

'Dylan Encyclopedia' author to give crash course on folk singer's life

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Hot on the heels of the release of the new Bob Dylan album, *Modern Times*, UT students will have the opportunity to get a crash course in the career of the popular artist at a special event presented by the University Thursday evening.

Writer Michael Gray, author of the recently released "The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia" will give a guest lecture at the Music Recital Hall tonight, presenting "Bob Dylan and the Poetry of the Blues," a one-man show utilizing video and music clips examining the impact American blues has had on the highly influential musician.

Gray first began chronicling the development of Dylan's music with 1973's "Song and Dance Man," and has followed Dylan's career ever since, across a series of books, reviews and other writings. He has also given numerous talks on the legendary performer and has been on tour since Aug. 30. His 823-page "The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia," a compendium of the people and places influencing and in turn influenced by Dylan, was released in June, garnering positive reviews from *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone* and others.

"What Gray gives you is an intelligent listener's perspective, but he's not a professional academic," said Thomas Palaima, classics professor. Palaima originally proposed the event after Gray contacted him through the *Austin American-Statesman*, where Palaima is a regular contributor. The talk will be Gray's first in Texas.

"He thought of Austin as the place to come, because there were so many Dylan connections, all these people he had played with over the years," said Palaima, adding that local musicians from Charlie Sexton through Doug Sahm had recorded or toured with Dylan.

The event is co-sponsored by a diverse array of UT interests, including the Center for American Music, the English department and the Harry Ransom Center. Palaima said Dylan's influence on American culture warrants Gray's serious study and offers the many groups backing the event as evidence of Dylan's importance.

"He's the American Homer," said Palaima, describing this significance of Gray's visit. "He has covered every aspect of the American experience in his career. The University should be interested in Dylan, because Dylan's a university in himself."

"Bob Dylan and the Poetry of the Blues" will be presented at MRH 2.608 at 8 p.m. Doors will open at 7:30. The event is free and open to the public.