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Movies

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New DVDs | 'Bob Dylan and The Band,' 'The Avengers'

New DVD releases for Tuesday, Sept. 25, include "Bob Dylan and The Band: Down in the Flood" and "Marvel's The Avengers."



New DVDs |

"Bob Dylan" and "The Avengers" lead the charge of DVDs Tuesday. Star ratings are by Seattle Times movie reviewers, freelancers or wire services. For full reviews (except for "Bob Dylan"), search the movie title at seattletimes.com.

"Bob Dylan and The Band: Down in the Flood" (not rated): Dylan fans know most of the story told in this unauthorized

and disappointing British documentary — how Bob Dylan hooked up with Ronnie Hawkins and His Hawks, later known simply as The Band — but it's good to have the details sorted out, since the group's provenance has always been somewhat confusing.

To tell it briefly, Arkansas rockabilly singer Hawkins moved to Canada with drummer Levon Helm in the late '50s. As their fame as an R&B bar band grew, Canadians Robbie Robertson, Richard Manuel, Rick Danko and Garth Hudson joined up. In 1964, the Hawks left Hawkins and, in 1966, Dylan recruited them for his famous "electric" world tour, when the band was booed by disgruntled folkies. After Dylan's notorious motorcycle accident, he invited the Hawks to join him in Woodstock; there, in a basement, they forged the folk-rock form eventually known as Americana.

The documentary bows before the subsequent "Basement Tapes" as the holy grail. It also considers the two brilliant albums by The Band ("Big Pink" and "The Band"), taking the story of Dylan and The Band to its eventual exit in 1976, with the concert/film "The Last Waltz."

The Hawks were rockers, not folkies, and the film suggests intriguingly that Dylan quite consciously immersed them in his sources, from Woody Guthrie to Johnny Cash. This thesis and others are advanced by various talking heads, including rock critic Robert Christgau (perceptive), Band biographer Barney Hoskyns (dull) and Basement Tapes archivist Sid Griffin (enthusiastic) — who fill up far too much time in a nearly two-hour film. The only Band musician interviewed is Mickey Jones, who filled in for Helm when he left the group in a snit.

Still, there's lots of great concert footage, and it's a worthy tale.

Paul de Barros, Seattle Times music critic

"Marvel's The Avengers" (PG-13): Marvel Enterprises' comic-book movie has been executed with all the reverence the superfans demand. The performances are so well-pitched that it's tempting to overpraise the movie that surrounds them.

Director Joss Whedon seems to have tamped down his instincts to play up irony and camp. Instead, he focuses on making the characters legible and the story easy to follow.

Whedon has positioned "The Avengers" exactly where it needs to be to keep spinning out in perpetuity. Bidding goodbye to at least one beloved character and saying hello to another in a tantalizing closing-credits hint, he leaves us wanting more.

DVD extras: "Assembling the Ultimate Team" featurette, commentary by Whedon. Also, on Blu-ray formats: "A Visual Journey" and several other featurettes, gag reel, alternate opening and ending, deleted scenes, Soundgarden music video "Live to Rise."

The Washington Post

Other releases

"Adventures in Plymptoons!" (not rated): A salute to the Oregon animator.

"Delicacy" (PG-13; subtitled): Audrey Tautou stars as a young Parisian who finds love — twice.

"Drunkboat" (not rated): A coming-of-age film about an obsessive teen (Jacob Zachar) whose chief father figure is an alcoholic uncle/Vietnam vet (John Malkovich).

"Damsels in Distress" (PG-13): Greta Gerwig plays the leader of a group of college women trying to raise standards at their school.

"The Samaritan" (not rated): A weary grifter and ex-con (Samuel L. Jackson), trying to stay clean, is at the heart of this Canadian import. No star rating provided.

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