

InTheSpotlight

Some other sides of Bob Dylan

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Joel Gilbert's three-DVD collection on Bob Dylan has almost everything a Dylanophile could want — interviews galore, candid photos, grainy home movies, inside information ... everything, in fact, except the man himself.

Dylan's voice is heard occasionally in this documentary, but not often enough. His music is performed by Gilbert's tribute band, Highway 61 Revisited, which boasts former members of Dylan's various touring bands. And Gilbert, who does most of the films' interviews and visits the troubadour's old haunts, dresses and acts the part quite a bit. But it's just not the same.

At a whopping four hours, *Bob Dylan 1975-81: Rolling Thunder and the Gospel Years* is a serious investment that pays mixed dividends. Gilbert talks to boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, about whom Dylan wrote an eight-minute song. Carter, whose story also was told in a 1999 film starring Denzel Washington, was a cause celebre and friend of Dylan, who donated proceeds from some shows to the boxer's legal defense fund. While the interviews are interesting from the standpoint of telling Carter's story, they seem to add too much to an already-long film. Clip-art style graphics and *E!* *True Hollywood Story*-esque reenactments don't help.

Which is not to say there's nothing here worth watching. Ramblin' Jack Elliott, a folk legend in his own right (who does a pretty funny Dylan impression, incidentally), talks about the Rolling Thunder Revue, which included Joan Baez, Roger McGuinn, Richie Havens, Roberta Flack and Joni Mitchell. There are interesting revelations about young Dylan's Greenwich Village days, the singer's influences, and the chaotic, spontaneous nature of the tour.

The film's highlight is a visit to a small church in Reseda, Calif., where Dylan became a born-again Christian. Gilbert talks to the minister who mentored Dylan through Bible studies, and examines the singer's spiritual transformation and use of religious imagery in his shows and in the *Slow Train Coming* and *Saved* albums, which bothered many longtime fans.

Barry Feinstein's photographs are the centerpiece to the second DVD. Feinstein was Dylan's official photographer for his famous 1966 electric tour, which shocked folkies and drew boos, catcalls and shouts of "Traitor!" and "Judas!" D.A. Pennebacker, a filmmaker who also accompanied Dylan on the tour, and rock journalist Al



The young Bob Dylan. The subject of these three DVDs doesn't actually take part in them, but there are interviews, photos and archival footage.

Bob Dylan

A collection of three DVDs: *Bob Dylan, 1975-81, Rolling Thunder and the Gospel Years* (240 minutes, 2006) *Bob Dylan, World Tours 1966-74, Through the Camera of Barry Feinstein* (120 minutes, 2005) *Bob Dylan — 1966 World Tour — The Home Movies (Through the Camera of Mickey Jones)* (95 minutes, 2003, 2006)

The movies: ★★½

Parent's guide: NR (drug references, profanity)

Price: \$14.95 each

The extras: ★★

Various interviews, including Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and Scarlet Rivera.

Aronowitz are also interviewed.

Probably the creepiest part of the film is a rambling, confrontational interview with self-proclaimed "Dylanologist" A.J. Weberman, who began as Dylan's friend but ended up going through his garbage, recording

phone conversations (without Dylan's knowledge), and basically stalking him.

Mickey Jones, who was Dylan's drummer on the 1966 tour, takes viewers — and Gilbert — through his personal home movies, shot while the group that would become the Band followed Dylan through Hawaii, Australia and Europe. Jones is funny, insightful, and certainly well-traveled in show business — he drummed for Trini Lopez and Johnny Rivers, and acted in *Sling Blade*, *Total Recall* and *Home Improvement*, among other things — but he seems, at best, an acquaintance of Dylan's.

The collection's extras feature extended interviews with some of folk and rock's seminal names, including Lopez, Elliott and Charlie Daniels. There are postcards capturing Dylan onstage and off, and a soundtrack CD by Highway 61.

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