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REVIEW

Music DVD Review: Blood Sweat & Tears - *Spinning Wheel*

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Blood Sweat & Tears was formed in 1967 by keyboardist Al Kooper and became one of the most pioneering jazz-rock fusion bands in the world. Their debut album, *Child Is Father to the Man*, released in early 1968, is still considered one of the greatest jazz-rock fusion albums of all time, but it would be the only recording produced by the original Kooper-led version of the band.

By 1969 Kooper was out of the band and the remaining members recruited vocalist David Clayton-Thomas who helped them forge a completely different sound for their self-titled second album. Kooper's brilliant organ playing was no longer the focus of the music, as the horn section and Clayton-Thomas's bluesy, soulful baritone now took center stage. The results were equally impressive. The album was also far more accessible, reaching #1 on the charts and spawning three top-ten singles, something *Child Is Father to the Man* never came close to doing.

Spinning Wheel features archive footage from a BS&T performance at the Civic Theatre, in Halifax, UK on April 9th 1980. Clayton-Thomas had recently reformed the band and released the new album *Nuclear Blues* in 1980. Non of the original BS&T members remained in the band, but the group of musicians assembled for this album and tour were more than worthy counterparts. The show opener, "Overture", was the only song performed from *Child Is Father to the Man* and these guys certainly do it justice. Clayton-Thomas was still waiting in the wings during this explosive instrumental, allowing his new band's amazing virtuosity to be immediately put on display.

Clayton-Thomas took the stage for the second number, the title track to *Nuclear Blues*, and the intensity never let up. Most of the BS&T classics were covered here, but, disappointingly, three of their most beloved songs and biggest hits, "And When I Die", "Spinning Wheel", and "You Made Me So Very Happy", were lumped together in an all too short medley. Interestingly, the DVD case refers to the latter song as both "You Made Me So Very Happy" and "You Make Me So Very Happy", which is a slight variation to the original song title "You've Made Me So Very Happy".

"Spanish Wine", another new song from *Nuclear Blues*, showcased some brilliant Spanish guitar work from the very impressive Robert Piltch. After a few minutes the horn section joins in to turn the song into a flamenco-inspired jam that stirred up many old memories of my two years living in Spain. This eventually segues right into a song they referred to as "Blood, Sweat and Tears Blues", which again highlights some of Piltch's incredible fretwork - this time on the electric. It must run in the family, because his brother David had been laying down some staggering fretless bass grooves throughout the entire show, and here he gets an extended solo section to showcase the rest of his remarkable bass skills.

The video ends with a performance of Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression", which the band also covered on the *Nuclear Blues* album. Unfortunately, the video fades to black only two minutes into the performance and then the recording abruptly ends. The total running time is only 58 minutes, and there are no extra features.

The production of the DVD is quite low budget and the material definitely shows its age. Dolby Digital 2.0 is the only audio option provided, but it sounds reasonably well considering the source material. The back of the DVD case has the following disclaimer that I found somewhat amusing: "If your system includes 5.1 audio, you should be able to switch the amplifier to activate simulated 5.1 SURROUND SOUND, to enhance this archive recording." Well, thanks for the tip. The worst problem with the audio is the loud hum that can be heard emanating from the PA system during the quiet parts of the show. Just like the good old days. The video was dark and lacked much detail, since the recording apparently relied only on the minimal amount of spotlights used to illuminate the band.

This DVD certainly has its weak points, but it does provide an enjoyable document of David Clayton-Thomas's 1980 version of Blood Sweat & Tears. Its definitely worth a spin if you were ever a fan of the band.

Set List

01. Overture

06. Hi De Ho
07. And When I Die
08. Spinning Wheel
09. You Made Me So Very Happy
10. Spanish Wine
11. Blood, Sweat and Tears Blues
12. Manic Depression

Performance 7/10

Production 4/10

Comments

#1 – May 14, 2007 @ 21:57PM – [Connie Phillips](#) [[URL](#)]

Congrats! This article has been forwarded to the [Advance.net websites](#) and [Boston.com](#).

