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Bob Dylan - Bob Dylan 1978-1989 - Both Ends of the Rainbow DVD

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Since appearing in small venues in New York City's Greenwich Village in the early 1960s, Bob Dylan has become the subject of discussion to exhaustive infinity. Somehow, fans and critics alike cannot seem to grasp the concept that Bob Dylan, while often considered a musician or performer by occupation, is a true artist. While cynics attempt to categorize his life's musical evolution, Dylan is far ahead of the overanalyzing minds that seek to catch and classify him, developing new ideas in sometimes "radical" progressions, lyrical contexts, and yes, even clothing. At times, cynics should listen, observe, and appreciate the evolution of a true artist unfolding before their eyes, rather than stating how Dylan has produced a "bad" album, or is in a creative hole. Bob Dylan 1978-1989 - Both Ends of the Rainbow is a work that pays homage to the context of Bob Dylan as a historical figure and artist in the period between 1978-1989.

While the musical spectrum of the late '70s and early to mid-'80s was pawing hard guitar rock for synthesizer-based, chorus-laden effects, Bob Dylan was maintaining his integrity. This DVD depicts Dylan's artistic progression in a more or less matter-of-fact manner during his recording and producing of *Slow Train Coming* (1979), *Saved* (1980), *Shot of Love* (1981), *Infidels* (1983), *Empire Burlesque* (1985), *Knocked Out Loaded* (1986), *Traveling Wilburys, Vol. 1* (1988), *Dylan & the Dead [live]* (1989), and *Oh Mercy* (1989). Over the course of 127 minutes, journalists, Rolling Stone Editors, Dylan biographers, album producers/engineers, and studio musicians provide their insight into the recording of the nine albums that Bob Dylan recorded in a span of roughly eleven years (an astounding album every fourteen months).

Interspersed between short bits of Dylan audio and video footage, viewers are educated about Dylan's interest and study of Christianity and its affect on his artistry; while informative and historically integral, the first forty minutes of the DVD are very slow-moving and dry - production was most definitely not of great concern in the minds of the disc's producers, as there is further opportunity for musical background, visual aides, and even technical effects (fades, etc) that is very barely adequate. While it need not be, the first forty minutes (while historically accurate) are quite dull.

Not long after the first forty minutes, the footage, production, and information begins to pick up; viewers are finally treated to some live video footage of Dylan's performance at Live Aid, and many live studio takes of his current-at-the-time material. An interesting note: observe how the musicians, producers, and engineers that are interviewed stay more to reporting the facts of recording sessions as they happened - very interesting and true stories that attest to Dylan's method, or lack thereof. Now, watch the interview footage of the biographers and journalists; this is where the DVD is both benefitted and tarnished - while their strictly historical information is accurate, their interpretation of what Dylan was thinking during his *Saved* or *Oh Mercy* albums is overkill. Why would viewers want to know what people, other than Bob Dylan himself, think about what Bob Dylan is thinking? It is understood that Dylan dislikes and does not easily or often grant interviews, but it does happen, and if viewers are so curious to know what Bob Dylan was thinking when he tracked "Brownsville Girl," do some research and get the answer straight from the horse's mouth. While the documentary is a bit longer than necessary, this issue is where it loses a bit of credibility - especially the way in which it ends - like hitting a brick wall.

In addition to the documentary, the DVD contains the famous Bob Dylan Gospel Interview that is heard in bits and pieces during the first forty minutes of the main title, contributor biographies, and section that displays more of Dylan's available works; unfortunately, an absolutely uninspired main menu text almost makes it seem not worth checking the other features.

Disc two features seven audio interviews (approximately one hour in total length) of Bob Dylan radio interviews from between 1978-1981. With the exception of one obvious interview, all of the recorded telephone Q&A with Dylan is informative, demystifying (which humanizes him to the faithful), and even features a bit of a nervous Dylan. All in all, the interviews are no-frills one on ones; a nice touch to the package.

Overall, while this release is informative, slightly dry at times, and a bit much in terms of other people's thoughts on what Dylan was thinking, it is a relevant source for learning about the great artist. What could make this product more pleasurable to view - perhaps some more concert video footage with Dylan, and even a new interview with Dylan (or at least a submitted request) speaking about what he was thinking during the period between 1978-1989. Most consider this period his low point, but in reality, this was the period of Dylan's greatest artistic exploration. Imagine being content performing "Blowing In the Wind" the same way for 40+ years without expressing or exploring any sentiments of evolving... A true artists finds oneself, let's go of that self, and then returns in another incarnation, and Dylan is still doing so, and will continue down this path as long as his mental clock ticks.

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