tour with The Band in 1974 and the Rolling Thunder Revue tour in 1975 ? 76 . The song continued to be featured in other tours throughout the 1970s and 1980s . On the Never Ending Tour , which began in 1988 , " Like a Rolling Stone " has been the second most performed song , with 1901 performances registered through November 2014 .

Live performances of the song are included on Self Portrait ( recorded August 31 , 1969 ) , Before the Flood ( recorded February 13 , 1974 ) , Bob Dylan at Budokan ( recorded March 1 , 1978 ) , MTV Unplugged ( recorded November 18 , 1994 ) , The Bootleg Series Vol . 4 : Bob Dylan Live 1966 , The " Royal Albert Hall " Concert ( recorded May 17 , 1966 ; same recording also available on The Bootleg Series Vol . 7 : No Direction Home : The Soundtrack ) , and The Band 's 2001 reissue of Rock of Ages ( recorded 1 January 1972 ) . The July 1965 Newport performance of the song is included in Murray Lerner 's film The Other Side of the Mirror , while a May 21 , 1966 performance in Newcastle , England is featured in Martin Scorsese 's documentary No Direction Home , along with footage of the above @-@ mentioned May 17 heckling incident .

Besides appearing on Highway 61 Revisited , the song 's standard release can be found on the compilations Bob Dylan 's Greatest Hits , Biograph , The Best of Bob Dylan ( 1997 ) , The Essential Bob Dylan , The Best of Bob Dylan ( 2005 ) , and Dylan . The mono version appears on The Original Mono Recordings . In addition , the early , incomplete studio recording in 3 / 4 time appears on The Bootleg Series Vol . 2 .

= = Legacy = =

The song 's sound has been described as revolutionary in its combination of electric guitar licks , organ chords , and Dylan 's voice , at once young and jeeringly cynical . Critic Michael Gray described the track as " a chaotic amalgam of blues , impressionism , allegory , and an intense directness in the central chorus : ' How does it feel ' " . The song had an enormous impact on popular culture and rock music . Its success made Dylan a pop icon , as Paul Williams notes :

Dylan had been famous , had been the center of attention , for a long time . But now the ante was being upped again . He 'd become a pop star as well as a folk star ... and was , even more than the Beatles , a public symbol of the vast cultural , political , generational changes taking place in the

United States and Europe . He was perceived as , and in many ways functioned as , a leader .

Record producer Paul Rothchild , producer of The Doors ' first five albums , recalled the elation that an American musician had made a record that successfully challenged the primacy of the British Invasion groups . He said , " What I realized when I was sitting there is that one of US ? one of the so @-@ called Village hipsters ? was making music that could compete with THEM ? the Beatles , and the Stones , and the Dave Clark Five ? without sacrificing any of the integrity of folk music or the power of rock 'n'roll . "

The song had a huge impact on Bruce Springsteen , who was 15 years old when he first heard it . Springsteen described the moment during his speech inducting Dylan into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988 and also assessed the long @-@ term significance of " Like a Rolling Stone " :

The first time I heard Bob Dylan , I was in the car with my mother listening to WMCA , and on came that snare shot that sounded like somebody 'd kicked open the door to your mind ... The way that Elvis freed your body , Dylan freed your mind , and showed us that because the music was physical did not mean it was anti @-@ intellect . He had the vision and talent to make a pop song so that it contained the whole world . He invented a new way a pop singer could sound , broke through the limitations of what a recording could achieve , and he changed the face of rock 'n'roll for ever and ever "

Dylan 's contemporaries in 1965 were both startled and challenged by the single . Paul McCartney remembered going around to John Lennon 's house in Weybridge to hear the song . According to McCartney , " It seemed to go on and on forever . It was just beautiful ... He showed all of us that it was possible to go a little further . " Frank Zappa had a more extreme reaction : " When I heard ' Like a Rolling Stone ' , I wanted to quit the music business , because I felt : ' If this wins and it does what it 's supposed to do , I don 't need to do anything else ... ' But it didn 't do anything . It sold but nobody responded to it in the way that they should have . " Nearly forty years later , in 2003 , Elvis Costello commented on the innovative quality of the single . " What a shocking thing to live in a world where there was Manfred Mann and the Supremes and Engelbert Humperdinck and here comes ' Like a Rolling Stone ' " .

Although CBS tried to make the record more " radio friendly " by cutting it in half and spreading it over both sides of the vinyl , both Dylan and fans demanded that the full duration of the recording should be placed on one side and that radio stations play the song in its entirety . The success of " Like a Rolling Stone " was influential in changing the music business convention regarding the length of singles , whereby they were restricted to durations of less than three minutes . In the words of Rolling Stone magazine , " No other pop song has so thoroughly challenged and transformed the commercial laws and artistic conventions of its time , for all time . " Richard Austin , of Sotheby 's auction house , said : " Before the release of Like a Rolling Stone , music charts were overrun with short and sweet love songs , many clocking in at three minutes or less . By defying convention with six and a half minutes of dark , brooding poetry , Dylan rewrote the rules for pop music . "

In 1966 , Dylan told Ralph Gleason : " ' Rolling Stone 's the best song I wrote . " In 2004 , speaking to Robert Hilburn , Dylan still felt that the song had a special place in his work : " It 's like a ghost is writing a song like that , it gives you the song and it goes away . You don 't know what it means . Except that the ghost picked me to write the song . "

More than 50 years since its release , " Like a Rolling Stone " remains highly regarded , as measured by polls of reviewers and fellow songwriters . A 2002 ranking by Uncut and a 2005 poll in Mojo both rated it as Dylan 's number one song . As for his personal views on such polls , Dylan told Ed Bradley in a 2004 interview on 60 Minutes that he never pays attention to them , because they change frequently . Dylan 's point was illustrated in the " 100 Greatest Songs of All Time poll " by Mojo in 2000 , which included two Dylan singles , but not " Like a Rolling Stone " . Five years later , the magazine named it his number one song . Rolling Stone picked " Like a Rolling Stone " as the number two single of the past 25 years in 1989 , and then in 2004 placed the song at number one on its list of " The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time " . In 2010 , Rolling Stone again placed " Like a Rolling Stone " at the top of their list of " 500 Greatest Songs Of All Time " . In 2006 , Pitchfork Media placed it at number 4 on their list of " The 200 Greatest Songs of the 1960s " .

On June 24 , 2014 , Sotheby 's sold Dylan 's original hand @-@ written lyrics of " Like a Rolling

Stone " at a New York auction devoted to rock memorabilia . The lyrics were sold for \$ 2 million , a record price for a popular music manuscript .

= = Accolades = =

= = Cover versions = =

Many artists have covered " Like a Rolling Stone " , including Nancy Sinatra , Patricia O 'Callaghan , Drive @-@ By Truckers , Johnny Thunders , David Bowie ( with Mick Ronson ) , the Four Seasons , Sixto Rodriguez , The Rascals , Judy Collins , Johnny Winter , Cher , Anberlin , Spirit , Michael Bolton , The Creation , David Gilmour , The Surfaris , Al Stewart , John Mellencamp , The Wailers , Green Day , D11V , Sebastian Cabot , and the Rolling Stones . John Lennon sings the lyric " Like a rolling stone " twice in the intro to his song " Dig It " on the 1970 version of The Beatles ' Let It Be album .

One of the most famous covers of the song was made by guitarist Jimi Hendrix , performing with The Jimi Hendrix Experience , who recorded a live version at the Monterey Pop Festival . Hendrix was an avid fan of Bob Dylan , and especially liked " Like a Rolling Stone " . " It made me feel that I wasn 't the only one who 'd ever felt so low ... " Hendrix said . After the second verse , Hendrix skipped to the fourth . Hendrix played the electric guitar , and music critic Greil Marcus described the atmosphere of the Hendrix recording thus :

Huge chords ride over the beginning of each verse like rain clouds ; the tune is taken very slowly , with Hendrix 's thick , street @-@ talk drawl sounding nothing at all like Dylan 's Midwestern dust storm . "

The song has also been covered in various languages . Hugues Aufray covered the song in French as " Comme des pierres qui roulent " ( " Like Rolling Stones " ) ( Aufray Trans Dylan , 1995 ) , Austrian Wolfgang Ambros included an Austrian @-@ German dialect version " Allan Wia a Stan " on his 1978 LP Wie Im Schlaf which reached position 8 in the Austrian charts for 8 weeks , German band BAP created a dialect of Cologne version " Wie ' ne Stein " on its LP Vun drinne noh drusse and Lars Winnerbäck did a performance of the song in Swedish titled " Som en hemlös själ " , literally " Like a Homeless Soul " . Articolo 31 recorded an Italian version titled " Come una Pietra Scalciaata " ( literally , " Like a Kicked @-@ off Stone " ) for their 1998 album Nessuno . Articolo 31 's version is a hip @-@ hop song which contains overdubs of a confused girl 's voice , rapped parts and DJing . This version contains only three verses and is four and a half minutes long .

= = Charts = =