



Chimes of Freedom

Mike Marqusee

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A celebration of the great songsmith's political engagement.

"Keep a good head and carry a light bulb."—Bob Dylan's response to the question "What is your advice for young people?", London 1962.

Bob Dylan's lyrics are at once abstruse and evocative, urgent and timeless. But, as Mike Marqusee's compelling new book makes clear, behind the anarchy and playfulness of Dylan's imagery lie meanings that are often highly charged with political and social concerns.

It was blues and folk songs that first led Bob Dylan to politics. But it was politics that unlocked his own astonishing songwriting ability, evidenced by dazzling responses in the early 1960s to the civil rights movement and the threat of nuclear war. Marqusee traces the young song-writer's subsequent reluctance to be pigeonholed, his rejection of "protest," and his turn to electric rock at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. He shows the way folk tradition, modernism, and commercial popular culture are sublimely fused in Dylan's masterworks of the mid-1960s, notably on the albums *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*, and discusses the artist's quest for American identity—amid the continuing carnage in Vietnam and growing chaos at home—in *The Basement Tapes*.

Following his acclaimed study of Muhammad Ali, *Redemption Song*, Mike Marqusee again demonstrates an engaging ability to fuse biography and politics, storytelling and original insight.

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