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Case Number 21113: Small Claims Court



Bob Dylan Revealed

MVD Visual // 2011 // 112 Minutes // Not Rated
Reviewed by Judge Russell Engebretson // April 13th, 2011

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Scales of Justice

Judgment: 68

Perp Profile

Studio: [MVD Visual](#)

Video Formats:

- 1.78:1 Anamorphic

Audio Formats:

- Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)

Subtitles:

- None

Running Time: 112 Minutes

Release Year: 2011

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Genre:

- [Documentary](#)

All Rise...

Judge Russell Engebretson never worked on Maggie's farm, but he stole her pump handle.

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The Charge

"The guy's got so many sides he's round."—attributed to Kris Kristofferson in reference to Bob Dylan.

The Case

The release of director and producer Joel Gilbert's Bob Dylan documentary **Bob Dylan Revealed** is set to coincide with Dylan's seventieth birthday. The disc is composed of eight chapters which include highlights from Dylan's musical career ranging from 1962 to the present. The documentary, which is mainly composed of new interviews and archival clips, is divided into eight chapters:

- 1962 Times Are A-Changin'
- 1966 Electric World Tour
- 1967 Drug Rehab
- 1974 The Comeback
- 1975 Rolling Thunder Review
- 1978 The Entertainer
- 1979 Busy Being Born...Again!
- 1992 Never Ending Tour

Mostly, it reiterates all the standard stuff: Bob Dylan's first album was a poor seller (6,000 or 7,000 copies), and his career was allegedly saved when producer Al Kasha went to bat for him at a board meeting. Dylan's controversial electric tour of 1966 is discussed by Mickey Jones, the drummer who subbed for *The Band's* Levon Helm during the tour. Some writers claim that reports of negative reactions from the crowds were greatly exaggerated; Jones pushes for the more common argument that many fans were booing the electric backup band.

A long interview with boxer Rubin Carter, charged with a triple murder in 1966 and the subject of Dylan's protest song *Hurricane*, covers some of Dylan's career in the early to mid '70s, including the Rolling Thunder tour, but Carter spends too much time aggrandizing himself. I could have done with a lot less of his commentary, which often strayed far afield from the subject at

Distinguishing Marks

- None

Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)
- [A Bob Dylan Timeline](#)

hand. Still, his comments on Joni Mitchell's bad reception at Dylan's prison concert were amusing in a gossipy sort of way.

One chapter covers Dylan's born-again conversion to Christianity. This section of the film is padded out with too many extraneous religious comments from interviewees like Pastor Bill Dwyer. For a quick flavor of what Dylan was like during that time, all you need to see is Dylan yelling to an audience shouting for rock 'n' roll during one of his concerts. He said, "You can go see Kiss and rock and roll all the way down into the pit." That scene is followed by footage of an angry fan outside of the theater who says, "He talked about religion. He preached. That's why I walked out." Joel Selvin, who at that time worked for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, says, "The audience was there to see the Bob Dylan that they knew and loved, and this guy shows up and force feeds them a Christian evangelical program. It was pretty strange." I have to say, if I had paid a then-hefty \$26 for a concert ticket in 1979 and ended up at a tent revival, I would have been majorly pissed off, too.

Some other notable people who worked with Dylan featured include producer Jerry Wexler, violinist Scarlet Rivera, folk singer Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and aforementioned music critic Joel Selvin.

Bob Dylan Revealed leans heavily toward hagiography with only dribs and drabs of controversial material to liven things up, and little if anything that has not been published or related in interviews before now. There is virtually none of Dylan's music on the DVD. The audio for the concert clips is muted and replaced with dialogue voiceovers and instrumental music written for the documentary. Aside from archival clips, Dylan himself is conspicuously absent from the proceedings.

There's no problem with the dialogue. It's clear and understandable, with a couple of instances of burned-in subtitles for voices that are a bit garbled. Video is par for a documentary. Some of the interviews are slowly desaturated from color to black and white then overlaid with a fake patina of scratches and print damage. I suppose it's a technique meant to reflect the condition of early Dylan clips. It's not terribly annoying, but it's too contrived for my taste. There is, unfortunately, no director's commentary—there are no extras at all, in fact.

The DVD should be okay as a rental, mainly for Rivera's and Wexler's anecdotes and the occasional honest, prickly comments. Only Dylan completists will likely want to invest in a purchase.

I recently read *Bob Dylan in America* by Sean Wilentz. It's a great read if you're interested in Dylan's songwriting and musical influences. Unlike this film, it is truly revelatory because Wilentz analyzes Dylan as a musician rather than a celebrity, as a tributary in the mighty, muddy river of Americana and folk music. It is through his songs, not his quirks and flaws, that Bob Dylan will endure. Happy seventieth, Mr. Zimmerman.



The Verdict

Guilty of repeating too much and revealing too little.

You, The Jury...

Your Reply

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