



## Episode 1, 2012: Bob Dylan Guitar

Dawn: My name is Dawn Peterson. For more than 40 years this guitar has been in my family. My Dad was a private pilot for Bob Dylan.

Dawn: The guitar was left on one of his planes and he took it home.

Dawn: After he died, I watched a documentary about Bob Dylan, and it showed footage of the first time that he played an electric guitar live. It looked exactly like the guitar that my dad had left in our family's attic.

Dawn: I want to know if this is the guitar that Bob Dylan played when he plugged in at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965

Elyse: I'm Elyse Luray.

Wes: and I'm Wes Cowan.

Wes: And we're about to investigate one of the potentially biggest finds we've ever made on History Detectives.

Wes: The story of Dylan being boo'd for switching to an electric guitar at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival is a legendary moment in Rock and Roll History.

Wes: But the guitar's whereabouts have long remained a mystery.

Dawn: Hello.

Wes & Elyse: Hi

Wes: How are you?

Dawn: Good. Nice to meet you.

Wes: Hi, how are you?

Elyse: Okay, let's see what you have. Oh, nice...

Wes: Wow...

Elyse: Can we take it out?

Dawn: Sure.

Elyse: All right. Let's see this baby...

Wes: So, uh – Fender – Fender Stratocaster, right?

Dawn: Yes.

Elyse: And it's a sunburst...

Wes: That's the finish... the sunburst finish

Elyse: Yeah. It's my favorite finish. Let's hear the story....

Dawn: My dad flew Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul & Mary, The Band. And I'm told that it was one of the guitars that Bob Dylan had.

Wes: Wait – Hold it. Wait a minute. Your dad used to fly Bob Dylan around in the 1960's?

Dawn: Right.

Wes: Wow.

Elyse: That's pretty cool.

Wes: That's totally cool.

Wes: So wait a minute did your dad ever try to get in touch with Bob Dylan and said, "Hey Bob I happen to have your guitar."

Dawn: I was told my father tried to get them to pick it up or get it back to them, and nobody ever came.

Wes: In 2005, Dawn and her husband wrote to Bob Dylan's management requesting that Dylan waive any claim to the guitar that had been with her family for so long. Dylan's lawyers declined her request, and said if his guitar had been left with Dawn's father all those years ago it should be returned. The lawyers have not been in contact since. So while it's not clear who actually owns the instrument, our job is to find out if, indeed, it is the legendary Newport guitar.

Wes: I gotta tell you, though. There were thousands of this exact model of guitar made. Right?

Dawn: Right.

Elyse: Yeah.

Wes: So... What are the chances that this is the real one?

Elyse: This has all been family folklore.

Dawn: Right. There were lyrics, though, also in the case.

Elyse: Oh wow. To what song?

Dawn: I don't know. It looked like he might have been writing songs.

Elyse: Wow. These are really his handwritten lyrics. That's actually really cool.

Wes: Well we don't know if they're his handwritten lyrics but...

Elyse: No, but if they are that's a good, that's...

Wes: absolutely. So we've got all this stuff. You know, I mean looking at the case – was there a luggage tag or anything like that?

Dawn: Nope. I do have a picture of my dad, his pilot photo.

Elyse: Oh, he's cute.

Wes: Wow. He looks like he could be in a rock 'n' roll band, in the 1960's. Take a look at that – wow. That's great.

Dawn: And this is a picture after one of the flights in California...

Elyse: Oh, there's Dylan. Cool.

Dawn: ...I believe, that my father took of Bob Dylan.

Dawn: And my dad's address book has a number for Bob Dylan when he was in Woodstock, New York.

Elyse: Oh, that's cool. Did you ever call it?

Dawn: I called it, when I was in junior high school.

Elyse: And?

Dawn: And no answer.

Wes: So have you done any research on the stenciling on the case, 'Ashes and Sand'?

Dawn: I have looked it up on the internet; I didn't find all that much information about it, though

Wes: So it's a mystery.

Dawn: Right.

Wes: We take the guitar back to our office for a closer look. It's an incredible story, but at this point, that's all it is.

Elyse: Let me just tell you one thing –

Wes: You're thinking the same thing I am, I'm sure.

Elyse: I don't believe it.

Wes: Listen, if this is the guitar, right? That – That Dylan plugged in at Newport – I mean, how big is that?

Elyse: It's huge.

Wes: The first thing we need to do, is figure out when this guitar was made. I mean, there's a serial number on the back.

Elyse: Of course.

Wes: So, where's the – Wait a minute. Here's a – "Dating Your Fender Stringed Instrument." All right.

Elyse: Oh, cool. Okay...

Wes: So let's see.

Elyse: So, ready? I'll tell you what it says. L31324.

Wes: The L 20,000s to the 50,000s...

Elyse: Okay, so that would fall into that category.

Wes: '64.

Wes: Okay, so the guitar was made before the '65 Newport Folk Festival. But there's no documentation that Dylan was playing at '64 strat that day and not an earlier model. Photos of Dylan at Newport in 1965 show him playing a Fender Stratocaster with a sunburst finish. Dawn does have some interesting evidence.

Wes: And this thing was kinda cool. The address book. The first thing I'd ask, though, is – uh, I mean, this is like too good to be true, right? "Bob Dylan, Woodstock."

The lyrics I think are totally cool. But I'll tell ya, they don't look like complete songs and uh.. the handwriting...

Elyse: We should be able to match it.

Wes: I mean, either it is, or it isn't.

Elyse: Yeah, yeah.

Wes: So, why don't we split this up? I'll try to dig into the lyrics.

Elyse: Okay.

Wes: You dig into the guitar?

Elyse: That's – That's- That's a good idea.

Wes: Cool.

Elyse: My first stop is Rolling Stone Magazine which has been covering rock and roll since the 60's. I'm meeting Dylan expert Andy Greene.

Elyse: So how many times has Dylan been on the cover?

Andy: He's had the most covers out of any solo artist.

Elyse: Wow, so he's really up there in the history of Rolling Stone Magazine.

Andy: Yeah, we just keep going back to him.

Elyse: Dylan began his career in the folk music scene of the early 1960's. But Andy explains when the 24 year old stormed the stage with an electric guitar at Newport, the folk hero was plugging into a rock and roll revolution.

Andy: Now here...

Elyse: Oh, some of these are great.

Andy: ...this is the top 50 moments in rock history. I think that's the guitar.

Elyse: Looks pretty close. 'Fifty most important moments that changed the history of Rock and Roll.' And there's Bob Dylan.

Andy: Yeah. And that was the folk festival even. Yeah, that was the moment.

Elyse: They're claiming this is the guitar that Dylan went electric with.

Andy: That's pretty awesome.

Elyse: What do you think?

Andy: This definitely looks like it but they obviously made, you know, made a whole bunch of them.

Elyse: Let's talk about that day in July, cause I'm - I'm a little confused as to why it would be a such a big deal.

Andy: Well, you know, it was the Newport Folk Festival, which he played the previous two years. And by '65, he's the headliner. And the audience expected him to do 'Tambourine Man' and do 'Times they are A-Changin.'

Elyse: The early 60's had seen a folk revival, and Dylan was the movement's golden boy. In years past, he dutifully sang the folk songs the fans knew and loved, often accompanied only by acoustic guitar and harmonica.

Andy: And then Dylan walks onstage and he has a band. It was extremely dramatic. He went from solo acoustic to just full on electric. It's the most shocking things he's ever done and he's done a lot of shocking things.

Elyse: If an artist wanted to change, why not let him change?

Andy: Well cause they saw folk music as changing the world. And they saw rock and roll as pop. As sort of fluff.

Andy: If I play 'The Times They are A-Changin' from January of '64...

Elyse: Uh huh.

Andy: You will see the huge difference in sound that he had.

Elyse: Okay.

Andy: This is Dylan at the height of his powers, this is the Dylan that they most revered. Just the protest singer, the Civil Rights warrior even. You know this is Dylan at his most iconic to the folk purists.

Elyse: I can hear it. I get it. I totally get it. I can hear the emotion, the passion in his voice.

Andy: They didn't want to lose that.

Elyse: Okay, so what's the opposition to this?

Andy: I'll put on "Tombstone Blues" for you. That's a nice blues rocker. Track two.

Andy: I mean, this is...

Elyse: Yeah, I mean that's so good. It's so good.

Andy: ...this is night and day. There's a whole band behind him. It's almost blues rock.

Elyse: It's great.

Andy: It's like garage rock.

Elyse: I love it.

Andy: It's very aggressive.

Elyse: Yeah.

Andy: And it's not socially conscious at all. It's not a protest song.

Elyse: No, it's fun!

Andy: But to the folk purist, this was treason.

Elyse: Andy says Dylan's Fender Stratocaster had sounded the call to revolution. And the new rock music movement that Dylan helped pioneer that night would define the late '60s counterculture.

Elyse: So, show's over, huge phenomenon. What happens to the guitar?

Andy: I mean, I've seen pictures of him playing it at a few more gigs and then it was gone. I have no idea what happened.

Elyse: Andy says one of the problems is that to his knowledge, no one has any details about that Newport Guitar: Where it came from, what year it was made, or what he did with it.

Andy: You know there're so many mysteries that just surround Dylan and - and this guitar is definitely one of them.

Elyse: So, if I could prove that this was Dylan's guitar where he went electric, how big of a find do you think that would be?

Andy: It'd be huge. It would be a major historical find.

Elyse: Greenwich Village, New York City. Dylan lived here in the early 1960's. This is where the myth began.

Elyse: A few hangouts from that day remain, like the legendary White Horse Tavern where I'm meeting Jonathan Taplin. He was a Dylan Roadie at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, the man responsible for moving equipment. Including the guitar.

Elyse: So this is the guitar that I e-mailed you about. First let's look at the case.

Jon: Ooh my god.

Elyse: What's "oh my god?"

Jon: Well this company, Ashes and Sands, Incorporated

Elyse: Yeah what is that?

Jon: Was the company that Dylan set up to run his tours. And collect the money for his tours.

Elyse: Okay.

Jon: Nobody would have known that.

Elyse: Well, what do you mean nobody would have known that. Like, that was what?

Jon: Well, it wasn't like on any posters or anything.

Elyse: So the fact that that has that on his case is huge.

Jon: Yes.

Elyse: Let's look at it. See if it looks familiar to you. It's a Fender.

Jon: Well this is exactly the kind of guitar that Bob was using.

Elyse: Uh-huh.

Jon: It is the Sunburst. This looks like it. I mean, I don't know if it's the real guitar.

Elyse: All right. But you're getting a good vibe from it. Okay.

Jon: Definitely. Definitely looks like it.

Elyse: Alright, so that's looking good.

Jon: Yeah.

Elyse: Alright, so now tell me a little bit about, I mean you were there.

Jon: I was there.

Elyse: And he plugs in.

Jon: He plugs in.

Elyse: Tell me what happened?

Jon: Basically what happened was Pete Seeger opens, there's lots of folk music, and then Bob comes on. And everybody had been waiting for him and when he shows up, in an orange shirt, a black leather jacket, high heeled boots, I mean, it was like a shock to folk music. This was not the blue work shirt that we'd been used to. And then he starts into "Maggie's Farm" and by the end of the song, the audience is booing. Basically, the folkies were outraged. And Pete Seeger was telling the head of the festival, "turn the electricity off." There was just total chaos backstage. And then Bob quit. He was supposed to play for an hour and he just walked off the stage. And I ran around back stage from the sound mixing board and there was Bob and he was sitting at the bottom of the steps and he was just like crushed. I think it's probably the first time he'd ever been booed.

Elyse: Dylan did eventually return to the stage and pleased the crowd with acoustic numbers like "Mr. Tambourine Man."

Elyse: How did you feel when he plugged in? What was going through your head?

Jon: From an emotional point of view, I loved it, because I was totally on the side of Dylan changing. I have a theory of art that great artists take incredible leaps and just take big chances. Picasso did it. And Dylan did it.

Elyse: So the show's over. It was a monumental evening. What happens to the gear?

Jon: So they packed up the gear and it just so happened that Peter, Paul, and Mary, which were the biggest act.

Elyse: Right, right

Jon: ...in folk music at that time, had a plane called the Lockheed Lodestar.

Elyse: Uh huh.

Jon: So they would have put it in Peter, Paul, and Mary's plane.

Elyse: I have this photograph. His name is, um Vic Quinto. Look familiar?

Jon: No.

Elyse: Okay so he was the pilot, according to his daughter, Vic Quinto was the pilot of Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul & Mary. You would have never seen the pilots?

Jon: No.

Elyse: OK. Thank you. It was great.

Jon: My pleasure.

Elyse: Great information.

Elyse: But something is bugging me. I'm a little skeptical that Jon didn't recognize Dawn's father's name Victor Quinto or the photograph. I mean if he was in charge of the equipment, I kind of think he should.

Tom: Hey, this is Tom.

Elyse: One of my researchers, Tom McNamara, has been looking for anyone who might remember Dawn's father flying for Dylan.

Tom: to be frank with you, I couldn't find anybody.

Elyse: Tom says flight records from the time are gone.

Tom: So I found Richie Greene in this phone book.

Elyse: Tom called every number in Vic's phone book until he got hold of Richie Greene, a former pilot.

Elyse: And what did he have to say?

Tom: Richie Greene remembered Vic. They were old buddies. They flew together back in the 1960's. And he found this picture of Vic and Richie back in the day.

Elyse: Nice!

Tom: They worked at the same airfield when Bob Dylan's manager approached Vic, Dawn's father, and said, "Will," you know, "Will you fly for me? I've – I've got a job for you." And from then on, you know, Vic Quinto was flying for The Band, Peter, Paul & Mary, and Bob, of course, Bob Dylan.

Elyse: Alright, good.

Tom: And he gave me one detail which was pretty interesting. He – He remembered the exact plane that Vic was flying and that was a Lockheed Lodestar

Elyse: That's the plane that Jonathan Taplin remembers.

Elyse: I wonder how Wes is doing.

Wes: Wes here

Elyse: Hey Wes, it's Elyse. How are the lyrics?

Wes: Listen to this, 'Well the walls quiver and the back door slams, the county farms in the traffic jams.' I mean that sounds like, like Dylan, right? Yeah but I can't – I can't match it up.

Elyse: Oh that's weird

Wes: So I mean, we're still looking at a total mystery.

Wes: So I'm in SoHo, in New York City. While Elyse is checking out the guitar, I've got to check out these lyrics. Now I've already sent copies to a Dylan expert named Jeff Gold and I'm on my way to meet him right now. And he's going to tell me up or down.

Jeff: You've got to be extremely skeptical when it comes to Dylan stuff. There's lots and lots of fake stuff around. The vast majority of it, probably 95% of the stuff that I see isn't authentic.

Wes: Let's – let's take a look. So, there you go.

Wes: Jeff explains that authenticating Dylan's handwriting isn't easy.

Jeff: Dylan's handwriting changes as often as Dylan's songwriting. He's got the most inconsistent handwriting of anybody I've ever experienced.

Wes: Well you know in the autograph business, we'd want to compare these with something we know he wrote in '65 and these were supposedly written in '65. Can we do that?

Jeff: Yes. And that's where this gets really interesting.

Jeff: He writes here, "Watching the six white horses pass." Well, "six white horses" is a phrase that shows up in, "Absolutely Sweet Marie," a song Dylan wrote for his *Blonde On Blonde* album.

Wes: I knew that I heard these phrases before.

Jeff: Well I own Bob Dylan's manuscript for "Absolutely Sweet Marie."

Jeff: So, I scanned these things and blew them up pretty large and this "six white horses" is from the manuscript in question. This is from my "Absolutely Sweet Marie" manuscript and you can see he wrote, "six flying horses," and then amended it by writing "white" up here and "the" up here. So I Photoshopped this to put the words in the same exact order. Now as you can see, and this is very consistent with Dylan, it alternates between handwriting or cursive writing and printing.

Wes: I see exactly what you're talking about. He wrote the – the sixes in block printing and then he would start a word where he'd take a couple letters and he'd write it in cursive.

Jeff: It's kind of an idiosyncrasy of his. He goes back and forth in that way.

Wes: So is this pile of stuff Bob Dylan's?

Jeff: Beyond a shadow of a doubt. These are authentic manuscripts written and typed by Bob Dylan.

Wes: Whoa. I mean, I – I just sorta – I'm getting goose bumps when you just tell me that.

Jeff: They're pretty extraordinary.

Wes: Jeff believes the lyrics we have include fragments for three songs that were recorded at the *Blonde on Blonde* sessions in late 1965 but never actually made it to the album. They're evidence of a profound artistic transformation.

Jeff: He's not writing topical songs anymore. He's not writing love songs anymore. He's not writing, so much, literal songs about what he's feeling. These are more surreal. These are – are more abstract.

Wes: So, you know, I mean – I gotta ask – what are they worth? The group.

Jeff: I'd say thirty to fifty thousand dollars.

Wes: Yeah. Well, I mean, that doesn't surprise me a bit.

Jeff: These are a pretty extraordinary find.

Wes: Man, I cannot believe this. These lyrics are the real thing. Now the final step is to find out if the guitar is the very one that Dylan plugged into when he changed the world at Newport.

Elyse: I'm in Rochester, New York to meet Andy Babiuk. He's authenticated guitars for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Everyone tells me if there's any way to match our guitar to the Newport Fender, Andy's the man to do it.

Andy: Thanks for coming.

Elyse: Love the place.

Andy: Thank you. So let's see this thing.

Elyse: Alright, go ahead.

Andy: Whoa.

Elyse: What do you think?

Andy: Wow. It's got the original flatwound strings on it still.

Elyse: Okay what does flat mean? Explain that to me.

Andy: The strings are actually flat, like a ribbon wound. New strings, typically most players use a roundwound string.

Elyse: Okay

Andy: It's – It's quite a bit different.

Elyse: Andy says the flat strings are common to the period, although they could have been added at any time.

Andy: Ah, cool.

Andy: Way cool!

Elyse: The plate on the guitar's body dates to 1964 but Andy tells me that serial number plates are only held on with a few screws and can be switched to increase a guitar's value. He has another way to determine when the guitar was made.

Andy: I've got this little desk set up here so we can take this apart.

Andy: Mmm. It's got that cool, old guitar smell. In the guitar geek world, that's a sought after smell.

Elyse: I've got to get this geek smell down.

Andy: So now we're going to very, very, very carefully remove the neck.

Elyse: Okay. I got it. Oh cool. Huh.

Andy: And there's the neck.

Elyse: Oh, there's the – ooh. Is that dust?

Andy: And there's the date.

Elyse: The second of May '64. So it's period. I mean, it's a match.

Andy: This - This is the right thing, so this is great.

Elyse: This is really great.

Elyse: The guitar is dated one year and two months before Newport. But is it the Fender he played that night? My office has made what may be a breakthrough. We ran down a photographer, John Rudoff, who'd been a seventeen year old pressed up against the stage that summer night in Rhode Island.

Elyse: Okay so these are from the 1965 Newport Festival.

Elyse: He took what may have been the best and clearest images of Dylan that night, and his controversial guitar. We had them sent up to Andy for comparison.

Andy: Some of the shots, the guitars are blurry in the shots but I think with this photo, it's a very clear shot where you can see the wood grain in the guitar.

Elyse: The clear wood grain is vital evidence, like a fingerprint. Andy says no two guitars have exactly the same grain.

Elyse: Okay these lines here you're talking about are the wood grain, right?

Andy: There's two lines here, right by the input jack, that match up.

Elyse: Okay that - I can see that but I don't know. Is that 100% sure? I mean what else could we...?

Andy: Well what we could do is look at the fingerboard, also made of wood, and if you take a look in the photo, there's a line, dark line, that goes across the dots.

Elyse: So here's the story. We kind of broke it up into three different elements.

Elyse: We explain to Dawn that the guitar case can be linked to Bob Dylan, the lyrics are in Dylan's handwriting, and the guitar itself can be dated to 1964.

Elyse: The last step was to compare the wood grain in the body of the guitar to photographs from that historic night.

Andy: If you take a look in the photo, there's a line, dark line that goes across the dots...

Elyse: Right

Andy: ...and you see that exact same line appear right here.

Elyse: I see it!

Andy: So...

Elyse: That's great. So I mean, in your opinion, what do you think?

Andy: That's Bob Dylan's guitar.

Elyse: Wow!

Andy: This is a culturally very important guitar. This is way cool. You want to leave it here?

Dawn: I just - I don't know what to say. It's - It's just amazing.

Wes: If this was once Bob Dylan's guitar, the question remains who owns it now?

Determining ownership after decades can be extremely difficult, with issues of law, intent, and context all playing a factor. But its value to history and the market place cannot be disputed.

Wes: The people that I talked to that said a fair sort of estimate would be somewhere between three and five hundred thousand dollars. So what do you think?

Dawn: I thought it might be that guitar but to know it actually is... It just...Awesome. Thank you guys so much.