

# No Direction Home follows Dylan on musical odyssey

How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a legend? However many it is, Bob Dylan has been there and done it — and he's got the legion of dedicated followers to prove it.

Chief among them these days seems to be Martin Scorsese. In the wake of his deservedly acclaimed documentary series *The Blues*, the most influential American filmmaker of his generation has turned his focus toward the most influential American singer-songwriter of his generation. And the results are every bit as extensive as you might expect — though perhaps not quite as definitive as you might hope.

*No Direction Home*, premiering on PBS's *American Masters* Sept. 26 and 27 but in stores Tuesday on DVD, is a two-disc set that chronicles the first few years of Dylan's relentless, decades-long musical odyssey. Combining extensive archival footage, interviews with Dylan's friends, lovers, contemporaries and competitors, and — most potentially revealing of all — in-depth conversations with the man himself, the 210-minute epic follows the young Robert Zimmerman from his youth in rural Minnesota to his status as the so-called “spokesman for his generation,” ending with the turmoil and controversy sparked by his decision to go electric in 1965.

Disc 1 plays like the Dylan version of *Bound for Glory*. Confined by the limits of life in small-town Hibbing, the young Jimmy strikes out for Minneapolis and then New York City, where he rewrites his past, immerses himself in the city's coffeehouse scene and meets up with his folksinger hero Woody Guthrie. Catching the ear of renowned talent scout John Hammond, Dylan becomes a recording artist, slowly climbing to global fame thanks to inspirational songs like *Blowin' in the Wind* and *Mr. Tambourine Man*.

But fame, typically, is not all it's cracked up to be, as we learn in *Disc 2*. Quickly elevated from folksinger to folk hero, Dylan seeks to keep moving forward, but can't seem to escape demanding fans, idiotic journalists and even fellow artists who want him to remain the same. The climax comes on his infamous U.K. tour in 1965, when he ends up sparring from the stage with a heckler who brands him a “Judas” for playing electric guitar with a band.

To any Dylan fan, it's a familiar tale. But Scorsese's documentary brings it to life in a way printed biographies never could. For the first time, we see it all: The streets of his home town, the clubs he played in New York, the artists he hung with, the studios where he recorded. Thanks to the mountain of live footage — including a slew of previously unreleased performances — we get to watch Dylan evolve from the young, rudimentary performer and songwriter into the charismatic, frizzy-haired genius who changed



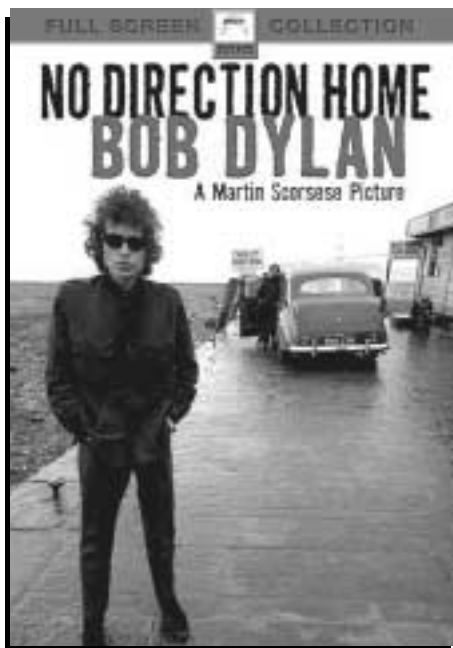
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the face of rock with *Like a Rolling Stone*. And of course, we get to hear about it from the horse's mouth.

Ultimately, though, Dylan's input ends up being both the documentary's biggest coup and its biggest disappointment. Sure, the reclusive singer discusses his past more

than he ever has before. But he still doesn't say much of any importance. Ever since his early days, Dylan has been a master prevaricator, obfuscator and self-mythologist. And he isn't about to change his ways now. Throughout the interviews, he continues to deny the obvious, romanticize the mundane, avoid the uncomfortable and claim more memory lapses than a president under cross-examination. Even worse, Scorsese, either out of reverence or reluctance, lets him get away



with all of it. If you want to hear about Dylan's life outside of music, his relationships, his drug use — pretty much anything that might add some human depth to his story — forget it. While we spend tons of time staring right into Dylan's eyes and listening to his words, a true picture of him remains as maddeningly elusive as ever. Which, we suspect, is just how he wants it.

One last point. If you're wondering why you should shell out for a DVD of a show that's gonna be on TV for free, here's why: 1) Because the DVD extras include seven complete performances edited down for the show, along with an unused *Positively 4th Street* promo film, performances from the likes of Maria Muldaur, Joan Baez and Liam Clancy, and more; 2) Because even the least dedicated Dylan follower is going to want to watch this historic footage way more than once.

★★★★



## DEVO Live 1980 MVD

And we say yeah, yeah, yeah, yeahyeahyeahyeahyeahyeahyeah

YEAH! If you're like us, you've got an uncontrollable urge for vintage DEVO video. But for years, the Spudboys have been frustrating us with limp reunion-tour vids and promo-clip comps. Well, somebody finally opened up the vault and brought out the good stuff — *Live 1980*. Recorded in a San Francisco theatre on the band's *Freedom of Choice* tour, this is 75 minutes of classic DEVO, complete with flower-pot hats, bodysuits and twitchy performances of *Whip It*, *Jocko Homo*, *Satisfaction*, *Smart Patrol / Mr. DNA*, *Come Back Jonee*. Historic to say the least. Too bad that whoever wrote the introductory CGI crawl didn't have a sense of history — it claims Reagan was president in August 1980 when this was taped. Looks like de-evolution is true after all.

★★★1/2

## Flaming Lips VOID Warner

As the recent rockumentary *The Fearless Freaks* established, Oklahoma's Flaming Lips are one of the most creative and endearingly quirky bands around. Not surprisingly, most of their videos earn the same adjectives and accolades. *VOID — Video Overview in Deceleration* — compiles 19 of the eccentric pop outfit's promo clips from 1992 - 2005. Along with the familiar hits like *She Don't Use Jelly*, *Turn it On*, *Do You Realize* and *Fight Test*, you get weird little nuggets like *Frogs* and *Everyone Wants to Live Forever*, and even the new *Mr. Ambulance Driver* — all remastered in 5.1 audio to add yet another dimension to the Lips' psychedelic arsenal. Turn it on, crank it up and get your freak on.

★★★

## Austin City Limits Music Festival

### Various Artists Rhino | Warner

Much like the venerable TV music series that shares its name, the *Austin City*



compilation from last year's festival gives you a little bit of everything: Local heroes like Bob Schneider and Los Lonely Boys, jammers like Trey Anastasio, country gals like Roseanne Cash and Shelby Lynne, hipsters like Franz Ferdinand and Pixies, southern rockers like My Morning Jacket and Drive-By Truckers, and even Canucks like Sloan and Broken Social Scene. Plus it's a lot cheaper than a plane ticket to Texas.

★★★

