D085.su DE HELD VAN HIBBING

Who and what is Bob Dylan? According to Wikipedia, he is:

an influential and popular artist (whose) place in American and European culture in the 1960s through to the present is unique

- a level-headed assessment few are likely to dispute. In 2005 Bono observed that:

underneath all the so-called eccentricity, which I think is just a mask, there's a very true person

- another appraisal that strikes an authentic note. But in 1988, Bob's good friend George Harrison said this:

Dylan is so brilliant - to me, he makes William Shakespeare look like Billy Joel and, as the Millennium turned, Poet Laureate Andrew Motion declared him:

one of the great artists of the century.



Personally I don't buy into any of this "greatest living artist" hyperbole, nor even the "spokesman of his generation" tag. Dylan is an enigmatic, knotty, extravagantly gifted man, sometimes insightful and wordly-wise but also capable of very woolly thinking (*All that foreign oil controlling American soil* ... and *First step was touching the moon* ... to quote two examples off the top of my head). He's a magpie (e.g. the *Empire Burlesque* film dialogue and the *Red Sky* nursery rhymes) lately turned plagiarist (did you ever stop to wonder why his last album was called *Love And Theft*? I'll bet Dr. Saga - his principal "victim" - did!). And he never spoke *for* his generation so much as *to* it - we listened, we heard and, so profound (in our minds, at least) was the consonance between his world-view and our own that, more

or less diligently, or willingly, or slavishly, we've been doing it ever since. Here's someone who says it much better than I ever could:

Dylan is a complex, mercurial human being of astounding gifts, whose purposes are usually ambiguous, frequently elusive, and sometimes downright unguessable. At the same time he is a sort of communicating vessel, open to currents that run up and down the ages quite outside the confines of the popular culture of any given period (Luc Sante, 2005)

And here's another well-informed perspective from long-time fellow traveller Larry Campbell:

There's always been a certain anarchy about ... his singing, his playing. There's this bohemian and, later, almost punk sensibility that goes through his thing, you know? And he sort of owns that, and it gives him a lot of leeway to throw precision out the door, because this is what his thing is, and that's what a lot of his following like about him. That and the really high level of poetic expression ... But there's [also] a lawlessness and ... a visceral approach to the music which is something completely unique ... (2008, to Blair Jackson)



So what has all this to do with D085.su? Well, above all else, once all the BS and hyperbole are set aside, this - as Larry sort of said - is what Dylan is: he's a poet and a musician. And where can this poet / musician best be seen? Right here, on DVDs like this one, painstakingly put together then generously circulated by Yassou (for whom great thanks) and others like him. Watch a well-filmed and sweet-sounding Bob, with harmonica but without guitar, deliver Just Like A Woman, or Mr Tambourine Man, or even Masters Of War from this Dutch stage in 1995 and it's impossible not to feel that you're in the presence of something - some one - extraordinary; very special.

(He's) a planet to be explored (Tom Waits, 2005)

He's sort of impenetrable, really (Paul Simon, 1991)

Do yourself a favour: find this DVD, watch it, then watch it again. *That's* Bob Dylan.

TAK Jesper

STARS Five