

Bob Dylan "Like a Rolling Stone"

By Douglas Baldwin

Imagine if Tool's new album were a brilliant collection of three-minute pop masterpieces. Or if Bruce Springsteen had recorded *Born to Run* as a rap album on par with that of Run-DMC. Such was the shock of revolution (and, for many, betrayal) when Bob Dylan released *Highway 61 Revisited* and its smash single, "Like a Rolling Stone."

Dylan was the figurehead of the folk movement in the early '60s, a subculture with a radical leftist political agenda and an archconservative musical approach. Dylan's own music had virtually summed up and anthemized the folk movement, but he knew it was time to move on. His experimentation with more introspective and personalized songwriting joined forces with the jubilant electricity of rock music, and he left the "acousti-conservatives" eating his dust as "Like a Rolling Stone" broke down walls of preconceptions and roared up the pop charts.

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Whether you choose to strum Dylan's rocker on acoustic or electric guitar, it's vital to have the steady but urgent groove that holds this song together. Build the foundational groove by grabbing an open C major chord and strumming eighth notes with steady, continuous down-strums. The traditional count for this is "one-and, two-and, three-and, four-and," where the numbers fall on the beats and the "ands" fall evenly in between.

The urgency is added by mixing occasional up-strummed 16th notes in between the eighth note pulse, as in Fig. 1. You can see the foundation of eighth notes in the count as well as in the notation; the added 16ths employ the syllables "ee" and "uh" and are played with up-strums. Pay close attention to the direction of the strumming, as it is absolutely vital to the feel. Many players tend to mimic the sound of the rhythm by catching each rhythmic attack with an alternating up and down stroke, creating some pretty ragged strumming motions.

Begin with the right feel and the sound will fall into place far more smoothly.

...TO BE ON YOUR OWN

The interplay of musicians on *Highway 61 Revisited* and on "Like a Rolling Stone" in particular is stellar. Dylan has always had a keen ear for the finest backing players and a love of the spontaneous early take, and this song certainly supports his *modus operandi*. Whether you're strumming with a band or on your own, use your ears to catch the details of the entire recording, and try to duplicate it in your own playing. Al Kooper's intro melody on the Hammond organ, Mike Bloomfield's gritty lead guitar fills, Harvey Brooks' in-the-pocket bass, and Frank Owens' punchy "tack" piano all weave around Dylan's full strumming to create a nearly orchestral sweep of textures.

The above-mentioned strum works great for the intro, but to create the jabbing counter-rhythms of the verses, try something like Fig. 2. Notice that the continuous down-strums are now replaced with up-strums on the counts of "two," the "and" of "three," and the "and" of "four." The down-strums effectively imitate Harvey Brooks' bass while the up-strums capture the tambourine accents and Al Kooper's keyboard stabs. Fig. 3 nails the chorus rhythm with its added

16th notes emphasized by the "tack" piano (a piano with thumbtacks stuck in its hammers for a percussive, honky-tonk tone). And when you come to the two measures of G that end each chorus, fill up the strumming with continuous 16ths to mimic Mike Bloomfield's rollicking lead guitar.



MODIFIED BARRE CHORDS REVISITED

With the exception of the opening C major and Fmaj7/C chords, we've arranged "Like a Rolling Stone" with chord shapes based on barre chords. But instead of barring across the strings

with your index finger, you should fret the appropriate note with the tip of your finger and allow the side of your finger to rest on the other strings. This will help mute them, and you can use a full strum with just the appropriate strings ringing. (The current superstar of this technique is Dave Matthews, who builds entire riffs from this "hit-all-six, let-a-couple-ring" technique.)

The first chord progression of the verse (C-Dm-Em-F-G) is a prime example of a diatonic progression in ascending stepwise motion. Translation: The chords are totally within the parent key—they are diatonic to the key of C—and they rise through the key step by step, not unlike a scale. Dylan also uses a diatonic progression in descending stepwise motion later in the verse. ♪

Fig. 1

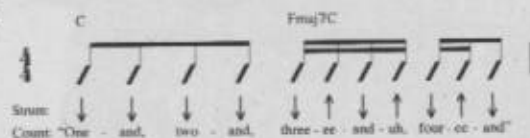


Fig. 2

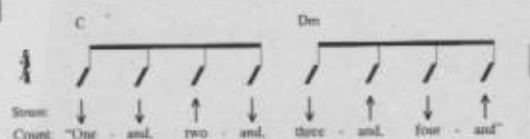
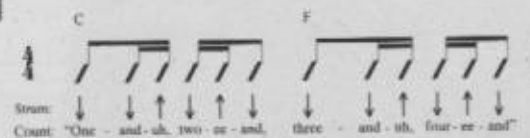


Fig. 3

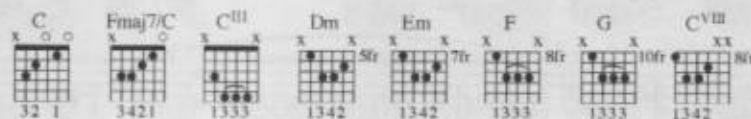


LIKE A ROLLING STONE

As Recorded by Bob Dylan
(From the Sony/Columbia Recording HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED)

Arranged by Adam Perlmutter

Words and Music by Bob Dylan



Intro

Moderate Rock ♩ = 98

Verse

C Fmaj7/C Play 4 times CIII Dm

1. Once up - on a time, you dressed so fine, —
gone to the fin - est school, al - right,

Em F G

Threw the burns a dime — in — your prime, — did - 'nt you?
Miss Lone - ly, but you know you on - ly used to get juiced in it.

CIII Dm

No - bod - y's ev - er taught you how — "Be - ware — doll, you're
Peo - ple'd call, — say, — to live out — on the

Em F G

bound to fall." — You thought they were all kid - din' you.
street, and now you're gon - na have to get used to it.

F

You used to
You say to you

G F

nev - er laugh a - bout com - pro - mise with the mys - t'ry ev - 'ry - bod - y that was
tramp, but now you

G F Em

hang - in' out. — Now — you don't — talk
rea - lize he's — not sell - ing an - y

Dm CIII F Em

so loud. — Now — you don't —
al - i - bis, as — you stare in - to the vac - uum

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Like A Rolling Stone

Dm C^{III} Dm

seem so proud
of his eyes

a bout hav - ing to be scroung - ing
and say, "Do you want to

*F

your next meal.
make a deal?"

How does it feel?
How does it feel?

*3rd and 4th times, switch to F on beat 3.

Chorus

C^{VIII} F G C^{VIII} F

How does it feel
(2., 3., 4.) How does it feel

G

to be with - out a home,
to be on your own,

G C^{VIII} F

like a com - plete un - known,
with no di - rec - tion home,

G C^{VIII} F G

like a roll - ing stone?
like a com - plete un - known,

1. 2. 3. C^{VIII} F

2. Ah, you've

3., 4. See additional lyrics

Repeat and fade

Additional Lyrics

3. You never turned around to see the frowns on the jugglers and the clowns
When they all did tricks for you.
You never understood that it ain't no good,
You shouldn't let other people get your kicks for you.
You used to ride on the chrome horse with your diplomat
Who carried on his shoulder a Siamese cat.
Ain't it hard when you discover that
He really wasn't where it's at.
After he took from you everything he could steal?
4. Princess on the steeple, and all the pretty people
They're all drinkin', thinkin' that they got it made.
Exchangin' all precious gifts
But you'd better take your diamond ring, you better pawn it, babe.
You used to be so amused
At Napoleon in rags and the language that he used.
Go to him now, he calls you, you can't refuse.
When you got nothin', you got nothin' to lose.
You're invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal.

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