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Bob Dylan: 1966-1978 After the Crash (Under **Review** series)

Picture: C+ Sound: C+ Extras: D Main Program: B

The truth was obscure, too profound and too pure, to live it you have to explode.

- Bob Dylan "Where Are You Tonight" 1978

It's just another Tuesday morning and here we are with

yet another documentary all about Uncle Zimmy. Is it possible that there is anything new, some revelatory tidbit, a wee chunk of Rosetta herein that will once and for all provide the master key to the endless corridor of locked doors that is Bob Dylan?

A Two Hour Doc

nd Critical Review

Short answer – No.

But that doesn't necessarily mean there's no value to this well made, but ultimately unsatisfactory film. The period of Dylan's career that goes under the microscope is for my money more interesting than the over analyzed and, if we're being honest, kind of shallow Genius Years. What happens after an artist releases a string of albums that includes Bringing It All Back Home, Highway 61 Revisited, and Blonde on Blonde; albums that not only irrevocably altered what rock'n'roll was, but completely remade popular culture in their own image. Add to that the traveling war zone that was Dylan's world tour with The Hawks in which was acted out a nightly ritual that was in nature less Top of the Pops and more Old Testament apocalypse.

Where could Dylan possibly go along that trajectory? To keep going at the speed he was traveling, at the same level of creative intensity, with the same fierceness of performance...he was rocketing toward madness and death. Which brings us to the title of this documentary, After the Crash; on July 29, 1966, Dylan was injured while riding his motorcycle near his home in Woodstock, New York. Much feverish speculation regarding the exact nature and severity of the accident has gone the rounds ever since. The very different Bob Dylan that slowly emerged after the incident confounded public expectation even more so than the lightning lad who went electric at Newport in 1965.

Who drained the surrealism out of John Wesley Harding? Who was this soft around the middle family man crooning tunelessly with Johnny Cash

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- > Bob Dylan: 1966-1978 After the Crash (Under Review series)
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- > The Assassination Of Trotsky (1972)
- > Gary Burton & Makoto Ozone – Live At Montreux 2002 (DTS)

on Nashville Skyline?

But the motorcycle accident is a MacGuffin. In and of itself it holds very little importance, no more relevance than Dylan's stubbing his big toe while walking offstage in Manchester. It's become too much a focal point in his career, too much a line of division – Before the Crash vs. After the Crash. The accident was both an opportunity and an excuse. It allowed Dylan to rest and detox, to reconnect to his family and to the music he loved. It changed the artist, the searcher, not a lick. If anything Dylan proved himself even more inquisitive.

After the Crash traces Dylan's art from The Basement Tapes to his conversion to Christianity during his 1978 world tour. The depth of the man's art only increased during these years. As a reminder of that fact After the Crash succeeds admirably. However, it does fall prey to giving more credit to the crash than the incident actually deserves.

Kristofer Collins

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