



Goin' 'Home': Scorsese takes on Dylan mythos

The more Bob Dylan reveals, the more he conceals.

Lately, the singer-songwriter has been much in the public eye. His memoir "Chronicles Vol. 1" has been perched on the New York Times best-seller list for 14 weeks. Late last year, he sat for an infrequent TV interview — with Ed Bradley on "60 Minutes."

Despite that current high profile, Dylan remains a cryptic figure. Although it's a delightful read, "Chronicles" often obfuscates about the facts, and he was as gnomic as ever in his CBS sit-down.

Now Martin Scorsese is taking on the Dylan mythos. The director's three-hour feature "No Direction Home" will premiere on PBS' "American Masters" series in two parts July 13-14.

"It's nonfiction — maybe," Scorsese said candidly at a Television Critics Assn. session Saturday at the Universal City Hilton. "With Bob Dylan, you never know."



Dylan

The film will focus on the five years from Dylan's arrival in New York in January 1961 to the July 1966 motorcycle crash that sidelined him. During that time, the protean musician underwent a hurtling artistic metamorphosis — from Woody Guthrie acolyte to protest-song icon, from impressionist folk poet to surrealist rock dandy.

"You're constantly in a state of becoming,"

Dylan says in a clip drawn from 10 hours of fresh interview footage shot by Dylan's aide-de-camp Jeff Rosen, who takes a co-producer credit on the project. (Scorsese said he has not conducted any interviews himself, though it's still a possibility.) The feature also will offer testimony from such familiars as one-time paramours Suze Rotolo and Joan Baez, musicians Dave Van Ronk and Pete Seeger and poet Allen Ginsberg.

"American Masters" executive producer Susan Lacy said the show pursued Dylan for 10 years. Judging from the five-minute reel screened for critics, the payoff for that quest should be breathtaking.

"No Direction Home" will tap a glittering lode of hitherto unseen footage. The promo reel included what might be the earliest film of Dylan, taken in 1962 by John Cohen of the New Lost City Ramblers on his New York rooftop. The film will unearth performances from the '63 and '64 Newport Folk Festivals and outtakes from D.A. Pennebaker's "Dont Look Back" and "Eat the Document," shot respectively on Dylan's '65 and '66 tours of England. Even some Dylan home movies will be aired.

The most unexpected clip unspooled for the writers shows Dylan — onstage in Manchester, England, on May 17, 1966, during his confrontational first electric tour — reacting as outraged folkie Keith Butler yells "Judas!" from the audience. It's a legendary moment in rock history, and now we can see it.

In conjunction with the PBS airing, Columbia Legacy will issue a two-CD set of unreleased Dylan music. Paramount Home Video will release a DVD with additional footage in late summer or early fall.

It remains to be seen if Scorsese — who filmed a balky Dylan for "The Last Waltz," the director's 1978 documentary on the Band — can capture the essence of this guarded, endlessly morphing musician. As the director noted, "He's constantly trying not to be pinned down. ... Tomorrow, he may be something else."