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Rolling Thunder and the Gospel Years (Highway 61) manages to provide an overview of a key period in Bob Dylan's career, but shouldn't be classified as a Dylan biography. Despite the presence on the cover of two different Dylan photos, it clearly says on the bottom that the set "contains no Bob Dylan songs," but that doesn't mean there's no discussion of his music.

The focus is on the Rolling Thunder Revue from 1975. But there are certainly some great stories from Ramblin' Jack Elliott, bassist Rob Stoner, violinist Scarlet Rivera and several other contributors. Perhaps the most controversial figure is Pastor Bill Dwyer, who served as Dylan's Bible class teacher and talks with specificity about Dylan's born-again transformation. Jerry Wexler (who served as producer) for the album *Slow Train Coming* also talks about various issues and events that resulted both during the making and later release of the record, while the great keyboardist, songwriter and performer Spooner Oldham adds his thoughts to the proceedings.

It's certainly a fascinating and frequently revealing documentary, whose many bonuses include great footage from the Muscle Shoals Sound Studios.

There were a host of acclaimed and spectacular groups at the 1970 Isle of Wright festival, which was the third and final event in that series until it's revival in 2002. During the five-day event, a trio featuring keyboardist Keith Emerson, bassist/vocalist Greg Lake and drummer Carl Palmer did their first official live date, though they'd previously done some rehearsal and warm-up gigs. With prior credentials ranging from the Nice to King Crimson and the Crazy World of Arthur Brown, the threesome quickly developed a style that merged the energy of rock with the technical and musical mastery of jazz and even classical. This performance served as both an introduction to the group and great promotion for the subsequent self-titled debut.

The new DualDisc combination *The Birth Of A Band-Isle of Wright Festival, Sat. August 29, 1970* (Eagle Rock) includes on the DVD side fresh interviews with all the band members, whose recollections are interspersed with performances from that show.

The CD contains the six-part, 35-minute adaptation of Mussorgsky's "Pictures At An Exhibition," which includes both intricate solos and great trio interplay, as well as their version of Dave Brubeck's "Rondo" and "Nutrocker," a B. Bumble and the Stingers number that would become a signature tune through their tenure.

Eventually tagged as an "art-rock," band, ELP had plenty of detractors right alongside the boosters, despite the now obvious musical talents of everyone involved. *The Birth of A Band* takes fans back to the ensemble's beginnings, and also presents their own reflections on everything that subsequently happened.

By Ron Wynn