

POP CULTURE

The new
DylansPLENTY OF SINGERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE LABEL,
BUT THE ORIGINAL ISN'T ABDICATING HIS THRONEBERNARD PERUSSE
THE GAZETTE

In No Direction Home, Martin Scorsese's new documentary on Bob Dylan, there's a revealing backstage scene filmed in 1966. The singer, tired of confronting hostile folk purists and hecklers over his decision to play full-tilt rock 'n' roll, looks both fatigued and shaken. "Man, I'm gonna get me a new Bob Dylan next week," he says wearily. "Get me a new Bob Dylan and use him. Use the new Bob Dylan. See how long *he* lasts."

Plenty of singer-songwriters over the years have applied for the job. Many have had the "new Bob Dylan" title bestowed on them by the media—usually carelessly. With almost no serious cries of "new Elvis" or "new Beatles" ever heard, it often seems as if anyone with a guitar and reasonably well-crafted lyrics has been a potential heir to Dylan's throne.

Problem is, the man himself shows no signs of abdicating. In fact, he's hot-

ter than he's been since the 1960s: The Scorsese documentary arrives in stores Tuesday and last year's bestselling autobiography, *Chronicles, Volume One*, is due out in paperback next month. The Bob Dylan Scrapbook 1956-1966, an illustrated biography, is also out in October. Tribute albums seem to be popping up everywhere, including a reggae collection and a compilation featuring young alternative bands. Two more Dylan concept discs come with the latest issues of *Mojo*, which features him on the cover, and *Uncut*. His most recent studio album, *Love and Theft*, released in 2001, was acclaimed as one of the best of his career. And at 64, he maintains a demanding tour schedule.

Greil Marcus's book *Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads*, about the 1965 single that launched the singer toward rock stardom, was published in March. Al Kooper, who played the crucial organ part on that seminal record, laughed when asked whether the media were ever on to something with the "new Dylan" concept. "Don't ask me. The last thing I do is agree

with things like that," Kooper said in a telephone interview with *The Gazette*. "I'm a grizzled old guy. I don't hear any new Dylans. I think he changed lyric writing in popular music—completely and single-handedly. When somebody comes along and does that again, then they can be the new Dylan."

The grizzled old guys aren't the only ones carrying the Dylan cheerleading section these days. Stefanie Reines owns the California-based Drive-Thru Records, a label known mostly for its punk and alternative bands. Reines discovered Dylan in 1988. She was 16 and he was touring with her favourite group, the Alar m. She has since seen him 70 times.

Last month, Drive-Thru released Reines's labour of love, *Listen to Bob Dylan*, a tribute album featuring 20-something artists like Jason Mraz, James Blunt, Something Corporate and Steel Train. Each picked a song from Reines's list of 50 and most treated the material with reverence.

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