

D255 BOB DYLAN GA YATTE KITA

(BOB DYLAN HAS COME TO JAPAN)

A translation by tetsuro

The eleven concerts Dylan played in Japan between 20 February and 4 March 1978 were his first in that country. On 15 April of the same year, to commemorate his visit, the weekly documentary series *Ruporutage Nippon* on TV channel NHK featured a half-hour programme called *Bob Dylan Ga Yatte Kita* (Bob Dylan Has Come To Japan). On 11 May 2003 the original programme was re-broadcast with a brief added introduction and coda. It is a pristine recording of this 2003 re-broadcast that [D255](#) preserves.

[X:XX] relates to DVD timings

[Blue in square brackets = added explanatory text]

Red = live Budokan footage

[0:00] The re-broadcast begins with hostess Sachiko Kagami [\[below\]](#) explaining to viewers what they are about to see. She tells them that in the 1960s Bob Dylan inspired young people all over the world with his protest songs against racism and war. She tells them that one of his masterpieces was *Blowin' In The Wind* and then reads a Japanese translation of part of its lyric. She says that this song asks people to stand up and protest rather than keep silent. In Japan it encouraged young people actively opposed to their country's security treaty with the United States and to the Vietnam war. She then says that the following programme, first screened in 1978, shows novelist Ryu Murakami (26) asking people who spent their hot youth in the 1960s listening to Bob Dylan to express their feelings about his first visit to Japan.



[1:20] Original 1978 broadcast title sequence.

[1:50] Haneda airport, press conference:

[While Dylan settles] Thank you for sparing us some time while you are very tired. We've been waiting many years for you to come to Japan. We sincerely welcome you.

Q: In the past you sang mainly protest songs. What has made you sing love songs?

A: *They were my most brilliant love songs.*

Q: You are regarded as a god of folk songs. What do you think of that?

A: *Well, I'm not a god of folk songs.*

Q: Then, what are you?

A: *I'm just a person.*



[3:10] Budokan Hall, first night: 12,000 attend, including the US ambassador and his wife and [much loved singer/actress] Hibari Misora. Brief shots of other celebrity arrivals: folk singers Nobuyasu Okabayashi and Yosui Inoue and singer / songwriter / actor Kenji Sawada.

[4:00] Live clip #1: Lonesome Bedroom Blues (55 second excerpt)

[Subtitles] Bob Dylan - born in 1941, made his debut at 20. Received fanatical support from young people all over the world with Blowin' In The Wind, The Times They Are A-Changin', Masters Of War, Like A Rolling Stone and so on. Influenced peace and civic movements and made a big impact on the culture and thoughts of young Japanese. Released 22 LPs. Japanese sales [to 1978] five billion yen.

[4:56] Interview #1: with Rabi Nakayama (folk singer) who translated Dylan's songs while at college and began performing. Attended all the Tokyo concerts:

Ryu: As a singer, what do you think of Bob Dylan?

I fell in love with him once again because he is taking his music very seriously. Such a great man is living his life seriously.

Ryu: But Mick Jagger seems to *enjoy* life and be happy. What do you say to that?

I guess Dylan is like that, too.

[5:17] Interview #2: with Teppei Kojima (folk singer, 23) who, after encountering Dylan's songs while at high school, decided to be a singer:

Simply fantastic. I don't want to say any more. It was like seeing the person I love most put on public display. I watched his performance like that. I wish he was here today!

[6:04] Interview #3: with Shigeru Izumiya (folk singer, 29 [below](#)) - one of the ones called *Dylan's children*):



I came to know him around 1968. Those were the days when college students were raising hell, gathering on the streets or at Shinjuku Station [\[more on this below\]](#). After work, I used to join them.

Ryu: Were you a musician at that time?

I wasn't playing professionally then. I wanted to become a cartoonist. Music for me was a hobby. A friend of mine kept saying Dylan was great. I couldn't understand why. He never sang a song properly - in every song, it was as though he had a blocked-up nose. I said why do you like a guy like this? He said he liked him intuitively, viscerally. I told him he was a snob.

Ryu: But now you like Dylan very much, don't you?

Yes, very much. So very much that I don't want to confess it openly.

[7:13] Interview #4: with Osami Okamoto (composer, 36):

Ryu: Do you like Dylan or despise him?

I like him very much.

Ryu: You went to the first concert. What was your impression?

During the first set I was tense, listening with too much expectation. But during the break, I realised Dylan was trying to become younger, at least it seemed that way to me, but the audience wouldn't respond, clinging to their memories of the past. In the second set I decided to be more relaxed and enjoy it. Then it was like a long journey through song, beyond time. At the end I saw a young boy on stage.

[8:27] Interview #5 [[at the baseball ground](#)]: with Michitsuna Takahashi (writer, 29):

Ryu: You were in the US for 3 years?

Yes, in San Francisco.

Ryu: When?

From 1966 to 1968. The largest student movement on the west coast was at my college. It was a time when the Vietnam war was at its peak. Dylan was said to be an opinion-former of the anti-war movement but I wasn't listening to him like that.

Ryu: Americans too?

Yes.

Ryu: They were listening to his songs as just songs? Like we listen to Yosui Inoue in Japan?

I think so.

[9:54] Interview #6: with Kenji Sawada (singer, 30) backstage at NHK Hall:

I was seated in the centre of the fifth row. I could see his face very well. Bob seemed to be in good mood. I was a little sleepy in the first set but I enjoyed the second set with some familiar songs. It was good to see him. He's a great artist, after all. I enjoyed the show as a fan.

[10:22] Part of the *Freewheelin'* version of *Blowin' In The Wind* is played, with subtitled lyrics.

[11:05] Interview #7: Tetsuo Shimizu (poet, 40):

Everyone can agree with his protest songs from their own point of view. It's good to think about life through songs. But instead of listening to his songs alone in their rooms after school, I think students should play mahjong or drink sake.

[11:49] Interview #8: Jiro Gyu (playwright, 37):

I'm interested in seeing his end. You know how the Beatles broke up, Elvis died with a doughnut disease, the way James Dean died was very cool. I'm curious to see how Bob will die. I've seen three ends. I want to see the fourth.

[12:10] Interview #9: Yoshihiro Tachiki (photographer, 40):

He experienced success so early in his career that part of him must be arrogant. As a photographer, I'm very interested in such arrogance. Photographers are more interested in defective people - I guess novelists too. One photograph can't end the war in Vietnam, but if we don't start with just one, we won't get very far...

[12:42] Interview #10: Kouhei Tsuka (playwright, 29):

I like to hear music while I'm drinking coffee in a café, but I hate it when it begins to have an opinion. A playwright must accept the concept of war to some extent. I kind of envy him because he can earn money by protesting against war.

[13:20] Interview #11: Tetsuro Kato (chief editor, *Playboy*, 36):

Ryu: As I get to know Dylan more, a part of me is sobered. Not because of him, but something else.

Maybe - but everyone is sober now, Dylan too. He sings petit bourgeois songs now - y'know, songs about love or peace. You can't compare them - their power - with the songs Jimmy Carter quoted in his presidential campaign.

[13:49] An unnamed woman and Ryu Murakami walking in the street:

He recently got divorced, didn't he?

Ryu: Yes...

If you can't make a woman happy, do you think you're qualified to say that the world will change or that times will change?

[14:00] 55 seconds of jerky Budokan video over *Hard Rain* (1976) audio with subtitled quotations overlaid:

The generation created Dylan and Dylan created the generation (The New York Times)

I must react an' spit fast with weapons of words (BD, 1963)

Love is all there is, it makes the world go round (BD, 1968)

After listening to ... The Ballad Of Hattie Carroll [sic] and Like A Rolling Stone and The Times They Are A-Changin' I've learned to appreciate the dynamism of change in a modern society (Jimmy Carter, 1974)

[15:23] Interview #12: Tomoya Takaishi, in a former school building in Fukui prefecture:

I've lived here since last July. This room is a little too wide so I divided it into four. They used to have science classes here, so there are faucets. After natural disasters such as flooding, schools used to be used as temporary accommodation, so I had a negative impression of living in a school. At first I was reluctant to live here, but now it's not that bad.

[Subtitles] Tomoya Takaishi (37), one of the singers most influenced by Bob Dylan. As a leader of the folk movement in the late sixties, he released many message songs including Jukensei Blues. Now lives in an abandoned elementary school in Noudashomura, Fukui prefecture. Still active in folk music while farming.

The way I see it, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan and I are of the same era. About six months before my first concert I thought, I would pay, let's say... It cost around 500 yen in those days to see Joan Baez. I would pay money to see Bob Dylan too. But I wondered would anybody pay money to see Tomoya Takaishi, who made his debut so recently? 'Cos Bob Dylan had done a lot by the time he was 25, which is the age I started out at. I've been kind of trying to overcome that handicap for years. Before Bob Dylan started to sing his own songs, he played blues, old standards and visited many people. That kind of nurturing environment was missing in Japanese culture. That's why I came to live here in the late sixties. I spend most of my time doing research using all the materials around me. It's good that the cost of living is cheap here.

Ryu: Today, after I got off the bullet train at Kyoto I took a taxi, but it took a very long time to get here. The taxi driver was worried about wild boar appearing and he wondered what Tomoya Takaishi is doing in a place like this, so deep in the mountains? Before I came here, I wanted to ask you what it means to be a man alone with just his guitar. But I'm a simple man and as I toss the ball around with someone I soon pick up the vibe. The dog and the skis leaning against the wall in the hallway have made me realize it's quite good!

I met a woman named Folk Song and she changed the course of my life. I've been struggling with her ever since. Now even my wife and son are involved. I can't quit before I make it. Once you meet this woman you must go on to the very end.

[17:28] Interview #13: Eisuke Shichiji (commercial magazine editor, 30):

[Subtitle] Acknowledges being of the Dylan / Beatles generation. Edits music magazines.

The sixties was a glorious decade. In Japan we call it the Golden Sixties. In my high school days, before Dylan became famous, Ginsberg, Kerouac and Nat Hentoff, who now lionises Dylan, were our sutra and Dylan appealed to the same sensibilities. He isn't unrelated in that sense and I like him very much. Something of the vibrations of those days shaped my outlook, which has in turn influenced the way I've lived since. That's how I feel. They're my true feelings.*

* [Literally *thread*; here means *spiritual guide*]

Ryu: It may be rude for a man like me who came to Tokyo admiring all of that, to ask you a question like this, but I wonder if there was a counter-culture in the late sixties in Japan?

I don't think so. I can say that now, although in those days we believed there was. For example, we saw Shinjuku Station West Gate Plaza as a counter-culture focal point, although it didn't become a Japanese Woodstock. I want to believe we had a dream because I was part of it.*

* [Every Saturday through the Spring of 1969, several thousand students and others - so-called *folk guerrillas* - would gather in the Plaza to sing protest songs. Eventually, riot police, using tear gas, dispersed them.]

[18.48] Excerpt from The Times They Are A-Changin' under a montage of BD photos and album covers.

Photo of the 1969 Tokyo University All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee in debate [with 44 year old novelist, playwright and activist Yukio Mishima].

[20:01] Interview #14: Masahiko Akuta [one of the organisers of the above debate] (dramatist, 32):

Ryu: It's tricky for me to ask you questions. Can you just talk freely, Mr. Akuta?

That's sly of you. I was paying attention to him [i.e. Dylan]. He didn't demonstrate. I admired him just for that.

Ryu: Uh-huh.

I hated all the rabble who joined demonstrations. I think you and your buddies joined, too? It's like I wanted to cut them down or hold a large mirror in front of them. Maybe that's why I became a dramatist, but ... How should I put it? I felt that demonstrating was beneath human dignity. I feel the same even now. How about you?

Ryu: Me?

I hate any kind of demonstration ...

Ryu: I went to one when I was in high school.

I guess you went because you saw them as like festivals?

Ryu: It wasn't as much fun as a festival ...

By the way, you know, the seventies may be the preamble to a religious era. Though we didn't notice it at the time, in the sixties Dylan created a kind of religion. I have no intention of starting one myself. In that sense, the underground is one way to go. I haven't earned a cent. It's like I don't want to sell even one drop of my sweat or blood. What does the underground mean to you? I think it will be your eighties.

Ryu: I totally agree.

And I? I will remain true to myself. I will survive. Or, who knows, I might starve to death.

Ryu: Uh-huh.

As for what the world has given me, I love people in my own way and have contributed according to that way.

Ryu: Uh-huh.

So, when I can no longer express my love in my own way, I think that's when I'll be gone.

[22:05] Interview #15: Kyouzou Nishioka (folk singer, 30):

[Subtitle] Admiring Dylan, he formed a band called Dylan II.

What I strive for most of all now is to make my spirit and that of my audience fly. For example, now I'm with you, Ryu, I want both our spirits to soar somehow - by means of a song or anything else. If I may elaborate a little, my mind, like other people's, changes gradually with the times. Basically, we are challenged by the times to adapt. I want to know that feeling and never lose that fight.

[\[Mr. Nishioka committed suicide in 1999 on the third anniversary of his wife's cancer-related death.\]](#)

[22:40] Teppei Kojima sings *Song to Dylan*:

*Mr D took flight
Long ago in a dark country far away
And after he had flown
I came to like him so very much
All I can do is stare at his pictures
Longing for those good old days
Before I knew it I was carrying his child
How does it feel, you once said
To be like a rolling stone?*

*All I really want to do, you once said
Is be friends with you*

[23:41] Ondo town, Hiroshima prefecture. Interview #16: Meidai Akita (chairman of the 1968 Nihon University All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee, 31):

[Subtitle] Now works at a car repair shop in his hometown.

Ryu: This is a programme about Bob Dylan.

I see.

Ryu: We have looked into various things to do with Bob Dylan and found that they all relate back to the sixties. That's why I came all this way to Kure. As I rode on the train, I was wondering about what I would ask you when we met, Mr. Akita. Then I realised that for a long time I've had something I wanted to say to you and now I want not to ask questions but to say it. I am a man who is nothing to you, but, for me, that isn't so. To me and my generation, no matter what you are now, you are a hero. I know I'm not putting it very well, but I want to do my work in a way that will win the respect of people like you who deeply moved me through books or television. I don't know how to say it better, but I just wanted to tell you that instead of asking questions.

Um, um ... Yes, yes. How about this? A long time ago something happened somewhere. It may look beautiful now, but actually it was so muddy... Not vengeance of the human soul or anything like that, but a very muddy and chaotic time, I think.

Ryu: Maybe. I could only guess through what I saw in the newspapers or on TV. I was 18 - no, 17 then. [\[Actually, he was not quite 16.\]](#) I grew up in Sasebo, you know. I was there when the *USS Enterprise* came into port* and caused so much disturbance. All that changed me. And the thing that inspired me most was the courage of the Nihon University All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee. Your actions moved me to want to become involved, gave me a lot of determination, food for thought. Made a deep impression. I came here to tell you that you had a great deal of influence then, no matter how things are now. [\[TV channel\]](#) NHK would want me to ask you all sorts of questions, but that doesn't matter to me Don't you feel like returning to Tokyo? Going to Tokyo?

* [\[Aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise*, the first American nuclear powered surface vessel to visit Japan, docked at Sasebo on 19 January 1968 despite vigorous on-shore protests including "heavy street fighting" and "riots". The ship sailed for Vietnamese waters on 23 January, allegedly four days earlier than originally planned.\]](#)

Well, I'd like to, if I have time ...

[27:45] Live clip #2: I Threw It All Away (35 second excerpt)

[Subtitle] Number of shows: eleven. Combined audience: 100,000. Bob Dylan's estimated *guara* [\[gross earnings\]](#): 350 million yen.

[28:23] Ryu Murakami's closing words:

Seeing the rushes put me in mind of the TV series Mission Impossible. Every episode begins with the main character playing a tape that says Good morning, Mr. Phelps. The tape then goes on: Your mission today, should you choose to accept it, is ... So far, this programme has presented some narrative but hasn't declared any mission. Maybe my mission will not become apparent even when I leave here and return home. My next mission will be somewhere else, and the next one somewhere else again, and to reach those different places I think I'll have to extend myself. Anyway, although I'm very tired after meeting so many people, what I learned is that everybody is living their life. To live is a simple thing, of course, but it struck me, too, as a great thing. But since simply to live is no fun at all, that's where the mission comes in. And, if you are to find your mission, and succeed in it, I guess you have to extend yourself. That's what I thought.

[29:47] Original 1978 broadcast closing credits.

[30:00] The re-broadcast ends as it started with a brief 2003 add-on from Sachiko Kagami:

In the early seventies, enthusiasm for social activism subsided and the number of message songs dwindled. But Dylan's Blowin' in the Wind continued to be sung and passed on by a variety of singers. Now, 25 years on from the programme's original broadcast in 1978, we've received an e-mail from reporter Ryu Murakami: [\[She then reads Ryu's mail\]](#)

Back then, Bob Dylan wrote many good songs. To write a song good enough to be sung and passed down by people all across the world is very difficult. Ask yourself how many such songs are being given to the world now and you'll know it. And we should consider why such songs - songs to be sung and passed down by people everywhere - no longer appear, whether in pop, rock or folk.

What was the time Bob Dylan's songs echoed? Maybe it wouldn't hurt to reconsider that ...

[31:13] End

THANKS VP, JL

SPECIAL THANKS tetsuro