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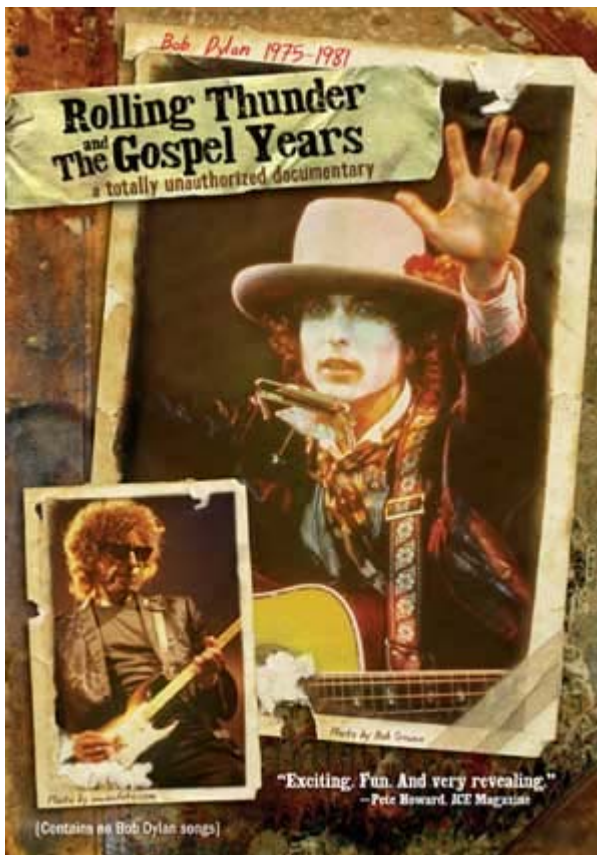
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BOB DYLAN 1975-1981 ROLLING THUNDER & THE GOSPEL YEARS

a totally unauthorized documentary

DVD Review by CD Pinkerton / bobsboots.com



Let me begin this write-up by telling the reader: "If you are reading this review at bobsboots.com, then you are the target audience of the film". It is geared toward the serious Dylan fan looking for a deeper understanding of particular events surrounding Bob during the six year period between 1975 and 1981. You owe it to yourself and to your Dylan collection to add this little gem to your arsenal.

Two other factions that will find it indispensable are fans of Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, and fans of Ramblin' Jack Elliot. This is the first interview that Carter has given in 30 years. It is an in-depth recapitulation of Rubin's slant of the events surrounding the 1966 murders for which he and John Artis were twice convicted. He brings Dylan into the picture more-so than any past chronicle has done. In the fascinating interview, the lines become indelibly blurred as to what are actual facts of the case, what are Rubin's sometimes dubious claims from his 1974

autobiography, and what has become his morphed interpretation of those claims through the direction of Dylan's lyrics that were, themselves, artistically gleaned from the autobiography. Ramblin' Jack is an encyclopedic compilation of everyone that he's ever befriended. Listen as he speaks with humor and wit about the Rolling Thunder and his involvement with Dylan and the sundry characters that created the human calliope that became the Revue. In a special feature of the DVD, Elliot weaves romantic stories of growing up and discovering life as only Jack can relate them. As he recalls, "I was born on a 45,000 acre ranch in the middle of Flatbush." Of course, most of us refer to this particular ranch as Brooklyn, NY.

Ok, let's get the negative aspects of this DVD out of the way, so we can concentrate on why it is a must-have item. First, and most importantly, While producer Joel Gilbert is an incredible Dylan sound-alike, (He and his band travel the country as the Dylan tribute act "Highway 61 Revisited") he is a neophyte movie director. His past accomplishments include *Bob Dylan 1966 World Tour The Home Movies* released in 2003, and last years' *Bob Dylan World Tours*

1966-1974 Through the Camera of Barry Feinstein. Continuing his passion for releasing life stories of Dylan with protracted titles, he gives us *BOB DYLAN 1975-1981 ROLLING THUNDER & THE GOSPEL YEARS* a totally unauthorized documentary. While this is his best directorial effort to date, there are still pitfalls. During the interviews, the screen quickly and constantly changes from full screen to half screen, bordered images to borderless, and from color to black and white. This artistic approach lends an MTV feel to the project, but its over-use becomes annoying at times. Too much of a good thing. Worse yet, each interviewee's comments are periodically interlaced with silly little cartoon stills à la VH1 that give some of the serious comments a non-believable feel. Their arduous over-abundance feel most inappropriate for discourses of this caliber.

That noted, I promise that you'll walk away from this film with handfuls of golden nuggets! If you think that this review might be a bit long, you ain't seen nothin' yet! The running time of this DVD is four hours! It's nearly too much to take in on a single sitting, nor does it need to be. The various interviews and time periods allow for natural feeling breaks to pause the film for rest room, food, or sleep. There are additional bonus features that are worth the price of the DVD by themselves! They include a fascinating journey with Gilbert to Hibbing Minnesota to explore Dylan's childhood home, and includes a tour of the family house, the iron ore strip mine that would frame several of Dylan's writings, comments of those who knew him, and much more. Also included in the special feature section is a wonderful photo gallery as well as the aforementioned Ramblin' Jack extended interview.

Just to touch on what's in store for the Dylan fan, how about seeing the 1980 three minute Dylan interview from the Pittsburgh Hilton Hotel that was broadcast by KDKA TV on May 15, 1980 ? There is, of course, no Dylan music on the DVD, but there is professionally shot concert footage. The tastefully incorporated background music from Highway 61 Revisited will cause you to perk your ears several times. There are also musical offerings from Scarlet Rivera, Regina McCrary, Rob Stoner, Jack Elliot, and Bruce Langhorne. Tour inside Muscle Shoals Studio and talk with producer Jerry Wexler. See some World Of John Hammond clips, go inside the -ahem- Rundown Studio in Santa Monica, and watch many revealing insider comments.

The absolutely not-to-be missed interviews that delve behind the scenes of Dylan's world include those from the intellectual and musical genius of Dylan band leader Rob Stoner; insights from Claudia Levy - the wife of deceased Jacques Levy who was Dylan's co-writer for Desire and stage manager for the Revue; A first ever interview with Dylan's bible teacher from the Vineyard Church, Pastor Bill Dwyer; Fascinating glimpses into Rolling Thunder from Scarlet Rivera (the beautiful violinist of both Desire and the tour) and others; and stories of the gospel years from keyboardist Spooner Oldham, song writer Al Kasha, Rock music reporter Joel Selvin and others. Even self proclaimed Dylanologist AJ Weberman chimes in with some truly provocative thoughts before he descends into the maelstrom of Weberman lunacy towards the end of the film. This could have been edited out, but it's been left for the viewer to do.

All in all I have only the highest recommendation for this DVD. Do yourself a favor, and pre order it now so that you'll be sure to get a copy on the street release date!

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Description:

Director & Producer Joel Gilbert (Bob Dylan 1966 World Tour The Home Movies, 2003 and Bob Dylan

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World Tours 1966-1974 Through the Camera of Barry Feinstein, 2005) weaves the story of this monumental period of Dylans life and music through revealing insider portraits, exclusive photos, live concert video clips and TV footage from 1975-1981, and with visits to Rundown Studios, the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, the Vineyard Church, and the Fox Warfield Theatre. www.highway61ent.com

Song Titles:

Featuring: Concert Video Clips 1975-1981; KDKA TV Interview Unearthed; World of John Hammond Clips; Rundown Studios Revealed; Muscle Shoals Studios Visit; Revealing Insider Interviews; Journey to Hibbing; Ramblin Jacks Early Days; Photo Gallery 1975-1981

Other Info:

Label: MVD
Running Time: 241 mins
Region Code: 0
Format: DVD

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