

Bob Dylan - Self Portrait (1970)

Written by bluelover

Sunday, 27 May 2012 20:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 10 July 2016 13:55

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01. *All The Tired Horses* (Dylan) – 3:09 02. *Alberta #1* (Traditional, arranged by Dylan) – 2:54 03. *I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know* (Cecil A.Null) – 2:20 04. *Days Of '49* (Alan Lomax, John Lomax, Frank Warner) – 5:25 05. *Early Mornin' Rain* (Gordon Lightfoot) – 3:31 06. *In Search Of Little Sadie* (Traditional, arranged by Dylan) – 2:25 07. *Let It Be Me* (Gilbert Bécaud, Mann Curtis, Pierre Delanoë) – 2:58 08. *Little Sadie* (Traditional, arranged by Dylan) – 1:58 09. *Woogie Boogie* (Dylan) – 2:05 10. *Belle Isle* (Traditional, arranged by Dylan) – 2:28 11. *Living the Blues* (Dylan) – 2:40 12. *Like A Rolling Stone* (Live) (Dylan) – 5:16 13. *Copper Kettle* (*The Pale Moonlight*) (Alfred Frank Beddoe) – 3:32 14. *Gotta Travel On* (Paul Clayton, Larry Ehrlich, David Lazar, Tom Six) – 3:04 15. *Blue Moon* (Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers) – 2:27 16. *The Boxer* (Paul Simon) – 2:45 17. *The Mighty Quinn* (*Quinn the Eskimo*) (Live) (Dylan) – 2:45 18. *Take Me As I Am* (*Or Let Me Go*) (Boudleaux Bryant) – 3:00 19. *Take A Message To Mary* (Felice Bryant, Boudleaux Bryant) – 2:44 20. *It Hurts Me Too* (Traditional, arranged by Dylan) – 3:13 21. *Minstrel Boy* (Live) (Dylan) – 3:30 22. *She Belongs To Me* (Live) (Dylan) – 2:41 23. *Wigwam* (Dylan) – 3:07 24. *Alberta #2* (Traditional, arranged by Dylan) – 3:12

Personnel: - Bob Dylan - guitar, harmonica, keyboards, vocals - Byron Bach, Martha McCrory - cello - Brenton Banks, George Binkley III, Emanuel Green, Martin Katahn, Doug Kershaw, Sheldon Kurland, Barry McDonald, Lilian Hunt - violin - Norman Blake, Fred Carter Jr., Ron Cornelius, Fred Foster, Bubba Fowler - guitar - David Bromberg - guitar, dobro, bass - Albert Wynn Butler - clarinet, saxophone - Kenneth A. Buttrey - drums, percussion - Marvin Chantry, Gary Van Osdale - viola - Charlie Daniels, Stu Woods, Bob Moore - bass - Rick Danko - bass, vocals - Pete Drake - steel guitar - Delores Edgin, Hilda Harris, June Page, Carol Montgomery, Maretha Stewart, Albertine Robinson - vocals - Solie Fott - violin, viola - Dennis Good, Rex Peer, Frank Smith - trombone - Levon Helm - mandolin, drums, vocals - Freddie Hill, Ollie Mitchell - trumpet - Karl Himmel - clarinet, saxophone, trombone - Garth Hudson - keyboards - Al Kooper - guitar, horn, keyboards - Richard Manuel - piano, vocals - Charlie McCoy - guitar, bass, harmonica, vibes - Gene A. Mullins - baritone horn - Joe Osborn - guitar, bass - Bill Pursell - piano - Robbie Robertson - guitar, vocals - Al Rogers - drums - Bob Wilson - organ, piano - Bill Walker - arrangements - Bob Johnston – Producer

Bob Dylan's first release of the 1970's was different from any album that preceded it. Dylan had

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a history of musical about faces, but this time it was not aimed in a positive direction. If *Blonde On Blonde* was one of the strongest double albums in rock history, then *Self Portrait* was one rock's most disappointing double releases.

Self Portrait was an album of cover songs, obscure traditional folk tunes, live performances from The Isle Of Wight Festival and a few originals. Dylan's reasoning behind such a release at the time was obscure, and critical reaction was universally negative.

Some felt that this release was Dylan's protest against his universal fame. Years later Dylan would consider *Self Portrait* as one of his poorer efforts. Whatever Dylan's motives, the album would sell well reaching number four on the National charts while also becoming Dylan's third consecutive number one album in England.

It took Dylan almost a year to record *Self Portrait* and he gathered a group of all star musicians in support. The Band, Al Kooper, Pete Drake, David Bromberg, Doug Kershaw plus a huge supporting cast all make, for the most part, wasted appearances. Dylan would also make use of cellos and violins as background.

The passage of years has put the album in a little better light. There are some good performances among the 24 songs but they must be ferreted out.

The best of the original songs are "The Mighty Quinn," which had already become a giant hit for Manfred Mann a few years prior, and "All The Tired Horses." Dylan's had rarely written a bad song during his career but "Woogie Boogie," "Wig Wam," and even "Living The Blues" can be regulated to just album filler.

The cover songs are hit and miss as well. Dylan gives a credible performance of "Early Morning Rain" by Gordon Lightfoot and Alfred Beddoe's "Copper Kettle" may be the best song on the album. This calm song of the simple life is Dylan at his best in spite of himself. On the other hand "Blue Moon" and "The Boxer" are so bad that you can only hope that Dylan was not serious when he recorded them.

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The live performances from the Isle Of Wight do not fare well. "Like A Rolling Stone" is just flat. "She Belongs To Me" is a song that should have remained acoustic. The best of the lot is "Minstrel Boy," where at least Dylan seems engaged and interested. Self Portrait remains an enigmatic release even for Bob Dylan. While it covers a lot of ground, it ultimately collapses upon itself and remains one of the strangest and weakest albums of Bob Dylan's career.

---David Bowling, blogcritics.org

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