

Positively Fourth Street

(Bob Dylan)

You got a lotta nerve to say you are my friend
When I was down, you just stood there grinning
You got a lotta nerve to say you gotta helping hand to lend
You just want to be on the side that's winning
You say I let you down, you know it's not like that
If you're so hurt why then don't you show it?
You say you lost your faith but that's not where it's at
You have no faith to lose and you know it
I know the reason that you talk behind my back
I used to be among the crowd you're in with
Do you take me for such a fool to think I'd make contact
With the one who tries to hide what he don't know to begin with?
You see me on the street, you always act surprised
You say, "How are you? Good luck," but you don't mean it
When you know as well as me you'd rather see me paralyzed
Why don't you just come out once and scream it?
No, I do not feel that good when I see the heartbreaks you embrace
If I was a master thief perhaps I'd rob them
And now I know you're dissatisfied with your position and your place
Don't you understand, it's not my problem
I wish that for just one time you could stand inside my shoes
And just for that one moment, I could be you
Yes, I wish that for just one time, you could stand inside my shoes
You'd know what a drag it is to see you

"Positively 4th Street" is a song written and performed by Bob Dylan, first recorded in New York City on July 29, 1965. It was released as a single by Columbia Records on September 7, 1965, reaching No. 1 on Canada's RPM chart, No. 7 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100, and No. 8 on the UK Singles Chart. Rolling Stone magazine ranked the song as No. 206 in their 500 Greatest Songs of All Time list.

The song was released between the albums *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*, as the follow-up to Dylan's hit single "Like a Rolling Stone", but was not included on either LP. The song's title does not appear anywhere in the lyrics and there has been much debate over the years as to the significance or which individual the song concerns.

The master take of "Positively 4th Street" was recorded on July 29, 1965, during the mid-June to early August recording sessions that produced all of the material that appeared on Dylan's 1965 album, *Highway 61 Revisited*. The song was the last to be attempted that day, with Dylan and a variety of session musicians having already successfully recorded master takes of "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry" and "Tombstone Blues". The studio band on "Positively 4th Street" featured Robert Gregg (drums), Harvey Brooks (bass), Frank Owens or Paul Griffin (piano), Al Kooper (organ) and Mike Bloomfield (guitar), with the song initially being logged on the studio's official recording session documentation under the working title of "Black Dalli Rue".

In 1989 a Bristol music promoter purchased an old KB Discomatic jukebox that had once belonged to John Lennon during the mid-1960s. A copy of Dylan's "Positively 4th Street" single was found among the 41 7" singles loaded onto the machine. As a result, the song appears on the John Lennon's Jukebox compilation album, which was released to coincide with the publicity surrounding the jukebox's unveiling and a South Bank Show documentary about the jukebox.

The song, like most of Dylan's, is composed of a simple harmonic, or chordal, and melodic structure; the verse has a I-ii-IV-I progression followed by I-V-IV-vi-V. The song is in the key of F# Major. Dylan begins by telling the unspecified second-person target of the song that they have a lot of nerve to say that they are his friend and then goes on to list a multitude of examples of their backstabbing duplicity. While the lyrics are distinctly negative, the organ-dominated backing music is that of care-free folk-rock. The melody is somewhat repetitive and does not deviate from the harmonic progression set up during the first four lines of the song. Additionally, the song has no recognisable, repeating refrain, and does not feature its title anywhere in the song's lyrics. Founder of *Crawdaddy!* magazine, Paul Williams, has noted that the song's lyrics are uncharacteristically straightforward and devoid of the rich, poetic imagery present in the majority of Dylan's contemporaneous material. Thus, the song can be seen as something of an open letter to Dylan's intended target, with the Top 40 airwaves serving as Dylan's means of communication.

There is uncertainty about exactly which "4th Street" the title refers to, with many scholars and fans speculating it refers to more than one. New York City's 4th Street is at the heart of the Manhattan residential district Greenwich Village, where Dylan once lived. This area was central to the burgeoning folk music scene of the early 1960s, which centered around Dylan and many other influential singer-songwriters. For example, Gerde's Folk City was originally located at 11 West 4th Street. However, the song also may concern Dylan's stay at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, where 4th Street S.E. is one of the two main roads crossing through the part of campus known as Dinkytown, where Dylan lived and performed.