

Generations

President Barack Obama presents rock legend Bob Dylan the Medal of Freedom on May 29, 2012, during a ceremony at the White House in Washington. Dylan won the 2016 Nobel Prize in literature, announced Thursday.



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Dylan's words will last forever

In 2005, I wrote a column for The News Herald regarding a "60 Minutes" program in which Bob Dylan was being interviewed by Ed Bradley.

As one of the few living legends in the arts remaining, this was



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Dylan's first interview in nearly 20 years and a time for reflection by the troubadour on his 43-year-old career.

And now, a decade later in Stockholm, on Dec. 10, Dylan will have earned the ultimate prize for "having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition" that will live on for generations to come. He's won the 2016 Nobel Prize in literature and, for the first time, the prestigious award has been bestowed on a musician. And he's one of our sons!

Reporters and others gathered at the Swedish Academy's headquarters in Stockholm's Old Town reacted with a loud cheer as his name was read out. Dylan, 75, is arguably the most iconic poet-musician of his generation. Songs such as "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are A-Changin'" became anthems for the U.S. anti-war and civil rights movements of the 1960s. His impact on popular culture was immense.

But although he had been mentioned in the Nobel speculation for years, many experts had ruled him out, thinking the academy wouldn't extend its more than a century-old award to the world of music.

They were wrong. The academy's permanent secretary, Sara Danius, said that while Dylan performs his poetry in the form of songs, that's no different from the ancient Greeks, whose works were often performed to music.

The Nobel Prize will cap off a career of numerous other awards, including an Academy Award in 2001 for the song "Things Have Changed," a lifetime-achievement award from the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences in 1991, and in 2008, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his contributions to music and American culture.

No one can argue that Dylan's distinctive twang and poetic lyrics have produced some of the most memorable songs ever written. In the 1960s, his songs of protest and turmoil spoke to an entire generation, and I, too, played his records constantly. My mother, weary of the twang, described his voice as that of a cat whose tail had been run over and over by a rocking chair.

But his music was food for my soul.

Although Dylan *was* the voice of his generation, it was evident during the Bradley interview that he would have none of the accolades anyone attempted to laud upon him. With his perpetual scowl, Dylan revealed his distaste for any other title the media had given him except that of a simple musician.

Arrogant, brash and often taunting the establishment, even his "Like a Rolling Stone," voted best song of all time, isn't a joyful song. It contains haunting lyrics of loneliness and frustration that symbolize a young person's quest to set out on his or her own in a world filled with tangible and intangible barriers to success and happiness.

What interested me most about Dylan's interview with Bradley was his response to Bradley's question, "Do you ever look back at the music you've written with surprise?"

Dylan thought for a few minutes and then sort of growled: "I don't know how I got to write those songs. Those early songs were almost magically written. I did it once, but I can't do it again."

That's probably what a lot of living legends tend to admit to themselves, but Dylan actually voiced it to the viewing public. Creativity is a glorious time in one's life when everything seems to magically merge together and something amazing is produced.

Whether it be art, music, writing or any other creative landscape that one produces, the fact that it influences someone else is truly a gift and the greatest reward of all.

I saw Dylan twice at a concert at Jones Beach in New York. Dressed all in black with a pretty bare stage except for a few members of his backup band, he sang all the fabulous oldies and a couple of new songs.

There weren't any fireworks, light shows or scantily clad women prancing around. He didn't interact with the audience, and when the last note was sung, he simply put his guitar down on the stage and walked off.

But that's what we expected from Dylan, and he didn't disappoint.

If we stick a time capsule into the ground in 2016, who will we use as symbols of our current generation or culture? Who has influenced our youths with words that have meaning and convey a message that not only has a good beat, but means something to everyone?

After this last accolade, I have a feeling Dylan is tired of the title.