

Q: Andrew, it's good to talk with you it's been a while! We've talked in private about your book a number of times over the years but it seems we're now nearly there. Can you tell readers what to expect.

A: It's "Razors' Edge" updated. Picking up where that left off in 2000, the earlier chapters are reworked and altered a bit in style, though I try to keep the spontaneity and "live reporting" which is after all a large part of the point of the book but some things have been tidied up and new information inserted, new recordings like the 88 and 94 soundboards have come out of shows I discussed, for example. But the main story for those who've read the first book comes in the new chapters, 'what happened next...'. "Razor's Edge" has been out of print for a decade or so though, so hopefully there will be new readers of the early chapters too.

Q: First off, what is the title of the book and how many new pages/words are there?

A. The title of the book is "One More Night: Bob Dylan's Never Ending Tour".

'How many new words', that's a good question. I'll have to get back to you on that. It's hard to compare as parts have been moved around and the statistics and tables have been taken out as they are ever changing and nowadays nearly everyone can access the dedicated websites for such things. (Andy later sent an e-mail saying that: "From 2001 to 2011 is about 45,000 words, there's also an afterword, and expanded section on "Why does He tour so much" and and bits added throughout so over 50,000 I guess. Of course I have written about the Net in *ISIS and Judas!* So the assiduous reader of fanzines knows what I think of certain times and shows.

Q: What's the total page count likely to be?

A: Just over 400 plus the foreword – maybe about 425, all in, depending on the next alterations.

Q: For those who don't know the story of the update can you give us a brief history?

A: It's 12 years since "Razor's Edge" came out, 13 since I finished writing it so this update has actually been a long time coming and was first scheduled for nine or 10 years ago! Yes, I know, hard to believe but Sean [at Helter Skelter Publishing] wanted an update in 2003 or '04

I'm getting on a bit, as they say, Derek so you'll have to take all my dates as "approximates", but the shop was still open so it was before the end of 2004. Anyway, Sean was keen, though I thought it too early, and he was quite persuasive so I started writing an update then and he came to visit me in Cambridge to move the whole thing forward/decide what we would do...

...But we had such a good time talking about music and music books – it was really funny, I thought, for someone who spent every day in a music bookshop to spend so much of his time on my music book "collection". "Collection" is too grand a word but as we all know Dylan books alone fill many a shelf and all of my music books are in the guest bedroom so it took an age to get him out of there and exploring anything of Cambridge. Anyway, the music centric covered just about everything of mutual interest so that curries came and went, the weekend passed and we only talked about the update for about five minutes as I saw him to the train station as he left. I think he agreed it was a good idea to wait a bit though that maybe came later, anyway we said we'd have another weekend soon and talk about "Razor's Edge 2" then, but of course we never did...

Q: Yes, of course, Sean's leukemia. Tragic.

A: Yes, leukemia. A dreadful, dreadful disease. He battled it for so long and so bravely. He kept in touch, always talking about what he'd do in Cambridge when he was "up to coming back"...

Communication came in brief bursts, you'd get a little run of news of improvement and then it would all be knocked back again. At some point, I really cannot remember when exactly, 2006 maybe, he contacted me full of life and saying there really should be an update now.

I had completely put the idea aside but he reignited it, asking if there was an anniversary coming up, so, naturally, I mentioned 2008 and the 20th anniversary [of the NET] so we started planning for that but then there was "radio silence" and I knew by now what that meant and contacted a mutual friend who indicated Sean was having setbacks again. Bizarrely that vague plan to get the book out for the 20th anniversary was picked up on in the trade press and a 2008 edition was even advertised (with a pre NET cover!) in bookstore magazines as a coming publication. I was in touch with Sean in-between times and also shortly after that advert appeared but we no longer talked about the book or the future. Things had become much grimmer for him.

*Q: Yes, I remember that time very well. It was heart rendering. Sean [Body] was just 42 when he died and a really nice guy. Helter Skelter was a great music-book publisher and the book shop on Denmark Street was just unbelievable. I could spend all day in there ... browsing the shelves and chatting to people. If you were in there for an hour someone was bound to come through the door that you knew! Fellow Dylan fans or music journalists. Of course, Helter Skelter published the first **ISIS** Anthology in 200,1 the was the same year "Razor's Edge" came out.*

So, after Sean passed away everything came to a standstill again for your update?

A: Indeed, yes, actually it was shelved before then, late 2006 or early 2007 when Sean had nother relapse and my own motivation was zero at that point as I was not enjoying any shows and did not want to write a history of the Net and my attendance that ended on such a downer. So it went out of mind for a few years. It was an unfinished project, which did bug me a little but not one that I thought then that I'd go back to. I had really struggled with the idea of the 20th anniversary edition. The problem was that '05-07 was all the same to me, at that point I really wished the 2003/4 update had happened and I could have ended my tale there.

Q: Why there?

A: Well, what had once been negatives distracting from a show, became all encompassing for me. Who wants to read *that* show after show, year after year? If you loved those shows you'd hate reading it; if you agree with me, then there'd be no need and in any case I had said a lot of it already. While praising *a,b,c* of a show, I'd previously mentioned disliking *x,y,z*. Chapter after chapter of only *x,y,z* seemed pointless, who'd want to read that? No-one, surely – and I just as surely didn't want to write it.

The book still felt unfinished though and, in a general sense, the disappointment of these years were part of my story but certainly not the way I wanted to end it, so I lived in hope I'd see a show I liked again. Meanwhile '08-09 were a just a continuation of all I disliked– and the years all blurred together in a way they hadn't in the past, for me anyway. I mean, if you listen to a show from the '90s you know which year it is from, '90, '91, '92, '93 ... all the way to '99, all sound different. Hell, early '91 sounds like a person from a different stage in his career (if not a different person altogether!) from late '91 – and Spring '95 and Winter '95 are as different performance wise as their respective seasons are in climate ... but I could now no longer tell the difference between one year and the next far less legs within a year– another reason not to go over every year repeating myself and boring readers. Still, though, it nagged at me that the 2001–2004 enjoyments were lying gathering virtual dust and that my story was unfinished.

Of course, what else can you expect when writing on a topic called "Never Ending"? Still, for my part I now planned to finish it if and when I next really enjoyed a show or shows from a particular leg.

Q: When did that happen for you?

A: The last leg of 2011, the first Glasgow show and the last London one. I found a balance and a perfect, for me, ending point. But of course it has taken so long to get the book out – even now I am not sure *exactly* when that will be, late June at best, I guess, I have already seen an electronic copy of what was to be the final proof and it has at least one major issue that needs to be addressed, one I've flagged up before at that – that the tour has moved on and moved on dramatically. So, I used an unexpected delay last year to slip in a few paragraphs re 2012 and then a frustrating, again unexpected, six week delay in recent months to pen a bit on what I'd heard from 2013...

Q: What do you think about 2013 so far? For whatever reason the setlists have been incredibly repetitive but the performances have been excellent. As we know very well, you can't tell the quality of a Dylan performance just by reading the setlists!

A: Yeah, this was early days but I heard things that were more exciting and promising than I had heard since..... well, for a very long time. Non changing set lists weren't a problem in 66, 75 or 79 but that becomes quite a complicated area in relation to the NET and I discuss that at length in the book. Anyway, yes, excellent performances I was struck by how he was really expressing '**What Good Am I?**' in particular, probing and stretching and ... well, I thought it was great but you can read why in the book. Roll Up! Roll Up! Please buy, hahaha.

Q: For me, "Razors' Edge" was a truly great book. It gave fantastic insight into the performances but also I enjoyed it very much as being YOUR story. Maybe I enjoyed that aspect so much because I knew you.

A: That's very kind of you to say. Well, yes, the book makes clear that it is both an overview and my story and that I believe we all carry our own NETs with us. I explicitly encourage more books on the subject at the conclusion- especially from fans. Other kinds of books will inevitably come, I discuss those too but I think it important that this aspect is captured for posterity by people living through it. I have vague plans for a supporting website with a section of fan memories/reviews of shows they thought should have been in the book. A great big "Hey, Andy you got it wrong leaving this one out..." section. Then again there are so many Dylan websites nowadays and Bill Pagel's contains multitudes of enthusiastic reviews ... as you can tell, I haven't decided.

Q: So, just good or great shows you "missed"? You should do it!

A: Yeah, just for the positive, to stress where others have loved what I did not. I don't see much benefit in reviews trashing what I liked ... not that I am saying others should like what I do, but that's just not the kind of website I'd like to run. It may be unmanageable even with what I am proposing here, I also wanted to put up PDFs of all the "Judas" issues – if I have and can find them and scan in all the "Homer, *the sluts*" and put up PDFs of them but when I got out the masters I saw that they had been returned with many missing pages and the thought of scanning in from photocopies to replace these was a bit depressing ... oh and the size of them, I had forgotten how many pages some issues had. It'd take forever and as you know I have little spare time – if I had, I'd not have stopped my **ISIS** column.

Q: What are you up to? Is it Shakespeare?

A: Yes, deep into research on a book on Shakespeare as well as "the day job". It's going well, over the summer I'll be concentrating on the chapter on the Cambridge Shakespeare Festival. Live performances every night that are always different, using the same text as a basic blueprint but always bringing something new or different to light via the magic of live performance. Ha, sound familiar?

Q: It sure does. Back to Dylan, who is publishing the book? Are you self-publishing this time?

A: I'm using CreateSpace, Amazon's mixture of self-publishing and publishing services. You can pick and choose what bits you do and how much they do. I thought it was the best move for this kind of book. Dylan live since 1988 is a niche market after all. Hopefully, with widespread interest in fanzines like **ISIS**, online and in the rock press to "spread the word" it'll compensate for a lack of bookshop presence and advertising. I've been curious about this new world of publishing for some time and wanted to try it out in any case, I find it fascinating in itself.

Q: Publishing does seem to be moving in that direction but it's something I have no experience in. Amazon seems to be taking over the world which I'm not at all in favour of. What has it been like working with them?

A: I was very worried about this. I thought that as they were Amazon they might treat the customer with a certain disdain, you should feel lucky to be with them type thing. I once put a website contract out to tender and the people from IBM were appalling, so sure that we'd buy from them because of who they were that they came bottom out of the three bids. They were furious too, they could not understand the decision though they had put no effort in at all and just assumed "IBM" meant "yes please"... Anyway, so far – we are not quite there yet! – CreateSpace have been the opposite. They've been great to deal with, as it is an as-automated-as-possible service, though, it is obviously inflexible. You have to do things *exactly* to and in the sequence of the set protocols. The delays that I have been mentioning are not all their fault, in fact up until these last few steps none were. A lot of it is down to me not knowing the procedures and not anticipating things because I've never done it before. For example, I didn't realize – it's obvious now but I'd never had to think of such things before – that the cover cannot be produced until the exact page length has been agreed because the spine size has to be exactly determined. I had someone lined up to do the cover too early, by the time the OK was given for this the people were involved producing a magazine and/or on leave so I lost April and half of May. Of course I then slipped in a few pages re more recent NET activity ... which means the spine size may be touch and go; hopefully this will not mean a further delay!...

...that's just one example from the actual printing side of things, there is also administration to go through re publishing in the States if you are not a US resident. All of these things take time.

The other thing is that if the book was not on an ongoing subject, I wouldn't even be talking about "delays". I just thought that it'd be out way before the 25th anniversary and certainly that Hammersmith 2011 would not be a year and a half ago, so I am impatient. As I say, the people who work for CreateSpace have been great to deal with ... If I knew back in 2012 what I know now the book would have been out before Xmas last year and although I am sorry it wasn't, at least I got to add a bit re 2013.

Q: What have been the difficulties and challenges in writing it? After all, it's a immense project?.

A: Yes, the major difficulty is the sheer scale of the thing. He's in his 26th year of NET touring, his 28th year of unbroken annual touring. Before that there were always gaps, in the '60s he stopped in '66, in the '70s he didn't start till '74 and had a "year off" in '77, in the '80s he didn't tour in '82, '83 or '85. And the tour lengths were very different. Touring "years" like '66 and '84 consisted of a few months, total shows per year were often under 50, not 100 or more. Actually off the top of my head, only 1978 seems like a "NET year" in number of shows ... when we say the Net we are talking about approximately half his career and 2,500 shows, far, far in excess of "half"...

...so, anyway, there has to be a lot of generalising and individual moments or show of brilliance "missed" which is why I encourage others to write their NET histories. Whole legs can also be affected by one's exhaustion of following the previous year. By Spring 1997 I was trying to catch breath after excessive travelling in the previous four years following the NET. My exhaustion probably coloured my view of Dylan and the bands' playing. Ian Woodward sent me a link to a brilliant snippet of footage from Japan 1997 just the other day. Dylan looks fabulous, he's so obviously enjoying himself as he faces thousands of ecstatic youngsters. ***'Like a Rolling Stone'***,

Spring 1997 – I'd never have mentioned that in the book ... seeing this now, it looks so fresh and exciting – I'd love to re-write that part...

At the other extreme, there are whole legs where one enjoys so many shows so very much that a *relative* “off” night – say Edinburgh in Spring '95 – seemed disappointing then but only because it was preceded by Prague and followed by Glasgow. This can happen with years too – I found France in '92 *relatively* humdrum for that year because I had gorged myself on audio and video from the fabulous US shows prior to going on that trip. Trying to balance all these kinds of factors was a real challenge...

And you know that you will upset people who love years or legs or even individual shows that you do not. It is a highly emotional and subjective area. That's probably the worst bit of all, knowing in advance you'll get intemperate online rants against something or another you've written – or even worse, as happens, against something you never said in the first place. On the other hand, you also get enthusiastic praise from many others - or at least *razor's Edge* – got a lot and, the best thing of all, many wrote that “it sent me back to the recordings”. That's always marvellous to read or hear.

Q: Are there new photos?

A: Yes, they are all different from *Razor's Edge*. Duncan Hume kindly provided photographs, I am anxious to see how the ones inside have come out, I've only seen the ones on the cover in actual print. The ones on the inside are all black and white, the cost of colour photos is exorbitant, the book would have to be sold at five or six times the price to cover that. The original photos are great so, fingers crossed, it's hard to tell from the electronic proof as they are in low-res there to keep the file size down.

Q: So, to recap, you have made some changes to the original “Razors' Edge” ... updates, style and reworks and then the new chapters. We are now up to 2013 from 2000!

Yes, that's about it – we could have started and finished with that (hahahaha).