

BACK IN THE USSR

Blood, Sweat & Tears Talk Blackmail, Backlash, Infamous Iron Curtain Tour in New Doc Trailer

What the Hell Happened to Blood, Sweat & Tears? chronicles the band's notorious 1970 trip to Poland, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia

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Blood, Sweat & Tears COURTESY OF SONY MUSIC ARCHIVES

BLOOD, SWEAT & Tears venture behind the Iron Curtain in the wild new trailer for the upcoming documentary, *What the Hell Happened to Blood, Sweat & Tears?*

As the clip establishes early on, Blood, Sweat, & Tears were briefly the biggest band in America — Grammy winners with massive hits like “Spinning Wheel.” But in 1970, at the height of their powers and the Vietnam War, the U.S. State Department enlisted the group for a tour of three Soviet-linked countries: Poland, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia. Looking like U.S. government pawns didn’t exactly endear Blood, Sweat & Tears to the counterculture that previously embraced them, and their popular standing never recovered (the tour landed at Number 7 on *Rolling Stone*’s list of the “Worst Decisions in Music History”).



However, the reason they agreed to the tour, guitarist-singer Steve Katz claims in the trailer, was because they were blackmailed. While the new trailer doesn’t offer any more details on that part of the story, it does tease the band’s tumultuous, surreal adventures behind the Iron Curtain — a striking mix of excited young fans and violent authoritarian crackdowns.

In an email to *Rolling Stone*, director John Scheinfeld explained how he came to tell this story. He said he’d always been a big fan of BS&T, and had long wondered, what the hell had happened to them. It was only after he spoke with drummer Bobby Colomby that he was finally able to ask, and Colomby’s “answer was so intriguing, so compelling, that I just had to make this film.”

Scheinfeld added: “It was absolutely fascinating to me that Blood, Sweat & Tears was a victim of cancel culture long before we began using this phrase. Political criticism typically comes from one side or the other. But in a unique set of circumstances, BS&T was hammered by the right *and* the left. Even more stunning, we discovered that the band figured into geo-political conversations in the Nixon White House and at the highest levels of government in three Communist countries.”

Colomby also spoke about the tour and its lasting impact on him in an email, saying, “This Eastern European tour changed our lives. We came back sure of one thing, that as bad as the Nixon administration seemed to be and as horrific the Vietnam war was... we knew that communism, which we experienced firsthand, was not a viable political alternative for America... ever.”

What the Hell Happened to Blood, Sweat & Tears features a trove of never-before-seen archival material, as well as present day interviews with five of the nine members. The movie will premiere in New York City and Los Angeles on March 24, before expanding to theaters across the U.S. and Canada via Abramorama.

The movie will also be accompanied by an original soundtrack featuring 10 recently discovered and remastered tracks from the BS&T Iron Curtain tour set for release on April 21. 🎧