

the band grow up and evolve into the very different group it is today. Starting in 1985 as a traditionally costumed choral group of children, they grow before the camera into rambunctious teens with really bad 80s hair styles and futuristic glitter fashion to professional, very slick adult performers, pioneering a new hybrid of traditional and contemporary music. Many of these songs and videos have never been heard or seen outside Finland, and they are a real treat. If all this wasn't enough, there is also a 2003 interview with Mari Kaasinen and Janne Lappalainen, as well as complete biographies, discographies, and a photo gallery. All in all, this is a very enjoyable history and recent overview of one of Finland's finest exports.

— Lahri Bond (Leverett, MA)

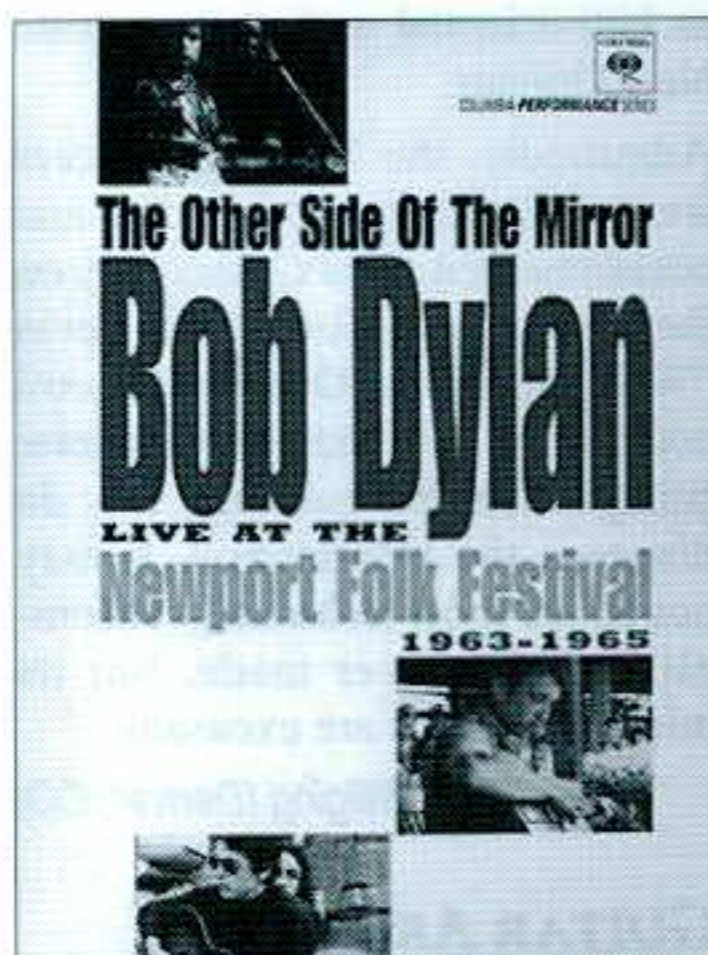
INCREDIBLE STRING BAND LIVE AT THE LOWRY

MVD Visual/Secret Films
SECDVD123 (2004)

In the United Kingdom in the mid-to late 60s, folk rock was invented and defined by such seminal bands as Pentangle, Fairport Convention, and the Incredible String Band. After making a highly folk-influenced first album with original member Clive Palmer, ISB mainstays Robin Williamson and Mike Heron went on to forge an early form of world music, borrowing from many different musical traditions and creating a fusion of acoustic, acid-drenched folk that was somehow simultaneously innocent and visionary. The band saw many highlights (Woodstock and the experimental theater piece called "U") and low points (the unfocused film *Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending* and a fascination with Scientology) before disbanding in 1974. Though the individual band members enjoyed fruitful post-ISB successes (Williamson, particularly, evolving into something of a modern-day Celtic bard), fans clamored for decades for a reunion. Williamson and Heron did rejoin for a short while in the early part of the millennium, and with the addition of original member Palmer they even resurrected the band's old title. But Williamson soon tired of nostalgia and went on with his career, and the current lineup became a quartet, with Heron and Palmer joined by multi-instrumentalist Lawson Dando and an excellent fiddler and vocalist with the name Fluff.

This lineup was captured in concert in 2003, and the DVD of the show features 18 songs culled from the group's first five albums. While it's a hoot to see Heron and Palmer back together and to hear the old songs given a fresh coat of paint, the absence of Williamson and his Gypsy-like sense of spontaneity is sorely missed. The ISB was best when it was living strictly in the moment, with members reacting and improvising off each other and the audience. This well-rehearsed modern-day outfit is clearly professional, but alas, the child-like sense of wonder is long gone. Too many times the members veer dangerously close to sounding like an ISB cover band. Still, for those who missed them back in the day or for those young musicians, like Devendra Banhart and the Espers who try to recapture the spirit of the 60s and draw their inspiration from the music of the ISB, this is a worthy DVD to check out.

— Lahri Bond (Leverett, MA)



BOB DYLAN - THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR: LIVE AT THE NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL 1963-1965
MLF Productions/Columbia/Legacy
88697 15537 9 (2007)

The young Bob Dylan would surely have been a phenomenon anyway, but it was the Newport Folk Festival that made him a star. Arguably the most influential showcase of the 1960s folk revival, Newport was a festival where old and new performers could be seen by both the movers and shakers of the burgeoning folk business and by a 10,000-strong audience comprised mostly of college students who would carry news of their discoveries back to their campuses. This striking concert DVD documents Dylan's

Newport performances over the three summers that saw him evolve from an earnest protest singer to a black-clad rock icon, and even after four decades, the excitement is palpable.

The 83-minute, professionally filmed black-and-white program begins with a glimpse of a smiling (and acoustic) Dylan singing "All I Really Want to Do" to an afternoon audience in 1965, and then quickly flashes back to a 1963 workshop and "North Country Blues," his hard-sounding tale of struggling iron miners. The six-song excerpt from Dylan's 1963 performances is entirely topical music from the period when he cast himself as an often dour, always intense, pseudo-hayseed Woody Guthrie clone. He may have been playing a role with an eye on fame, but his duet with Joan Baez on "With God on Our Side" still brings chills, as does the closing group sing of "Blowin' in the Wind" with Baez, the Freedom Singers, and Peter, Paul & Mary (whose harmonious version of the song was a chart hit at the time).

By 1964, Dylan's rustic work shirts have been replaced by a dark jacket, he jokes around onstage, and the songs are becoming more personal and surreal, as the classics "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "Chimes of Freedom" bracket a segment that also includes Johnny Cash covering "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" and a duo reprise with Baez. The 1965 footage completes the transformation and includes the legendary but seldom seen electric mini-set with members of the Butterfield Blues Band that drew a mix of cheers and boos and turned the folk establishment upside down. It's potent stuff, especially the aggressive performance of "Like a Rolling Stone" with Al Kooper's organ wailing behind Dylan's scalding vocals, and in contrast to some contemporary reports the sound mix is quite decent.

Director Murray Lerner provides further background on the film in a supplementary interview. As a series of snapshots of Dylan during his most productive and most influential years, *The Other Side of the Mirror* is both great music and important musical history.

— Tom Nelligan (Waltham, MA)

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