

# The Electric Review

## FROM THE DVD CORNER

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### NEW DYLAN ON A NEW DVD

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◆ **BOB DYLAN: 1975-1981. ROLLING THUNDER AND THE GOSPEL YEARS.**  
Directed and Produced By Joel Gilbert. Highway 61 Entertainment Productions;  
Music Video Distributors.

By John Aiello

At first glance, the slipcase of this forthcoming DVD will disappoint hard-core Dylan freaks who no doubt will quickly note that there are no Bob Dylan songs included in the production.

However, that sentiment quickly dissolves once you get this one in your player: Even though **Bob Dylan** is an unauthorized documentary that's been produced with no input from Dylan or his camp, this film is an exceptional ride that contains heretofore unknown facts about one of the singer-songwriter's most pivotal and creative periods.

When Dylan took his now famous "Rolling Thunder Revue" on the road in '75 he sought to bring the spirit of Jack Kerouac's *spontaneous prose* to his fans, preaching from the altars of the rock and roll stage. It was a magnificent tour that wound its way through the silent tongues and tangled gut of the Americas; going on for a year, its likes would never be duplicated.

**Bob Dylan** begins with a chronicle of this seminal roadshow, taking us on a ride through a half-decade period in the poet's life which would see him write three records and go on another huge world tour (finally culminating in a complete revision of his religious an artistic focus). The years 75-81 were huge for Dylan, and huge for his fans as well. It's an alluring era when we witnessed the chameleon Dylan transform himself time and again in search of a door to the sweet purity of self-expression and self-knowledge.

Gilbert's **Bob Dylan** is a bold undertaking, and viewers will immediately be struck by how much new information they get here. Framed around interviews with so many of the supporting figures from Dylan's late 70s work, the film is jump-started by its ability to give us the 'stories behind the songs.'

Interviews with former boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter are sweeping and intense, as Carter himself paints a vivid picture of the introspective Dylan who came to visit him in prison and then wrote a 10 minute epic about the wrong-way road of Carter's murder trial and subsequent imprisonment. Carter speaks of a Dylan who had gone directly back to his 1960s' roots to write a topical song about the black experience-- a song that he hoped might somehow help to free a man who was obviously wrongly accused. To hear Rubin Carter speak of Dylan in these personal and human terms is truly startling, and even passing fans will sit enthralled.

In addition, Rob Stoner, who played bass for Dylan on a couple of legendary tours, tells of how the "Street Legal" and "Desire" albums were recorded, also sharing behind-the-scenes details of how the 1978 tour of Japan unfolded. Stoner's eloquent monologues fill in major holes in the Dylan story, broadening our understanding of what the singer was going through when he embraced Christianity with such passionate fervor. Although these are highlights of the DVD, they are only the tip of the iceberg. Other nuggets include interviews with Jack Elliott and the genius-producer Jerry Wexler, along with inside looks at both *Rundown Studios* and *Muscle Shoals Studio*.

With a running time of 4 hours, this DVD is a majestic and very telling look at the creative process of a musician who has both fascinated and mystified us since he took New York by storm in 1962. And in a way, it's almost better that Dylan and his music are missing from the production: As strange as it sounds, I think it makes the narrative stronger to allow the key "side-players" from the period to build this compelling story that records the steps of a man on an artistic and personal journey to find God in the beauty of his multi-dimensional muse.

- John Aiello

<http://www.electricrev.net/cdwatch1.html?1136169846#DVDS>