



# Shot of Love is good Dylan

by Michael Brennan

Bob Dylan is back with a new release (actually it's been out over a month) after last year's **Saved** and, consistent with it **Shot of Love** is strong and solid. It is again a very religious and Christian orientated album, but there is a heartfelt seriousness and sincere urgency to it that has become characteristic of his recent "religious" records. It is a rejuvenated energy that has given Dylan a focus, making his recent work as good as any-

thing he has done in the seventies.

Contrary to the general criticism, Dylan has received concerning his "born-again gospel", his vision today is as meaningful and relevant as it has always been. Of all the remaining rock figures from the sixties (including The Who, the Rolling Stones, and the Kinks), it is Dylan who is creating the most original and spirited rock and roll.

It's the opening cut, "Shot of Love", that cuts sharply with its all-too human cry of desire and alienation and that gives the album an immediacy unequalled since "You Gotta Serve Somebody" off **Slow Train Coming**:

Don't need a shot of heroin to cure my disease  
Don't need a shot of turpentine to bring me to my knees  
Don't need a shot of codine, help me repent  
Don't need a shot of whiskey, help me be president  
I need a shot of love.

The beat is heavy and hard, the guitars biting and churning, and the vocals scratchy and tough. The sound throughout the album is spontaneous and alive. In the day of technically perfect, and unfortunately sterile recordings, it's good to hear Dylan attain such a rough, old rock and roll sound in the studio. It is the drumming of Jim Keltner that pushes the band to blend as a unit so well.

Surprisingly, the next song "Heart of Mine" opens with a reggae rhythm, which the band sustains quite well. In fact, there is a reggae feel throughout the album, and especially prominent on "Watered Down Love" and "Dead Man, Dead Man". Dylan uses these rhythms freshly, giving them a rockier edge and a rougher sound.

The direct religious sentiments are not as explicit on this album but on "Porperty of Jesus" Dylan's convictions come to the fore. The song has the gut energy of the title cut and a biting, sardonic lyric. Here, Dylan expresses the void that exists between society and a humble follower of Christ; a man who has denied the superfluous pleasures of society's existence to commit himself to God. "You got something better/ You got a heart of stone." The sincerity of this song works, but it borders on an arrogance and personal righteousness that leaves little room for much sympathy and understanding.

This smug righteousness pervades the album, and it is the only reservation I have about **Shot of Love**. "Trouble", "Watered Down Love" and "Every Grain of Sand" are overly simplistic and much too full of doctrine. Here, Dylan's Christian values become burned and rarely transcend the Biblical morals as they did on the truly confessional songs of **Saved**. I don't know why Dylan feels he has to convert society when, as in the past, he could express more personal and subtle experiences. And there is little humor in these songs. The recordings of **Highway 61 Revisited** or **The Basement Tapes** will certainly outlast many of these.

Bob Dylan still remains a serious and major musician today and though **Shot of Love** may not sound quite as fresh or original today as Elvis Costello or The Clash, it is filled with enough gems worth saving.

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