
Bob Dylan World Tours 1966-1974 Through the Camera of Barry Feinstein

A Look at Photographer Barry Feinstein

By El Bicho

Gilbert's documentary will be many things to many people, depending on how deep your interest in Dylanology is. From its title, the documentary purports to be about two of Dylan's most famous world tours as seen through the lens of tour photographer Barry Feinstein.

Those tours took place during the years 1966, when Dylan decided to give up his role as the king of folk music to play electric rock 'n' roll, and 1974, when Dylan returned to touring after a self-imposed period of seclusion following his motorcycle accident. The Band backed Dylan on both tours and the 1974 tour can be heard on the album *Before The Flood*. Feinstein is a very good photographer. His work has graced the pages of *Time*, *Esquire*, *Newsweek*, and *Look*. He shot album covers for Janis Joplin's *Pearl* and Dylan's *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. He worked as a cameraman on *Easy Rider*, *Monterey Pop* and even directed *You Are What You Eat*.

Throughout the documentary we see a number of his photos of Dylan, most of which are revealed for the first time. He talks about the art of photography and the techniques he employed. He was asked by Dylan and *Life* magazine to cover the 1966 tour, which he shot in black and white only. Then he went out on the 1974 tour, adding color to his palette. The 1974 tour was Feinstein's last because it was so good that he believed any other tour would pale in comparison.

The documentary appeared to be a nice tribute to a man who was a talented artist in his own field and was a witness to some memorable events in the world of popular music. However, when the documentary and Gilbert venture off to cover Dylan's downtime between tours by retracing Dylan's steps in Woodstock and Greenwich Village, we see the true purpose of the documentary is for Gilbert to live out his Dylan fantasies.

Gilbert is the lead singer of the Dylan tribute band Highway 61 Revisited, wrote a book about Dylan's guitar technique and even tries to appear like Dylan. The similarities start and end with the shirts and sunglasses he wears, though.

Gilbert meets with other people that had been in contact with Dylan regardless of their connection to Feinstein or even the tours in question. Gilbert interviews documentary filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker, who made *Don't Look Back* about Dylan's 1965 tour of England. Pennebaker was along for the tumultuous 1966 tour as well. Gilbert shows him

some of Feinstein's pictures and they talk a little, but not much is gained in the experience for the viewer.

Other segments get stranger and more off track. Gilbert interviews A. J. Weberman whose claim to fame is that he constantly harassed Dylan when he lived in Greenwich by going through Dylan's trash, by recording and releasing the phone calls when Dylan asked Weberman to stop bugging him, and by having hundreds of people show up on the street outside Dylan's apartment on his birthday.

Weberman is shown to be a complete nut the longer he talks; he believes that Dylan put out a hit on him in a song, yet garners no sympathy when he talks about Dylan beating him up. While Weberman admits he was wrong for what he had done, there's no reason to give him any more attention; however, he does make Gilbert's Dylan obsession seem normal in comparison.

Gilbert also interviews recently deceased Al Aronowitz who introduced Dylan and The Beatles. Aronowitz' voice is almost unintelligible as he talks about the legendary meeting and how they all smoked pot together. It wasn't until I did some research that I discovered it took place on August 28, 1964, which is two years before the '66 tour, so I'm not sure why it's included.

Gilbert is the main weakness of the project. He says that he keeps in mind the work of Pennebaker in the work that he does, but his choices certainly don't reflect it. He makes bad decisions as the director, such as leaving in a phone-call interruption during the interview with Pennebaker. The footage is poorly put together and looks horrible. Some of the interviews are presented with the interviewee in a small box on the screen that moves around to different corners while the background is the same image from the small box, except that it is blown up and colorless. It is very distracting.

The worst sequence is an attempt to recreate Dylan's motorcycle accident a la *Hard Copy*. There's a lot of footage of a motorcycle in a sepia tone with the sounds of the bike idling and loud crickets. Gilbert rides on a Triumph motorcycle intercut with footage of him walking through a graveyard. The image is manipulated with special effects and sounds of a crash are added. It is unnecessary and unintentionally silly.

The film could have been a fascinating, hour-long look at Feinstein instead of the two-hour fan fantasy that is presented. I enjoyed learning about Feinstein and he takes very good photographs. The information about Dylan is interesting and informative, but things almost screech to a halt whenever Gilbert inserts himself.

He even comes off like a jerk in a sequence in Woodstock when he messes with the mind of an old burnt-out hippie by telling the guy he is Dylan and signs an autograph for a young girl. Hard core aficionados will enjoy this video tour. Those with a milder Dylan appreciation will enjoy the photographs and history. I recommend renting it before you buy to see if it is what you want. I would have preferred a book of Feinstein's work. Hopefully, this documentary will be the needed catalyst.



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