

The dylanite pandemic continues



By Samantha Wernham

ROME - The legendary singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, famed across the globe for his relaying of social turmoil through hard-hitting lyrics, has enjoyed a career spanning over 50 years. The literary excellence of the artist's lyrics won him a Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016 -- something author Marco Zoppas predicted upon beginning his biographical book 'Ballando con Mr D.'

Yes, Zoppas began writing with the prediction that Dylan would scoop a Nobel Prize before his death. Fol-

lowing the publication of the book, the idol did just that.

The book's title, 'Dancing with Mr D,' in fact the same as that of the opening track of The Rolling Stones' 1973 album, invites the modern reader to join Zoppas on a journey through the life and times, trials and tribulations of the revered folk, blues and rock and roll icon.

Referring to Dylan as 'a messiah of the rebellion of the 60s,' the Italian author compiles an extensive account of significant personal events, as well as including prominent socio-historic context and excerpts of various songs throughout the text, using the lyrics to aid him in his explanation of Dylan's ideologies -- so-called 'Dylanologies.'

For example, Zoppas focuses on when Dylan, one of the best-selling artists of all time, having sold over 100 million records, met the pope back on Sept. 21, 1997, playing 'Blowing in the Wind' for the pontiff, now internationally recognised as an anthem for the civil rights movement.

Interestingly, one major question of the book revolves around Dylan's political alliances. Is he a leftist, as most commonly believed, or do his lyrics actually swing more to the right?

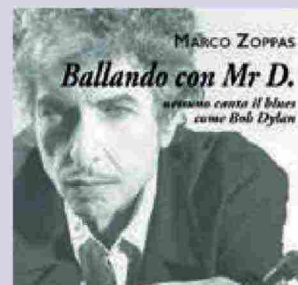
In an interview with Italian daily Libero, the author used the example of the song 'Maggie's farm,' claiming it to be "an invective against forced labour which can be seen as anti-capitalist," then adding, "but also anti-collectivist and anti-Soviet. For example, the lyric, 'She's 68 but says she's 24,' could refer to communism, claiming it is something new when actually it is just another form of tyranny."

Hence, it seems Dylan is not so easy to categorise. Another example referred to is the lyric, 'Darkness at the break of noon,' a line almost identical to Arthur Koestler's anti-communist classic 'Darkness at Midday.'

In fact, instead of labelling the artist as 'left' or 'right,' Zoppas proposes we refer to Dylan as a 'South-ernist,' passionate mostly about the

atmosphere and society of the belly of the United States.

In a book crammed full of insight, factual detail and intriguing analysis, one cannot help but get drawn into what Zoppas refers to as 'the Dylanite pandemic,' making us wonder just how many doses a day of the American icon are necessary to satisfy the global obsession.



"BALLANDO CON MR D."
by Marco Zoppas

BookTime, 148 pages, 14 euros

