

# MUSIC FOR SCREENS: SPRING '09

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TALK BACK! EMAIL PRINT

## Unauthorized Dylan doc gets to truth

### Lack of access to Bob has upside for filmmaker

By MELINDA NEWMAN

Joel Gilbert doesn't need a weather-vane to know which way the wind blows: **Bob Dylan** fans can't get enough of America's greatest living singer/songwriter. This spring, the filmmaker released his sixth unauthorized documentary on the artist otherwise known as **Robert Zimmerman**.

And while **Martin Scorsese's** "No Direction Home" received full cooperation from the singer-songwriter, not to mention a wealth of fully licensed original tunes and rarely seen vintage clips, there's one huge advantage that Gilbert has over such "authorized" projects like "No Direction": there's no interference or guidance from the notoriously image-conscious Dylan or his zealously protective business handlers.

Gilbert's docs get dissenting views and unvarnished anecdotes from savvy and articulate observers like legendary producer **Jerry Wexler** or seasoned music pros like **Rob Stoner** and **Spooner Oldham**. Their candor and straight-

forward recollections from years on the road and in the studio with the mercurial Mr. Dylan prove invaluable.

It all started 10 years ago when Gilbert's Dylan cover band, Highway 61 Revisited, played an **American Cancer Society** benefit. There, Gilbert met former Dylan drummer **Mickey Jones**, who showed Gilbert his Dylan home movies.

In 2003, Gilbert and Jones released "World Tour 1966: The Home Movies -- Through the Camera of Bob Dylan's Drummer Mickey Jones" via their own website before linking with **Ventura Home Entertainment**.

Gilbert says that "World Tour 1966" has sold more than 100,000 copies, although this figure cannot be verified through such tracking services as Soundscan.

Gilbert followed with a series of titles that chronicled various tours, including "Bob Dylan 1975-1981: Rolling Thunder and the Gospel Years," released in 2006, as well as his latest, "Bob Dylan Never Ending Tour Diaries: Drummer Winston Watson's Incredible Journey," which highlights Watson's footage from touring with Dylan in the mid-'90s.

For the most part, Gilbert's DVDs are profitable because he handles the interviews and editing himself; plus fans appreciate his detailed discussions with Dylan associates, he says.

For the last three projects, his band (which includes three former Dylan musicians) has recreated "Dylan-esque" music, obviating the need to pay expensive licensing fees. Gilbert cleared all rights for the first two "World Tour" films.

Before a title goes on sale via **MVD Entertainment** Group's music arm, MVD Visual, Gilbert has a several-week window to sell the \$14.98 DVD exclusively through his website. "Typically, I'll break even on all my costs from my initial sales," he says.

Gilbert has never met Dylan and doesn't expect to. "I know he doesn't talk to some of his best friends very much," he says, "so I don't expect him to seek me out."



**CHRONICLES:** Between making Dylan docs, Joel Gilbert leads the tribute band Highway 61 Revisited.

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