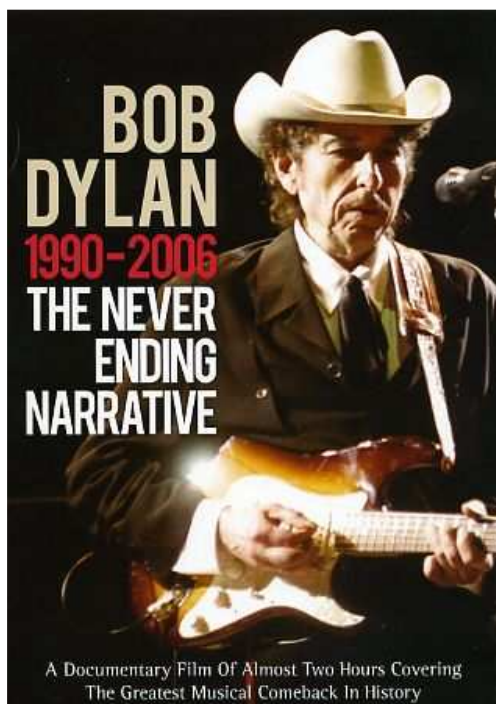


 FAME Review: Bob Dylan - 1990 - 2006: The Never Ending Story (DVD)





1990 - 2006: The Never Ending Story

[Bob Dylan](#)

[Chrome Dreams](#) - CV15610 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Upon the advent of Dylan's 70th birthday, this analysis of the great man's most difficult two decades is particularly auspicious, as the release of *The Never Ending Narrative* follows thankfully on the heels of Dylan's final re-invention of himself. There will be, ladies and gentlemen, no further New Dylans. Prior, however, to this latest wrinkle, the poet troubadour went through a dizzying succession of uneven albums and highly questionable concerts. In fact, at one point, Bob's backing band is rightly characterized here as "hopeless" while the performances, Bobby Z included, were "unspeakable", more than once so bad that it appeared the guitarist-singer was out of his mind.

Of course any chart of that descent and rocky bottoming-out is rooted in the man's highly controversial conversion from what was early a very loosely practiced Judaism (later to become an alliance with the Chabad Lubavitch movement, even, if reports are accurate, while he was yet a Christian), a fact conveniently omitted whenever Dylan is scorned for sudden zealotry into born-again Xianity. In 2004, he made a telling remark on CBS that has gone unnoted—"You're born, you know, the wrong names, wrong parents. I mean, that happens"—and that could very well, when explored properly, explain much of the genesis of what occurred and was carried on for, as *Never Ending* emphasizes, many long, puzzling, and sometimes heartbreaking years. Hidden away in that one telling remark, I very strongly suspect, is the sort of material Alice Miller made groundbreaking advances in, in trauma and the problems of human developmental psychology. One doesn't really expect critics to explore such things, but there may well be a whole new area of rock journalism waiting in those two not-so-casual sentences.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of this overview, though, is the wealth of insightful, biting, highly entertaining opinions and facts, a treasure trove of what music criticism really should be and much too frequently is not—not to mention what it always should have been a la Joe Carducci and his monumental *Rock and the Pop Narcotic*—even with its many flaws. Such barbed philosophical estates nicely counter the hyper-commercial maundering the "profession" has come to be as the old dogs sell their all-too-ready-souls for cushy well-paid magazines spots, professorships, and what have you, the new generation tending to a vocabulary apparently composed of nothing but flippancy and horrifically tired novo-clichés. Not so here. In *Never Ending*, no one holds back, highly considered in their praise, historical tracings, dubieties, and even some condemnations. Wait until you glom the pronouncement on Daniel Lanois' involvement with Dylan. Highly amusing and dead on, the kind of Hey-I-don't-have-any-paymasters-Luigi-and-I'll-say-what-I-damn-well-please!! brazenness that rock and roll has always arrogated to itself.

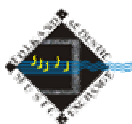
The wry comment is early rendered that rock and roll, where once it was all about youth, has now also become interested in the process of aging. True enough, and if not in lyrics as such, then more so in the creation of art, the process of change itself, and what happens after all the piss and vinegar have evaporated with the subsidence of hormones and the loss of all that precious once-boundless energy. Dylan finds himself again, like it as he may or may not, figuring as a central exponent in all that's good and bad in the milieu, and his commentarists are not loathe to examine every inch of the still resolving borderlands.

Thus, this overview journey is engaging, salty, illuminating, incisive, controversial, enjoyable as hell, and hugely satisfying. Look out MVD, Eagle Vision, and Sexy Intellectual, you've got hungry company! In fact, *The Never Ending Narrative* is so far the very best I've yet seen in this regard, setting a new high-water mark for future serious criticism outside print venues. More, considering the shoddy estate of so hideously much of the inky realm, *Narrative* very well be establishing what it truly means to be a critic in the video age.

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