

Superstar has superfan club

By JULIAN MAKEY

WHO WAS Louis J Manley? Not many people know that he was the assistant physician present at singer Bob Dylan's birth.

Among those who do are members of the Cambridge Bob Dylan Society who make the term "fan" seem woefully inadequate.

Any snippet of information about the great man, however trivial — even this article — is bound to be squirrelled away into someone's collection of memorabilia.

The society's organising group happily admits it is obsessed with a singer who became the voice of a generation.

But why do they do it?

John Stokes, 42, a legal accountant, of Oaklands, Fenstanton, said: "They feel Dylan is one of the most important people of current times.

"They are living alongside Dylan and treat themselves as archivists or historians for future generations."

Chris Cooper, 39, a male nurse from Peterborough, is a self-confessed "completist" — particularly ardent fans who attempt to collect recordings of every Dylan concert.

So far he has 1,200 audio tapes and 200 videos of the star in action. Dylan has made only 38 official albums.

Fans of ageing superstar Bob Dylan travel all over the world to see their hero — some preferring to spend money on concert tickets rather than mortgage payments. And some of his most ardent supporters are found at the Cambridge Bob Dylan Society.

A couple of members covered all 12 Eric Clapton concerts in London after hearing a rumour that Dylan might be appearing.

Chris tried to give up in 1982 and wrote telling his friends, but they carried on sending him tapes. His period of abstinence lasted two years.

Celebrating

"It took about two chords of 'Highway 61' in Newcastle and I was back in again," he said.

For publisher's proof reader John Nye, 38, of Woodlark Road, Cambridge, it is the attraction of Dylan's music.

Computer consultant Keith Marsh, 35, from Wellingborough, who has written a book on Dylan with Chris, has not long returned from watching 13 of

the 15 concerts in Dylan's European tour following a trip which cost him £1,000.

He was robbed during the tour, but Dylan fans he barely knew stepped in and gave him money and tickets.

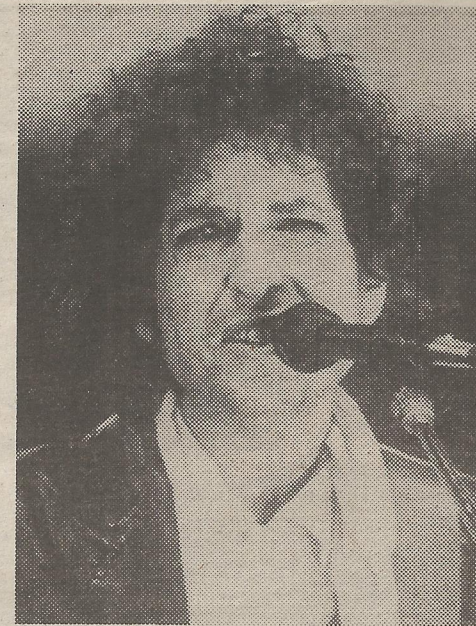
The organising group are a cheerful bunch not above poking fun at their own foibles.

Keith once made 355 telephone calls to get tickets for a Dylan concert.

"You can always pay the mortgage, but you can't always see Dylan," he said.

The society — open to everyone with an interest in Dylan — meets at the Royal Standard pub in Mill Road at 8 pm on the last Friday of the month. Admission is £1. Footnote: "Mastermind" questions on Dylan are considered child's play by the ultra-fans. The one about Louis J Manley came from a Dylan convention quiz.

'They think of themselves as archivists'



The man himself . . . Bob Dylan.



Cheerfully obsessed . . . John Nye of the Cambridge Bob Dylan Society.