



That's one reason why Bob Dylan And The Band: Down In The Flood, which came out at the end of September, is such a jolt. It has interviews with folks who were in the trenches during that collaboration – including Band keyboardist Garth Hudson, drummer Mickey Jones from the 1966 English tour, Band producer John Simon – as well as Dylan scholars and rock critics who know what they're talking about.

It also starts out with Dylanesque instrumental tracks underscoring the footage and talking heads, which isn't promising; it implies that it's possible to illustrate the importance of something with an inferior copy. (It's not.) Some TV and concert film of drummer Levon Helm's early band and pre-Dylan Band cohort Ronnie Hawkins follow, but those are background, not the story itself.

And then suddenly, a quarter of an hour in, we're looking at – and hearing – Dylan's famous clip for "Subterranean Homesick Blues," and it generates a palpable sense of relief. From there, Down In The Flood confidently tells the story it wants to tell, complete with the songs necessary to tell it, from footage from the famous 1966 concert at Manchester's Free Trade Hall (complete with the infamous "Judas!"/"Play [really quite] loud" moment, about which Jones has his own theories in the DVD extras) to songs from the loose recording sessions that would result in The Basement Tapes. At one point, it seems like the movie includes Johnny Cash performing "Big River" just to show off.

While Down In The Flood doesn't offer the same amount of music as, say, Martin Scorsese's No Direction Home, it includes enough to make the points that it wants to make without having to resort to fakery or simple description. That's precisely where You Can't Do That On Film falls down. Without examples of the footage being discussed, the best a performance documentary can hope to be is a framework waiting for the rest of the story to be filled in. - Marc Hirsh

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/monkeysee/2012/10/16/163011261/you-cant-do-that-on-film-a-performance-documentary-without-performance-footage>