A meeting of great movie minds
Scorsese, De Niro and Pacino on ‘The Irishman’
PG 5

Child abuse secret revealed in documentary
‘Tell Me Who I Am’ director elicits confession
PG 4
Like a prickly stone

Bob Dylan is a legend. When he comes to UMBC expect his performance to be divisive.

BY CHRIS KALTENBACH

How does it feel?

Going to a Bob Dylan concert, that is. For sure, few are going to argue the man's bona-fide rock legend, the voice of a generation, one of the three or four most influential musicians of the 20th century, a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a Nobel laureate. The man's a legend, deservedly so. And at 78, he's still going strong — as part of his current tour, which started Oct. 11 in Irvine, California, he'll be performing at the UMBC Event Center on Nov. 12.

But if there's no denying Dylan's music, there's plenty of discussion when it comes to his live performances. For every fan who adores seeing him live — this, after all, is the man responsible for "Like a Rolling Stone," "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and "Hurricane," not to mention "Blowin' in the Wind" — there seems to be another willing to let the opportunity pass. He doesn't interact with his audience, the complaint goes, he's constantly re-imagining his songs, he won't let the crowd take pictures with their cell phones. Frequently, he won't even let his performance be broadcast onto the venue's overhead TV screens.

"I'm not a huge fan of Dylan anymore," says Doug Potash, an Annapolis-based wealth adviser who started the Rolling Stones fan page, Shidoobee, on Facebook. "His voice is gone. For a couple of tours, he wouldn't even play the guitar. And it takes five minutes to realize what song he's doing...People have asked me to go see him, and I'm really not interested anymore."

Laureen Claggett, 61, who lives in Tacoma, Washington, and works in alternative health care, agrees...to a point. She's seen him in concert four times, most recently three years ago, and probably would forego the chance to see him again. But that, she stresses, doesn't mean she regrets going, or that she wouldn't urge others to.

See DYLAN, page 5
"He's a poet, you know? He's a genius," says Claggett. "People go to concerts for different reasons. Bob Dylan is who he is. He's not gonna be engaging and going 'rah rah' with the audience, I think that's what a lot of people expected. I appreciate him for what he is. There will never be another Bob Dylan as Bob Dylan, his songs are his songs and his aura is his aura. For plenty of people, that's enough."

"He is just the way he is, you either accept him or you don't," says Mary M. Truitt, 61, a past life regressionist living in Annapolis who guesses she's seen Dylan around 20 times, and makes no apologies for him as a performer or for her unwavering fandom. "You're in the presence of one of the great geniuses of all time," she says. "Don't pick at him. Let him be who he is. I think it's amazing that he's still out there and people can see him live."

Dean Rosenthal, 61, a musician living in Edgerton who guesses he's seen Dylan perform 30 times or more, agrees. The man is a one-of-a-kind talent, whose songs shaped, chronicled, and gave voice to a generation, he says. "You're going and you're seeing this artist create in front of you. I mean, his music is going to live forever. To go and witness that...to me, it's like being where some great painter is painting--"

Early word on the current tour sounds promising. In reviewing his Oct. 19 show at Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln, Nebraska, L. Kent Wolgemuth in the Lincoln Journal Star called it "the best Dylan show I've seen in a decade, maybe longer." On stage, he wrote, Dylan "was more animated than he's been in many recent local performances" And the set lists for the shows so far, while missing such classics as "Like a Rolling Stone," "Lay Lady Lay," "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Rainy Day Women #12 and #33" (with its "Everybody must get stoned" chorus) and "Tangled Up In Blue" contain plenty of familiar songs from the Dylan canon: "It Ain't Me, Babe," "Simple Twist of Fate," "When I Paint My Masterpiece" and "Ballad of a Thin Man," to name a handful.

Not that you'll necessarily recognize them right away. Sometimes, you'll get a reggae version of "Like a Rolling Stone," or you'll get a rockabilly "Rolling Stone," or you'll get a straightforward, maybe an acoustic one," says Truitt. "You just never know what's going to happen."

Truth to tell, maybe it's refreshing that Dylan doesn't treat his songs like untouchable, unvaluable museum pieces, to be taken out occasionally and admired, but not examined, not to be tinkered with. Maybe it's cool that he's constantly re-imagining his creations, playing with them, seeing if there are other ways of looking at them. Dylan is going to tinker with his songs, even the standards, and for those who aren't fine with that...well, there's always a CD-player, turntable or MP3 player around to play the originals. "He doesn't owe anyone a thing," says