



# Laramie Movie Scope: Blood Sweat and Tears: Spinning Wheel

## Classic big band pop concert

by **Robert Roten**, Film Critic

**April 4, 2007** -- "Blood Sweat and Tears: Spinning Wheel" is a DVD music concert video using selected film footage shot by Jeffery Kruger on April 9, 1980 at the Civic Theatre in Halifax, England. That must have been some concert, since War was also on the bill that day. Click [here for a review of the War concert DVD](#) made from Kruger's film shot that same day. This concert was the last in a 10-day tour of England by Blood Sweat and Tears and War. Blood Sweat and Tears is kind of like a modern version of a 1940s era big band. Their music, at this stage in the band's evolution, had a heavy jazz influence and some of their songs harken back to the era when jazz was king, like their version of Billy Holliday's classic song "God Bless the Child."

Watching Blood Sweat and Tears in concert, one can understand how the band managed to make jazz, which has a small niche audience, into successful popular music. These guys are seriously talented, plus they have an excellent lead singer in David Clayton Thomas, who sounds like a black guy, but is white. I'm not a big fan of jazz, or Blood Sweat and Tears, but they do put on a great show with some dazzling jazz instrumental riffs. A rendition of "Spanish Wine" is bookended with nimble classical and Spanish style guitar playing by Robert Piltch. There is also a highly sophisticated guitar bass solo in the same set by his brother, David Piltch. The concert includes a medley of BS&T's greatest hits, including "God Bless the Child," "Lucretia MacEvil," "Hi De Ho," "And When I Die," "Spinning Wheel" and "You Made Me So Very Happy." During this set David Clayton Thomas and band stretch out the final few notes of "Hi De Ho" to ridiculous lengths. This medley has fairly robust versions of each song. Other tunes on the DVD include an opening hot jazz instrumental overture (the DVD starts with that, instead of the menu), followed by "Nuclear Blues." The concert ends with "Blood Sweat and Tears Blues" followed by the band's arrangement of Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression," but that last song is cut off after just two minutes.

The version of BS&T which performed on this DVD was one of the last incarnations of the band, started in New York in 1967 by Al Kooper. The original members were Kooper, Jim Fielder, Fred Lipsius, Randy Brecker, Jerry Weiss, Dick Halligan, Steve Katz and Bobby Colomby. By 1980, no original band members were left. The group had dissolved and reformed several times. There had always been tension between the different musical styles of jazz, rock and blues within the band. In 1980 David Clayton Thomas re-formed the band with mostly Canadian musicians, including (in addition to those already mentioned above, Vern Dorge (soprano & alto saxophones, flute), Earl Seymour (tenor & baritone saxophones, flute), Bruce Cassidy (trumpet, flugelhorn), Richard Martinez (keyboards) and Bobby Economou (drums). These same musicians appear on one of the last BS&T albums, Nuclear Blues. The tour, which spawned this DVD, was made to promote that album. The group disbanded after the tour. BS&T was reconstituted by David Clayton Thomas and dissolved again when Thomas quit the group once again to pursue a solo career. The group was reformed in 2005, fronted by former Three Dog Night vocalist Chuck Negron and is still touring.

This film was shot using available light, mostly stage spotlights, but the images come out pretty well considering that. It helps that the spotlight operators used mostly white and yellow lighting. The soundtrack (2 channel Dolby® Digital) is pretty good for a concert recording. The various instrumental solos come through well, and the vocals are also clear. It is a good concert video with a good selection of BS&T hit songs, along with some selections from the Nuclear Blues album. The DVD runs only 58 minutes long. This DVD rates a B. It is being distributed by [MVD Entertainment Group](#) in the US and by [Cherry Red Films in the UK](#). [The DVD is suitable mainly for jazz and BS&T fans.](#)

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