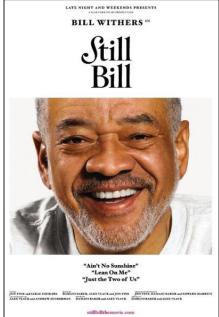


REVIEWS

Still Bill

[Late Night and Weekends]

DVD REVIEW



Music lovers owe filmmakers Damani Baker and Alex Vlack a debt of gratitude for their tenacity. Bill Withers has remained intensely protective of his privacy since he quit the music business 25 years ago, and the directors spent years convincing him to cooperate in the making of this priceless documentary. They somehow managed to not just film hundreds of hours of footage of Withers over two years, but to accompany him on a very rare return trip to his tiny hometown of Slab Fork, W.Va. Withers and childhood friends reminisce about their impoverished upbringing without sentimentality or self-pity—traits that the 71-year-old Withers clearly loathes. He discusses his unlikely rise to fame—he didn't take up music professionally until his 30s, yet found almost instant success with hits like "Ain't No Sunshine" and "Grandma's Hands"—his decision to retire from the spotlight and the pain of his childhood struggle with stuttering in the same matter-of-fact manner. As *Still Bill* progresses, Withers shows tantalizing glimmers of a renewed interest in music-making. He briefly takes the stage to sing "Grandma's Hands" with friend Cornell Dupree at a tribute concert. His mounting enthusiasm as he impulsively writes and records a song with new friend Raul Midón is a joy to behold, as is his justifiable pride in the burgeoning talents of his golden-voiced daughter, Kori, an aspiring singer and songwriter. Whether Withers ever returns to center stage, *Still Bill* will stand as a document to his seemingly bottomless wisdom and warmth.

– Chris Neal

'Whether Bill Withers ever returns to center stage, *Still Bill* will stand as a document to his seemingly bottomless wisdom and warmth.'

