RORY GALLAGHER

Title: Irish Tour '74

Label: Polydor

Release Date: 1974

Medium: Double Album

Availability: Very Good

Venue: Ulster Hall, Belfast, Ireland
Carlton Cinema, Dublin, Ireland
City Hall, Cork, Ireland

Recording Date: January, 1974

Lineup: Rory Gallagher - Guitar, harmonica, vocals
Gerry McAvoy - Bass
Rod De'Ath - Drums
Lou Martin - Keyboards

Set List: Cradle Rock
I Wonder Who (Who's Gonna Be Your Sweet Man)
Tattoo'd Lady
Too Much Alcohol
As The Crow Flies
A Million Miles Away
Walk On Hot Coals
Who's That Comin'

One of the seventies legendary guitarists was Rory Gallagher. While he was alive, Gallagher was known as the guitarist's guitarist. While he never achieved the U.S. stardom that he deserved, Gallagher was technically the equal of any blues based guitarist in rock. He could do nearly anything on the guitar. He was one of rock's great bottleneck players, he was a master at harmonics, he could duplicate any sound without the aid of special effect pedals, he was fast and clean or measured depending on the need, and he could play acoustic as well as electric guitar. The master guitarist was always in control of his instrument and he was an exceptionally good live performer. While Gallagher released a slew of albums, none of them sold well and he remained a cult artist at best through his life. Still, he was one of the all time greats and deserves to be remembered in a better light.

Rory Gallagher was born William Roray Gallagher in Donegal, Ireland on March 2, 1948. His father worked for the Electricity Supply Board in Ireland so they moved based on what projects were underway. One year later, they were in Derry City than Cork, where Gallagher was raised. Both of his parents had a musical background. His father played accordion and sang in local bands. His mother was a singer and actress who performed in theatre.

When his parents noticed that Rory and his younger brother, Donal, were musically inclined, they encouraged them to learn to play. Rory started on a ukelele and moved to guitar at the age of nine. He won a talent contest at the age of twelve and used his winnings to buy an electric guitar. He upgraded to a 1961 Fender Stratocaster when he turned fifteen. His early influences covered the spectrum of blues, rock, folk, and skiffle music. He listened to Lonnie Donegan, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, and most significantly, Muddy Waters, while in his teens. His playing grew even more refined as he listened to Woody Guthrie, Big Bill Broonzy, and Lead Belly. He also learned to play alto sax, bass, madolin, banjo, and sitar.

He made payments on his first Stratocaster by joining the Fontana Showband at the age of fifteen. They toured throughout Ireland and England. That group eventually mutated into a r&b based band called Impact. They toured Ireland and Spain in 1966. Later that same year, they broke up and after forming a short lived trio in Germany with bassist Oliver Tobin, Gallagher returned to Ireland to form his own band.

He recruited Eric Kitteringham on bass and Norman Damery on drums and called his new group The Taste, in 1966. They were a blues rock and r&b power trio.

After a 1968 lineup change that paired Gallagher with Richard McCracken and John Wilson, Taste landed a recording contract and wound up releasing two studio and two live albums. They played a well received set at the 1970 Isle Of Wight Festival but crashed and burned because of personality conflicts and problems with their label by the end of 1970. Overall, they charted one album in America, three in England, and had a number one single in Germany.

When Gallagher left Taste, he immediately started work on forming a new back up band and signed a solo recording contract with Polydor. He auditioned the best musicians of the time and wound up hiring two Belfast based musicians, bassist Gerry McAvoy and drummer Wilgar Campbell to back him. His debut solo album, *Rory Gallagher* (1971), was released on May, 1971. *Deuce* (1971) followed in November of the same year. Both made the UK albums chart, peaking at numbers 32 and 39.

Gallagher hit his commercial peak with a new live album, *Live! In Europe* (#101-1972). It cracked the top ten pop albums chart in England, peaking at number 9, and nearly cracked the American top 100 pop albums chart. The album was recorded in February and March, 1972 and was released in May, 1972. It was certified gold in England. Later that same year, Gallagher beat out Eric Clapton as Melody Maker's Guitarist/Musician of the Year.

Blueprint (#147-1973) featured new keyboardist Lou Martin and new drummer Rod de'Ath, who had replaced Campbell. It nearly cracked the British top ten, peaking at number 12. The album was released in February, 1973. In November, 1973, he followed with *Tattoo* (1973). It was his first solo album not to chart in America but did peak at number 32 in England. The album saw the guitarist tackle a number of genres, including rock, jazz, and blues rock in addition to Delta and Chicago blues.

The guitarist followed with another live album, *Irish Tour '74* (#110-1974), which was recorded in January, 1974 in Belfast and Dublin. It sold well in America and peaked at number 36 in England. The album would be his last new release on Polydor. Polydor released two compilations in 1974 and 1975. The Story So Far (1974) did not chart but a compilation of his first two albums called *Sinner … And Saint* (#156-1975), charted in America. It focused on material from his first two studio albums.

After leaving Polydor, Gallagher signed with Chrysalis Records and released a new studio album, *Against The Grain* (#121-1975). It charted in America but not England. Gallagher worked with Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover on his next album, *Calling Card* (#163-1976), which was released in October, 1976. It charted in the U.S. and peaked at number 32 in England.

During recording sessions for a new studio album, Gallagher decided to fire Martin and de'Ath and scrapped the recordings. In the end, he decided to return to a power trio format, only replacing de'Ath with new drummer Ted McKenna. The change resulted in the album not being released until October, 1978, two years after his last album. *Photo Finish* (#116-1978) charted in the States, but not England. Gallagher's next studio album for Chrysalis was *Top Priority* (#140-1979). It was released in September, 1979 and peaked at number 56 in England.

Gallagher's third live album, *Stage Struck* (1980), was released on Castle Records in November, 1980. It was recorded between November 1979 and July, 1980. The album did not chart in America but did peak at number 40 in England. It featured a more hard rock sound than his previous records. By the time Gallagher

released his ninth studio album, *Jinx* (1982), new drummer Brendan O'Neill was in the band. He also had resigned with Chrysalis, with Mercury distributing the album in the States. Gallagher had largely lost his U.S. audience and the album did not chart. However, it did reach lower levels of the British pop albums chart, peaking at number 68.

While most of Gallagher's seventies albums reached the lower reaches of the American pop albums chart, they did not sell as well as they did in England. Part of this was due to the fact that he was never properly marketed in the United States. However, Gallagher did become a popular concert draw on college campuses across the nation during this period and his first two live albums were well received in the States.

After the release of *Jinx* in 1982, Gallagher lost his major label deal with Chrysalis Records. It was another five years before he released his next album, *Defender* (1987) on Capo Records. He released his final album, *Fresh Evidence*, on Capo, in 1990. The album was recorded with McAvoy, O'Neill, and keyboardist John Cooke. He followed with his last American tour in 1991. In 1993, he completely overhauled his backing band, performing with David Levy, Jim Leverton, Richard Newman, and Mark Feltham.

While he continued to tour up to the end of his life, Gallagher's health was deteriorating. He had developed a phobia of flying and used powerful sedatives to combat this fear. Unfortunately, the combination of the sedatives and his heavy drinking permanently damaged his kidneys.

After playing his final show in the Netherlands on January 10, 1995, Gallagher was addmitted to King's College Hospital in London two months later. He received a liver transplant and was in intensive care for 13 weeks. Just as it appeared that he was well enough to be transferred to a convalescent home, his health went severely dowhill and he passed away on June 14, 1995. Over the next several years, several compilations of his material were released.

They included *A Blue Day For The Blues* (1995), *Last of The Independents* (1995), *BBC Sessions* (1999), *Wheels Within Wheels* (2003), *Big Guns: The Very Best of Rory Gallagher* (2005), which peaked at number 31 in England, *The Essential* (2008), *Crest of a Wave: The Best Of Rory Gallagher* (2009), *The Beat Club Sessions* (2010), and *The Rory Gallagher Collection* (2012). He is also featured on three box sets. Gallagher is also featured on three posthumous albums including *Meeting with the G-Man* (2003), *Live at Montreux* (2006), and *Notes From San Francisco* (2011). The later peaked at number 44 in England.

As described above, there are plenty of compilations around that feature Gallagher. The most interesting are Sony's 1999 set, *BBC Sessions*, which includes 10 live and 12 studio tracks. Capo's 2003 release, *Wheels Within Wheels*, is an acoustic set that contains 14 tracks. Capo/RCA's 2005 set, *Big Guns: The Very Best Of Rory Gallagher*, includes 24 tracks dating back to his work with Taste. Finally, Capo/Sony's 2012 release, *The Rory Gallagher Collection*, contains 28 tracks, including three live tracks. This is the same set as The Essential Rory Gallagher, which was released in 2008.

Gallagher is featured on six live albums. RCA's 2003 set, *Meeting With The G-Man*, contains 14 tracks recorded in 1993. Eagle's 2006 release, *Live at Montreux*, includes 12 tracks recorded in 1975, 1977, 1979, and 1985. Eagle's 2011 set, *Notes From San Francisco*, contains 12 live tracks recorded in 1979 and the never released studio album that he recorded in 1977. . Buddha's 1972 set, *Live In Europe*, contains 9 tracks. Buddha's 1974 release, *Irish Tour '74*, was taken from the famous Tony Palmer documentary of Gallagher's 1974 tour. It has been released on CD and video. It contains 10 tracks. Buddah's 1980 set, Stage Struck, includes 10 tracks recorded in 1979/1980.

I have two live recordings from Gallagher, including his highly regarded *Irish Tour '74*. This double record set contains eight cuts recorded at three different Irish concerts in early 1974. There are also two additional songs recorded during live sessions during the same tour. Four of the songs featured on the live portion of the record are from his 1973 release *Tatoo*. For this tour, Gallagher expanded his usual three man lineup to include keyboardist Lou Martin. The net result is a more full sound and a second soloist. Without question though, Gallagher is the star of this set.

"Cradle Rock" seethes with energy, including some of Gallagher's incomparable slide work. "I Wonder Who", a cover of a Junior Wells song, returns to the old Chicago blues style of some of the guitarist's idols. Again, the guitar work is blistering. There is no slide this time, just balls out fast fretwork, including some Jeff Beck like special effects. Both songs also feature electric piano solos from Martin. "Tatoo'd Lady" is blues rock at its best. Once again, Martin takes some of the load off Gallagher by contributing a solo, allowing Gallagher to let loose with some guitar theatrics that are based in rock. The rest of the album follows this same pattern.

"Too Much Alcohol" features his slide work in a traditional one/four/five blues progression. "As The Crow Flies" is performed on solo acoustic guitar. The song features equal doses of bottleneck and finger picking. It is an exquisite work, featuring Gallagher's best vocals on the album as well as some harmonica work. "A Million Miles Away" is rock like, with some definite classical influences. On this one song, Gallagher manages to sound like Roy Buchanan, Duane Allman and Jeff Beck, all during the various points in the same song. All in all, it's a tour de force. "Walk On Hot Coals" is fast blues at its best. Propelled by the frantic drumming of De'Ath and McAvoy's thumping bass, Gallagher lets loose with his best guitar work on the album. The live audience cuts end with the slide guitar and keyboard dominated "Who's That Coming".

Without question, *Irish Tour '74* showcases Gallagher in the best possible way, on stage in front of an appreciative audience. It is rightfully considered to be his finest album, studio or live, and is a must have in any live music collection. Fortunately, the album is still in print and available at any large music retailer.

Title: Just A Rolling Stone

Label: Genuine Blind Pig

Release Date: 1990

Medium: CD

Availability: Poor

Venue: Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Holland

Recording Date: June 5, 1970

Lineup: Rory Gallagher - Guitar, harmonica, vocals
Gerry McAvoy - Bass
Wilgar Campbell - Drums

Set List: Laudromat
Hands Up
For The Last Time
Wave Myself Goodbye
Just The Smile

This five song mini set appears on the Italian Import CD *Just A Rolling Stone*. The Genuine Blind Pig recording also includes songs from Taste as well as these tracks, which were recorded with Gallagher's first solo band. Interestingly, all five cuts are from Gallagher's solo debut, which was released in September,

1971. So, with all due respect to Genuine Blind Pig's research department, I believe this part of the recording was made on June 5, 1971, not 1970 as stated on the jacket.

For this show, Gallagher was backed by bassist Gerry McAvoy and drummer Wilgar Campbell, both of whom played with him on his debut and his first live album, 1972's *Live In Europe/Stage Struck*. Unlike *Irish Tour '74*, which leans heavily on traditional blues, this mini set is more rock oriented. The three opening cuts are performed with the full band. The opener is blues based, the second is straight rock with plenty of guitar hero theatrics, and the third is Hendrix like. The last two pieces feature Gallagher on solo acoustic guitar. Performance quality on all five cuts is very good, recording quality is only fair. Since this set does showcase Gallagher's rock side, it is a nice supplement to *Irish Tour '74*. That is, if you can find it. Try alternative shops that specialize in imports or used records.