The Dylan Tapes: Friends, Players, and Lovers Talkin' Early Bob Dylan

Anthony Scaduto
Stephanie Trudeau, Editor
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In 1971, Anthony Scaduto’s Bob Dylan became the first investigative biography of the greatest modern songwriter, examining his formative years in the New York folk scene and the evolution of his musical style and persona. Scaduto passed away in 2017; the interviews he conducted while researching his book are now transcribed in The Dylan Tapes, a book for hardcore Dylan fans.

Two dozen of Dylan's contemporaries—and Dylan himself—speak in the book, including his ex-girlfriend, Suze, and her sister, Carla; and fellow musicians, including Phil Ochs, Dave van Ronk, Joan Baez, and the Clancy Brothers. Some discussions focus on Dylan's music and influences, but most involve what he was like on a personal level as he graduated from an aspiring folk singer to an international star.

Published in full, the transcripts are a window into the reporting process, with Scaduto trying to confirm facts with different sources and verify nebulous timelines. It's also worth noting that several of the interviews include statements that were made off the record or were otherwise not intended for publication. These complications underscore the challenge of defining early-career Bob Dylan, as his own tall tales about his youth and his rapidly changing persona often made it hard to separate facts from fiction.

The Dylan Tapes is a behind-the-scenes view of one of modern music's true legends—and of one of the first long-form pieces of music journalism.

JEFF FLEISCHER (March / April 2022)

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