

SPEEDWAY 74 DVD

As reviewed by Speedway Plus, December 7, 2025

RETRO Speedway has released the second instalment in its Speedway Years series, this time focusing on the 1974 season. Presented in a dual-disc box set, each DVD runs for two hours and blends rare cine film with broadcast footage, vividly capturing a pivotal era in the sport - when flamboyant racing leathers were in fashion and the four-valve revolution had yet to begin.

The production is narrated by Tony McDonald, whose voice-over provides thoughtful context rather than traditional race commentary. His measured observations help viewers appreciate the historical significance of what they are seeing, while instrumental backing tracks from "Clarkie" - a familiar figure to fans through his long association with Speedway Star magazine - add atmosphere without distracting from the action.

Former rider Maurice Stobart, an avid cinematographer, contributes silent cine films from 1974 that offer a unique glimpse into second division racing. His footage highlights the Workington Comets, where his nephew Darrel rode, and includes rare scenes from now-defunct tracks such as Coatbridge, Eastbourne, and Barrow. Particularly striking are shots of the Comets supporters' bus travelling south to Weymouth, a reminder of the dedication and camaraderie that defined the sport's fan culture.

Stobart's films also underline the distinctive character of the venues themselves: the steep banking at Coatbridge, the square layout of Barrow's Holker Street circuit and the atmosphere of smaller provincial tracks that have long since disappeared.

The footage features a host of notable riders, including Tom Owen, Terry Kelly, Geoff Bouchard, Mitch Graham, and a youthful Steve Lawson. Match race highlights include Barry Briggs and Ivan Mauger thrilling crowds at Derwent Park, a reminder of the star power that drew thousands to the terraces.

Another cine enthusiast, Mike Bratley, focused on the Oxford Rebels, capturing both home meetings at Cowley and away fixtures at Halifax, Hull, Sheffield, Belle Vue, Cradley, and Hackney. His reels showcase riders such as Jimmy McMillan, Chris Pusey, Chris Morton, and Carl Glover, alongside footage from a number of meetings at Swindon, home that season for Good Ol' Bernie Leigh, during Reading's sabbatical while Smallmead was under construction.

Complementing the cine material are professionally televised meetings, narrated (in the main) by the legendary Dave Lanning. These include the British Final at Coventry - won by Eric Boocock, who reflects (in his usual 'matter of fact' manner) on his achievement in a recent interview. Terry Betts also offers insights, noting that the British Final, with its Australasian contingent, was often tougher than the World Final itself.

Fans of ragged starts will enjoy seeing Ray Wilson being excluded for breaking the tapes, despite Billy Sanders in the next gate already being a good two foot over them before Willy had even twitched.

Ullevi in Gothenburg hosted the World Final in 1974, with a local favourite topping the rostrum. The rider himself is interviewed and admits that he wasn't actually a very good speedway rider!

Lanning describes one of the starts as "jet propelled", a phrase which may have lodged in a brain somewhere in the Tatum household.

The World Team Cup final at Chorzow is also given generous coverage, the first year in which England had gone solo, rather than being lumped into a Great Britain side that had traditionally featured as many Kiwis as Brits.

In order to qualify they had to overcome Scotland, New Zealand and Australia in a qualifier staged at Ipswich. The meeting was originally scheduled for the Thursday, but was rained off and moved to the Sunday, leading to a rather under-strength New Zealand side taking to track. The cine footage of this qualifier shows that, even at 35 years old, George Hunter was a stylish force to be reckoned with for the Scots.

Other big meetings covered on the discs include the Anglo-American-Nordic final in Denmark; the European Final at Wembley (attendance 45,000!) and the World Pairs final at Hyde Road.

There are lots of other little treats included, which we'll leave to you to discover yourself when you've purchased your copy.

In addition to the racing footage, there are also summaries of some of the big news stories of the year. Even "a little bit of politics" as we hear about the ban on commuting Swedes. We also learn that 1974 was the final year of Ronnie Moore's career and the first year of Bruce Penhall's, symbolising a generational shift in the sport.

Lovingly produced and richly detailed, this release is more than a nostalgic journey - it is a celebration of speedway's enduring appeal. Clips are carefully selected, riders are identified, and races are contextualised, ensuring that the set serves both as entertainment and as a historical archive.

For long-time fans, it rekindles memories of a golden era; for newer audiences, it provides a vivid introduction to the sport's heritage. With its blend of rare cine film, professional broadcasts and insightful narration, **Speedway '74** stands as an essential addition to any fan's collection and an ideal gift for those who cherish the sport's 1970s heyday.