It's All Over Now, Baby Blue

In the film Don't Look Back, Dylan sits around his room in London's posh Savoy Hotel, surrounded by hangers-on. Bored, he picks up an acoustic guitar and plays a new song he's just written: "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." He has an evil grin on his face; after the first two verses, it's the only smile in the room – everyone else looks shattered. The party's definitely over. The song was originally recorded on January 15, 1965 with Dylan's acoustic guitar and harmonica and William E. Lee's bass guitar the only instrumentation. The lyrics were heavily influenced by Symbolist poetry and bid farewell to the titular "Baby Blue."

It's All Over Now, Baby Blue

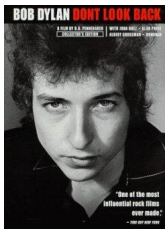
"It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" is a song performed and featured on his "Bringing It All Back Home" album, released on March 22, 1965 by Columbia Records. It was a huge mystery back then about the real identity of the "Baby Blue" referred in the lyrics. There were even speculations that it might be Bob Dylan himself.

Bob Dylan - Bringing It All Back Home

“Dylan” was a self-chosen name in homage to the great, legendarily self-destructive Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, whose lush, lyric, over-the-top poetry presumably influenced many of Bob Dylan’s songs. At the time it might have seemed an act of extraordinary chutzpah for a Jewish kid from Duluth, Minnesota, named Bob Zimmerman to anoint himself with the poet’s internationally famous name.

Dylan Thomas

In the history of American popular music, Dylan is generally credited with the transforming of the folk-revival movement from its reverent fixation upon traditional ballads to the creation of new, socially engaged, and politically provocative music. The composer/songwriter becomes the performer. And what a performer!



‘Don't Look Back’ (1967), poster

Bob Dylan’s raspy voice and aggressive folk style imprinted itself upon the public when, in his brilliant album “Bringing It All Back Home,” he cultivated a more sophisticated musical idiom, synthesizing folk and rock in a way that would seem inevitable in retrospect; yet, at the time, struck folk music purists as disloyal. Dylan clearly anticipated the formal, aesthetic, and tonal limitations of folk music, even as, by way of LSD experimentation, he explored the myriad possibilities of bending music as one bends one’s mind, toward the surreal, the fantastic, the phantasmagoric.

Bob Dylan Blue

Perhaps his most haunting song, as it’s his most mysterious, is the surreal “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”, with its air of a fairy tale in which the end of something (a love affair? a life?) is being reiterated in each refrain in the very face of *‘Strike another match, let’s start anew.’* Like all good poetry, this song of Dylan’s can’t be paraphrased. Like all good music it is both of its time and timeless.

Bob Dylan sings ”It’s All Over Now Baby Blue”

The words constantly at the forefront of the woman's mind are those of the title, which are repeated in the refrain: *'It's all over now, Baby Blue'.* The first is negative. In envisaging a time – a *'now'* – after her anticipated death, she sees her life as a failure. Her life is gone, and with it both her chance of happiness and the opportunity for doing good. The other way of taking the claim is more positive. By the end of the song it might well be the case that *'i t's all over now'* in that her decision to help others will have brought about the end their misery, and with it her own.

Joan Baez - It's All Over Now Baby Blue

There's little reason to see "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" as 'about' an event in Dylan's life, such as his adopting a new musical style around the time it was written. Essentially it's about the mental state of someone trying to renew their life following what they see as a calamity – the breakup of a relationship. Although the woman concerned is being addressed by the narrator, it makes sense to see her for most of the time as addressing herself.

The Byrds - It’s All Over Now Baby Blue, single

So who is Baby Blue? Well, like most of Dylan's subjects, the character is probably an amalgam of personalities in his orbit. There has been much speculation about the real life identity of "Baby Blue", with possibilites including Joan Baez, David Blue, Paul Clayton, Dylan's folk music audience, and even Dylan himself.

The Grateful Dead - It’s All Over Now Baby Blue

“It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue” is a great song, with a colorful cast of characters, a plaintive chorus, and a memorable message. In a way, it treads similar ground as “Like A Rolling Stone” and the “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” The folk guitar chord changes and somber melody alone make listeners prick up their ears to listen. And there is something simply heartbreaking, allusively so, about the chorus line.

Graham Bonnet - It’s All Over Now Baby Blue

"It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" has been covered countless times by a variety of artists from bands like the Byrds, and Animals to Falco, Hugh Masekela, and Bryan Ferry. The Belfast band Them (featuring Van Morrison) recorded a cover of "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" in 1966. It was later re-released in Germany in December 1973 where the single became a hit in Germany, first entering the charts in February 1974 and peaking at #13, during a chart stay of 14 weeks. The Grateful Dead and solo Jerry Garcia had the song in their extensive repertoire of Dylan songs.

Them - It’s All Over Now Baby Blue

“I had carried that song around in my head for a long time,”- Dylan has said, -*“and I remember that when I was writing it, I’d remembered a Gene Vincent song. It had always been one of my favorites, Baby Blue… ‘When first I met my baby/she said how do you do/she looked into my eyes and said/my name is Baby Blue.’ It was one of the songs I used to sing back in high school. Of course, I was singing about a different Baby Blue.”*

B[redacted]

Baby Blue