Hurricane: Background Notes

**Rubin Hurricane Carter**: born 1937 … died April, 2014.

During teenage years and early adulthood, spent time in juvenile detention and prison.

Turned to boxing, ranked no 3 middleweight contender in the world 1963-4.

**June 17 1966**: two men, and a woman murdered at a bar in Paterson, New Jersey

**Aug 14 1966**: a local small time criminal Alfred P. Bello said in a signed statement that he had scene Carter and another man, John Artis at the murder scene. Carter and Artis were arrested.

**May 27 1966:** an all-white jury convicted him and an associate John Artis. They were sentenced to life in prison.

**In September 1974**, while he was still in prison, Carter’s book ‘The Sixteenth Round’ was published.

In the book, Alfred P Bello and another witness, Arthur P. Bradley claimed they had been bribed and pressured into making false statements at the time and denied they had seen Carter and Artis at the murder scene.

Carter sent Dylan a copy of his book. Dylan visited him in prison.

Dylan co –wrote the song with Jacques Levy and released the single in **November 1975.**

Dylan had not written a protest or ‘finger pointing song’ in over ten years and has never written one again in spite of continuing to write and perform original material ever since.

**In March 1976**, a retrial was ordered and Carter and Artis were released.

At the retrial later that year both men were once again found guilty.

**In July 1985,** the New Jersey Federal District Court, the retrials convictions were overturned due to being ‘based on racism rather than reason’ and Carter was released.

(Some people have always disputed his innocence. There is plenty online both for and against.)

Source: The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia. Michael Gray.

(Gray is a big fan but not uncritical…. he says “almost every line of Dylan’s song is inaccurate” which I think is a tad harsh. He also says “none of this makes any difference to Hurricane as a creative achievement….. (it is) a scintillating rendition of a skilful affecting narrative”

**Trivia:** Carter spoke on the same stage as the Dalai Lama at the Telstra Dome in 2002. STC students who returned from the gig thought he was ‘awesome’

In his later years he was Executive Director of the organization, **In Defence of the Wrongly Convicted**.