Dylan tapes: trivia

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The performance is the incredible difference between the "folk" Dylan, the "rock" Dylan, and the "country" Dylan (Nashville Skyline). The tape features him rapping about song writing and the difference between the "folk" and the "rock". Dylan had by this time gone acoustic; though he cannot sing, his maturity (and the most memorable cut in a talking blues number about bigotry and religion based on a black character named Heskiak Jones. Nothing is familiar but it's just the sort of material explicable, from a bright young folk singer in Greenwich Village during the early sixties. The second tape is quite dis- tant in time. For three reasons: it sounds as if it were pressed using a dodgy needle, Dylan had by this time gone electric; and the material is familiar. The tape was apparently recorded in the studio in his house at Woodstock and includes The Band in backup instrumentation. However, what moves the listener is Dylan singing his material which has already become familiar through the efforts of other artists. Though he cannot sing, Dylan conveys meaning in his songs which he performs them that become lost in interpreta- tions by others. This tape includes the only recorded versions by Dylan of "I Shall Be Free"-some complete with the same harmonic used by The Band in their re- cordings. "Wheels On Fire"-done in an easy swing, "Tears Of Rage", "If You Gotta Go"-done in an up-tempo version, "Every Night Without You"-blurry and recorded before a live audience somewhere, "Too Much Of Nothing"-the Peter, Paul, and Mary (of course) hit of the year, "The Mighty Quinn"-Dylan's comment on Christ complete with The Band harmonies on the chorus and a recorder in the background. The sound quality is very poor but hearing the original is often worth the trouble. Still, this album is really a piece of musical trivia. It is for the informed Dylan fan or the "rockologist" (one who digs the roots). For these two groups it is a must. Others best beware the parodied tapes.

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-Jeff Gale

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