

# THE AGE OF THE "NON-PROTEST" PROTEST SONG

**"In such ugly times, the only true protest is beauty."**

*songwriter Phil Ochs*

I made several people a tad upset recently when I suggested that we have entered a unique time in history that introduces the non-protest protest song ... these are powerful songs that are positive in nature encouraging good action, promoting community and that four letter word "love."

Keep in mind, most of those who were upset were artists who recently released albums of protest songs that nobody was buying.

What was my point? I feel the constant roar of anger and political divide across kitchen tables, communities, the nation and the world have turned people's attention away from angry songs. Those songs don't work so well. The age of finger pointing, stomping your feet, banging your head against the wall - although important in the spirit of free speech - is for the most part ineffective.

Bob Dylan realized this way back in the mid 60s. He single handedly revived the protest song and helped it reach a mass audience. By the time his album *The Times They Are A-Changin'* came out, he found himself crowned as the voice of a social movement and "the voice of a generation."

That was a heavy weight for a 22 year old kid from Minnesota.

So, he rejected it.

Dylan had decided that this was not what he wanted to be. Within months he explained to critic Nat Hentoff: *"I don't want to be a spokesman. From now on, I want to write from inside me ... I'm not part of no movement... I just can't make it with any organisation..."*

Oh, yes, he gave us a literary cannon of brilliant work ... *'Let Me Die in My Footsteps'*, *'Blowin' in the Wind'*, *'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall'*, *'Only a Pawn in Their Game'*, *'With God on Our Side'*, even *'Masters of War'* (taking on the military-industrial complex). Some of the best protest songs in musical history.

But he realized the work he now referred to as "finger-pointing songs" had no lasting value other than being musical works of art. They were indeed fine songs but accomplished little if anything.

It was the beginning of the end of Protest Songs.

I'm not suggesting that you don't speak up or express yourself. Your freedom of speech and freedom to express your point of view is critical. Of course, you should write, sing, march and speak up.

I'm talking about the music, not the intent. I'm specifically explaining why no one gives a damn. I'm talking about what works and the change in how society communicates.

For the most part, things like Twitter, Facebook and other web-based platforms have REPLACED the purpose of protest songs. That is why they those songs are no longer effective. People everywhere are arguing, lecturing, finger-pointing and complaining. It has become a harsh, loud, blustering thundercloud of noise that, in reality, changes nothing, changes no one's mind, changing no one's point of view.

So, what replaces the protest song?

Why, the "None-Protest" Protest Song.

Here's what a skilled writer and passionate SongFarmer can do:

Write songs that will actually work.

Write songs that become noticed beyond the digital roar.

Write songs that don't pound on the same bloody bruise that we see on Facebook and cable news. Folks have become weary from the anger.

Write songs that make a positive point, bring community together, have a gentle approach to other peoples points of view.

These days, kindness has become a very sharp blade.

Use it. It has become even more important than ever ... the front porch should not be a war zone ... write songs that make people feel good about their homes, their front porches, their neighborhoods, their heart, their life, their community and family and that is how you can help change the world for the better

In a world of anger and forceful opinions, songs about calmness will be noticed. And sung by others. And considered.

And remembered ... along with you, the artist who writes it.

