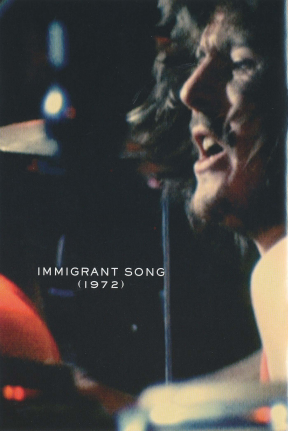


IMMIGRANT SONG
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
EARLS COURT
KNEBWORTH



LED ZEPPELIN





IMMIGRANT SONG
(1972)



CONSIDERING the visuals and the soundtrack are actually a digitized 'mash' between two separate performances – the film footage taken from the band's performance at the Sydney Showground in Australia, in February 1972; the music from a Long Beach Arena show, in Los Angeles, in the summer of 1972 – the version of 'Immigrant Song' which opens Disc 2 is a wonderfully evocative bridge between the early, understated Zeppelin of the Albert Hall era and the full-blown grandeur their performances would assume throughout the rest of the seventies.

Plant says he enjoys the "panoramic sweep" of 'Immigrant Song'. "It's just amazing, on the tail-outs, the phrasing on those pushed guitar chords, and the vocals really work well too."

"The fourth album had just come out and we were on a roll," recalls Jones. "Even though the visuals and soundtrack are from different performances, the energy that comes across is palpable."



MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
(1973)

BLACK DOG
MISTY MOUNTAIN HOP
SINCE I'VE BEEN LOVING YOU
THE OCEAN



AND then, with the blink of an eye, we are at Madison Square Garden in July 1973. The three shows Zeppelin performed there over the weekend of July 27-29 marked the end of an American tour that saw them drawing bigger crowds to their shows than anyone before, including the Beatles and the Stones, and when we cut to them on stage doing 'Black Dog', it's clear we are into new territory, both band and audience

feeding off the electricity pulsing back and forth between them.

The setting is immediately more glamorous too. Indeed, the whole band appear to have undergone a dramatic transformation.

"Originally, we saw the whole essence of our live performance as something that the audience listened to very carefully, picking up on what was going on, the spontaneity and musicianship," says Page. "By the time you see us in New York, though, we're so full of confidence now that the showmanship has started to come through and we're working together with almost a telepathy between us..."

As Jones observes, "Performing in America was always different to anywhere else. The actual event was almost as important as the music. But it was never contrived. Visually the real theatre relied more on the performances of Robert and Jimmy. They gave the band a visual presence it would never otherwise have had."

"It was such a big deal by then," says Plant, "but the feeling of freedom it gave out was tremendous. We were buccaneer musicians, ready to try anything and, for me, Madison Square Garden was a seminal moment. Until then, I don't think I could ever have imagined something like that. It was like having a dream come true that you never knew you had."

EARLS COURT
(1975)

GOING TO CALIFORNIA
THAT'S THE WAY
BRON YR AUR STOMP
IN MY TIME OF DYING
TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT
STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN



BY contrast, the footage from the band's five-night residency at London's Earls Court arena, spread over two weeks in May (17-18 and 23-25) 1975, is captured here in refreshingly intimate style. Then the largest indoor arena in Britain, the band had installed two 24x30-foot Eidophor video screens either side of the stage, designed to send out close-up pictures of them performing so that everyone at Earls Court

would be able to see what was going on. That they had also decided to record some of the shows was "more down to luck than anything," Plant recalls. Their first British shows for over two years, they simply wanted to keep a record of the shows for themselves. "There was no thought that we might end up doing something like this with them one day."

Focusing initially on the acoustic segment where Robert, Jimmy and John Paul would all gather together on stools, it serves as a touchingly personal interlude after the hypnotic frenzy of New York. Plant says he was "flabbergasted at how good the Earls Court footage is. You can clearly see how loose it was, how much fun."

There are also riveting electric versions from those shows of 'In My Time Of Dying', 'Trampled Underfoot' and a superior version of 'Stairway To Heaven'. "Because it was the first time that back projection had been employed at a rock concert, it's all in close-up and you get a completely different ambience to the rest of the material," says Page. "You don't really get any idea of how big the show we were doing was, it's more like we're just in a room together playing."

KNEBORTH (1979)

ROCK AND ROLL
NOBODY'S FAULT BUT MINE
SICK AGAIN
ACHILLES LAST STAND
IN THE EVENING
KASHMIR
WHOLE LOTTA LOVE



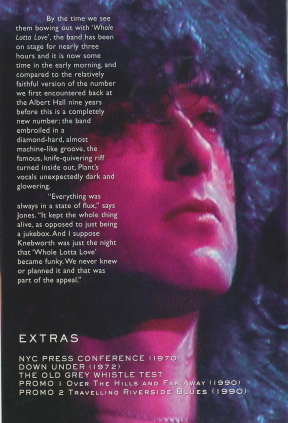
THE final concert footage from Knebworth offers a completely different ambience. The two shows Zeppelin gave there on August 4 and 11, 1979, found them performing to a mammoth combined audience of over 400,000 people. Their first appearances in Britain since Earls Court four years before, though none of us knew it then, would also be their last, a fact which adds an emotional piquancy to these performances.

Jones says he is particularly fond of the Knebworth material because "although it seemed like this really huge event from afar, actually when you get really close-up it's still the same four people all in a huddle together on the stage."

"When the early punks said it was self-indulgent they missed the point," says Plant. "It was the opposite: to achieve what we did on stage, it took a lot of personal restraint. It was this completely selfless form. Everybody was the captain of the ship at one time or another..."

Featuring the first-ever live performances of some of the material from the band's 'In Through The Out Door' album, which was about to be released, the highlights from Knebworth are innumerable. Special mention must go, though, to such spectacular moments as 'Achilles Last Stand', 'In the Evening' and 'Kashmir', where far from appearing to be nearing the end of the road the band actually sound more defiantly in command of their music than ever.

For Page, Knebworth is "as intense as anything on the DVD. The whole thing's like a complete assault, really. That's what hit me when I first looked at it again. I had seen bits of it here and there over the years, but what we managed to find was extraordinary, new footage and angles from cameras we never even knew existed."



By the time we see them bowing out with 'Whole Lotta Love', the band has been on stage for nearly three hours and it is now some time in the early morning, and compared to the relatively faithful version of the number we first encountered back at the Albert Hall nine years before this is a completely new number; the band embroiled in a diamond-hard, almost machine-like groove, the famous, knife-quivering riff turned inside out, Plant's vocals unexpectedly dark and glowering.

"Everything was always in a state of flux," says Jones, "it kept the whole thing alive, as opposed to just being a jukebox. And I suppose Knebworth was just the night that 'Whole Lotta Love' became funky. We never knew or planned it and that was part of the appeal."

EXTRAS

NYC PRESS CONFERENCE (1970)
DOWN UNDER (1972)
THE OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST
PROMO 1 OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY (1990)
PROMO 2 TRAVELLING RIVERSIDE BLUES (1990)

THE additional material on Disc 2 comprises yet more fascinating tidbits, such as the footage from 1973 of the band and their entourage boarding the famous 'Starship' – the Boeing 720B 40-seater in which they traveled America.

Another fun item is the TV news footage of a rare press conference Robert and Jimmy gave in New York together, in September 1970, to promote Zeppelin's forthcoming brace of concerts at Madison Square Garden, coinciding with the third Zeppelin album going to No. 1. Similarly, another televised press party, this time in Sydney, in February 1972 (during the same Australian tour the Showground footage was shot). Originally shot on 16mm black-and-white film, it's notable for the surprisingly good footage of the band doing 'Rock And Roll' and for the footage of John Bonham being interviewed by a rebellious-looking young woman named Germaine Greer, who talks about the then-recently released fourth album and the different musical styles on it.

The interview with Robert which follows was originally done for the weekly BBC TV show 'The Old Grey Whistle Test', and was first broadcast on January 12, 1975. Shot backstage in Brussels during warm-ups for the 1975 American tour, Robert talks about how much he is looking forward to coming back to England that summer for the Earls Court shows.

There are also a couple of interesting promo films. The first, 'Over The Hills And Far Away', was pieced together from old seventies footage spliced together in a vaguely surreal montage, and actually dates from the early 90's when it was used to help promote the 'Remasters' box-set.

The second is another 1990 promo, this time of 'Travelling Riverside Blues', again pieced together from existing clips, including some lovely footage of Jimmy at home in his studio.

This glimpse of the music and the performance of four musicians who transported their gift from a small basement room in Chinatown, London, on to a wild rollercoaster ride through the clubs, festivals and stadiums of the world of pop culture is quite remarkable. It is a stirring and dynamic insight into a unique entity.

Mick Wall

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Music produced by Jimmy Page
Sound Engineer: Kevin Shirley

Packaging design and artwork: Andie Airfix at Sonori
Photography: Pervie Smith - Icons, Mike Putland - Renss, Robert Ellis - Raphano
Photographic research: Ross Hallin

Press conference - NBC News Archives
"Rock and Roll" appears courtesy of Reelin' in The Years Productions LLC
on behalf of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation
The Old Grey Whistle Test - BBC

