

## HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED

### A DISCUSSION ON TIME AND FREEDOM

In 1965 Dylan releases the extraordinary HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED, an album representing, in my opinion, the absolute “top” in rock history [...]

[...] It' a new language that includes, with some mitigations, folk and blues components into a wider picture, where two formal ambitions soar above all, freedom (the open form) and spirituality (cyclicality). As a matter of fact, “doing it his way”, Dylan succeeds in the realization of the mentioned ambitions, so the resulting album is an unreachable masterpiece that goes beyond the limited borders of rock. [...]

[...] The effects resulting from the harmonic opening are the addition of the three spatial dimensions to the two musical ones (rhythm-time and melody-time) and, moreover, a sort of time suspension, due to the harmonic movements “drowning” in the liquid and mercurial sound, therefore not obtained with the same modalities of Coltrane or Davis but evenly almost at their same level of enchantment. And, exactly as in modal jazz, the second effect elevates, creating a sort of permanent 5<sup>th</sup> dimension (in short, a 6<sup>th</sup> dimension) that is above the one, floating from the bottom to the top, conceived by the Byrds in FIFTH DIMENSION [...]

[...] Yet, musical dimensions are practically infinite, regardless of the number of instruments that are used, and who has studied some mathematical analysis can easily convince himself that this is true. Music is all about interdependent variables. The only problem is that, in our culture, we usually need certain points of reference, some independent variable we can build our perception of the sounds as music upon, that is to say such as to connect the sounds we hear with a form. However, we may reach a sufficient level of abstraction and manage to open new “doors of perception” also in the case of wide opening and accentuated relativity of the set of sounds we listen to, if certain features of the set help us in doing it. [...]

[...] Achieving a relative musical time isn't that difficult or complicated. It can be easily done just by slowing down or speeding up the execution. Unlike what most of the people may think, this is not a technical mistake but only a matter of creating a dynamic relationship between the musical time and the inner own time of the performer and, though you may be surprised in realizing it, such approach doesn't differ at all from what happens in classical music [...]

[...] Moving to a totally different field, it doesn't differ at all from what happens also in the country-blues, which is full of examples of the conception of "relative time" and, more generally, of relativity in various of the dimensions of music. Such conception is indeed a fundamental feature of music, as it allows it to be life, breath, blow in the air (*Blowin' In The Wind*). Dylan must have had a grab on these ideas, probably as a result of listening, exactly, to country-blues and of perceiving the musical sense of such relativity in the pieces of Blind Lemon Jefferson and of the other bluesmen from the pre-rhythm 'n' blues period, and, in fact, he succeeds in realizing them through [...]

[...] Moreover, also harmony is relative. A "musical item" (a set of sounds perceived as music) can be harmonized, in other words sensed as spatiality, in infinite ways [...]

[...] We could practice the abstraction capabilities of our "musical brain" discovering or hypothesizing new manifestations of relativity or of infiniteness, also in other musical dimensions, or reasoning on some of the other variables of music. We may probably go on with such exercise of "musical philosophy" endlessly, eventually just to find out that music is not about rules but about feeling and that feeling is the miraculous result of the complex cognitive, cultural, motional and emotional components involved in the processes of making and listening to sounds or, maybe better, in **the process** of making and listening to sounds, since playing, singing, listening, and even dancing to a certain degree, aren't different and separate actions but rather an overall set in which just one thing, an innate attitude, different in each human being, combines mind, body and spirit altogether at the same time. This thing is what we call music but it's nothing else than our inner reflection of life (*Life Itself*, with a Springsteenian quote). [...]