

MOJO

WHAT GOES ON!

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

JOSÉ FELICIANO

José Feliciano raves over 1963's epochal *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.

"I was living in the Village in New York City, in an apartment on 8th Street near St Mark's Place. I'd started my teenage years away from home and my life was full of music, all the music happening in America then, like The Byrds and The Beatles, who came to the kids and said, 'You can live like this and be happy, you don't have to conform to the ways of the adults!' I felt free.

Then somebody took me to their home and played Bob Dylan to me. When he came, it was another thing, again. Don't Think Twice, It's All Right, Girl From The North Country, and Masters Of War - they were great songs, dealing with important subjects. He wasn't the greatest of musicians, but his poetry and the way he used words affected me very deeply. Through his music we tried to treat members of society that we wouldn't even talk to years before with some respect and dignity.

So I listened to Dylan, but I followed José, me. My conscience and my mind taught me how to play, and that's what I did. But he was an example. My understanding of what music could do was deepened - other

West Village preservation: (below) José Feliciano, still mind-deepened; (bottom) Dylan's epochal second.



"DYLAN WAS THE FIRST GUY WHO TURNED THE BEATLES ON TO GRASS. REMEMBER."

fields were opened to me, like jazz and classical. For a time, I wanted to be like Segovia or Julian Bream or John Williams, guitarists who were my heroes. I honestly don't know, if I hadn't heard this record, would I have been the freewheeling guitar player that I am today?

I used to hang with him, then. I met him at Gerde's Folk City in the Village. He'd come and catch my show, we'd have a couple of glasses of wine and then he'd get on-stage and do his thing. He's a good guy. He just couldn't put up with people asking him dumb questions! If you knew that coming in, you left him alone and sat down and talked to him like I'm talking to you. Even then he was a legend, in a sense, before he even crossed over to the West Coast.

I still follow Dylan. He's still great. I'd like to do something with him, you know. It's been ages since I heard [*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*] because I lost a lot of my albums in a fire, but I know it pretty well, so I can just play it in my mind when I want. These songs don't get old, it's the same with Elvis, Heartbreak Hotel and Hound Dog. There'll never be another band like The Beatles and there'll never be another Dylan. And Dylan was the guy who turned The Beatles on to grass, remember! That's important."

José Feliciano and Jools Holland's album As You See Me Now is out now on East West.

