

THE CUTTING EDGE: SESSIONS FOR BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

by Roger Ford

Back in the summer of 2010, in the lead-up to the official release of the Witmark demos in the *"Bootleg Series"*, *Rolling Stone* magazine ran an article about this release and about the future of the *"Bootleg Series"* in general. Their "source close to the Dylan camp" revealed that, among other ideas, there might at some point be a giant box set of the complete *"Blonde On Blonde"* sessions. "When Bob recorded he did it like a jazz guy, where all the versions of the songs are very different from each other," said the source. "I'd love to release a set where you hear the whole takes and everything else. That would be just for the super-fans."

Since then, of course, the whole copyright extension issue has blown up, to which Sony's response has hitherto been to put out an annual *"50th Anniversary Collection"*, released in minimal packaging and purely token quantities. These sets, covering Dylan's unreleased recordings from 1962-1964, were not commercial, money-making products. Dylan's studio recordings from 1965-66, though, are in a different league in terms of legendary status, and *"The Cutting Edge"* has capitalised on this by turning two years' worth of copyright extension material into a serious commercial package under the *"Bootleg Series"* banner. So in one sense it has extended the inevitable 1965 copyright release forwards to cover 1966 as well;¹ from another perspective it has taken that pre-existing idea of a *"Blonde On Blonde"* sessions release in the *"Bootleg Series"*, and extended it backwards to cover the sessions for the previous two albums as well. Neat.

As it turns out, the complete *"Blonde On Blonde"* sessions aspect really was just for the super-fans: the 18-CD *Collector's Edition* (which of course also includes the complete sessions for *"Highway 61 Revisited"* and *"Bringing It All Back Home"*, along with a variety of other trinkets) had a colossal price-tag. And for overseas customers, just the postage and import duties generally came to way more than the cost of the 6-CD *Deluxe Edition* that was put out through the normal retail channels. For the mass market there is a 2-CD *"Best Of The Cutting Edge"* release, and for vinyl fans a 3-LP *Best Of* box set with a code that apparently allows you to download all 6-CDs-worth of the *Deluxe Edition's* content.

This series of articles will assess, track by track, the contents of the 18-CD *Collector's Edition*, starting with the sessions for *"Bringing It All Back Home"*. But first there are a few issues relating to the set as a whole that merit brief discussion.

1. How complete is "complete"?

Sony's promotional blurb promised "Every note recorded by Bob Dylan in the studio in 1965/1966", but it's not quite that in practice. Many have noted that the *Collector's Edition* misses the session with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers at Levy's Recording Studio in London on May 12, 1965, from which there is a widely bootlegged recording of Dylan singing a verse of *'If You Gotta Go, Go Now'*; this session has been discussed in previous articles in *ISIS*². Although Levy's studio was owned by Columbia, there is apparently no documentation at all of this session in the Columbia/Sony archives in America, and no tapes to be found. Reports suggest that although half a dozen or so tunes were attempted (and taped), there were no complete takes recorded, and there was very little structure or musical direction to the session. Perhaps producer Tom Wilson, who oversaw the session and presumably took possession of the tapes, decided that the results were not even worth taking back to Columbia in New York.

Another widely noted absence is the *'If You Gotta Go, Go Now'* single released in some European countries in 1967, though recorded in 1965. This is discussed in more detail later, as are one or two other minor omissions.

2. The editing of the recordings

Many purchasers of the big blue box would have been happy for it to include absolutely everything on the studio tapes: all the producer's "slates" announcing the title and number of each take, all the studio chat between Dylan, the other musicians and the producer, and whatever rehearsals were recorded. Obviously we don't know how much has been left out, but there's no doubt that the complete unedited tapes would have filled a lot more than the released 17 CDs of studio recordings. The producers of the box set clearly took their own view on what should be included and what should be left out. The notes do say that "the identifying producer slates have been removed for aesthetic reasons" (though in fact quite a few have been at least partially left in); and there is some studio chat here and there, and one or two rehearsals that were never even listed as takes on the recording sheets. By and large, I'm happy to accept their decisions on these matters given that the box always had to remain a commercial proposition.

However there is a related, but perhaps more serious, issue concerning fade-outs. While we are allowed to hear how most of the false starts and breakdowns came to an end, the large majority of the complete takes are faded out. Now it's

very unlikely that the engineers actually faded out the recordings while the musicians were still playing; this would much more likely have been done at the mixing stage. No doubt many of the complete takes ended untidily, the musicians fully aware that the recording would be suitably faded later; so presumably it was the producers of this box set who decided that for aesthetic reasons (again) we should be spared this untidiness. They were probably mindful of the fact that many of the complete takes would be carried over to the 6-CD and 2-CD editions, where listeners would probably be expecting a more commercially-oriented product. For the *Collector's Edition*, though, it's a very moot point. This edition was never going to be an album that you'd sit and play right through time and time again; it's more of a voyage of discovery, and after that a reference resource. Most serious Dylan collectors would in any case know how to produce faded-out copies of particular tracks if they really wanted them. OK, for the tracks that made the three original albums, we have often been given endings that are longer than on the albums; but the fade-outs do nonetheless leave me feeling somewhat short-changed, and either patronised or misunderstood.

3. The mixing

The producer's note in the box set's smaller book states that "there was no attempt made at creating glossy, finished recordings. What's presented here is the sound you might have heard in the control booth at the end of a day at CBS studios." What this means in practice is that the recordings are presented pretty flat; there is no added reverb, for example, on the vocals or individual instruments, and the frequency balance is less "edgy" than on the original records. The result is warm and natural-sounding, though with less of the impact that would grab your attention if you heard it on the radio. In context, this approach is fine. On the tracks with backing musicians you'll also notice that the stereo image is quite a lot narrower than on the released recordings; this is more in line with modern mixing styles, and makes for a more comfortable listening, in particular on headphones. So generally speaking I have no complaints; any exceptions will be mentioned in relation to specific tracks.

4. Musician credits

Clearly the producers have put quite a lot of effort into working out who played on each track, as detailed in the box set book. The information sources and deductions involved in this process are not explained (Did they rely on the studio logs? Did they talk to musicians involved? Did they make their own judgments based on listening?); but it's encouraging that in some cases they still admit to uncertainty. There will continue to be much detailed debate about what mistakes have been made, but as a rule I shall go with the credits given in the book unless I think there is particularly strong evidence to the contrary.

5. Lyric variations

One of the great pleasures of listening to "*The Cutting Edge*", and to the *Collector's Edition* in particular, has been hearing how Dylan's songs evolved not just musically but lyrically too. Quite clearly he did not write out the words at the beginning and then sing from these in the way that most pop/rock singers would; in fact at one point he refuses a tactful suggestion that he have the words in front of him to help him through the recording. And while some of the lyrical changes clearly represent an evolution, a progression towards an ideal, in other cases lines are just rephrased in minor ways from take to take because it is the *sense* that Dylan has in his head, not the precise form of words. In this particular respect Dylan seems to have more in common with soul singers than with pop singers. What this also means is that the words we have come to think of as perfected, encapsulated in these classic albums, could well have turned out somewhat differently if for some reason Dylan had had to go on and record another take or two.

The lyrical variations are so great in number that it would be absurd for me to try and detail them all, and in any case they are much better experienced through listening. Beyond the odd example, I shall only mention any that I find particularly entertaining or significant.

6. References to documentation

Columbia studios kept a number of different types of written record relating to their recording sessions. A good explanation can be found in the first of Michael Krogsgaard's articles on Dylan's recording sessions, published in Dylan fanzine *The Telegraph* back in 1995, and now available online³. The most important documents are what Krogsgaard referred to as the *recording sheets*. These listed every take contained on a tape reel, showing the song title, the take number, and whether the take was a short false start, a long false start (otherwise known as a breakdown) or a complete recording⁴. The recording sheets also gave each song's *CO number*, a number allocated by Columbia's producers to every song recorded at a studio session. Sometimes the same song was given more than one CO number, usually because it was a "remake", i.e. a song that had already been recorded at an earlier session and was now being tried again. Sometimes in this situation the previously allocated number was used again; practice was inconsistent. Generally, though, a succession of consecutive takes of the same song always had the same CO number. On "*The Cutting Edge*" you can hear several examples of Tom Wilson or Bob Johnston "slating" both the CO number and the song title at the start of a take. In this article the CO numbers will be shown after the song titles; this should make it easier for readers wanting to cross-refer to Michael Krogsgaard's listings or other sources of information about the recording sessions.

And now, on to the individual recordings.

January 13, 1965

At this first session Dylan chose to record either solo or with minimal backing – at least until the last couple of takes of the day. None of the tracks feature any drums or keyboard. Maybe the idea was to get some of the quieter songs properly recorded (hence the presence of 2nd guitar and bass on some cuts), but also to work out which songs would benefit from being remade with a larger scale studio band over the following two days.

Set No. 1
 Date 1-13-65
 Program Bob Dylan

Start No.	Start Time				
1	2:10	DIME STORE	1	2b	CO 85270
2	2:45	BANK ACC. BLUES	1		CO 85271
3	3:34	IT'S ALL OVER NOW BABY BLUE	1		CO 85272
4	5:45	BOB DYLAN'S 115TH DREAM	1	2b	CO 85273
5	2:55	WINGS - TOMMY MONAGHAN	1		CO 85274
6	3:00	SUBBLETY - MARY SUE BROWN '10	1		CO 85275
7	2:15	HAPPY BOB WILSON	1		CO 85276
8	2:00	GOT A MIKE FOR JOHN?	1		CO 85277
9	2:53	ALCATRAZ TO THE NINTH POWER	1		CO 85278
10	2:54	YOU GOTTA GO	1		CO 85279
		" " " ADD.	1		" "
	2:42	BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME	1		CO 85280

→ off Mike at beginning

LOVE MINUS ZERO/NO LIMIT (CO85270)

Take 1, Breakdown (Disc 1 Track 1, also on 6-CD set):

"We've got a good sound in here" says producer Tom Wilson, before slating "Dime Store, Take 1". Dylan launches into a beautiful rendition of the first verse of the song, with John Sebastian tentatively joining in on bass guitar. Dylan's guitar is slightly out of tune, but the way his voice surprises you by dropping down on the word "flowers", just that, reassures you that you probably didn't waste your money buying this absurdly comprehensive collection. A little way into the second verse Dylan forgets the words and the take breaks down. "Start it again," he says to Wilson. "I'll do this one more time; if I can't do it, we'll do another song."

Take 2, Complete (Disc 1 Track 2, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

Another take with just an electric bass keeping Dylan company. This time Dylan has his guitar in tune and they make it to the end, with Dylan varying the words a little: "My love she speaks like silence, *above* all ideals and violence". Dylan evidently still isn't entirely happy with it, perhaps because of the slightly distracting percussive noises coming from the bass; he returns to the tune later in the day, but for now he keeps his promise and moves on.

I'LL KEEP IT WITH MINE (CO85271)

Take 1 (Disc 1 Track 3, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

This wonderful solo piano version has been familiar to Dylan collectors since it was first bootlegged in 1970 on the "John Birch Society Blues" LP; in 1985 it got its deserved release on "Biograph" (though there the recording date was incorrectly given as January 14). A pre-release tape of material being considered for that collection included Wilson's mistaken slate for the song as "Alcatraz To The Ninth Power", which Dylan corrects, after some thought, to "Bank Account Blues". That preamble is included here on "The Cutting Edge", though the CO number is missed off, as is Dylan's preceding question "Got a mike for John?" (Presumably Dylan was referring to John Sebastian, though of course Sebastian's voice is not audible on "I'll Keep It With Mine", nor indeed on any song recorded at these sessions.) The tape rolls a little longer at the end here, until Dylan lifts his foot from the sustain pedal. "That's nutty, man", drawls Wilson.

IT'S ALL OVER NOW, BABY BLUE (CO85272)

Take 1 (Disc 1 Track 4, also on 6-CD set):

This is the solo acoustic version known to collectors since the excellent "Stealin'" bootleg first appeared in 1969. It was released on "Bootleg Series Vol. 7: No Direction Home", but this is a nicer mix, with less top-end gloss and a more natural guitar sound. It's not as long as the final "Bringing It All Back Home" album cut, on account of a shorter harmonica break before the final verse. Dylan's guitar is slightly out of tune.

BOB DYLAN'S 115TH DREAM (CO85273)

Take 1, Fragment (Disc 1 Track 5, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

This is the solo breakdown that Dylan chose to include at the start of the song on "Bringing It All Back Home", with Dylan and Tom Wilson (mainly the latter) both cracking up with laughter before Wilson announces, "Take 2". On the album, of course, it was tacked onto the start of the full-band final take of the song from the following day's session, making it seem as though the mirth was caused by the band's failure to join in. Here on "The Cutting Edge", it becomes clear that the "Take 2" which Wilson calls is actually another solo acoustic performance from January 13, so the real reason for the laughter remains a mystery.



Take 2, Complete (Disc 1 Track 6, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

This is pretty much as you'd expect, in essence the song you know from the album but without the backing band. Dylan's shaggy dog story was evidently fully written before the sessions started. He makes one or two vocal slips and slight changes to individual phrases, and also throws in the occasional short harmonica break; but the tempo and tenor of the song are just the same as on the album. On the recording sheet this was first shown as "B. Dylan's Later Dream", but the word "Later" was then crossed out and "115" written above.

SHE BELONGS TO ME (CO85274)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 7, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

A simple solo acoustic run-through, sounding almost more like an outtake from "Another Side" than from "Bringing It All Back Home". The lyrics are not yet fully worked out: instead of "She never stumbles, she got no place to fall" we have the more repetitive "She's got no place to stumble, she got no place to fall"; and in the last verse, instead of the familiar "Bow down to her on Sunday, salute her when her birthday comes", we get the less logical but possibly more interesting (and certainly more alliterative) "Salute her on Sunday, bow down when her birthday comes". Dylan will return to this song later in the day; for now, it is logged on the recording sheet as "Worse Than Money".

SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES (CO85275)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 8, also on 6-CD set):

This solo rendition, logged on the recording sheet as "Subterranean Homesick Blues #10", is familiar from "The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3". Here it lacks Tom Wilson's request for "Quiet on the set" and his slating announcement; but to make up for that we get an extra twenty seconds or more of guitar and harmonica at the end, with no fade.

OUTLAW BLUES (CO85276)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 9, also on 6-CD set):

Although not identified on "The Cutting Edge" as having been previously released, this terrific Delta-blues-style solo version has long been available in an iTunes download EP, "Exclusive Outtakes From No Direction Home: The Soundtrack". It has an alternative verse that's worthy of Robert Johnson:

*Well I paid fifteen cents, I did not care if I was right or wrong
I paid fifteen cents, I didn't care if I was right or wrong
Then I saddled up a nightmare and I rode her all night long*

This take was listed on the tape box as "Barb Wire (Sittin On a Barbed Wire Fence)", a title resurrected by Dylan a few months later for a rather different song.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN (CO85277)

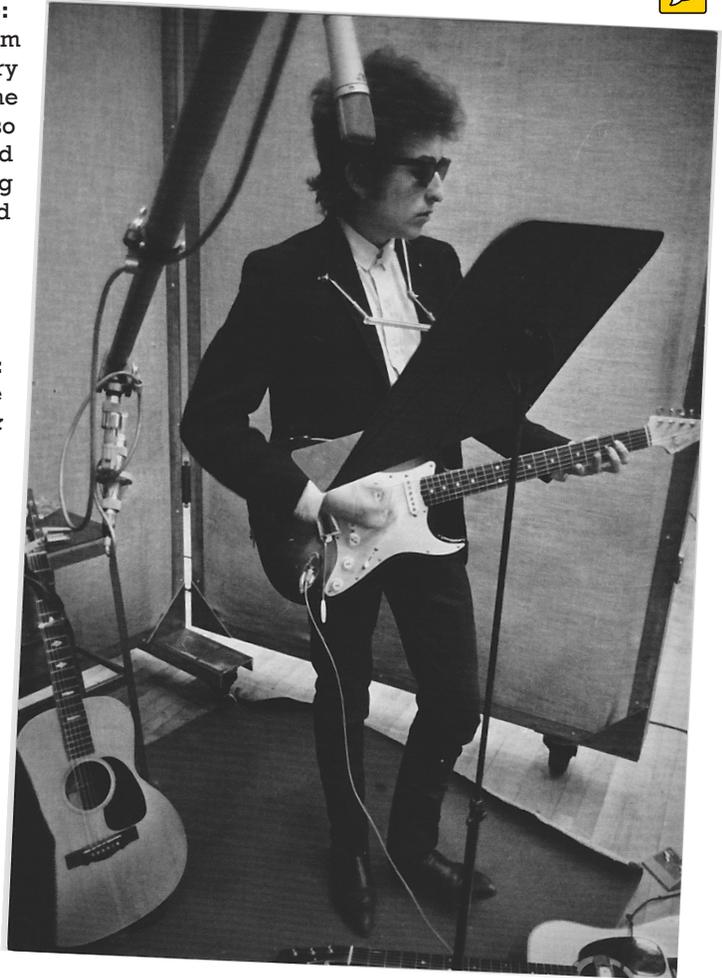
Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 10, also on 6-CD set):

A breakneck speed run-through, with the sort of 12-bar blues piano (and stomping foot) accompaniment that Dylan could probably play in his sleep, much along the lines of 'New Orleans Rag', 'Denise' or 'California' only faster. "The room is so cold, I got to wear my hat", sings Dylan in the second verse; but otherwise the words are pretty much fully worked out. He moves on to the next song on his list with a marked drop in tempo

FAREWELL ANGELINA (CO85278)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 11, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

Dylan's only recording of this lovely song, first released on "The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3" back in 1991. It was shown on the recording sheet as "Alcatraz To The 5th Power". Dylan drops his pick just before the last verse and finishes it strumming with his fingers; this alone would have ruled out the inclusion of this particular take on "Bringing It All Back Home", but it's surprising that Dylan didn't return to it during either of the next two days' recording. Perhaps he already had enough long, acoustically-oriented songs for the album, or perhaps he was already minded to give the song to Joan Baez. For her recording, made later in 1965, Baez dropped the "camouflage parrot" verse that Dylan sings here; she also developed the melody and the harmonic structure into a more polished composition.



IFYOU GOTTA GO, GO NOW (CO85279)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 12, also on 6-CD set):

Dylan had already been performing this song in concert for many months, playing it for laughs; in contrast, this acoustic studio run-through seems rather peremptory, lacking the comic edge that Dylan gave it for live audiences. And the ending is sloppy – clearly this take wasn't intended as a keeper. The recording sheet shows a take following this, listed as "You Gotta Go ADD"; presumably "ADD" means Addition, but there is no sign or mention of this extra take in "*The Cutting Edge*"; it is most likely a confusion with the brief track that follows.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT (no CO number)

Take 1, Incomplete (Disc 1 Track 13, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

Pretty much a throw-away, this single-verse number appears to have been mis-identified in the studio documentation as some sort of supplement to "*If You Gotta Go, Go Now*" (see above), but it is clearly nothing to do with that previous song. It appeared on bootlegs in the early 1990s; possibly it was considered for "*The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3*". The bootlegged tape includes Tom Wilson's slate: "85280, get the name later", and Dylan's response: "No, no, I'm not gonna do it". "*The Cutting Edge*" then picks up from there, with Dylan continuing "I'm just gonna do . . ." and starting to strum the opening chord in that fragmentary song. "No, I'm gonna play on the piano", Dylan says after he finishes, but by the time he gets there, he's moved onto the real CO85280, which is '*California*'.

CALIFORNIA (CO85280)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 1 Track 14, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

Bizarrely listed on the tape box as "Bending Down On My Stomick Lookin West" (did Dylan dictate that spelling??), this 12-bar piano blues has been a Dylan collector's staple since it appeared on early bootleg LPs. Ever since the inclusion of its lyrics in *Writings And Drawings* (1973) it has been given the subtitle "early version of 'Outlaw Blues'"; but it's clearly not really that, as Dylan had already recorded his first take of that song. However, the verse that begins "I got my dark sunglasses" did get picked up later in the day and plugged into the first remakes of '*Outlaw Blues*', and then the verse stayed in that song while '*California*' was discarded. Although not declared on "*The Cutting Edge*" as previously released, this performance was used in an episode of the TV Series *NCIS* and was the opening track of "*NCIS: The Official TV Soundtrack, Vol. 2*" (2009); there it had a little more reverb than is present on "*The Cutting Edge*", and a more satisfying treble edge on the piano.

LOVE MINUS ZERO/NO LIMIT (CO85270)

Take 3 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 15, also on 6-CD set):

Another long-time collector's favourite, which first came to light on the 1969 "*Stealin*" bootleg. Dylan is accompanied by Bruce Langhorne on electric guitar and John Sebastian on bass guitar.

SHE BELONGS TO ME (CO85274)

Take 2 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 16, also on 6-CD set):

Langhorne accompanies Dylan again on this first remake; the bass sounds like an upright rather than a bass guitar, so it's probably played by Bill Lee rather than John Sebastian. This is another of the "*Bringing It All Back Home*" outtakes that graced the old "*Stealin*" bootleg, though there the instrumental ending was cut short by about 15 seconds – and the track was in mono, of course. The full-length cut first saw the light of day on "*The Bootleg Series Vol. 7: No Direction Home*"; the mix there gave greater separation and made Langhorne's fabulous guitar adornments more audible than they are in "*The Cutting Edge*" mix.

OUTLAW BLUES (CO85281)

Take 1 Remake, False Start (Disc 1 Track 17):

For his second attempt at this song, Dylan has clearly switched into a different gear, maybe by way of preparing for the next day's sessions. Actually, to call this a take is overstating things – it's more of a plugging in; and it was something of a revelation to find that any of the recordings made on this first day had seriously amplified accompaniment. The first thing we hear is a snatch of Dylan's Strat, then Tom Wilson asks, "What's the name of it?" But Dylan's having fun with his whammy bar, raising some laughter in the studio. Wilson tries again: "What's the name, Bob?" But Dylan's non-answer tails off as he picks out a chord while Al Gorgoni tests his electric guitar for pitch, and John Sebastian his harmonica. "Is it a remake, or the same thing we've been doing?" persists Wilson, but Dylan's only answer is to start cranking out an electric blues riff on the Strat. Wilson gives up trying to get any information out of him: "OK, stand by" – then, muttering to himself, "I'll give it a new number anyhow". And then the tape cuts. This sort of thing may amount to nothing as a musical performance, but in the way it conveys the flavour of the sessions it more than justifies the existence of this 18-CD edition.

Take 2 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 18, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

Dylan, Gorgoni and Sebastian, with the addition of Joseph Macho Jr. (a.k.a. Joe Mack) on bass, scratch out a raw, ragged version of the song that was really far less deserving of a place on the 2-CD "*Best of the Cutting Edge*" than the solo version recorded earlier in the day. Another unfamiliar verse appears, this time rather less memorable:

*Now if you're ever in Augusta, please say hello to Lucy May
If you're ever in Augusta, please look up Lucy May
I don't know her too good, but say hello to her for me anyway*

And the “fifteen cents” verse from the earlier acoustic take is replaced with the “dark sunglasses” verse from ‘California’. These two cuts from the end of the day were listed on various studio documents as “Tune X”, ‘Key To The Highway’ (yes!) and (for the first time) ‘Outlaw Blues’.

January 14, 1965

The next day’s session has Dylan re-recording six of the songs he put down in basic form the previous day, this time with a full studio band.

1/14/65
Bob Dylan

Start Time	SELL	SPC					
			June 3) Mini store (Remake)	1	(C)	CO5270	✓ 2:55
			Insert 1	1	(C)		✓
			Subterranean Homesick Blues (Remake)	1	2	6	85275
				(3)			✓ 2:25
			Outlaw Blues	1	2	6	85282
				(3)			✓ 3:10
			Overdub 1	1	(C)		✓ 3:10
			Try Girl (MONTAGNA)	1	(C)	85283	✓ 2:48
			Bob Dylan 115 th Dream	1	(C)	85284	✓ 6:10
			on the road again	1	2	3	85285
				3	4	6	" 2:54

LOVE MINUS ZERO/NO LIMIT (CO5270)

Take 1, Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 19, also on 6-CD set):

Remarkably close to the final released version, this is allowed to play through to a slightly tatty ending; if Dylan had stuck with this version it would no doubt have been faded out like the LP cut. Bobby Gregg is on drums, probably Bill Lee on bass, Bruce Langhorne on lead guitar and Paul Griffin on electric piano. “The Cutting Edge” book also credits Al Gorgoni and Kenny Rankin with playing guitars on this and the following two takes, but I certainly can’t hear them.

Take 2 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 20, released on Bringing It All Back Home):

This time Dylan throws in the familiar short harmonica break before the last verse, making the track a little longer than the previous take. In this mix the play-out runs on longer than the released version, with Dylan playing a couple of guitar chords that are at odds with the rest of the band, and then blowing a little tentative harmonica as the track fades. This is the first recording from the sessions to have been selected for release on “Bringing It All Back Home”, and it immediately illustrates the more intimate mixing style employed for “The Cutting Edge”. It’s worth taking the time to do a cross-check with any of the stereo releases of the original album, but the difference is probably most marked in comparison with the current CD issue, as remixed by Michael Brauer in 2003.

Insert (Disc 1 Track 21):

Dylan is evidently largely happy with Take 2, but wants to record a better harmonica solo for the fade-out, holding his harp in both hands blues-style rather than in his customary round-the-neck holder. After much drily humorous banter between Wilson and the musicians the 30-second solo is duly recorded, and it sounds fine; Dylan’s playing is nicely in keeping with the song’s warmth and equanimity. But it was never used; instead the original track was faded out soon after the end of the last verse.

SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES (CO5275)

Take 1 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 22, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

The sound of the released track is basically there, so there must have been some rehearsal before the tape started rolling. Dylan trips over the words here and there, and in a couple of places the chord changes get out of step with the vocal. This one clearly isn’t done yet.

Take 2 Remake, False Start (Disc 1 Track 23):

This next attempt surprisingly starts with a sustained bendy note from the fuzz-tone guitar; Dylan joins in on acoustic, but Bobby Gregg’s entrance on the drums is all over the place. Wilson whistles through the intercom to call it to a halt, saying “Hold it, let’s keep that intro right”. “What is the intro?” asks Dylan; “You got me” replies Wilson helpfully, so Dylan sorts it out for himself.

Take 3 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 24, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

Here's the track that Dylan chose to announce his conversion to electricity, by making it both his new single and the opening track on his new album; and it's sounding pretty good here, with the instruments more tightly packed than on any of the stereo album mixes. At the end the tape is allowed to run on for quite a few seconds more than on the original single – or any of the album releases – but it's nonetheless faded out before the musicians come to whatever halt they reached.

OUTLAW BLUES (CO85282)

Take 1 Remake, False Start (Disc 1 Track 25):

Dylan and the musicians have clearly worked up a new full-band arrangement, which is essentially as we know it from "*Bringing It All Back Home*". Wilson whistles the first take to a stop after twenty seconds – something isn't to his liking, though it's not clear what.

Take 2 Remake, False Start/Breakdown (Disc 1 Track 26):

On the second attempt they get practically through the first verse but the band hasn't worked out how to come back in after they pause on the last line of each verse; so it falls apart.

Take 3 Remake, Complete (Disc 1 Track 27, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

Aside from the different mixing/mastering style and an extra ten seconds or so of instrumental fade-out, this is the album cut we know. The track has a hand-held harmonica playing throughout – even while Dylan is singing – which in the past seemed something of a mystery: was it perhaps John Sebastian, who was present at the sessions and known as a harp player? Michael Krogsgaard's 1995 article about the recording sessions³ showed that after this complete Take 3 there was in fact an overdub take, which *could* have been used for Dylan to overdub the harmonica; but it could equally well have been for some other purpose, so the matter did not seem finally settled. But now on "*The Cutting Edge Collector's Edition*" we hear Dylan say, just before the *previous* take, "When we get done, I'm going to dub in the harmonica"; so it looks very likely indeed that the Take 3 Remake was in fact recorded without harmonica, and then Dylan dubbed it on immediately afterwards. However, "*The Cutting Edge*" only gives us the final overdubbed version, and the documentation makes no mention of the overdub take; nor do the musician credits for this track say who is playing the harmonica.

SHE BELONGS TO ME (CO85283)

Take 1 Remake, Complete (Disc 2 Track 1, also on 6-CD set):

By now, Tom Wilson is slating this song as "My Girl"; the arrangement, with just drums, Bill Lee's stand-up bass and Langhorne's second guitar, is essentially as we know it from "*Bringing It All Back Home*", though Dylan lets Langhorne take the instrumental break alone, without adding his own harmonica. It's a good take, but at the end of the last verse they come to a swift and untidy stop, clearly unplanned.

Take 2 Remake, Complete (Disc 2 Track 2, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

This is the perfect master take, faded out to almost exactly the same length as on the released album.

BOB DYLAN'S 115TH DREAM (CO85284)

Take 1, False Start (Disc 2 Track 3):

This is the false start that *really* preceded the final album take, but shorter than one from the previous day that did make the album, and much less entertaining. Dylan starts singing even before starting to play his own guitar, and the other musicians don't know where to come in. The take is barely three seconds old when Tom Wilson calls it to a halt.

Take 2, Complete (Disc 2 Track 4, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

As per the album cut, but of course without the false start. The narrower mix sounds much better to my ears than the wide stereo mixes we've always been accustomed to – more solid and focussed like the original mono, but with the auditory depth and realism that mono can't deliver.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN (CO85285)

Take 1, False Start (Disc 2 Track 5):

Dylan winds up this second session with four shots at a full-band arrangement of this song. "What's the name of this, Bob?" asks Wilson; "Ah ... I... I dunno, I gave it a name yesterday" replies Dylan, to laughter from the musicians, before he remembers: '*On The Road Again*'. For some reason this isn't slated as a remake, but that's clearly what it is. Dylan pounds a riff on the piano, but this first take doesn't even make it as far as the vocal before Wilson's whistle is heard.

Take 2, Complete (Disc 2 Track 6):

On the second attempt Dylan slightly fluffs his opening words ("Well I go up in the morning..."), but they keep going, and this take is complete. The band picks up Dylan's piano riff and turns it into a sort of squared-off rumba, very different from the final album version recorded the next day.

Take 3, False Start (Disc 2 Track 7):

The third take is a brief mess, with Paul Griffin on the electric piano throwing in way too many glissandos, and it falls apart again before the first verse starts.

Take 4, Complete (Disc 2 Track 8, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

This last try of the day has a pretty confused rhythmic identity, but makes it through to its faded-out ending. Of the two complete takes, I prefer the first for its funkier feel; but it's Take 4 that got chosen for the 6-CD and 2-CD sets, probably because the vocal is slightly cleaner.

And so ends the second day's recording . . . probably. Michael Krogsgaard's researches in the Columbia archives³ found some indications that there was a further session on the evening of the 14th involving Dylan and Langhorne along with the addition of John Sebastian, John Boone and John Hammond Jr. However, no tapes seem ever to have been found (there are certainly none represented on "The Cutting Edge"); and the surprisingly detailed track-by-track musician credits in the big box set indicate that the three additional 'evening' musicians mentioned by Krogsgaard did in fact play a part in the *daytime* sessions – which could of course have run on into the evening. So it seems that this now legendary evening session is most likely a figment arising from the notoriously confusing (and sometimes contradictory) studio documentation. John Boone, incidentally, was almost certainly Steve Boone, bassist in The Lovin' Spoonful, who has recalled playing at the "Bringing It All Back Home" sessions (but with no exact memory of which songs he played on); his full name is John Stephen Boone, but he has always preferred to be known as Steve.

January 15, 1965

The third day's session saw Dylan recording four songs that he hadn't even attempted on the first day, and revisiting three others. Over half of the finished album comes from this 3½ hour stint: all of the second side plus a couple of songs on the first.

1/15/65
 Robert Dylan

Part	SE	No.	P. S.	No.		
Maggie's Farm		1		CO 85286	✓	4:00
On The Road Again		2	6	85285		
		3	6			
		5	6			
		7	6			
		9	6			
		12	6		✓	7:40
St. Augustine Man		1	6	85287	✓	7:30
Gates of Eden		1		85288	✓	6:45
The Tambourine Man		1	6	85289		
		3	8			

Part	SE	No.	P. S.	No.		
The Tambourine Man		4	6	CO 85289		
		6			✓	5:50
St. Augustine Man (Remake)		1		85290	✓	4:10
You Gotta Be		1	2	85291		
		3	4			

MAGGIE'S FARM (CO85286)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 2 Track 9, released on Bringing It All Back Home):

We have to assume that there was some prior rehearsal of this song that went unrecorded, but a single recorded take was all it took to get the final album cut. The different mix makes one of the electric guitars (played by either Al Gorgoni or Kenny Rankin) stand out in an unfamiliar way, and the fade is slightly longer than on the now-standard 2003 issue of the album.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN (again!)(CO85285)

Dylan had already attempted this song on both of the first two days' sessions, and had one solo and two complete full-band takes in the bag. The words were pretty much fixed, but he clearly wanted to improve on the very busy, clattery band arrangement.

Take 1 Remake, Complete (Disc 2 Track 10, also on 6-CD set):

The first remake take has Dylan still at the piano, thumping a very four-square rhythm, though after the introduction this is well down in the mix. The less rattly drumming is a definite improvement, allowing Paul Griffin's electric piano to come across more clearly.

Takes 2 - 6 Remake, False Starts/Complete (Disc 2 Track 11):

At this point, Dylan evidently decides he's going to leave the piano; after a couple of bluesy phrases on the harmonica he announces, "I'll just play a little bit on the harmonica and then you come in..." No-one is credited with harmonica on the remaining takes, but it must be Dylan. It sounds as though he's playing it hand-held rather than in his shoulder rack, so he's probably not playing any other instrument on the remaining attempts at this song. Takes 2 to 5 are barely more than missed cues. Take 6 is actually a breakdown despite what the notes in the book suggest; at the beginning of the last verse Dylan throws in an extra half-bar of harmonica and consequently comes in late with his vocal, putting him out of step with the chord structure that the other musicians are following. After it falls apart, Dylan plaintively asks, "Can you hear me singing? ... Can you hear me singing?" The arrangement is clearly progressing, but still has that *thump-thump-thump-thump* rhythm that seems too heavy-handed for the subject matter.

Take 7 Remake, Complete (Disc 2 Track 12, also on 6-CD set):

This take keeps the same arrangement but makes it through to the end without any goofs.

Takes 8 - 9 Remake, False Starts (Disc 2 Track 13):

There's evidently been some discussion before the remaining takes, because the rhythm has changed to the much lighter *da-da-dah-da, da-da-dah-da* pattern that we know well from the master take. Take 8 hardly gets started; Take 9 does, but Dylan puts in a half-bar lag in before the second vocal line, and the musicians fail to adjust: "Can you hear me?" Dylan asks again after it breaks down.

Take 11 Remake, False Start (Disc 2 Track 14):

Take 10 is missing from the studio records, and absent here; this probably just reflects a hiccup in the numbering rather than a lost take. Number 11 gets through the first verse, but then Tom Wilson calls a halt: "That tempo's too fast to squeeze in those words, Bobby". "Hey man, c'mon!" replies a peeved Bobby, "We were gonna do it!" Wilson: "You oughta do it right... so if you wanna do it that way, go ahead."

Take 12 Remake, False Start (Disc 2 Track 14):

This take fades in with Dylan saying "... the way we're gonna do it" and sets off at exactly the same tempo; but Paul Griffin goes haywire on the electric piano and it grinds to a rapid halt.

Take 13 Remake, Complete (Disc 2 Track 15, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

Take thirteen finally nails it, at the same tempo again; the fade is slightly longer than we're used to from "*Bringing It All Back Home*".

So, that's a total of seventeen takes over three days to finish what is a pretty lightweight comedy song. Perhaps conscious of this, Dylan now moves on and captures two major songs very swiftly, playing them alone. He could just about have done them while the musicians were having a tea-break.

IT'S ALRIGHT, MA (I'M ONLY BLEEDING) (CO85287)

Take 1, False Start (Disc 2 Track 17, also on 6-CD set):

Tom Wilson starts to slate "Gates of Eden", but Dylan breaks in, "No... I wanna do this other one first". He gets through the first section of the first verse but is maybe a little too close to the microphone, as Wilson breaks in: "Bob, can you back up just a little...?" Dylan is clearly irritated by the interruption: "I really don't feel like doing this song, and I have to do it, though... it's such a *long* song". "Suit yourself, I'm with you", replies Wilson, who appears also to be having a side conversation with someone else in the control room.

Take 2, Complete (Disc 2 Track 18, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

Despite Wilson's double-edged retort Dylan persists and delivers the tour de force we know from "*Bringing It All Back Home*". At the beginning of the fourth verse he makes a slip, starting to sing the word "respect" instead of "obey", so that we get "For them that must resp-obey authority that they do not respect in any degree". Fortunately the offending half-word was just one beat long, so it was simply **edited out** without the rhythmic flow being disturbed. If you go back to the released version and listen very closely you can hear that the transition from "must" into "obey" isn't pronounced *quite* naturally; but hey, nobody noticed it in 50 years. You'll more readily appreciate the difference that post-production can make: on the original stereo LP and on Michael Brauer's 2003 remix (though not on the intervening 1987 CD mix) the guitar has masses of reverb added; the song gains much more presence and impact, especially on the guitar riffs.

GATES OF EDEN (CO85288)

Take 1, Complete (Disc 2 Track 19, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

As with the previous tune, Dylan had been playing this song live for a while so as a solo recording it was never going to take long to get right; and in the event a single take is all it took. The guitar on this track has always sounded different, with much less top end than on the other acoustic numbers on Side 2 of the album, and that difference is now apparent even in the raw state of the recordings presented on "*The Cutting Edge*". It's as though maybe Dylan's guitar microphone was turned off and both vocal and guitar were recorded on a single microphone.

MR. TAMBOURINE MAN (CO85289)

Given that this song had been written at least eight months previously and already recorded (unsuccessfully) for "*Another Side of Bob Dylan*", the only question can have been how to re-record it: as an acoustic or an electric number. Fifty years on,



the surprise is that the latter was the first choice. Perhaps this was Tom Wilson's preference more than Dylan's; either way it was a bad call, but it gives us an interesting experience and reason to be doubly thankful for the final version.

Takes 1-2, False Starts (Disc 2 Track 20, also on 6-CD set):

Take 1 is taken up with Dylan tuning up and expressing annoyance at Wilson's failure to notice that he wasn't ready to start recording. "If you'd *look* at me, Tom... you'd see when I wave my hands, y'know".

Take 3, Breakdown (Disc 2 Track 21, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

The second take gets going, with Langhorne playing the same magical guitar lines as he does on the album cut; there's no bass guitar, but Bobby Gregg is playing a great galumphing beat on his drum kit – with added tambourine (of course). They get through the opening chorus and just into the first verse, but Dylan's heard enough. "Hey, me and Bruce'll just play it, okay?" he says; "It's very loud in one ear... it's kinda pulling me a little bit, y'know." We're not party to all of the discussion that follows, but Dylan was evidently persuaded to give it another shot, with exactly the same arrangement and sound. Take 3 gets to the third chorus, but the tambourine gets a little out of time with everything else, and Dylan loses it: "No! I can't, uh... hey, the drumming's driving me mad – I'm going out of my *brain!*"

Takes 4-5, Breakdown (Disc 2 Track 22):

And so Dylan does it the way he knew it should be done, just him and Bruce. Take 4 has Dylan playing a bar or so on guitar before deciding to start again; on Take 5 he opens with a few bars of harmonica on top of his guitar, but folds part-way into the first vocal line.

Take 6, Complete (Disc 2 Track 23, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

Finally they deliver the master version that we know. This mix has Langhorne's guitar sounding rather distant, but for once the track is allowed to run right to the end, with an extra 25 seconds of increasingly extravagant harmonica, then a guitar flourish from Dylan to end it.

IT'S ALL OVER NOW, BABY BLUE (CO85290)

Take 1 Remake, Complete (Disc 2 Track 24, released on *Bringing It All Back Home*):

Dylan sticks to the winning formula, though Langhorne's guitar – presumably for the sake of variety – is played in a lower register, sounding almost like an electric bass played higher up in its range. They record the released album cut in a single take.

IF YOU GOTTA GO, GO NOW (CO85291)

Four complete takes recorded straight off – and none of them made the "*Bringing It All Back Home*" album. It's interesting that this song was recorded at the end of the last day, after Dylan had been focussing on the largely acoustic songs that made up Side 2 of the finished album; perhaps he was thinking about this particular song as a next single rather than as an album track. Thanks to "*The Cutting Edge*" we now know who the second voice on the choruses was: Angeline Butler, the female voice of The Pilgrims, a vocal trio Wilson had put together as a sort of black equivalent of Peter, Paul and Mary⁵. Dylan had apparently known her since his Greenwich Village coffeehouse days. The way she tells the story in "*The Cutting Edge*" book, she just happened to have dropped by the studio, got chatting, and Dylan suggested she sing with him on this track. The book includes a great Daniel Kramer photo of her sharing a studio microphone with Dylan; why Kramer has never released this photo before nor mentioned her presence in his own photo-book⁶ is perplexing, as is the fact that her contribution was apparently not documented alongside the other musicians in the studio logs.

Take 1 Complete (Disc 3 Track 1):

Dylan opens this take strumming his acoustic guitar in just the way he'd done on the solo take recorded two days earlier; then the drums come in, and then the rest of the band along with Dylan's vocal. It's a nice run-through, clearly well-rehearsed beforehand, with a good vocal. On this take the only harmonica playing is over the lengthy play-out at the end.

Take 2 Complete (Disc 3 Track 2, also on 6-CD and 2-CD sets):

Take 2 has a slightly punchier opening: no acoustic guitar intro, just straight in with the drums. But the vocal is less tidy, and the electric piano a little irritating, at least in this mix. Dylan plays a bit of harmonica before the final verse as well as over the play-out.

Take 3 Complete (Disc 3 Track 3):

"Can we have one more?" asks Tom Wilson before the third take. Someone in the control room (an engineer?) then prompts Wilson to ask Dylan to change his position at the microphone, presumably to make more room for Angelina Butler; so Wilson continues, "Come round a little more on the mike, Bobby ... there you go. Get right in there, Angela, when your time comes." By now Dylan has abandoned his acoustic guitar in order to use both hands on his harp, which he now plays before and after every verse, getting some sounds that he couldn't have achieved with the harmonica round his neck. One of the electric guitar players starts to improvise a bit more at the end of each verse when Dylan sings "Or else you gotta stay all night", and the vocal is better than on the previous take.

Take 4 Complete (Disc 3 Track 4):

This final take was originally considered for inclusion in "*Biograph*", a rough mix appearing on a circulating pre-release tape in 1984. Seven years later it made it onto "*The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3*", properly mixed though without the slated take number and count-in heard on the "*Biograph*" pre-release tape. These are also omitted here on "*The Cutting Edge*". The mix is rather narrower than on "*The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3*", but the ending is faded to pretty much exactly the same length. Personally, I've always found this a rather ugly-sounding take, over-dominated by Dylan's none-too-special harp playing.

The “If You Gotta Go, Go Now” Benelux single:
 Now, as anyone who’s fan enough to buy the *Collector’s Edition* will surely be aware, ‘If You Gotta Go, Go Now’ was actually released as a CBS single in Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg in 1967, remaining available for at least a year, and most Dylan collectors will have heard this on tape or on a bootleg even if they don’t have a copy of the original vinyl. This single has never been included in any subsequent official Dylan collection, and there is no acknowledgment of its existence in “*The Cutting Edge’s*” documentation. So which take was it? The answer is that it was essentially the generally excellent Take 1, but with the following edits:



1. The introduction, up to Dylan’s vocal entry, was stripped off and the intro from Take 2 spliced on in its place;
2. Two bars of instrumental playing were trimmed out between the first and second verses;
3. The ending was faded to a reasonable length for a single, about 20 seconds less than on the raw Take 1 as it is presented on “*The Cutting Edge*”.

It’s not too difficult to reproduce these three edits using digital editing software, though the joins tend to be slightly more detectable in stereo than on the single’s mono mix.

Start No.	Start Time	SELECTION TITLE SPOT DATA	Take No.	F. S.	Master No.	OK	REMARKS
1		You Gotta Go (Comp 1)	1/2		Co 85291		Used 1st version Bob 4993 for 9/15.
2			3/4				Cut to Bob 4993
1		You Gotta Go (Comp 2)	1/2		Co 85291	✓	
2							
3							

The “If You Gotta Go, Go Now” overdub session:

But that’s still not the whole story. The early vinyl bootleg “*Stealin*” contained what initially sounded like the Dutch single, but on closer listening was a different mix, with the backing vocal (and also the electric piano) much less prominent. Hold that thought for a moment, and fast forward to 1995. Michael Krogsgaard’s researches³ revealed that on May 21 1965, while Dylan was still in Europe, there was an overdub session for ‘If You Gotta Go, Go Now’; the product was five completed takes of ‘If You Gotta Go, Go Now’ (Composite 1)⁷, followed by two complete takes of Composite 2; none of these takes are present or even mentioned in “*The Cutting Edge*”. Krogsgaard was unable to find any details of the musicians involved in the overdubs, but listening to the Dutch single in comparison with the bootlegged mix (and indeed now in comparison with Take 1 on “*The Cutting Edge*”), it’s clear that a further vocal line was dubbed onto the choruses. It’s particularly evident on the first “got to go” of each chorus; evidently Angeline Butler had been a little reticent about getting in there at the microphone with Dylan, and understandably so. Of course, there’s nothing to confirm that it was Angeline who added the overdubbed vocals, but it certainly sounds like the same voice as on the original January recordings, only louder⁸.

So it seems fairly clear that ‘If You Gotta Go, Go Now’ was for a while intended to be Dylan’s next single release, though perhaps this was more Tom Wilson’s or Albert Grossman’s idea than Dylan’s. In any event, by the time Dylan was back from England he was busy working up ‘*Like a Rolling Stone*’ and heading towards the more serious attitude of “*Highway 61 Revisited*”. ‘If You Gotta Go, Go Now’, which Dylan had recorded five months previously (and had been playing live for months before that), would have seemed very old-hat and lightweight in comparison. Possibly the cancellation of Dylan’s release of this song opened the door for Manfred Mann, who recorded their hit version a month or so later.

Next time: the sessions for “*Highway 61 Revisited*”.

My thanks to Ian Woodward and Bob Stacy for their help in putting this article together.

Notes:

1 In its copyright extension role, **"The Cutting Edge"** only covers Dylan's studio recordings for 1965 and 1966. Sony has now covered the 1965 live recordings (at least, the ones they currently have access to) by making them available to purchasers of the *Collector's Edition* as a free download. As for the 1966 live recordings, we'll find out later this year in what form they will appear.

2 Ian Woodward, *Tracking Dylan: 3* (ISIS #120, 2005) and *Re-tracking Dylan: 2* (ISIS #136, 2008)

3 Michael Krogsgaard, *Bob Dylan: The Recording Sessions, Part One* (The Telegraph #52, Summer 1995). Now accessible at <http://www.punkhart.com/dylan/sessions-1.html>

4 You'll see a few of these recording sheets (headed "Tape Identification Data") reproduced in the book that holds the CDs in **"The Cutting Edge"**. A section of the first recording sheet for the **"Bringing It All Back Home"** sessions is printed just inside the booklet for **"The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3"** (though on that particular copy there are annotations which were added at a later date using a heavier black pen); and there are also some examples in the booklet for **"The Bootleg Series Vol. 7: No Direction Home"**.

5 Check out The Pilgrims' album **"Just Arrived!"**, which can be sampled on iTunes and probably elsewhere. It happens to include their version of Ian Tyson's **'Four Strong Winds'**, later recorded by Dylan at **"The Basement Tapes"** sessions.

6 Daniel Kramer, *Bob Dylan* (Citadel Press, NY, 1967). This book included Kramer's written account of the **"Bringing It All Back Home"** sessions as well as many photos from the recording studio.

7 A composite, as you'd probably guess, is a track made by splicing together bits of other tracks. Take 5 of **'If You Gotta Go, Go Now'** Composite 1 is marked on the recording sheet as the selected take, presumably for release as a single. Michael Krogsgaard suggested that Take 2 of Composite 2 (also marked "OK" on the sheet) was released on **"The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3"**; but now we are able to hear all four original takes of the song from January 15, 1965 it is clear that **"The Bootleg Series Vols. 1-3"** version is just a different mix of Take 4, with no splicing in of material from any other take, and with no overdubbed backing vocal. So the second composite appears to remain unheard.

8 Reports of Dylan's May 12, 1965 session at Levy's recording studio in London (see Note 2 above) strongly suggest that a black American girl vocal trio called The Poppies were present at that session, and it's just possible that Dylan thought of re-recording **'If You Gotta Go, Go Now'** with them for a single release. The widely-bootlegged single-verse version of the song recorded at this session, though, clearly lacks any vocal backing, and appears to have been recorded purely to accompany a spoken message for a Columbia Records sales convention in Miami. Probably because of this loose connection it has often been claimed that it was The Poppies who recorded the additional backing vocals on the 1967 Dutch single of the same song, but there is no evidence at all that they were involved in the May 21 overdub session in New York which produced that single.



Photographer Daniel Kramer with his image of the *Bringing It All Back Home* album cover