

Bob Dylan – Desire (1976)

Written by bluelover

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01. Hurricane – 8:29 02. Isis – 6:55 03. Mozambique – 2:57 04. One More Cup Of Coffee (Dylan) – 3:43 05. Oh, Sister – 4:00 06. Joey – 11:03 07. Romance In Durango – 5:44 08. Black Diamond Bay – 7:28 09. Sara – 5:29 Personnel: - Bob Dylan – vocals, rhythm guitar, harmonica, piano on "Isis" - Scarlet Rivera – violin - Howard Wyeth – drums, piano - Dominic Cortese – accordion, mandolin - Vincent Bell – bellzouki, bass - Rob Stoner – bass, background vocals - Emmylou Harris – background vocals - Ronee Blakley, Steven Soles – background vocals on "Hurricane" - Luther Rix - congas on "Hurricane"

Bob Dylan released Desire on January 5, 1976 and it would prove to be one of his best selling albums, reaching number 1 on the National charts while achieving double platinum status.

The Basement Tapes had been released in mid 1975. Since this was an album of material recorded in 1967, Desire was the follow-up to the classic Blood On The Tracks. In many ways Desire was a more ambitious project as he would produce an album of rockers, story telling, and topical songs clothed in imagery and melodies. Jacques Levy would serve as a co-creator on many of the tracks. If there can be any criticism of this album, it would be the rotating group of musicians that never really coalesced into a tight knit working band.

Two long story songs appear on the album. "Hurricane" is a protest song about the incarceration of boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. He had been convicted of murder in 1966 and quickly became a symbol of the civil rights movement. This song was very controversial when it was released. In 1976 Carter was re-tried and convicted a second time. Through a series of legal maneuverings a third trial became necessary in 1988 and when the state refused to prosecute, Carter was released. He remains an almost mythic figure. Dylan seemed committed to his cause but has not performed the song live since 1976. "Joey" was a biographical track about deceased gangster Joey Gallo. He is presented as an outlaw with morals. Noted writer

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Lester Bangs would take Dylan to task, line by line, for his praise of Gallo.

Two wonderful love songs appear on the album. “Oh Sister” is about the fragility of love. Emmylou Harris provides some wonderful vocals on this track and many others as well. “Sara” is a personal song in the form of a tribute to his wife. It is basically Dylan in the confessional. She would file for divorce in March of 1977.

I have always been drawn to “Isis” which is a journey of imagery. “Black Diamond Bay” is almost a script waiting to be filmed. It explores the destruction of an Island from different perspectives including the Island itself. “Romance In Durango” is a return to the style of John Wesley Harding. It chronicles an outlaw and his lover on the run. “One More Cup Of Coffee” concerns a family of wandering gypsies. It is a moody and haunting tale set to music. “Mozambique” is a straight forward rocker with some lyrical imagery thrown in for good measure.

Desire was an album of adventure. The songs are well crafted and Levy’s contributions fit Dylan’s style well. If Blood On The Tracks is rated 5 stars then Desire is very close at four to four and a half stars. It remains one of the important releases of the 1970s and is still worth seeking out three decades later. ---David Bowling, blogcritics.org

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