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Bob Dylan at 30: unseen portraits

AL CLAYTON COURTESY SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT



Above and below: Dylan and colleagues recording the *Self Portrait* album at Columbia Records' studio in Nashville

As Dylan releases rarities from his 1970 *Self Portrait* album, two photographers talk about the shots they took at the time but which have only just come to light

Al Clayton

My first proper meeting with Dylan was when I took pictures at a party at Johnny Cash's house on the Cumberland River in Nashville, where the guests included Kris Kristofferson and the songwriter Mickey Newbury. The black and white pictures here are of Dylan conversing with musicians and record company people when he was recording *Self Portrait* at Columbia Records' studio in Nashville. After I took the pictures, Dylan got hold of all the negatives. I think he wanted complete control.

Dylan was unusual. My first impression was of an extremely shy person; he seemed on the edge of

paranoia, really frightened. We didn't get into what he was frightened of — it would be very deep, I think, psychologically. I tried to talk to him, but whenever I would bring up a topic, he would say: "I don't know anything about that." He was completely withdrawn, and very into himself.

People intruding on his privacy was a major fear. Around that time, Cash was doing a show with Dylan at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, where they do the Grand Ole Opry. We were all in a dressing room and this man who was trying to gatecrash the show fell through the roof. Poor Bob started shouting: "Al, get him out of here!" The police took this guy away. That seemed to establish a decent relationship between us. After that, I think Dylan kind of trusted me.

