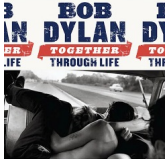


Bob Dylan - Together Through Life (2009)

Written by bluelover

Tuesday, 13 October 2009 13:18 - Last Updated Monday, 11 July 2016 08:13

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01. *Beyond Here Lies Nothin'* 02. *Life Is Hard* 03. *My Wife's Home Town* 04. *If You Ever Go To Houston* 05. *Forgetful Heart* 06. *Jolene* 07. *This Dream Of You* 08. *Shake Shake Mama* 09. *I Feel A Change Comin On* 10. *It's All Good* 11. *Bob Dylan – Theme Town Radio Hour (interview recorded in studio b)* Musicians: Bob Dylan – guitar, keyboards, vocals
Mike Campbell – guitar, mandolin David Hidalgo – accordion, guitar Donnie Herron – steel guitar, banjo, mandolin, trumpet Tony Garnier – bass guitar George Recile – drums

In "Together Through Life," the latest missive issued from his woodshed out in Malibu, the bard of America calls up some obvious influences. Bob Dylan has said this album was inspired by midcentury Chess and Sun label recordings, and indeed, the hearty ghosts of Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf stomp through most tracks, with Doug Sahm and Edith Piaf stopping in for a dance or two. But John Bunyan? Leave it to Dylan to pull up some really old roots.

Bunyan's 1679 "A Treatise of the Fear of God" may or may not be the inspiration for "Forgetful Heart," the most ominous song on this mostly romping collection. Dylanologists, such as the historian Sean Wilentz, have noted that "the fourth part of the day" that Dylan gently intones about in "I Feel a Change Coming On" refers to an Old Testament passage (Nehemiah 9:3, for the curious) about penitence and paying Heaven its due.

Chasing allusions is half the fun of listening to Dylan's music. On "Together Through Life," the other half involves plainer pursuits, shaking a tail feather and shouting along.

Both tossed off and carefully designed to feel that way, "Together Through Life" was recorded

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with cronies including Tom Petty's longtime guitarist Mike Campbell and Los Lobos co-founder David Hidalgo, whose Creole-Latino accordion playing sets the mood throughout. Dylan's lyrics employ the old blues technique of finding the soul in the jellyroll -- using tales of love and sex to get to deeper matters of mortal bondage and spiritual transcendence.

It's a trick he's used throughout his career, but here his touch is particularly light.

With such titles as "Shake Shake Mama" and "It's All Good," some feel a little hackneyed at first. Repeated listening peels off the layers, but Dylan's singing, especially frog-ified to pay tribute to the "raw" in early rock, reminds us to not get too serious. "It's all good," Dylan says while documenting the apocalypse in the roadhouse stomp that closes the album.

Take this old bluesman any way you want to, baby, and be glad he's still here.--- Ann Powers, latimesblogs.latimes.com

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