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### 'Bob Dylan: Revealed' Documentary

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Ch-ching. And yet another documentary is released in tandem with [Bob Dylan's](#) 70th birthday. Whether the movie was made to cash in on this anniversary or whether it would have been made anyway is something only producer Joel Gilbert knows. But either way, *Bob Dylan: Revealed* is a 110-minute documentary covering Dylan's career from 1962 through the 1990s, and features interviews with a good handful of Dylan's stage and studio alums over the course of his career. A decent, kinda cheesy introduction for new Dylan initiates, the movie touches on all the basics, leaving plenty of questions unanswered.



Highway 61 Productions

#### In the Beginning

Starting with the 1960s, the film quickly brushes over Dylan's early years in Greenwich Village, touching on the release of his debut album, then skipping forward to 1966 where it dives in with a fairly long, detailed interview with drummer Mickey Jones, who filled in when Levon Helm quit the Hawks Dylan's first regular backing band during the 1966 acoustic/electric world tour. Detailing the tour, the interview covers the band's itinerary from Hawaii to Sweden, Denmark, Australia, and finally Britain.

Cutting in old Super 8 footage shot along the way long with vintage black and white photos, Jones gives a blow-by-blow account of Dylan and his entourage's travails, commenting on things like Dylan's attitude with the media, and filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker's shooting of the tour for the never-released TV special *Eat the Document*. Finally ending the tour in Britain, the film draws out the booing that Dylan experienced during his hard sell switch to electric music. Much time is spent dwelling on the oft rehashed story of the Manchester Free Trade Hall concert in May when a fan yelled "Judas!"

The period ends discussing Dylan's July 1966 motorcycle accident with opposing commentary by Jones and photographer Barry Feinstein, who debate what actually happened. Did he really crash? Did the bike actually just fall over in a driveway? Was it just a cover to get out of the rat race? Was it a cover because he was exhausted from the tour or needed to enter rehab?

#### The 1970s

The film jumps ahead to Dylan's 1974 tour with the Band as Feinstein talks about shooting the tour and the incredible portfolio of frames he captured during this epoch, including the cover for the live album *Before the Flood* and the famous shot of Dylan with Jimmy Carter in the governor's mansion before he was president.

Using interviews with violinist Scarlet Rivera and bassist Rob Stoner, the documentary thoroughly details the 1975 recording of the album *Desire*. A large chunk of the film highlights the plight of incarcerated boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, who talks about his time in prison, the ballad Dylan wrote about him, and the campaign the singer-songwriter launched for his release. Poring over Dylan's 1975 Rolling Thunder Revue tour, Carter, Rivera, Stoner, and [Ramblin' Jack Elliot](#) discuss the road show and little events that occurred along the way, while touching briefly on the film [Renaldo and Clara](#), which camera crews shot en route.

Jumping ahead, the documentary fleshes out Dylan's Christianity phase with the 1978 release of *Slow Train Coming*. At the famous run of concerts at San Francisco's Warfield Theater, the documentary includes hilarious footage of people walking out of the shows after being turned off by Dylan's preaching. "If I wanted this I could have went to church!" one fan exclaims, while another is furious that Dylan didn't play the hits. Meanwhile, Pastor Bill Dwyer talks about Dylan's conversion, which lasted all of three years, ending with the release of *Infidels*, soon after which Dylan once again embraced his Jewish heritage.

#### The 1990s and Beyond

Skipping over the '80s altogether, drummer Winston Watson is the main spokesman of the 1990s and the Never Ending Tour (the documentary claims it began in 1992, although most accounts have it starting in 1988). The most accessible of all of Dylan's musicians over the years, Watson talks about how he joined the band, his experiences on the road, and how Dylan treated him and eased him into his touring band.

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Unfortunately, the movie ends abruptly right there, failing to mention Dylan's big comeback in 1997 which carried him into the new millennium. Important things like his 2003 film *Masked and Anonymous*, his 2004 autobiography, *Chronicles: Volume One*, and the 2005 documentary *No Direction Home* are completely neglected. Which is to ignore Dylan's important shift from popular musician to his current status as icon and elder statesman of American roots music.

All told, those interviewed in the documentary include iconic record producer Jerry Wexler, backup singer Regina McCrary, journalist Joel Selvin, photographer Barry Feinstein, bassist Rob Stoner, violinist Scarlet Rivera, keyboardist Spooner Oldham, Pastor Bill Dwyer, Dylanologist A.J. Weberman, drummer Winston Watson, songwriter/producer Al Kasha, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, and folk singer Ramblin' Jack Elliot.

### Bob Dylan Revealed?

Just the title, *Bob Dylan: Revealed* is pretty flamboyant promise, indicating the documentary will "reveal" all kinds of earth-shattering new information about Dylan. However, everything in the film has already been thoroughly explored in dozens of books and documentaries. In other words, this is not some kind of definitive examination of Dylan's life and work.

What the film amounts to is one of those one-man shows, where the director/producer (in this case Joel Gilbert) runs around with his video camera, interviewing anyone willing to talk to him about their times with Dylan. Super low budget, rather than use authentic Dylan music, the soundtrack is made by the Bob Dylan cover band, Highway 61 Revisited.

The interviews in this skin-deep film capture certain epochs in Dylan's career, however, since it's hinged on the commentary of so few players, it is largely unbalanced, skipping over large chunks of time and important events. A better documentary would have used more diverse interviews, including some with any of the couple dozen well-established Bob Dylan experts or biographers, not just self-described Dylanologist A.J. Weberman, who got famous by digging through Dylan's garbage in the 1970s.

Despite its narrow range and the above criticisms, however, this film will make a good introduction for beginners who want to crank open a few more doors about Dylan. As for those well-informed Dylan fans, although they won't learn anything here, they will enjoy the footage and photos, as well as the stories told by those who were behind the scenes.

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