

Robin Trower – State to State: Live Across America 1974-80 (2013)

Written by bluesever

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CD1: 01. *Twice Removed From Yesterday* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:04:11] 02. *Lady Love* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:03:00] 03. *Daydream* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:07:40] 04. *Too Rolling Stoned* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:05:54] 05. *I Can't Wait Much Longer* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:06:46] 06. *Day Of The Eagle* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:03:59] 07. *A Little Bit Of Sympathy* (Live - Philadelphia '74) [00:05:11] 08. *Bridge Of Sighs* (Live - California '74) [00:05:35] 09. *Alethea* (Live - California '74) [00:04:06] 10. *Rock Me Baby* (Live - California '74) [00:04:59] CD2: 01. *Daydream* (Live - Illinois '76) [00:10:26] 02. *Same Rain Falls* (Live - Illinois '76) [00:03:35] 03. *Sailing* (Live - Illinois '76) [00:05:12] 04. *Long Misty Days* (Live - Illinois '76) [00:04:59] 05. *I Can't Wait Much Longer* (Live - Illinois '76) [00:06:46] 06. *Too Rolling Stoned* (Live - Illinois '76) [00:09:05] 07. *Somebody Calling* (Live - Oklahoma '77) [00:06:07] 08. *Bluebird* (Live - Oklahoma '77) [00:04:20] 09. *The Ring* (Live - Missouri '80) [00:02:47] 10. *Jack and Jill* (Live - Missouri '80) [00:03:34] 11. *The Shout* (Live - Missouri '80) [00:02:34] 12. *Hannah* (Live - Missouri '80) [00:01:20] 13. *Victims of the Fury* (Live - Missouri '80) [00:03:53] 14. *Mad House* (Live - Missouri '80) [00:03:06]

A two CD set released on October 04, 2013 includes twenty-four previously unissued 'live' performances by the Robin Trower band. The album includes performances recorded in Philadelphia and California (1974), Illinois (1976), Oklahoma (1977), and Missouri (1980).

The late, and supremely gifted, James Dewar sings on each track on the album, and plays bass guitar on all but two tracks on Disc 2: 'Somebody Calling' and 'Bluebird'. Robin was feeling his way into a new phase of his career, and brought in Rustee Allen on bass guitar with the intention of exploring, to an extent, funkier rhythms and sounds. Robin believed this would enable Jimmy Dewar to concentrate on fresh ways of delivering his distinctive and expressive voice. Whether this experiment was successful, or not, is left to the listener to decide, and those lucky to see the different groups in performance. I believe the personnel change, while 'transforming' the scope of Robin's music, left James Dewar, musically and personally, exposed on stage without his bass guitar.

All of the tracks on Disc 1 feature the magnificent drumming of the late Reg Isidore. Disc 2 highlights a significant change to the group; Bill Lordan replacing Reg Isidore on drums. Both excellent musicians, with different musical identities and style. I believe that Bill Lordan's musicianship, and presence, improved the sound of the group in performance, and also in the studio. His drumming is inspired and dynamic, and enabled Robin to explore different musical concepts. The version of 'Alethea' recorded in California in 1974 highlights the contrasting techniques and creative abilities of both drummers.

This 'live' collection contains music of the highest caliber (even where the recordings are of a low standard, and Robin's guitar tone is adversely affected by feedback, and malfunctioning effects pedals) played by superb musicians, and fronted by a guitar player who pushes himself to the limit each time he takes to the stage.

For me, the highlight of the performances are those recorded in Illinois, during 1976. All of the tracks, especially, 'Daydream', the wonderful 'Same Rain Falls', and 'Too Rolling Stoned' contain some of Robin's most expressive, moving, and inventive guitar playing. His excellent musicianship, guitar tone, and use of effects, confirm that Robin had arrived at an artistic peak. This, however, could not have been achieved without the evocative, subtle, and tremendous James Dewar on vocals & bass, and Bill Lordan on drums, who both combined to create a tight and superb rhythm section.

The track 'Sailing' is remarkable and atmospheric. Not to everyone's taste, but it suits mine. Jimmy is in great voice, and the melodic groove is of deep emotional depth. Robin's guitar tone on 'Long Misty Days' resembles a jet aircraft taking-off with its huge, brooding sound. The live performance is magical and contains some of Robin's most eloquent and emotive playing.

A striking feature of the recordings is the power, texture, and soulful voice of James Dewar. At times, the unique quality of Jimmy's voice elevates itself above the atmospheric music, and the listener is drawn to the magical and beautiful expressiveness of his vocals. Magnificent music.

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