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FEATURED ALBUM: BOB DYLAN'S *THE CUTTING EDGE 1965-1966: THE BOOTLEG SERIES, VOL. 12*

Written by **Mike Duffy** on November 6, 2015

The 14-month span when Bob Dylan recorded albums *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde* – or between 1965 and 1966, for those counting – was one of the most important times in music history.

That was the time when Dylan not only gave the world timeless classics like “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” “Like a Rolling Stone” and “Queen Jane Approximately,” but also when the iconic troubadour “went electric.”

During this period, Dylan experimented with more of a narrative style with rambling lyrics instead of being tidy and direct. The instrumentation was also more psychedelic and jangly, as if he was in a juke joint and everybody was feeling it.

Back then, such a transition was controversial, as evidenced by the mixed reaction to his performance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival – whether that was due to Dylan's electrification, the venue's poor sound quality, or the short set time.

But there is no doubt that this trilogy of albums had a major impact on popular music that came thereafter.

That is why Dylan's latest edition of his bootleg series is such a treasure trove. *The Cutting Edge 1965-1966: The Bootleg Series Vol. 12* (out today), is comprised of studio outtakes from all three albums, diving to unprecedented depths of those inspired sessions.

The collection comes in a two- and six-disc format, in addition to a limited-edition 18-disc behemoth that includes each take of every song that comprised *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*.

False starts. Abrupt endings. Chatter from the booth. Chatter from the musicians. Flubbed notes and lyrics. It's all there – raw and real and revealing. The comprehensive nature of the set truly takes the listener back to when many of the songs were just sparks in Dylan's head.

Dylan tried out countless concepts before reaching the end product. It's fascinating to hear him before and after a song talking with producers Tom Wilson and Bob Johnson, whether the conversation is about trying a different take or the fact that he is simply tired of singing. At times, Dylan is intense and focused, but at others, the ideas seemed to be coming so quickly that he would immediately test out a different tempo or add different instruments.

Blonde on Blonde's “Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat” is a prime example of that. On *The Cutting Edge*, there is a crazed version that features sound effects like a telephone ringing and a car horn that is markedly different from what eventually made its way on to the album.

On “It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry,” we are treated to a rambling rocker on one of the alternate takes included on *The Cutting Edge*, which is a far cry from the twangy, slide-guitar alt-country tune found on *Highway 61 Revisited*.

Even “Like a Rolling Stone” – 20 takes of which make up an entire disc on the Deluxe edition – underwent significant changes, with its early stages as a low-key waltz (as offered on the two-disc sampler) morphing into the bone-rattling anthem known ‘round the world.



After a half-century of making records that challenged the listener by walking a road where pop, rock, poetry, art and revolution converged, Dylan has consistently proven himself a genius. But getting an immersive look into how one of his most fertile periods came together is an absolute treat. It's fascinating to see how the songs got to their final destination, but once they did, you think, "Yeah, Dylan got it right."

Watch Dylan's new video for the track "Visions of Johanna" below and click [here](#) for more information.











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