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Bob Dylan's Jesus Years Busy Being Born...Again!

Highway 61 Revisited

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Bob Dylan has pretty much done everything musically that one could think of, and he has always done it on his own terms, not quite worrying about the audience. In hindsight, people shouldn't have been all that surprised when he went Jesus for a few albums, complete with the live show preaching.

Joel Gilbert digs into these years in documentary form. He tells the story with interviews from Jerry Wexler, who produced Dylan's first religious album, *Slow Train Coming*, band members Regina McCrary and Spooner Oldham and a slew of religious and/or music "scholars." Lacking is a current Bob Dylan, which is something I was hoping for: a perspective 30 years later.

Wexler's memory of the recording session is enthralling, full of great stories that I couldn't tear myself from. He is the highlight of the documentary. I also enjoyed hearing some of the "theories" about this time: Bob Dylan didn't take his newfound devotion to Jesus all that seriously, the fans were upset by his style not because of religion but because he had abandoned his old material that they loved so much. A great story comes after Dylan is convinced to play some of his famous material again: he changes everything around so it sounds different. This guy is a true musical innovator.

Some parts of the documentary look thrown together. There are lighting and sound issues at times, which gives the film an uneven look. The story is told in a linear fashion, though it doesn't really get interesting until Wexler makes an appearance. I do like how Gilbert looks like Dylan, faking me out a few times at first.

I would say that this DVD is tailor made for Dylan fanatics, especially ones that want a little more insight into this time of his career. The bonus features are entertaining, featuring some footage from his 1978 World Tour, photos, MP3s and (my favorite) a small feature about Dylan and "Hurricane" Carter.

Written by: RF
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