

D255 RUPORUTAGE NIPPON ~ BOB DYLAN GA YATTE KITA
(BOB DYLAN HAS COME TO JAPAN)

Bob opened his mammoth 1978 World Tour in Japan - a country he'd never played before - with three dates at Tokyo's Budokan Hall followed by three shows in Osaka then five more at Budokan. In commemoration of his historic visit, the Japanese Division of Sony released *BD At Budokan*, intending it initially, it was claimed, for the Japanese market only, though once copies began to find their way around the world and demand for it grew exponentially, a global release inevitably followed. All something of a shame since large tracts of it are so horribly unlistenable - all that sprightly, tootling woodwind - indeed, it's remarkable just how consistently poorly Bob - so great a live artist - has been served (until the splendid *Bootleg Series*, anyway) by the officially sanctioned live output credited to his name. Though he may have a down on bootleggers in general, it's certainly true that the best of their efforts have done more to cement his reputation in perpetuity than his record company (*Dylan & The Dead* - pah!) ever did. But for them, we'd never have heard 1961's unforgettable Black Cross, for example, or The Gaslight Tapes or any of his astounding Fox Warfield 1979 Contract With The Lord concerts, or any more of Tour '84 than the unsatisfactory *Real Live* recalls or any of the numerous more or less wonderful concerts given here, there and everywhere - Kalamazoo to Christchurch, Berlin to Buenos Aires - between 1995 and the present day. (And, 67 years young, he'll be preparing to play somewhere tonight - Stavanger, Norway actually - even as I write.) I don't think there'd even have been a remedial *Bootleg Series*, either, had the fans not first clearly demonstrated by their determined and persistent efforts to "liberate" him, a collective appetite for substantially more than the *Saved / Infidels / KOL / Down In The Mouth* crumbs previously on offer.



Anyway, back to Japan. On 15 April 1978 (i.e. some six weeks after his last Budokan show), Japanese TV channel NHK screened a half-hour programme about him and his

visit, preserved here (recorded when re-broadcast on 11 May 2003) in pristine quality. And if you either are Japanese or are fluent in both spoken and written Japanese, you'll probably regard this, with good justification, as a solid four star item. Otherwise, unfortunately, due to its utter impenetrability* to the non-native, it cannot be recommended. For the record, we see a brief 1:20 excerpt from his airport / arrival press conference but, though he's in what passes for him at these events as a notably blithe and co-operative mood, that's all she wrote. For, because the Japanese to English interpretation of questions has been edited out for the benefit of a home audience that wouldn't need or want to hear it, we twice see Bob answer questions he's heard but we haven't! Both responses, naturally, mildly intrigue, making the urge to speculate strong. He first replies:

They were my most brilliant love songs

- so what was the question? Then he says:

Well, I'm not a God of Folk Songs.

Q: Then what are you?

I'm just a person.

Ooh, Bob, if only (for your sake, though not ours) that were so.

D255 also includes two very short and not particularly high quality pro-shot concert footage snippets - first and most interesting is 55 seconds (that's the first one and a half verses) of Lonesome Bedroom Blues, which he sang four times in the opening week of this tour then never again, then, towards the end of the programme, 35 seconds from the tail-end of I Threw It All Away. There's also another 55 seconds of jerky, left-profile stage-shot footage strangely overdubbed with the first verse of Hard Rain from Fort Collins 1976 (i.e. as found on **D361**, **D005** etc) - a cheap trick not likely to fool anyone reading this, anyway. Between these bonbons come a series of interviews with assorted singers, playwrights, journalists, a poet, former political activists and so on with barely one intelligible word or phrase to be heard (it's even hard to pick out the "Bob Dylan"s, which are re-assuring to catch if only to know that between one interviewee and the next we haven't unwittingly segued into some totally unrelated topic.)

HVALA 'Bo

STARS A beautifully well-preserved artefact from 30 years back, which, unless you happen to hail from Japan, is unlikely to reward the effort of its acquisition - thus just one.

UPDATE July 2008: with an English translation* now to hand (arigato, tetsuro), much better, so star-rating upped to three and a half.

* For a full English transcript, see **D255 (#2)**