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Bob Dylan - 1975-1981: Rolling Thunder & The Gospel Years

Directed by Joel Gilbert

Timothy Stout

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

This "totally unauthorized documentary" feels like just that. As the cover proclaims, it "contains no Bob Dylan songs." And even though the cover features two prominent photos of the man, the documentary itself hardly shows his face. If you're looking to find endless footage of the Rolling Thunder tours, one of Dylan's most creative and vision-driven periods, you will be disappointed. What we have here is a hodge podge of interviews touching on and discussing where Dylan's career was headed at this point in his life. The interviews are somewhat interesting, but at times border on extremely boring; the opening interview with Rubin "Hurricane" Carter (which, according to the press release, is his first interview in thirty years) is fairly gripping though it carries on perhaps a bit too long as one begins to wonder if the documentary is about Dylan or Carter.



All in all, this proves to be less than a worthy trip through a very important period in a very important man's life; told, unfortunately, not by the man, or even necessarily by those who



knew him best. And though this might be an essential DVD for Dylan completists (even that's a stretch), there are other places to get insight on this chapter of his life: might I instead suggest one of the many books available on Dylan? Or just listen to any of the albums from these years being discussed: *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 5* offers two excellent discs of lively Rolling Thunder madness and if you're searching for an album from his gospel years, *Slow Train Coming* is a great place to start. No, these CD's don't feature any visual footage of this time in Dylan's life, but at least they feature Bob Dylan songs.

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