



BOB DYLAN



Trainload Of Fools Bugged Down On A Magnetic Field:

Bob Dylan's European summer 1978 tour

When one looks back on Dylan's career as a live performer in the hazy days before the Never Ending Tour took its own life it is quite easy to collect a handful of outstanding concerts. Fans will always refer to the Rolling Thunder Revue, the early gospel shows and the Street Legal tour. Indeed, Dylan's road trip around the world in 1978 was one of eager anticipation and massive public attendance. Early reports of his first tour of Japan during the first two weeks of February turned out to be both completely different from anything he has ever done before and also one of artistic freedom. By the time that the first European concerts are announced Dylan-fever peaked as never seen before. It had been twelve years since Bob last toured Europe (the 1966 hailed shows with The Band) and much happened since then. Zimmy fell off his motorbike, became

a father, discovered country music, disappeared for a couple of years and came back in grand style at the start of 1974 for a nationwide tour with The Band. Since then he produced two classic albums: *Blood On The Tracks* and *Desire* and played one of his most ambitious tours ever: the two Rolling Thunder Revue legs of autumn 1975 and spring 1976. His very first cult-film of that era, *Renaldo And Clara* became a commercial failure. Dylan split from Sarah in 1977 and unreliable sources in the music industry whispered that one of the reasons to start the 1978 tour was pure financial. Whatever Dylan had on his mind, the results were no less than historical. The rehearsals began at Rundown Studios in Santa Monica from mid December 1977 to January 1978. Dylan asks bass-player Rob Stoner (who stood next to him during the



Rolling Thunder Revue tour) to assemble a group of musicians from Los Angeles. He had also recruited Stephen Soles and David Mansfield from the RTR band. From the very start it became clear that Dylan had a massive band in mind. Musicians come and go during the January rehearsals, while Dylan provides the band members with a unique preview of his yet-to-be recorded *Street Legal* material. Meanwhile Dylan gets interviewed by several reporters of national magazines and newspapers about the upcoming *Renaldo And Clara* movie. On January 27th he rehearses with his finalized 1978 tour band: Billy Cross on guitar, Steve Douglas on horns, Bobbye Hall on percussion and Helena Springs, Jo Ann Harris and Debbie Dye on back-up vocals. Dylan arrives for his very first tour of Japan on February 16th in Tokyo. He is subjected to his first foreign-language press conference and visits Ryoan Temple rock gardens in Kyoto. On February 20th he plays his first 1978 concert at the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo. Nine shows follow after which Dylan heads for Australia to

play another five gigs. From April 10th onwards Dylan starts recording his new album *Street Legal* at his own studio in Santa Monica. The session only lasted five days for the nine compositions and were mixed in another week. The end result was an album that included some superb songs (*Senor, Changing Of The Guards* and *We Better Talk This Over*) but sounded very dry and very unlike that wild, thin mercury sound that Dylan wanted to re-create. The 1999 re-release is an absolute must for all fans as the mix is redone from the analog master reel tapes and the mid price cd sounds now as it should be: warm, accurate and heartfelt. Late May Dylan rehearses with his band for the upcoming European tour. Seven concerts at Los Angeles Universal Amphitheatre follow as a final preparation. Meanwhile all European shows are sold out in a matter of hours. On June 13th Dylan flies into London where he spends the next two days shopping and surveying the London music scene. Two days later he plays his first UK show at Earls Court in London where he



sells out the house for six nights to very favourable reviews in the music press. The whole European tour is a massive success in big arenas (London and Paris) and outdoor soccer stadiums. On June 30th Dylan travels from Berlin to Nürnberg by train, a seven hour trip. One day later he plays one of his best European shows, together with the other big open air event at Blackbushe, at the Zeppelinfeld. An estimated crowd of 80.000 fans gather at the field where Hitler held his infamous speeches for Nazi-Germany. A small number of neo-nazis throw things on stage throughout the show. Dylan is visibly touched by this location and delivers a tour-de-force. The two and a half hour concert features many highlights: the acoustic *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* is a statement not to forget and gets a standing ovation from the crowd. The set-list does not include many rare songs from this part of the tour, but *One Of Us Must Know* is played with so much precision and *Tangled Up In Blue* sounds even more fragile on this magic night. Many fans agree that Dylan

played one of those historical nights at the Zeppelinfeld in Nürnberg. We have found the original master tapes in outstanding sound quality and remixed those analog masters through a HDCD processing to a digital perfect result. We hope you will recapture the magic of the performer and his songs being delivered by a magnificent band. That long hot summer night in Nürnberg wiped away all the bad memories of what should have never been. By the time Eric Clapton joined Dylan for a final *The Times They Are-A-Changin'* the meaning of the song took its own life. Dylan came to Nürnberg and left more than a message. Listen to this memorable set and feel the vibes on that stage at the Zeppelinfeld. History hopefully never repeats itself, except the fine art of one performer on the night of July 1st, 1978...

*The Gentlemen's Club
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