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Tom Dowd and the Language of Music. Mark Moormann, producer and director. Palm Pictures DVD, 2004.

Most documentaries involving popular music subjects focus on artists. Their often troubled childhoods, ascent to greatness, struggles with personal tragedies, and sometimes their untimely demise are manna for a captivating story. Throw in some never-before-seen concert footage, and voilà: a must-have for the serious music fan or collector. Fortunately, *Tom Dowd and the Language of Music* does not follow such a predictable format; instead, this engaging documentary traces the achievements of recording engineer and producer Tom Dowd, a man whose technical aptitude and musical instincts rank him among an elite few in recording history. The resulting film is captivating for the fan, collector, educator, and academic alike.

The documentary focuses primarily on Dowd's extraordinary life in the recording studio. From 1947 until his death in 2002 he recorded in numerous genres, from jazz to soul to rock, and worked with a remarkably diverse array of artists, including John Coltrane, Ray Charles, Ruth Brown, Thelonious Monk, Aretha Franklin, Ornette Coleman, Dusty Springfield, and the Allman Brothers, among many others. Of his work with several labels, Dowd's time with Atlantic Records stands out. Not only was he able to capture that "funky soulful sound" cherished by the Ertegun brothers, but he also introduced them to eight-track recording and true stereo, placing Atlantic at the forefront of recording innovation. He designed and built the first slide controller system for eight-track, enabling multiple "on the fly" adjustments, and he occasionally made creative musical contributions by suggesting chord changes or, in the case of Cream's "Sunshine of Your Mind," helping to develop the core rhythmic feel. While he worked to elicit the best work from recording artists, Dowd did not spend his own professional life in the spotlight. He rarely shared in the profits, and his name often appears only in very small print on the backs of the albums he produced.

Although *Tom Dowd and the Language of Music* is both informative and enjoyable, a few directorial decisions make elements of the film challenging for viewers. First, although the break from typical documentary format is refreshing, the alternative treatment of chronology and subject matter can be jarring. For instance, it is difficult to follow the thread when director Mark Moormann cuts from Dowd's description of his work on the Manhattan Project in 1942 to footage and discussion of the introduction of magnetic tape into recording practice in New York City around 1948, and then, with virtually no segue, returns to Dowd's physics work in the early 1940s. Addressing some of these editing decisions could have clarified the overall structure of the film, making the narrative and subnarratives easier to follow. Second, although the discussion and footage of atomic bomb testing emphasizes the power and destruction that would eventually be unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this section of the film remains rather open ended, since Dowd's personal views on his involvement are conspicuously absent. Only in the additional interview footage contained as part of the DVD extras do we learn more about Dowd's

views. Third, aside from Dowd himself, those who tell his story are primarily male rock artists or famous figures from the music industry. A few photos, some video footage, and Dowd's commentary address his experience recording jazz, but no jazz musicians are interviewed in the film. Even more strikingly, viewers might be led to believe that Dowd only recorded male artists, with the exception of Aretha Franklin. But Dowd's discography includes recordings of Cher, Gladys Knight, Patti LaBelle, and Diana Ross, and he also worked with the Sweet Inspirations—the legendary gospel group and Atlantic backup singers—all of whom were alive at the time when the film was made.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the strengths of this film far outweigh its weaknesses, and one strength may be the abundance of rich material it offers for classroom discussion. Students rarely see past the star power of an artist, but this film forces viewers to identify the collaborative efforts between a recording artist and session musicians, producer, and engineer. Through Dowd's story, we also receive a concise—and painless—history of recording technology that includes discussions, and often useful footage, of Edison recording; cutting direct to disc; electric recording; monaural; binaural; true stereo; magnetic tape; microphone setup; multitrack recording; the creation of a master disc; Les Paul's "octopus"; slide controllers; dub and overdub; and digital recording. Moreover, the film contains segments pertaining to the creation and artistic vision of Atlantic Records as well as Les Paul's conceptualization of the solid body guitar.

There is a great deal more to learn from this film than first meets the eye. It offers a chance to witness intelligence, musicianship, creativity, hard work, and instinct at play. Rather than a sensational treatment of overindulgence, greed, violence, or personal tragedy, *Tom Dowd and the Language of Music* offers an extremely optimistic and collaborative vision of musical creation. Most important, it demonstrates that though one man's humility and positive attitude may not have delivered fame and fortune, it brought him a remarkable amount of musical accomplishment and professional respect.

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Rush, R30—30th Anniversary World Tour. Anthem 6682520029 (Canada), Rounder DVZOE 1082 (US), Sanctuary SVEDF0216 (UK and Europe), 2005.

In 2005, the progressive/hard rock band Rush (consisting of bassist-singer Geddy Lee, guitarist Alex Lifeson, and drummer Neil Peart) marked its thirtieth anniversary by releasing *R30*, an elaborate "live-plus" DVD package. Earlier live projects from the band in the late 1990s and 2000s acknowledged an international fan community beyond its primary audiences in the United States and its native Canada, including followings in the UK, Japan, Brazil, and Germany. Together,