

Bob Dylan rains supreme

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The use of weather as emotional metaphor is one of the richest seams in the history of pop music lyrics. Now academics have analysed how pop music reflects the weather and have also named the man who has written more songs mentioning the weather than any other: Bob Dylan.

From *Blowin' in the Wind* to *Shelter from the Storm*, he has used weather references in 163 of 542 songs. The study does not go into the more challenging aspects of Dylan meteorology, such as what are *Rainy Day Women #12 & 35* and what sort of wind is an *Idiot Wind*?

The researchers, mainly from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of Southampton, found 759 popular songs referring to the weather with the most common references being to the sun and rain, and the least common being blizzards. *Stormy*, a song covered by Scott Walker, mentions six types of weather.

More than 900 songwriters or singers have focused on the weather. After

Dylan, the most prolific are Lennon and McCartney. Weather songs make 7 per cent of the total in *Rolling Stone's* 2011 top 500 list of greatest songs.

Dr Sally Brown, the lead author, said: "We were all surprised how often weather is communicated in popular music, whether as a simple analogy or a major theme of a song, such as *Blowin' in the Wind* or the Hollies' *Bus Stop*, where a couple fall in love under an umbrella."

The study, published in the journal *Weather*, says that some songs were inspired by specific events. The Beatles' *Rain* was prompted by a downpour in Melbourne, Australia, of which Lennon said: "I've never seen rain as hard as that, except in Tahiti." And George Harrison wrote *Here Comes the Sun* after he emerged from an annoying business meeting into one of the first sunny days of spring.

Dr Brown added: "References to bad weather in pop songs were statistically more significant in the USA during the more stormy 1950s and 1960s than the quieter periods of 1970s and 1980s."

