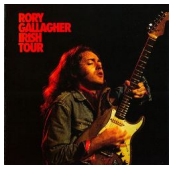
Rory Gallagher - Irish Tour (1974)



1. Cradle Rock 2. I Wonder Who 3. Tattoo'd Lady 4. Too Much Alcohol 5. As The Crow Flies 6. A Million Miles Away 7. Walk On Hot Coals 8. Who's That Coming? 9. Back On My Stompin' Ground (After Hours) 10. Maritime Musicians: Rory Gallagher – vocals, guitar, harmonica Gerry McAvoy – bass guitar Lou Martin – keyboards Rod de'Ath – drums

The companion piece to director Tony Palmer's documentary of the same name, Irish Tour 1974 was recorded that January in Belfast, Dublin, and Cork at a time when precious few performers -- Irish or otherwise -- were even dreaming of touring the trouble-torn island. Northern Ireland, in particular, was a rock & roll no-go area, but Gallagher never turned his back on the province and was rewarded with what history recalls as some of his best-ever gigs. Irish Tour 1974, in turn, captures some of his finest known live recordings and, while it's impossible to tell which songs were recorded where, across nine in-concert recordings (plus one after-hours jam session, "Back on My Stompin' Ground"), the energy crackling from stage to stalls and back again packs an intensity that few live albums -- Gallagher's own others among them -- can match. Highlights of a stunning set include dramatic takes on Muddy Waters' "I Wonder Who" and Tony Joe White's "As the Crow Flies," a raw acoustic rendering that is nevertheless totally electrifying. A frustratingly brief snip of the classic Shadows-style "Maritime" (aka "Just a Little Bit") plays the album out in anthemic style and then, of course, there's "Walk on Hot Coals," a marathon excursion that posterity has decreed Gallagher's most popular and accomplished statement -- a status that Irish Tour 1974 does nothing to contradict. It's foolish playing favorites, however. Even more than Gallagher's earlier (1972) Live in Europe album, Irish Tour 1974 confirms Gallagher not simply as the greatest bluesman Ireland ever knew, but as one of the island's greatest-ever performers. The 1999 remaster adds nothing in the way of bonus material (shame), but greatly improves the sound quality. ---Dave Thompson, Rovi

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