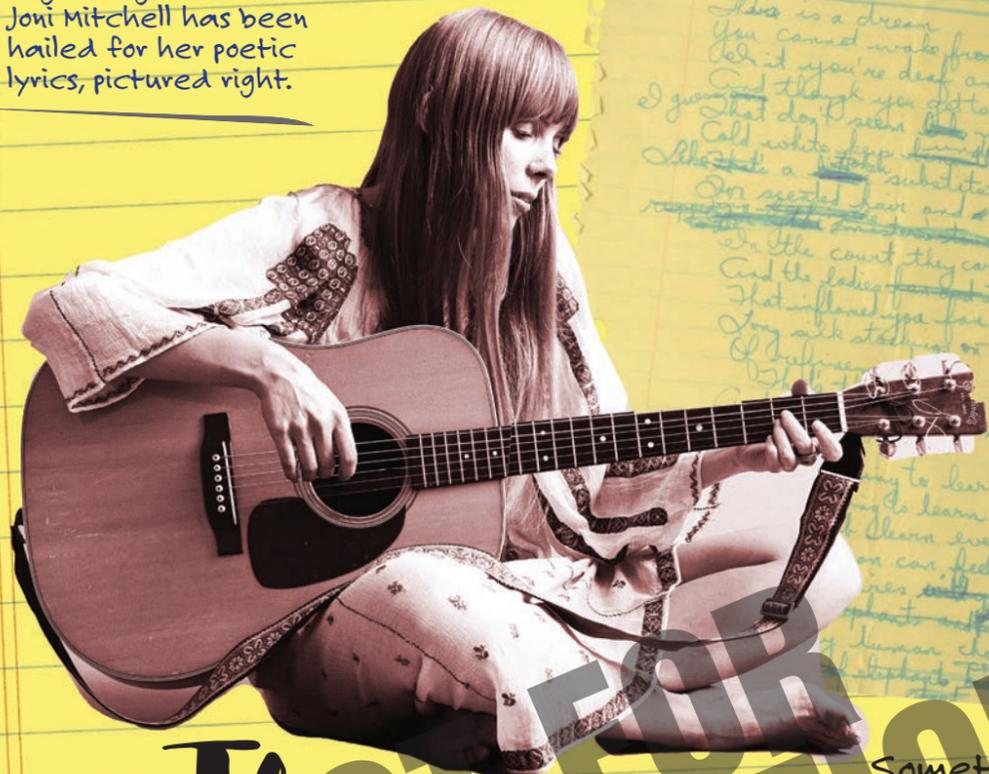


Left: Canadian singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell has been hailed for her poetic lyrics, pictured right.



Judgment of the Moonstar
...the Deaf Master
This is a dream
You cannot wake from
But it you're deaf and brooding
And though you get to keep the picture
I guess that don't seem to much to
Call white lips your fingers
All that a substitute
Don't scold hair and a swans
In the court they came your ledged with
And the ladies
That inflamed you face and titter
You walk attached on the bedposts
I believe
...to learn to drive your dearl
...to learn to gress your lord
...learn every seas emotion
...can feel
...of lunar chold
...of the trees and still

Sometimes a great song is all about the lyrics. Here's a guide on how to craft your own.

The Art of the Lyric

by Chris Sampson

What comes first in songwriting, the lyrics or the music?" Professional songwriters are asked this question countless times over the course of their career. But for as long as inquiring minds have wanted to know, songwriters haven't come up with a good answer.

The truth is, there's no step-by-step formula to songwriting. The creative process is often a whirlwind of lyric fragments, half melodies, and beginnings of chord progressions that eventually fuse together into one complete musical statement.

Through practice, you will learn what works best for you as

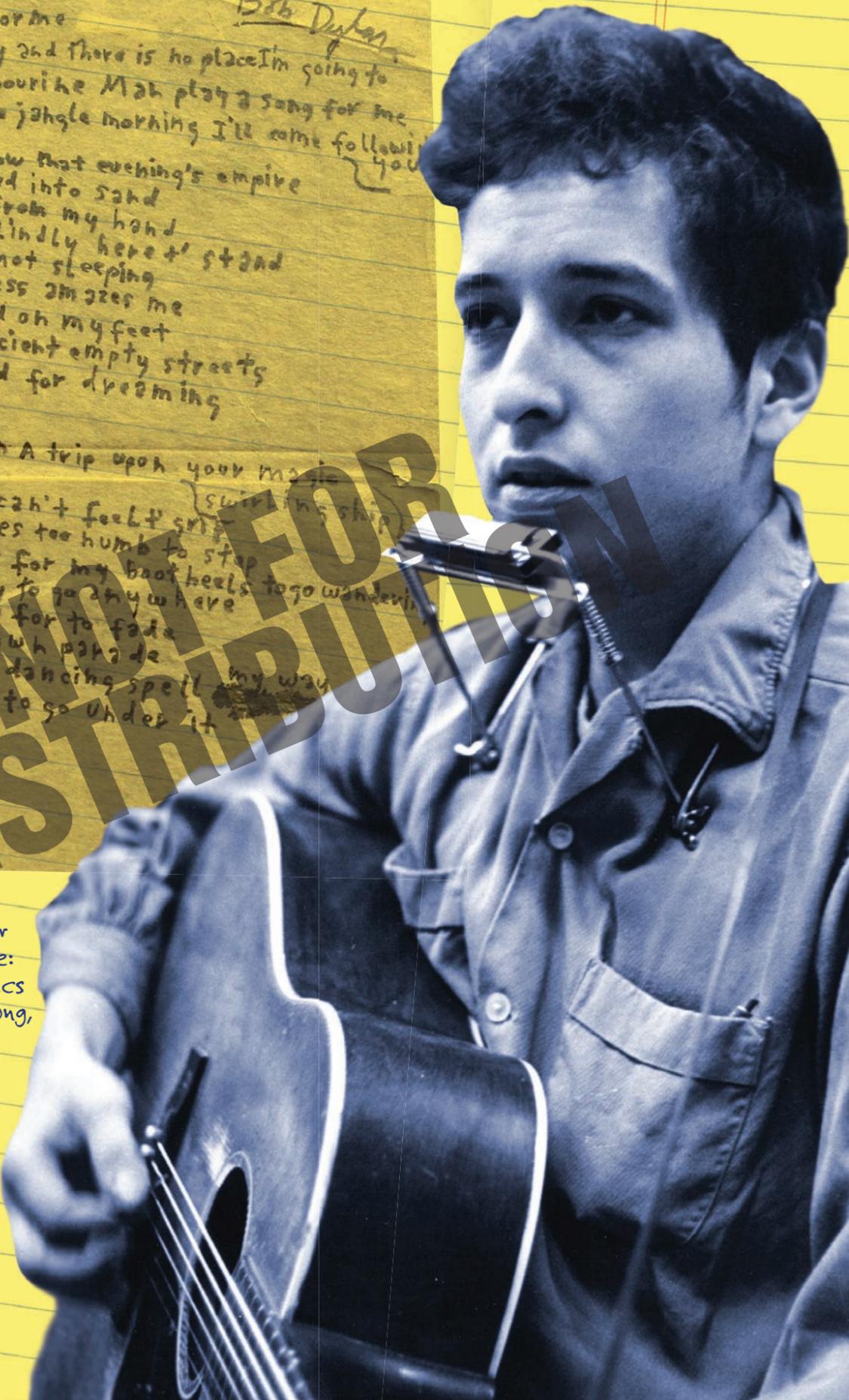
a songwriter. Along the way, however, there are many techniques that you can learn about the craft—both lyrically and musically—that will not only make the process easier, but can dramatically improve the quality of your songs.

In upcoming articles, we'll discuss the musical elements of songwriting. But for now, let's start by studying the art of the lyric.

IN A WORD

Before we dive in, let's consider the role that lyrics play in a song. Have you ever read a song's lyrics before listening to it? If not, give it a try. For example, read the four lines

Bob Dylan
Hey Mr. Tambourine Man
Play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey Mr. Tambourine Man play a song for me
In the jangle jangle morning I'll come following you
Though I know that evening's empire
Has returned into sand
Washed from my hand
Left me blindly here + stand
But still not sleeping
My weariness amazes me
I'm braked on my feet
And the ancient empty streets
Are too dead for dreaming
(Chorus)
Take me on a trip upon your magic
My hands can't feelt grip
My toes too numb to step
Wait only for my boot heels to go wanderin'
I'm ready to go anywhere
I'm ready for to fade
Into my own parade
Cast your dancing spell my way
I promise to go under it
(Chorus)



Right: Singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. Above: Handwritten lyrics to his 1965 hit song, "Mr. Tambourine Man."

PHOTOS: (MITCHELL) JACK ROBINSON/GETTY IMAGES, (DYLAN) MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES