

Nel 1975 il New Musical Express pubblicò, per ridere coi propri lettori, la finta recensione di *Snow Over Interstate 80*, un immaginario album di canzoni natalizie registrato da **Bob Dylan** a metà degli anni '60.

Snow Over Interstate 80



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The following spoof article appeared in the UK music magazine "New Musical Express" in 1975. I've included it here not only because it's pretty funny but also because the original list of unreleased Dylan songs that started this project off included three "mystery" names: FREEWHEELIN', NIGHTINGALE'S CODE and WOODSTOCK YULE. Somewhere along the line the fact that these were spoof titles had been lost, so I wanted to set the record straight. **Remember, the article below is a hoax!**

Bob of course released a genuine Christmas album, **Christmas In The Heart**, in 2009.

Alan Fraser

DYLAN - the missing Christmas album

At last, definite evidence has come to light that confirms that, in the autumn of 1965, Bob Dylan did record a Christmas Album.

The existence of the Dylan Christmas Album has always been hotly denied by Dylan himself, his management, and his record company. Even the most determined bootleggers and Dylanologists have been unable to obtain extant copies of the record, the master tapes of which were allegedly destroyed when the project was suddenly nixed by Dylan himself at the eleventh hour.

Now, "Thrills" has obtained a copy, rumoured to be one of only seven copies in the world, the other copies being in the possession of Dylan himself, his then manager Albert Grossman, ex-CBS president Clive Davis and an anonymous French collector said to have paid \$100,000 for it in 1966.

How this copy of the album - which was entitled "Snow Over Interstate 80" - came into our hands, must of course, remain the darkest of secrets. But here, for your delight, are the true facts.

The sessions which produced "Interstate" took place in New York City, between the completion of "Highway 61 Revisited" and the commencement of the "Blonde On Blonde" sessions. Considering the album comes from Dylan's "classic" middle period, most of the tracks are, frankly, disappointing.

It has been said that the idea of a Christmas Album was forced on Dylan against his will by commercial pressures and a previously unnoticed clause in his recording contract. Dylan seems to have treated the idea with an intriguing mixture of enthusiasm and commercial cynicism.

The album had apparently been completed, mixed, and several thousand copies pressed before Dylan reversed his decision and cancelled the whole project, after threatening never to perform again if the album were released. Even the artwork had been tentatively completed [when Dylan announced his decision], the rough of which "Thrills" shows for the first time.¹

Side one kicks off with a dynamic up-tempo version of "Visions Of Johanna", in which the "Nightingale's Code" version of the lyrics is laid over a rocking Kooper/Bloomfield workout on what is at root, a standard Jimmy Reed riff. The track runs to some seven minutes and tends to slide over the edge towards the end when Bloomfield and Kooper indulge in a lengthy pre-"Super Session" trading of solos.

Track two is a studio recording of "Tell Me Mama" that Dylan performed regularly during the 1966 tour with The Band and is already preserved on the "Live At The Albert Hall" bootleg.²

The third track is the most bizarre on the record. Would you believe "Frosty The Snowman" in the style of the Ronettes on Phil Spector's Christmas album with The Zim giving a three year advance preview on his "Nashville Skyline" voice? Fantastic, but true. Dylan drawls out the lyrics, and at one memorable juncture after yelling "... and two eyes made out of co-a-l" adds a spontaneous whoop of "believe me mama".

The production credit for "Frosty" is mysteriously given to one "Delmore Nis Won", which, according to more than one reliable source, was Phil Spector and Brian Wilson working in uneasy harness at Dylan's personal and adamant insistence.

The first side closes with a massed female chorale of dubious pitch singing "I'm Dreaming Of A White Christmas" against an almost mournful background of strings, with an occasional overdub of some lazy slide guitar, sounding suspiciously like early Ry Cooder. The chorale was apparently made up of youthful Greenwich Village folkies, including (according to some sources) the anonymous and bespectacled eighteen year old Patti Smith, and the Warhol model Edie Sedgwick.³

Dylan occurs nowhere on the entire cut unless it is he strumming lazy twelve string rhythm guitar. Production here, however, is credited to Dylan.

Side Two opens with the title track, "Snow Over Interstate 80" - which is possibly as magnificent as anything on "Blonde On Blonde", with lines like:

"Arabella talks so sweetly
Her Chevy's broken down
As the snow piles on her windshield
Winston's back in town ... "

Backing is the 'jingle jangle' sound of numbers like "Stuck Inside of Mobile With Thee"⁴ supplemented at the end with some heavily echoed sleigh bells.

It's followed by "Farewell Angelina", which is frankly, just not that good. It seems to have been left over from an earlier session - possibly from "Another Side" - and features Dylan playing acoustic and singing half-heartedly. Joan Baez did it better⁵.

Then we are confronted by another sop to a 'Dylan Christmas Album', as he recites, with no instrumental accompaniment, the relevant part of St. Matthew's gospel - "And there came a great light, etc."⁶

It takes a little over a minute. There is nothing else to say.

Those of you still reading this will probably be familiar with the widely bootlegged "She's Your Lover Now", which is the next cut. In fact, none of the bootleg versions has a completely mixed ending like the version presented here, which has a fade-out time of some two minutes.⁷

Next up is an eight minute marathon cut, called "Freewheelin'", never previously bootlegged or published. It's a slow acoustic number supplemented with Spartan bass and drums and a sinewy guitar from what must be Robbie Robertson, and seems to be another diatribe against Suzy Rolloto [*sp.*⁸] whom enthusiasts recall is pictured walking down snow-bound streets of New York with Dylan on the cover of "Freewheelin'" album.

The album then swings back in its schizoid fashion to a final stab at a seasonal offering with "Silent Night"⁹ with what sounds like Michael Bloomfield playing primo tacky acoustic and Dylan's almost consistently out of tune singing.

It's easy to see why Dylan insisted on the whole thing being scrapped despite the outstanding magnificence of a handful of the cuts. The title track was also being considered for a Christmas Single by all accounts.

A later Dylan Christmas single rumoured to be called "Woodstock Yule", and allegedly arising from the "Self Portrait" sessions, has never come to light.

Notes by Alan Fraser

¹ The spoof album cover is at the top of the page, courtesy of the "Inside The Museums" web-site, now shut down after the death of webmaster Wim van der Mark in 2001. Obviously it existed only as an illustration to the NME "Thrills" article

² **TELL ME MOMMA** was officially released on "The Bootleg Series Vol. 4, Live 1966", recorded at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester on 17 May 1966 (at that time the circulating recording was wrongly believed to be from the Royal Albert Hall). The hoax article claimed that the album track was from a studio version when in fact no such recording exists. (Reference: Michael Krogsgaard's article "Bob Dylan: The Recording Sessions", Part 1, in "The Telegraph", issue 52.)

³ For pictures of Edie Sedgwick with Andy Warhol at the time of Bob's involvement with Warhol's Factory, see my "[Blonde On Blonde Missing Pictures](#)" page

⁴ STUCK INSIDE OF MOBILE WITH THEE is a mistitling of **STUCK INSIDE OF MOBILE WITH THE MEMPHIS BLUES AGAIN**, printed on the sleeve of the first UK printings of "Blonde On Blonde", again see my "[Blonde On Blonde Missing Pictures](#)" page

⁵ **FAREWELL ANGELINA** was officially released on "The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3". At that time (1975) no Dylan recording of the song was believed to exist, hence its inclusion in the hoax article (and erroneous description)

⁶ Bob did of course release his reading of the poem 'Twas The Night Before Christmas as the B-side to a "Must Be Santa 7" single in 2009

⁷ **SHE'S YOUR LOVER NOW** was also officially released on "The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3", although not as described here

⁸ Bob's then girlfriend pictured on the sleeve of "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" was actually called Suze Rotolo, not Suzy Rolotto!

⁹ Bob actually did perform "Silent Night" during the recording sessions for "Infidels" at The Power Station, New York City, on 22 Apr 1983, with Mark Knopfler (guitar), Mick Taylor (guitar), Alan Clark (keyboards), Robbie Shakespeare (bass) and Sly Dunbar (drums)! The recording is not circulating to my knowledge. (Reference: Michael Krogsgaard's article "Bob Dylan: The Recording Sessions", Part 6, in "The Bridge", issue 2.) Bob didn't re-record this song for 2009's **Christmas In The Heart**.