

the protest songs of a year before. The last set from 1965 reveals the "rock star" Dylan, seen in rehearsals peering through dark sunglasses.

Worthy of note is Dylan's playful interaction with Joan Baez in their 1963 and 1964 duets. Baez lovingly looks at Dylan as he sings, proud to have introduced him to the folk establishment. It's in stark contrast to Dylan's treatment of her in the Pennebaker documentary of the 1965 UK tour, *Don't Look Back*.

Dylan's Newport performances still reverberate today, as loud now as any time in the last 40 years. How else to explain such a curiosity as the recent film *I'm Not There*? Director Todd Haynes relies on six actors (including Cate Blanchett) to portray the different facets of Dylan's persona. In fact, Dylan is so much an icon of popular culture that legend and fact have become one for the mass audience. He's led a big-screen sort of life, and Lerner's *The Other Side of the Mirror* gives viewers the early frames. (Alison Hayes)

#### BOB DYLAN: Both Ends of the Rainbow, 1978-1989 (Chrome Dreams)

Never one with a satisfied mind, Bob Dylan made a practice of "going" to some unexpected places—going electric, going into the basement of Big Pink, going country, going kabuki. But when he went Christian evangelical, well, it really threw everyone for a loop. There were no evolutionary signposts for it, and, as *Both Ends of the Rainbow* asserts quite well, there was something unsettling to fans about the ultimate anti-authoritarian submitting to the ultimate authority.

While his actual "Christian period" lasted only a few years, *Both Ends of the Rainbow* is admirable in its scope, covering not just his three tepid-yet-controversial evangelical records—*Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot of Love*—but also the three just after it, *Infidels*, *Empire Burlesque* and *Oh Mercy*, as well as the wonderful Traveling Wilburys debut. These last two were the return of the wayward artist who'd lost his way—just as much from musical reasons as ideological ones. But as well-intentioned as *Both Ends of the Rainbow* is, one has to question the value of a two-hour documentary when 75 percent of the music being discussed is just crap.

Subtitled "An Independent Review and Critique," *Rainbow* has a good, wide range of interviewees, from ruling rock journos to producers, engineers and musicians. Yet no one can actually get at the WHY of Dylan's born-again conversion, or make heads or tails of it. Though there's one revealing moment in an on-air interview between Dylan and an LA disc jockey, very little is given that explains Dylan's state of mind.

Yes, it's shocking to hear Dylan proselytizing through his lyrics. It's easy to see how it was a turn-off back then; it's still awkward now. But considering that *good* gospel music, from Sam Cooke through Kirk Franklin, is often an enjoyable spin for the secular listener, the focus on Dylan's being born-again status overshadows the fact that his music suffered on its own terms.

More interesting than all the authors are the musicians who make it clear that no one who actually knew how to play music (as opposed to write about it) much cared what Dylan was doing. They still wanted to work with him. Even as Dire Straits were becoming one of the biggest bands on the planet, Mark Knopfler lent his playing, touring time and production skills to four years of Dylan albums, through 1983's *Infidels*, which also included Mick

Taylor on second guitar. Sly Dunbar says straight up that he and Robbie Shakespeare "idolized Bob Dylan." Jerry Wexler produced *Slow Train*, the best of the three Christian records, and Chuck Plotkin, who'd raised Springsteen's *Nebraska* from demo cassette to major label release, still enthuses about his work on *Shot of Love*, easily among Dylan's worst albums ever (*Empire Burlesque* may take the cake).

So where does that leave us? *Both Ends of the Rainbow* is admirably thorough and totally informative, but still somewhat shallow, never really arriving at anything definitive. As it starts, there's a bristling energy with each new interview, with many differing and fresh perspectives. But as the film progresses, other than the strict documentary aspect of the albums and some fascinating details (even for non-techies) on Dylan's recording techniques, the same talking heads start to wear on the watcher, and it feels more like an exercise in guesswork and personal opinion than anything else, encyclopedic but not quite conclusive. (Alex Stimmel)

#### FAIRPORT CONVENTION - Tony Palmer's Film of Fairport Convention & Matthews Southern Comfort (Voiceprint)

Fairport Convention, by 1970, had already established itself as the premiere British folk-rock band, having recorded several highly regarded albums amid periods of tragedy or adversity. Tony Palmer's film captures Fairport at a decisive point in its career, a brief moment following the exit of extraordinary vocalist Sandy Denny and before the departure of founding guitarist Richard Thompson. Now considered one of the most acclaimed incarnations of Fairport Convention, this line-up consisted of Thompson, violinist Dave Swarbrick, bassist Dave Pegg, drummer Dave Mattacks and second guitarist Simon Nicol.

On July 5, 1970, only days after the release of this line-up's only studio album, *Full House*, Fairport headlined the Maidstone Fair in Kent, performing for an unusual and diverse audience comprised of long-haired hippies, businessmen in suits and children with balloons. Warmly received by the crowd, the band was in excellent spirits, turning out rousing performances of their typical 1970 set list, which included "Sir Patrick Spens" and "Now Be Thankful." Watching this DVD's footage of Swarbrick's prowess on violin and mandolin, matched by the virtuosity of Thompson on guitar, substantiates the view that Fairport was at its peak as an ensemble during this period.

Palmer's footage also includes two songs, "My Front Pages" and "Southern Comfort," by Matthews Southern Comfort, led by former Fairporter Iain Matthews. Matthews' vocals and guitar work, accented by Gordon Huntley's pedal steel, endow the *Comfort* with a countrified vibe.

Regrettably, the film itself is glaringly short, clocking in at just under 32 minutes. Palmer's editing is jarring at times as well, but the fact that this is the only commercially filmed footage of the *Full House* line-up renders this DVD essential for all Fairport fans. The film also stands as an interesting social document of a unique moment in history at the end of the '60s decade and all that it has come to represent. The bonus interview with Palmer adds information about his relationship with the band and how the project originated. (Alison Hayes)

#### MAN - At the Roundhouse 1976 (Voiceprint/MVD)

Deke Leonard, one of the ringleaders of the Welsh band Man, writes in his supremely funny *Rhinos, Winos & Lunatics* (Northdown Publishing, UK, 1996), that the roots of his group are in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales. "The Merthyrites spend most of their tragic lives trying in vain to overcome this serious anthropological obstacle, but providence has set its hand against them, and that's that. Descended from one of the seven lost tribes of Tydfil, they are stubborn, mean-spirited, socially-inept weasels."

Such was life in 1968 when Leonard joined Man. The British Empire was no more, but its hierarchy still reigned. The Welsh, proper Englishmen believed, were but stoop-shouldered coal miners given to drink, bad hygiene and the Devil's own sin, no better than Australians (descendants of criminals), Canadians (offspring of fur traders and savages), Scots (wearers of kilts and eaters of haggis) and Irish (Papists).

By the time the cameras rolled for *Man - At the Roundhouse 1976*, the Welsh band had been together eight years, struggling for minor fame on both sides of the Atlantic, and had gone through 13 lineups, with various members in, out and then back in again. Leonard himself had come and gone several times. By December 1976, when Man played a farewell stand at the Roundhouse, it seemed a good idea for the band to be gone altogether.

Man had evolved out of the Bystanders during those halcyon days in the late-'60s when musical experimentation was encouraged and/or demanded. Their early sound was described as "music to move your bowels to," but it got them out of Merthyr Tydfil and onto bills with everybody from Alexis Korner to Egg and Soft Machine. By the constipated mid-'70s, they were down to touring America in support of REO Speedwagon and borrowing a few bucks off other bands for \$25 hookers in Nashville. Hence the decision to call it a day.

This 53-minute DVD, edited from three Roundhouse shows, has Man performing just six songs, two of them on the short side, but the performances show they wanted to go out in a blaze rather than fade away. And this was before Neil Young's ballad about Johnny Rotten.

The two-guitar frontline of Deke Leonard and Mickey Jones rips through splendid versions of the anthemic "C'Mon," "Born with a Future," the prop-dopico "Bananas" and "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You," the last an homage to John Cipollina of Quicksilver who had played a series of shows with them the year before. Besides Jones and Leonard, the Roundhouse lineup featured Phil Ryan on keyboards, bassist John McKenzie and drummer Terry Williams who would soon join the opening act Rockpile.

The print used for the DVD transfer has that bleached look of '70s high-speed color stock exposed in mostly available light. Some color restoration would have been a gain, but the sound quality is good. Also included is footage of band and their fans throwing back a few at the pub, mulling over what, if anything, it all means. Man's principal players figured out seven years later, on April Fool's Day 1983 no less, that it meant having a good time someplace other than Wales. They reformed the group and have been playing out, in various formations, ever since then. (Bill Wasserzieher)

