

## **SPEEDWAY 73 DVD**

**As reviewed by Speedway Star magazine, November 29, 2025 issue**

**THE 1973 season really was a golden one for British speedway. Two thriving leagues of 18 teams and the summer highlight of the Daily Mirror International Tournament won by England in the most dramatic and controversial style.**

Len Silver's hungry Lions returned to Wembley in September to create more history by becoming the first all-English side to win the World Team Cup. Belle Vue's Peter Collins, 19, scored a brilliant maximum.

Swedish superstar Anders Michanek, who led Reading to the British League first division title and won the World Pairs with Tommy Jansson, dominated the domestic and international scene for most of the season.

Those of us lucky enough to be around to enjoy this special period still can't fathom why 'Mighty Mich' – British-Nordic Champion and European Champion – didn't cap his finest year by winning the biggest prize. Instead, it was Jerzy Szczakiel who sensationally snatched the ultimate victory by defeating Exeter's major new signing Ivan Mauger in a run-off for the crown in front of a record World Final crowd of 100,000-plus in Chorzow.

Those are just the headline stories from the recently released Speedway 73 DVD – the first in an evocative new 'Classic Years' series from Retro Speedway.

Their absorbing four-hour double disc set includes rare and previously unseen footage and interviews with some of the top riders of the day: Mauger, Michanek, PC, British Champion Ray Wilson, World No. 3 Zenon Plech, the badly injured Eric Boocock, Malcolm Simmons and American newcomer Scott Autrey, while former King's Lynn general manager Martin Rogers recalls how he briefly cast aside the iron curtain to import Polish stars Plech and Edward Jancarz for the traditional end of season Pride of the East meeting, where at least 10,000 fans gathered in awe.

One of the highlights is the quality footage from the first televised England v Sweden encounter in the Mirror Tournament at Sheffield, where nine races and Dave Lanning's commentary capture the brilliance of match-winners Reg Wilson and Peter Collins as a huge Owlerton crowd – many crammed onto the terraces of the long since closed back straight – roared the home nation to an important, hard-fought 40-38 win.

There's an endearing quirkiness to much of the footage presented here. The Overseas segment features a brief clip of Hackney's Barry Thomas practicing at Sydney Showground during the 1972-73 British Lions' tour, Peter Collins in action at Leszno and Czestochowa against the Young Poles, and Kiwi giants Ronnie Moore, Barry Briggs and Mauger all racing in the same meeting at Hamilton, New Zealand, against the likes of Chris Pusey, Tommy Sweetman and Bob Andrews.

So much for the big names. The beauty of the opening 'Around the Tracks' tour is how the 8mm colour home cine film provides fleeting glimpses of some long forgotten riders who didn't make the grade. Although it's not HD quality (it's 52 years old!), most riders are recognisable in their distinctive leathers when individualism still had its place.

What hits home as you take root sipping tea from your favourite armchair and absorb the images on screen is that, even in those harsh economic times – 17 per cent interest rates, peak inflation of 25 per cent, the introduction of VAT, industrial unrest, strikes, and a shortage of oil supplies that precipitated the three-day week – fans still flocked to most tracks in search of salvation.

They temporarily suspended their fears about IRA bombs, Tory PM Ted Heath taking Britain into the European Common Market, accepted that a pint of beer had crept up to 13p and a three-bedroom semi cost around £10,000...speedway, staged every day of the week, was their refuge. Escapism.

Even for their pre-season supporters' club dance at the Reading Top Rank Suite, the BL1 champions-to-be drew a crowd of 1,500. Soon the Racers would have everyone dancing to their tune.

Men sporting sideburns, driving new Austin Allegros with cassette players blasting out glam-rock favourites such as Wizzard, Sweet and T-Rex, met mini-skirted ladies in the stands and on packed terraces, vying for their attention as the antidote to pop heartthrobs Donny Osmond and David Cassidy. And, mercifully, not a distracting mobile phone in sight and only three TV channels. Happy days, indeed.

As well as feasting on hours of action, the DVD revisits the main speedway news stories of the year, bulletin-style with accompanying photos stills: the winners, losers, walk-outs, track openings and closures, newcomers, record transfers, Rider Control moves, career-ending injuries, suspensions, sackings, retirements and, sadly, tragic deaths.

You can also listen to the emotional radio commentary of THAT classic, unforgettable (but sadly unfilmed) Speedway Star-sponsored British League KO Cup Final deciding run-off at Belle Vue's Hyde Road between PC and Michanek – and then hear what both protagonists made of it. They're still catching their breath in Manchester.

The follow-up Speedway 74 DVD has just been released and there's no doubt Retro's Classic Years will build into a very popular and collectible series dripping in nostalgia.