

## D027.a NEWCASTLE, 5 JULY 1984

**SOUND** The electric songs are consistently sub-fi, not bad but not great either. (To appreciate what's lost, check out *Real Live*, which includes two tracks, License and T Blues, both from this show.) Hard Rain and Tangled from the first acoustic set sound comparatively fine. Sadly, by the time the second (T Man to Me Babe) comes around, audio quality has dipped, rendering them rather less distinctive. But it's all listenable and, given the period (or until an upgrade\* happens) will have to do.

**IMAGE** A left-centre, stage-front, hand-held film in which we see lots of heads, *none of which cause the (lanky?) taper (or us) the least bit of trouble.* (What they *do* do, rather, is add presence and immediacy). Shakes also are too few to worry about, with the camera remaining under impressively close control throughout. There's regular right-sided panning to take in Taylor's solo work (also, when he's on, Santana's) and an occasional swing left so as not to forget McLagen / Sutton. For two-thirds of the gig, until about the end of Every Grain, picture quality (thanks to abundant daylight - see screenshot) is surprisingly good. Then, as dusk starts to fall, so does image definition, though again what remains is acceptable enough. Overall, this film constitutes a valuable record of D '84 and its creator deserves high praise.



**RUNNING TIME** D027.a's twenty tracks run 92:20 whereas full Newcastle '84 audio runs 140 minutes. So what's missing? Four songs are cut entirely: Bleeding from the first acoustic set, LARS (played after Every Grain), then Heaven's Door and Times, last two songs of the night. As to what we do see, only seven of the twenty cuts featured are complete, though most others are substantially so, with several missing just one or two opening lines. There are a couple of splices and lopped endings here and there. Hardest pruned are Maggie's and T Man, both shorn of entire verses.

**PERFORMANCE** Respected archivist Olof Björner recommends two shows from the '84 tour: Barcelona (which he declares *one of the best Dylan concerts ever!!* - and they're his exclamation marks, not mine) and Newcastle. So far, so good. But outdoor daytime gigs lack the intimacy of a darkened hall and a spotlit stage, no matter who's playing. As with firework

displays, *night* is ideally the backdrop of choice. And stadium rock was never going to be Bob's forté either. Here he plays hard, in the first verse of JLaw breaking a string, which very quickly becomes two, such that half the song is delivered on the remaining four until, finally, at the top of the bridge, he changes acoustics without missing a beat. Later on, in Wind, he does it again and eventually uses three guitars just in this one song. Okay, if you play H61 or Watchtower hard, they'll sound all the better for it - but Every Grain, similarly attacked, is dreadful, devoid of any hint of the compassion or tenderness its lyric demands and there's a deadening sameness about much we hear. If you like reworked lyrics, on the other hand, you'll be better pleased. Masters has an interesting new line whilst Simple Twist is chock-full of them. But though cathedral bells and clicking bootheels figure, as well as a series of bravura statements - *I taught you everything I know / I'm leaving my heart here with you / What do I care?* - again the whole doesn't quite hang together, more pose than poesy. New song Enough Is Enough, here in its seventh outing of nine, had a different set of verses each time he performed it before being abandoned altogether, so catch it while you can. And then there's Tangled. Back in '78, slow, spare, sexy and nothing like the jangling *BOTT* original, it quickly became a live stand-out. So too in '84 the same song (except it wasn't) had a fame that went before it and diehard fans, alert to the news of yet another extravagant makeover, handed in their ticket expecting to hear something special. And my abiding memory of his Wembley performance was that it *was* just that. What a let-down, then, later, to put on *Real Live* and find his rich, ringing guitar sound mixed into oblivion and much of the song's magic with it. Here, though, compensation, at least in part, for though the take is not complete nor the delivery quite so full-on as it would be two nights later, compelling it remains. And the Hard Rain before it is better yet - indeed, the best thing here by some distance. A year and eight days on from this Newcastle summer's eve, Bob would stand on a Philadelphia stage with Ron Wood and Keith Richards and, in the space of fifteen minutes, wantonly inflict upon his global reputation very serious harm (see [D013](#)). Had he ditched that dismal duo and merely reprised, solo, the Hard Rain and Tangled we see here, how different things might have been.



**COMMENT** Some artists get flowers thrown at them, or even ladies' garments. In Newcastle, where they do things differently, it's socks! (You'll just have to watch it.)

**GRAZIE AT**

**STARS** For a five-star '84, see [D113.su](#). As for this one: four.

\* See [D027.asu](#)