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Film Review: *Bob Dylan Revealed*

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Bob Dylan Revealed

Directed by Joel Gilbert

(Highway 61 Entertainment, 2011)

Americans have a seemingly limitless fascination with the lives of the rich and famous, and the more reclusive the famous person is, the more passionate people become about uncovering their secrets. That said, there have been many worthwhile films made about famous people. Ken Bowser's biopic *Phil Ochs: There But For Fortune* is one, as is Scorsese's *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* and Pennebaker's portrait of Dylan *Don't Look Back*. They're all honest films, warts and all investigations of artists who forever changed the way we hear popular music.

With its provocative title, *Bob Dylan Revealed* promises a lot more than it delivers, and there are several major problems. First, it's an unauthorized film, so you won't hear any of Dylan's music on the soundtrack. Highway 61 Revisited, a Dylan tribute band fronted by director Joel Gilbert (as Bob Dylan), supplies most of the music, save for very brief snippets. So it's a Dylan movie without Bob Dylan's music; draw your own conclusions.

There there's the idea of a Dylan film that's being made by a Dylan impersonator. Watching Gilbert toss out easy questions to his interview subjects, you get the impression that he's in awe of his subject, so he never asks the hard questions that might reveal something we don't already know about the man. The film is almost two hours long, but it seems a longer. There are no telling insights, few interesting anecdotes, and a lot of self-important pontificating.

Third, you don't see much of Dylan in action. There are black and white clips from '60s press conferences that have been seen in every Dylan film ever made and a few seconds of TV appearances from the '60s and '70s, but without any sound, probably due to those pesky copyright laws. There's also one appearance by Dylan on a Lubavitch telethon from 1988

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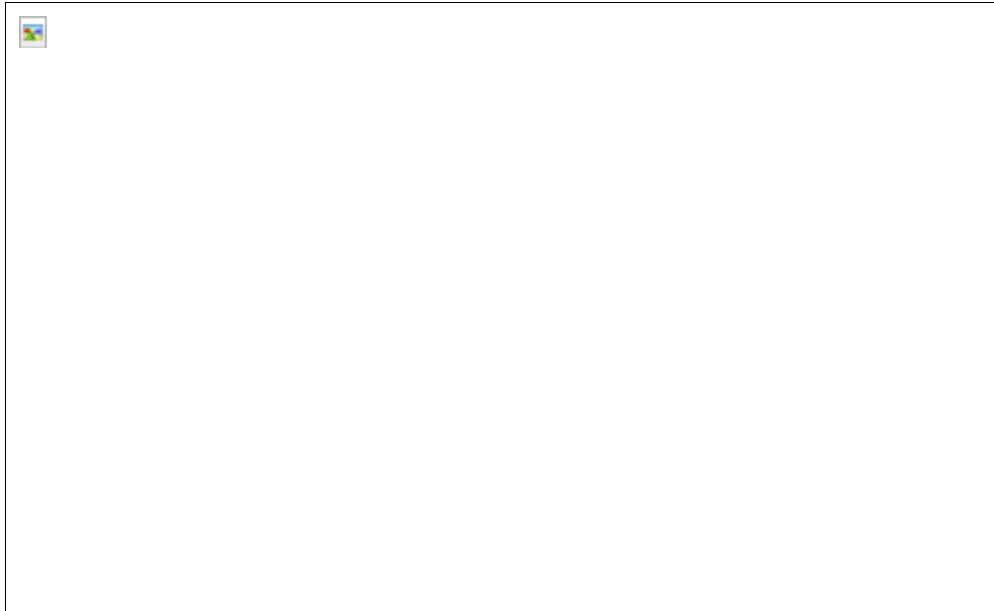


wearing a yarmulke and looking uncomfortable and one extreme close-up of him from his “born again” period talking about the Lord. Most of the images in the film are still photos taken by Barry Feinstein, Dylan’s favorite photographer.

The interviewees include Atlantic (and later Warner) Records president Jerry Wexler, who produced *Slow Train Coming*, long time Dylan drummer Mickey Jones, fiddler Scarlet Rivera, *San Francisco Chronicle* music critic Joel Selvin, Pastor Bill Dwyer of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship Church, Rubin “Hurricane” Carter, Rob Stoner, who was Dylan’s musical director for a few years and Winston Watson, drummer in the Never Ending Tour Band for five years in the late ‘90s. The interviews are poorly edited and go on too long. There are only a handful of interesting anecdotes, but they’re padded by hours of unfocused talking. Gilbert never asks his subjects to stay on point so they go on about tuning up before a show or minutiae about backstage activities.

Simply put, the film is a mess. If you want to look into the life and art of Bob Dylan, Scorsese’s *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* is the place to start.

Watch a trailer for *Bob Dylan Revealed*



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