

attempts to lower the volume on the sound system, leading to a physical altercation with Dylan's manager, Al Grossman. This scene, staying true to actual events, propelled Bob Dylan to become one of the most influential figures in rock history.

Why was Dylan's shift to electric music so controversial? To understand the importance of this moment, it is vital to consider the cultural context of the 1960s. The decade was marked by major political and social upheaval. Americans experienced the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Kennedy assassination. Social norms were challenged with events such as the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, and the Counterculture Revolution. The folk music scene, where he initially became famous, was an idealistic and countercultural movement. In the early 1960s, the most popular music genres included doo-wop, early rock and roll, rhythm and blues, and the emerging soul sound. Songs like Chubby Checker's "The Twist" and Buddy Holly's "Everyday" were still mainstream hits. The Beatles were just a few years away from revolutionizing rock music. College students drawn to philosophy and politics grew interested in folk music because of its provocative, social revolutionary message. Folk purists viewed rock music as simplistic and juvenile, a style for teenagers rather than serious musicians. Though Dylan was not the best guitarist, singer, or harmonica player, he had the rare ability to incite raw emotions of nonconformity through his lyrics.

Understanding this historical setting enhances the impact of the film's dramatic climax. However, even without prior knowledge of the 1960s folk movement, *A Complete Unknown* remains an engaging and thought-provoking film. It is a must-watch for fans of rock music, musical biographies, and historians.

*Salvador Macias*

Ridley Scott, director. *Gladiator II*. Scott Free Productions, 2024.

The historical drama *Gladiator II*, a sequel to the original *Gladiator* (2000), directed by Ridley Scott, details the life of Lucius Verus Aurelius. The film takes place sixteen years after the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE and the end of the Pax Romana period (27 BCE -180 CE). It masterfully portrays imperial power, governmental corruption, arrogance of those seeking power, and the violence permeating Roman society. A strong plot is built around its

characters to demonstrate the immense power it takes to claim and hold the emperorship. While the film has historical inaccuracies, it does not detract from the story or its lesson to the viewers on how ancient history comes alive in the modern day.

The gladiator games are a plot device to reconnect the primary protagonist with his mother and the recovery of the family name that he abandoned when he fled into exile. Lucius had been forced into banishment as a means of survival after the death of his uncle because he was not old enough to ascend the throne safely. This is where we find Lucius as the story begins in Numidia. At the end of the second century, the battles and gladiatorial games show key aspects of Roman expansion and society. The opening scene begins with the siege of a port city in Numidia. The Numidian battle showcases Rome as a titan of military ingenuity and strength. The first act is the journey of the primary protagonist, Lucius, and his quest for justice. The second act explores the Roman government's internal politics through its twin Emperors' actions. The third and final act centers on an ambitious freedman's bid for power in Rome. The story focuses on the redemption of Lucius's place in Roman society.

The original protagonist from *Gladiator* (2000) is mentioned only by name and memory, yet the character plays an essential role throughout the story. Maximus Decimus Meridius, portrayed as having died heroically with public honors previously, is shown differently here. Maximus is honored in the arena by his fellow gladiators after having gone through a process called *damnatio memoriae*, which meant that all records of his life were stricken from public memory. The film takes artistic license when it comes to the use of historical figures. First, the emperors Caracalla and Geta were not twins, but aged about one year apart. Second, the character Macrinus, who is based on someone who proclaimed himself emperor, is depicted as a freedman overseer of gladiators instead of the praetorian prefect (Roman magistrate) he was historically.

Historical inaccuracies plague this film to such an extent that many historians believe it warrants discussion. The opening scene features a battle in a port city in Numidia, yet historically, Numidia fell to Rome centuries prior. During a naval battle in the Colosseum, an announcer proclaims this as a reenactment of the battle of Salamis in 480 BCE between the Trojans and the Persians. However, this battle would have been between the Greeks and the Persians, with no Trojan involvement, as their culture had been lost for centuries. In one scene, the audience is presented with a monkey given a position of

authority; while there is no evidence to support that a monkey was ever made consul at this time, filmmakers may have been inspired by the story of Caligula, who is said to have made his horse consul.

The main takeaway from this historical epic is that power corrupts, and justice can only be done by those with the will to take initiative. The focus on Lucius and his journey to find justice contrasts with that of Macrinus, who seeks power through political maneuvering. Both are pitted against each other in a final act that determines the fate of the characters and Rome itself. The general audience will enjoy the visual storytelling, action scenes, and use of practical effects, special effects created without computer-generated images (CGI). On a macro scale, *Gladiator II* is another addition to the ever-growing list of Roman epics depicting ancient history.

*Joseph White*

Ridley Scott, director. *The Last Duel*. 20th Century Studios, 2021.

The historical drama *The Last Duel* explores one of the most well-documented judicial duels during the medieval period in France. Fought between Jean de Carrouges (Matt Damon) and Jacques le Gris (Adam Driver) on December 29, 1386, the duel became a cultural phenomenon whose outcome was debated by both contemporaries and medieval historians centuries later. Of particular concern to writers was the truth of Marguerite de Carrouges' (Jodie Comer) claim: did Jacques rape her? The script is adapted from Erich Jager's 2001 historical fiction of the same name. Historians have praised the film's depiction of French costumes and culture, as well as its exploration of social history, particularly the place of aristocratic women in feudal societies. However, some historians criticize that the events have been morphed to fit its overall feminist message.

The plot can be divided into three parts, each focused on the point of view of a specific main character, Jean, Jacques, and Marguerite. Beginning with Jean, the audience is exposed to the life of French nobility around two key events: the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) and The Black Death (1346-53). Jean comes from a military family, with his father commanding a fortress. His entire life is spent fighting on behalf of the French Crown against the English, causing him to be absent from his home for years at a time. The Black Death killed at least a third of the French population a