

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

be



ON-STAGE WITH THE INCREDIBLES
—then and now

ISB reunion special!
Action from Cropredy, Bloomsbury
and the RFH



CARMINA: Robin goes
Latin

LIKKY part two

MIKE in the '70s

CLIVE: a discography
and more

be
G
F
e
D

17

Winter 2000

ECM

This new release is a wholly convincing demonstration of Williamson's uniqueness on which he unifies his many and varied talents in an intense way that recalls the very best work of the Incredible String Band. Vocally, Robin's never been stronger. His unaccompanied setting of Henry Vaughan's "The World" has all that neck-prickling dexterity and florid ornamentation from "Hangman's" days, but shot through with a deeper maturity. An extraordinarily good album, even by Robin's extraordinarily high standards.

David Kidman, Tyke's News

"The seed-at-zero" is an absolute masterpiece. Williamson fills the room. There is such vitality, yet also complete control of all the nuances of the voice, comparable to the great Oriental singers.

Karl Lippegau, West German Radio, Cologne

"The seed-at-zero", from its opening a cappella account of Henry Vaughan's mystical poem "The World" onwards, reveals Williamson as a master of the sung and spoken word and of the characteristic mixed forms of the bardic tradition. A tremendous musical tribute to Dylan Thomas and to Thomas's Welsh roots.

Karl Gedlicka, Concerto, Austria

Williamson's celebrated voice can still soar and raise neck-hair as it used to on such 1960s masterpieces as "Waltz Of The New Moon", "Three Is A Green Crown" and "Maya". Idiosyncratic, wholly original and brimful of integrity.

Chris Parker, The Tablet

Robin Williamson

The seed-at-zero

Some texts Williamson simply declaims, others he sings a cappella, some are sparsely arranged for harp, guitar and mandolin. Despite the reduced means, Williamson succeeds in pinning the listener to his seat for more than an hour, largely by virtue of his warm, powerful, emotionally-moving vocal performance.

Matthias Inhoffen, Stereoplay, Germany

Listening to this album, which sets the texts of Welsh poets and bards including Dylan Thomas, Idris Davies, Taliesin and Llywarch Hen demands concentration, but like everything Williamson has done, it radiates great magic and warmth.

Hanspeter Künzler, Wochenzeitung, Switzerland

A raw but rewarding, verbally dense record on which the themes of birth and rebirth, the cyclical nature of being and the vivid apprehension of nature extend the pantheistic inquiries of earlier songs such as "The Half-Remarkable Question", "Three is A Green Crown" and "Kobaddi Thare".

Andy Gill, The Independent

This season, when the leaves have fallen, and cold creeps through the clothes, and the frost settles over everything, this record will be a friend.

Wolfgang Doebling, Rolling Stone, Germany

How rare to find moments like these, moments when only the music counts, its beauty, its grace and its magic. Moments in which beats and volume and hipness and entertainment no longer play a role. There are discoveries to be made in every corner of this garden of delights...What a wonderful trip.

Peter Felkel, Musik Express, Germany

Never pillory a man for daring to be different. Amid the strangeness there is a magical charm and indeed an endearing sense of calm, both in the words he's delivering and the singleminded manner of the telling.

Colin Irwin, Folk News

With "The seed-at-zero" the art of the Celtic bardic tradition is in full bloom. The power of the performance makes Dylan Thomas a living contemporary, while the lyrics of Williamson's own songs rival the poetry of his early idol.

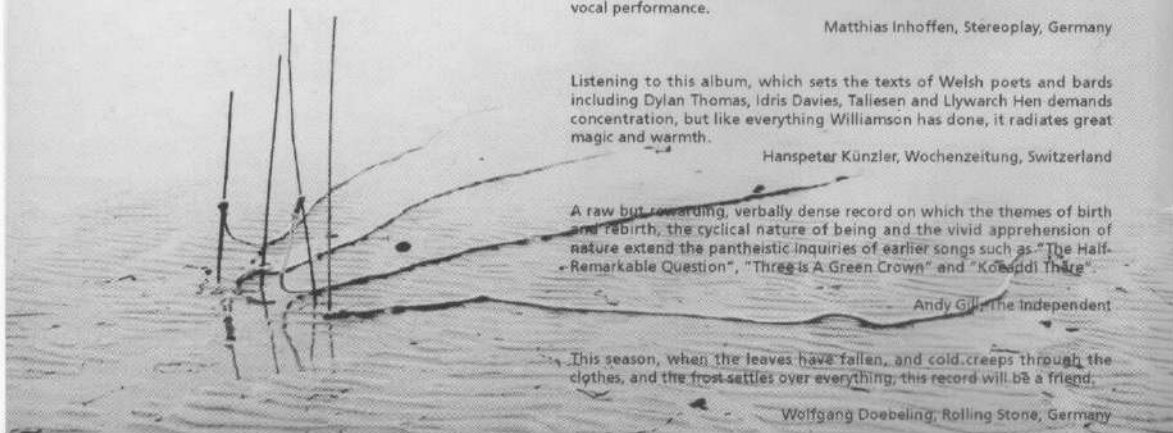
Jürgen Frey, Badische Zeitung, Germany

New Note Distribution Ltd.
Electron House, Cray Avenue
BR5 3RJ Orpington, Kent

ECM Records
Postfach 600 331
D-81203 München

Visit the ECM web site
www.ecmrecords.com

ECM 1732 CD 543 819-2



Winter 2000
17
 beGLAD

SUBSCRIPTIONS, BACK ISSUES, INFORMATION, GOSSIP—
 Raymond Greenoaken, 11 Ratcliffe Road, Sheffield S11 8YA, UK
 Tel: 0114 2661158
 beglad@taproot.demon.co.uk

beGLAD WEB PAGE
<http://www.makingtime.co.uk/beglad/>

U.S. SUBSCRIPTIONS
 (currently \$8 per issue)—
 Rockin' World / Scenescop
 P.O. Box 88
 Northampton
 MA 01061
 USA
 Tel/Fax: 413-253-2773
 charles@rockinworld.com
 Webpage:
 www.rockinworld.com

beGLAD 17 is published by Taproot Productions and edited by Adrian Whittaker and Raymond Greenoaken. Cover by Jas Wetherspoon. Photos by Jenny Bolder. Printed by SPC, Sheffield.

beGLAD is published twice a year, on June 1 and December 1. Issue 18 will be edited by Raymond Greenoaken; all contributions should be addressed to Raymond at the address at the top of this column.

The deadline for inclusion in issue 18 is 15 April. We're always happy to receive any ISB-related material—clippings, photos and other memorabilia, illustrations, poems, whatever—either on loan or as contributions to the beGLAD archive. Thanks to all who have donated material over the years: it's greatly appreciated.

beGLAD is currently £4 per issue in the UK, £4.50 in Europe and £5 in the rest of the world; these prices include p&p. For the USA, see above. Please make all cheques, money orders and postal orders payable to Raymond Greenoaken, and send 'em to the address at the top of this column.

Overseas subscribers: please pay by Eurocheque, International Money Order, or a cheque drawn on a British bank.



GLADitorial

Bit of a departure from the usual pattern this issue. I no longer have access to DTP facilities that are compatible with Raymond's, so he's agreed to take on the layout/design for all future issues. Meanwhile, the college where I work is undergoing a full inspection around press date—so Raymond's kindly agreed to co-edit this issue as I just won't have much spare time until it's over. A big thankyou to him.

I finally caught the reformed ISB at the Delgados RFH gig this October. The original ISB were quite often untogether, usually endearingly so. ISB Mark 2 were considerably better than last year's Edinburgh gig—I was impressed by the fact they'd clearly spent a lot of time on arrangements and on assembling a setlist which didn't just take the easy options. And I was particularly pleased to see that Mike had really found his voice again.

It has to be said they're still a bit creaky, though that will disappear with time; the big (and yet unresolved) question is whether the band can now go on to put a collective stamp on new material. I await developments with interest! **Adrian**

CONTENTS

- 3 GLADitorial** Partners in crime...  P6
- 4 Pieces of String** News, rumour, scandal and allegation
- 6 All together now...** Bloomsbury nights
- 8 In Action** At Cardiff, Cropredy and Bloomsbury
- 9 Peeling Back The Years** At the Royal Festival Hall
- 11 Back To stay?** We weigh it all up
- 14 The Girl On The Silver Bicycle** Likky's sister interviewed
- 17 Marriage, Memoir & Muse** Bite-sized bits of Licorice
- 18 Carmina** Latin larks at Llandaff
- 21 Reviews** CDs and live shows
- 25 The Curse Of Casablanca** Mike's lost album  P14
- 27 In The Deepness Of A Summer's Night** Clive's recording career
- 32 Reviews extra** More String-related releases
- 37 Sounds Of The Seventies** Mike's rockin' years
- 41 Straight In At 180!** The ISB's chart adventures
- 47 Small ads** You got it—I want it!  P37

Pig's Whisker Music, The Mean Fiddler, Celtic Connections present

the incredible string band



Jan 23	Cardiff The Coal Exchange	02920 230130
Jan 24	Milton Keynes The Stables	01908 280800
Jan 25	Coventry Warwick Arts Centre	02476 524524
Jan 26	Glasgow Old Fruitmarket	0141 353 8000

www.pigwhisker.com

The dates
 for your
 diaries!

Still a few
 tickets left...

Pieces STRING

Back tracks

In a unique co-operative venture, Island Records and Warner/Elektra are planning to release a two-volume *Best Of The Incredible String Band* compilation CD sometime early in the New Year. The first volume will be under the Elektra imprint and will naturally feature tracks from the band's Elektra years (including, we hear, two tracks from the long-unavailable *U*); the second volume, on Island, will tell the rest of the tale. Rumour has it that Elektra are seeking the services of Steve Sutherland, one-time editor of both the *MM* and the *NME* (though not, we understand, at the same time) to provide the liner notes for their CD. Sutherland once risked universal ridicule by admitting in the *MM* in the early Nineties that *Wee Tam And The Big Huge* was amongst his top five albums of all time and declaring that "The Incredible String Band weaved me the craziest tantric patterns in the brightest golds and greens." Shouldn't that be "wove". Steve? Editors should lead by example, you know...

Wave Band

The ISB are riding the nation's airwaves again. Five songs recorded at the Friday Bloomsbury concert in August found their way onto Radio One's legendary *Peel Show* last month, jostling for position with the usual tape loops, wonky drum machines and Fall tracks. Peel fielded a number of emails on air from approving listeners. "That'll do for me," he purred after the closing chord of *Waltz Of The New Moon*. Old Hippy comes out! And you can expect three more songs—*This Moment*, *Ducks On A Pond* and *Eyes Of Fate*—from the same concert on Radio Two's *Mike Harding* folk 'n' roots programme sometime over the next few weeks. It's expected that all these selections will appear on the forthcoming ISB live album, but—pay attention here—with different mixes. So hit that Record button, Harding listeners!

A busy year ahead...

Robin's rolling up his sleeves for a busy 2001, with plans for CDs, tours and TV. This summer's *Seed-at-Zero* album, made with ECM's Steve Lake, has been garnering ecstatic reviews both here and on the Continent. Plans are afoot therefore to tour the album next spring, aiming particularly at small theatres and arts centres, and to try to pique the interest of the various literary festivals around the land.

There are further developments in the *Townscapes* project. As we reported last issue, this involves Robin assembling music and spoken word sequences into CD form for sale on tour coaches in various cities in the UK. Last year Robin recorded the first of these, concerning Edinburgh, but owing to a dispute with the drivers' union the CDs didn't go on sale until the latter part of September, thereby missing the peak period almost entirely. Nothing daunted, however, it looks like he'll be turning his attention to Oxford, London and Bath next year, and is scheduled to do the recording for the first two of these in February. Also on the agenda is a similar project focused on Tunisia (actual locality as yet

uncertain), on which Robin is likely to be collaborating with the redoubtable oud-thrasher Hassan Erraji.

And on the subject of collaborations, the planned tour with Martin Carthy, originally earmarked for this autumn, has now been shunted to next May. A solo tour of the Eastern United States, pencilled in for that time, looks therefore like it won't be happening. Is that the sounds of lamentation and gnashing of teeth we hear across the water?

Robin will be working with Peter Neal through December and January on the creation of two pilot TV programmes. One will focus on *Carmina*, Robin's sequence of Latin Biblical texts, and may well feature filmed footage of last October's live premiere (which we review on page 18), as well as the recorded music for the production, with Robin putting it all into context direct to camera. A second pilot will be assembled around the *Townscapes* project, there's also a third pilot in the pipeline, this time in conjunction with HTV's Paul Calverley, and will take as its subject the feelings and reactions of children to their home town. Interest has been expressed in all three by Channel 4, BBC2 and the US Discovery Channel. More on the Peter Neal connection elsewhere...

Drowned Sound

The only sounds emerging at the moment from Albany Studios, the lair of new ISB-man Lawson Dando, are drips, gurgles and the purr of fan heaters. During the torrential rains of last autumn, Lawson arrived at the studio one morning to find the old Wizard of Changes had paid a call in the night. Rain had got in through the roof, and the mixing desk and Robin's oud were drifting like stately galleons across the lagoon that had once been the control room. Thousands of pounds worth of digital recording equipment were consigned to the skip, and the oud, which had disintegrated into its component parts, was borne hopefully away to the nearest instrument maker for rebuilding. Lawson, however, remained philosophical, sensing a timely opportunity—courtesy of the insurers—to upgrade the recording suite. Which proves the truth of the old saw that every cloud has a silver lining... On the debit side, the flooding has meant that mixing of the eagerly-awaited ISB live album has been unavoidably delayed. The album may not therefore be available at the time of the January concerts.

Clive's alive—and pickin'!

In the wake of his contributions to *At The Pure Fountain* and *Just Like The Ivy*, Clive has become a studio animal again. The sessions he did last Spring for a mooted solo album may be added to at some point. And while in the country for the ISB concerts in August, he nipped down to Cornwall to do a bit of recording with the original line-up of the Famous Jug Band—can we expect an album next year, we wonder? And just recently he's been snapped up by our chums at Scenescop Records in the States to cut a CD with his long-time associate Wizz Jones, a mere 33 years after the two men recorded the hitherto-unreleased *Banjoland*.

Video tasty

The Wienerworld video release of Peter Neal's *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending* film is now available in the shops. *Be Glad* was reviewed widely, garnering some interesting comments: *Loaded* called it "a visual template for the hippy lifestyle", whilst *Classic Rock* felt it captured the ISB "in their crazed creative prime". *Uncut*, though, was more critical: Ian MacDonald complained that "none of the Band's best songs appear, the soundtrack wobbles, the lighting is bad... the ISB are ill-represented." High praise came from the *Evening Standard* (the only paper to review it well 30 years ago!); "Fifty minutes of weirdness made when interesting, intelligent people were allowed to go out and make the documentary they wanted". And trade publication *Retail Home Entertainment* gushed: "a genuinely interesting artefact which is a must for any self-respecting historian of '60s psychedelia".

By a strange ISB coincidence (Mike Swann will love this), the publicity for the release is being done by one Phil Symes. Ten points for anyone who recognises him as the Neighborhood records PR pictured on the *Reputation* inner sleeve (and yes, it really is a coincidence—Adrian asked him). And if you think that's weird, he's based at 83 Charlotte Street—once home to Witchseason!

The video is slightly different from the initial mail-order release—besides a revised cover, the last few minutes of the film have now been enhanced. When the original transfer was done, there wasn't quite enough vintage film stock to reprint it all, and the last bit (the Pirate's death and rebirth) were taken from the same battered print shown at the Rio in Dalston in 1993—when all this began! This section has now also been reprinted and remastered.

You can buy the video direct from Pig's Whisker at £11.99 (UK) or £12.99 (rest of the world) in VHS/PAL format. See the ad on the page opposite. There's a website for Wienerworld if you want to find out more about what they get up to:

www.wienerworld.com

Channel 4 have made an approach to use footage from *Be Glad* in their major documentary series *Hello Culture*, written & presented by Matthew Collings, whose first series *This Is Modern Art* won the Huw Weldon Bafta for Arts programming last year. No transmission date yet set.

And there's yet more on the Peter Neal front...

Be Gladder

Peter Neal, in conjunction with ScreenVentures, is collaborating with Mark Anstey at Pig's Whisker on a contemporary ISB documentary, which Peter thinks of as "updating *Be Glad*". In the spirit of the original film, he's seeing where it takes him, and at the moment he's simply stockpiling material. The second night of the Bloomsbury concerts this August was filmed, as well as background material from Cropredy including footage of the site, festival-goers, Mike and Robin with Robert Plant, and snippets of the ISB set. Planned for the near future are interview sessions with both Mike and Robin and after that, says Peter, "We'll see how it goes." The Bloomsbury footage is now ready for editing.

Malcolm to gig again?

Malcolm's recently finished a long run of *The Pine And The Eagle*, his Theatre In Education piece. You'll find a Norman Lamont review of this on page 23. He would now like to do some music gigs featuring some of the new material he's been working on all this time. So—if you'd like to put on a Malcolm concert down your way, please contact him at Gowan Bank Barn, by Avonbridge, Falkirk, FK1 2JY, Scotland.

Meanwhile, he's finishing off his collection of demos (seventeen songs in all) for prospective record company consideration, and has continued to add to the *Animals With Attitude* bestiary, which now involves nearly forty songs. The associated TV show is still a possibility but is currently on the back burner.

Vashti hits the charts

As reported in *beGLAD 16*, Vashti Bunyan's long-lost 1970 album *Just Another Diamond Day*, recorded with Joe Boyd and featuring Robin on three tracks, finally gained a CD reissue this summer. Its status among collectors as the missing piece in the Witchseason jigsaw generated a goodly measure of press interest, and it was reviewed in a number of prominent periodicals and newspapers, including *The Guardian* (whose reviewer dubbed it "extraordinary"). Reviews indeed were so complimentary that within a few weeks of release *Diamond Day* was sitting at 14 in the Virgin Roots Chart. Laggardly as ever, we review it this issue: see page 32.

Read all about it

Two biographies have been published this year that should prove of interest to all students of String. Clinton Heylin's *No More Sad Refrains: The Life And Times Of Sandy Denny* was first to hit the shops, followed by Colin Harper's doorstopper *Dazzling Stranger: Bert Jansch And The British Folk And Blues Revival*. Over to *beGLAD's* Literary Editor Cynthia de Montford Jones:

"Colin Harper won his spurs back in 1994 with a definitive piece in *beGLAD 2* about the ISB-Pentangle connection. In *Dazzling Stranger* he charts the erratic but hugely influential career of Bert Jansch, weaving into the narrative the most

thorough account of the British folk revival published to date—you even get to know Joe Boyd's birthday (August 5th, trivia lovers). Naturally enough, the coverage of Bert's early days in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London features Robin, Clive and Licorice in prominent supporting roles, with numerous quotes from Robin. It's instructive to contrast Owen Hand's account here of the Bert-Likky liaison with David Harding's on page 17 of this issue.

"Colin's history of the folk revival is meticulously researched, though it might be argued that he's a little ungenerous to Ewan MacColl. He also plunges boldly into the numerous black holes in Bert's memory, and clearly now knows more about Bert than Bert himself. Plenty of rare photos too: you'll marvel at how Bert managed to remain so magnificently disshevelled through four marriages. Published by Bloomsbury at £25 in hardback, this will be a standard reference work on its twin subjects for years to come.

"Sandy Denny, by contrast, is poorly served by Clinton Heylin's slapdash, gossipy biography. It opens with a tasteless and lurid account of its subject's final hours written in the style of lowbrow crime fiction, before proceeding in pedestrian if more conventional fashion through her largely (if the author is to be trusted) unhappy life. Sandy's song lyrics are much scrutinised for insights into her character. Stripped of the shapely melodies, however, they come across as trite and insubstantial schoolgirl stuff, suggesting that Sandy never really grew up as a songwriter.

"Stringfans will however be fascinated by Heylin's account of the workings of Witchseason. We learn, for instance, that 'non-earners' on the roster like Fairport and Nick Drake were effectively subsidised by the ISB's success. There's an evocative description, courtesy of Anthea Joseph, of the Witchseason sanctum in Charlotte Street: 'It was one of those Georgian houses, you went up a rickety staircase, you came to our floor. Joe had an office... I had an office, then we had a sort of open-space bit which people congregated in... There was very little furniture, and everything came off the back of a lorry... People spent a great deal of time sitting on the floor.' Published by Helter Skelter at £19.99."

Tartan Terrorisn

Neil Nicholson, erstwhile keyboards man with the mid-'80s Mike Heron Band, has recently been exposing his knees in public in the cause of international goodwill. Neil is currently working with the kilt-flourishing Scottish band Beggar's Row, who are just back from their fourth tour of Russia, where they are regarded as folk superstars. Gigs at such prestige venues as Club Bizerka and the Central Club Of Journalists had the phlegmatic Slavs dancing on the tables. "Beggar's Row are now the most famous Scottish band in Russia," panted Vitaly Mironov, President of the Moscow Caledonian Club. (No, we're not making this up...) One commentator reported, "Complete strangers passed around Scotch and beer, while members of Beggar's Row taught young Russians how to adjust their kilts." Their own kilts, or those of Beggar's Row? Perhaps we shouldn't ask...

The lads have released their debut CD, *Soldiers Of Peace*, and are hoping to do some gigs south of the Border in the coming year. Check out their website: www.beggarsrow.supanet.com or, if you want to book them, contact harrymorris@supanet.com



Whoops...

Apologies to Edward Thorpe, whose credit for the photo of David Kidman last issue we omitted to include; apologies also for an editorial glitch in Adrian's review of *Where The Mystics Swim* in the same issue. He actually loaned (rather than contributed) £500 to help pay for the mixing—which he is still owed.

THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

Wienerworld Ltd now make available on home video The Incredible String Band's film *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending*. Originally destined for the BBC's Omnibus arts programme, *Be Glad* was never broadcast, being deemed too advanced for the Beeb. The film vividly captures the band on stage and in the Sound Techniques studio as well as carrying interviews with Robin and Mike, and concludes with the fantasy fable *The Pirate and the Crystal Ball*, featuring Malcolm LeMaistre and various members of Stone Monkey.

available in VHS PAL format
£11.99 UK £12.99 ROW

Pig's Whisker Music, P.O.Box 114, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 3YU, England.
Tel: 01246 567712 Fax: 01246 567713
info@pigswhiskey.com
www.pigswhiskey.com

ALL TOGETHER NOW— “WE ARE THE TABLECLOTH..”



They're back—and this time it's serious

Grahame Hood
reports from The Bloomsbury Theatre

Photos by Jenny Bolders and Martin Williams

THE SCENE IS THE BAR of the Euston Thistle Hotel around mid-day where I am interviewing Clive. When I adjourn to the bar for a round of coffees, an American gentleman sidles up, unable to contain his curiosity as to who Clive is and what the tape recorder and mike are for. I explain.

“Have you heard of The Incredible String Band?”

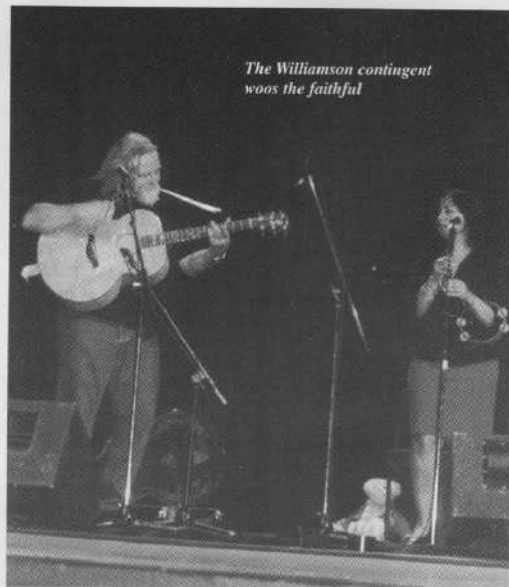
“Not for a very long time, sir.”

THE STAGE OF THE BLOOMSBURY THEATRE is strangely stark. No harp. Two keyboards, one at the centre, one at the right. Music stands. Out they come. Lawson takes up his seat at the right hand keyboard. Clive next to him. Mike behind the centre one, almost hidden behind it and his music stand. Bina and Robin. Robin picks up his fiddle and they are off into Chinese White. The audience suddenly realise that tonight anything is possible. The band is very together, with a musical tightness that belies Robin's later claim of their having had only a week's rehearsals. Robin switches to guitar for Ducks On A Pond and we begin to see that they really are a band, each with his part to play. Clive adds banjo as required, Mike plays bass lines on his keyboard and gets his harmonica out for the Ain't Got No Home... part, on which Lawson also gets in some great right hand piano lines.

It gets even more eclectic. Clive sings Queen Of All The Gypsies from his period with Bob Devereux, a song that really benefits from the band treatment. Robin sings Innocent Love solo, a song about meeting Bina—“the best thing that ever happened in Birkenhead”. And just in case you were starting to forget who the guy in the denim shirt at the back was, Mike gave us Painting Box, but in rather too serious a fashion, with little of the joy of the original.

Clive again, with a banjo solo—a waltz, one of the earliest items in his repertoire—telling us he started playing in 1953 (he didn't actually say that, but it's true!), having a half-crown lesson every Sunday. It was a simple piece, barely requiring more than one finger at a time on the fretboard, but it was really rather lovely. What did the sleeve-notes on the first album say about his playing bringing the smiles running from miles around?

Another Robin solo followed, from his new project of setting Dylan Thomas's lyrics to music: In My Craft Or Sullen Art. The first half ended with another surprise as Mike delivered This Moment, Robin's mandolin tuning problems leading to a comment about it “being just like a real String Band concert”. And, yes, Mike did say “And I just want to tell each one of you...”, though his tongue was so firmly in his cheek it was visible from the sixth row.



WE HAVE AN INCREDIBLE STRING BAND WORTHY OF THE NAME...

BACK FROM THE SHEER HELL of the queue for the bar, Waltz Of The New Moon greeted us. Again, the musicians all played their parts superbly, and the sound was good throughout. The energy levels were starting to creep up too... Big City Blues was a new Clive composition which showed how hard they had been rehearsing. Bina playing tambourine, Mike adding string synth, and Robin doing his best on slide guitar. A cry for Hedgehog Song was heard, causing some amusement, but also the thought that it might just happen. Not just yet though, as we had Robin and Bina doing The Storm Is On The Ocean, and very well. Give Bina her due, she has improved a lot since the Robin and Clive tour last October, and she hits a mean tambourine too.

Another pleasant surprise: Air, sung by Clive of all people, strumming a twelve-string guitar with everyone else humming away for all they were worth behind him. Very good indeed. Then came the highlight of the concert, The Eyes Of Fate, very powerful, drawing the most applause of the evening. A bit of light relief followed with a whistle solo, Paddy On The Turnpike (aka Frosty Morning), backed by some excellent banjo from Clive.

"A song by my friend Ivan Pawle..." said Robin. Surely not... It was! Strings In The Earth And Air, a song no-one would have expected to ever hear live again. Brilliantly done too. What else was coming? Mike again! With, as Robin put it, "a song from our more musical period", a lovely Maker Of Islands, with great band work, everyone doing just what was required to enhance the song. What happened next was even odder. Yep, it was bells and whistles time. A dozen or so audience members almost fought to get up on stage and play the taped up whistles and

bells when directed by Robin as he intoned Smoke Shovelling Song (Ommm...). Then, with typical Scots canniness, he walked down the line with a plastic bag, making sure everyone gave them back. Gosh.

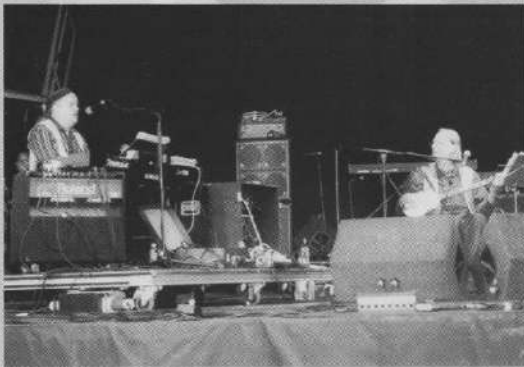
Last song time. A cajun-style You Know What You Could Be was great fun, the excellent Mr Dando playing piano with his left hand and washboard with his right. Bows and goodnights. Encores were of course demanded, "Give us the Kettle!" "Juanita!" (I'm not sure that was a serious request...) and, inevitably, "Hedgehog Song!" Can you guess what it was? Of course you can. The Kettle man had his way and we all sang along happily with Empty Pocket Blues. The Carter Family's You've Been A Friend To Me ended the evening, with Mike blowing his harmonica like a good'un.

Robin came on again to tell us that they had exhausted their band repertoire but he could leave us with October Song sung solo, a little fast, but moving too. The end.

WE ARE ACTUALLY IN THE POSITION NOW of having an Incredible String Band worthy of the name and their heritage. Tonight proved that they can literally do anything, and cover any style they need to (well, maybe not Ithkos...), and that they can take any part of their past and represent it in a valid way. They played unselfishly, with an obvious amount of respect and affection for each other. Clive was excellent, a strong character in his own right, and his banjo playing fitted in much better than one might have expected, though of course he is no ordinary player. The only doubt must be Mike Heron's relatively low-key part in the proceedings, barely visible behind his keyboard, and though his vocals were as impressive as ever, he deserved a larger share of the action. Presumably that is his choice. I'd love to have heard Red Hair again, though. ☘



*"I think they liked us..."
Lawson nips away early to take
first crack at the champers*



**St Donat's (top pic)
and Cropredy**

Photos by Jenny Bolders



BOX OFFICE 020 7388 8822

peeling back the years

Steve Pilley
takes his binoculars to the Royal Festival Hall

THE PEEL SESSIONS GIG at the Royal Festival Hall, on October 8th 2000, as guests of The Delgados, wasn't widely publicised. It rather seemed something of an afterthought, coming after the successes of the summer, and especially the Bloomsbury concerts. Still, RFH is within striking distance of home. And wasn't it there, in 1972 aged 16, that I saw my heroes for the first time? So I went along to see what was to be seen.

MY ONE-PRICE SIT-WHERE-WE-PUT-YOU TICKET got me right at the back of the first or second level upstairs, so I didn't have a wonderful view of the band: there they were half a mile away. You couldn't make out their faces or even what they were playing (eg Robin's slide guitar)—not what I'm used to from Robin's concerts of late. It wasn't helped by people coming in and out all through, with attentive ushers with torches anxious to make sure everybody had the correct seat. Pretty silly really: I had a whole row of about 50 seats to myself, yet people were being crowded together and set behind others who'd keep fidgeting or sticking their big heads in the way.

In a hall that size, from where I was sat, I couldn't begin to estimate how many people were there. Yes, there were a lot of empty seats, but there were a lot of occupied ones, too. And how many people came for the ISB rather than for the Delgados, or for John Peel, or indeed for Clearlake, is another imponderable. Suffice it to say there were enough to make plenty of enthusiastic noise at the end of each ISB number.

Clearlake was the support band, whom John Peel introduced by saying he'd not heard them but he'd been told they were "shit hot". They were pretty good at that, had some interesting sounds. They played for maybe thirty or forty minutes, did about six fairly short numbers.

A fifteen-minute break, then John Peel introduced the ISB. They played 11 songs, all of them from the summer set. I thought straight-away that Mike was on much better form tonight, although he did sit behind his organ all evening as before. As a matter of fact all of them were on strong form individually, except perhaps Clive, who seemed to be still recovering from his bout of lumbago. Trouble was, they weren't on entirely strong form *together*—there were a couple of occasions when no-one was quite sure where to go next, and Mike would try to sing one bit, Bina another, and Robin a third. I think it true to say that Robin prevailed in every case, but it was noticeable, and it reinforced that criticism that has been levelled before, that they were under-rehearsed.

photo by Stefan Veit



In fact, I don't doubt it was true on this occasion: I bet they hadn't played together since the last of the summer shows, except for pre-show. They'd all had ideas independently, but hadn't really worked them out together.

Look, I've been the staunchest defender of ISB2000. I won't hear a bad word said about the controversial Edinburgh gig last December (where, incidentally, there were very few "mistakes", far fewer than at Bloomsbury for instance). Nor am I going to say that RFH was a bad gig. I had a great time, so did many in the audience, and so, I'm told, did the band. Nevertheless, there's no getting away from the fact that there were some screaming mistakes this evening. Any disappointment I guess lies in the sense of an opportunity missed: here was a mixed audience of fans and, presumably, others who'd not heard of the band before. I didn't feel confident that the band would receive the same tolerance from strangers as they sometimes have from fans, let alone demonstrate why the ISB is so important both in the Sixties and today.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE ROBIN FIDDLE MORE THAN HE'S DONE IN YEARS...

THAT SAID, THE SUBLIME MOMENTS that shone throughout Bloomsbury were there, at times, especially towards the end. Certainly I came to the end of many of the songs with a feeling of "Wow!"—only I wasn't always quite sure why.

They didn't talk to us very much, either. The first I noticed was Robin giving some of the same spiel as at Bloomsbury to introduce Strings In The Earth And Air. Then near the end he mumbled something about getting near the end.

Mike stuck mainly to playing the organ—though in my naïveté I'm never quite sure whether it's just an organ or a more general keyboard. Certainly Lawson switched from piano to strings at least once (Strings In The E & A), but quite who was doing what with keyboards elsewhere I couldn't swear to. Mike also played some inspired harmonica at the end of Ducks On A Pond—one of the high spots of the evening, that.

Lawson was on keyboards, of course, and his piano playing was as easy as ever. Peering, I was able to make out that he was strumming his washboard in Empty Pocket Blues, but it was inaudible. Bina sang—she's getting better and better as she gains confidence, but more rehearsal (especially with Mike) would help. Clive rather played the role, once intended for Mike, of strummer, mainly on banjo but switching to guitar for a couple of numbers. He also took lead vocal on Air, and EPB of course. Robin started on the violin—it's good to see him fiddling more than he's done for years—and switched between that and guitar throughout, and whistle on Air and EPB.

THEY STARTED WITH CHINESE WHITE, which seemed to drag a little compared to Bloomsbury. The strengths and weaknesses of the evening were immediately in evidence. Next came Ducks On A Pond. If there's something just faintly ridiculous about the opening now, it's in the contrast in Robin's voice between now and *Wee Tam*. But we can get over that, on nostalgia if nothing else. Ducks didn't get off to a good start: Robin missed "the lady soothes the lion's fur" and went to the "who'll buy me a mynah bird" section, which ended up getting sung twice. The middle section—"I wear my body like a caravan..." was shortened to just one verse, as at Bloomsbury. The final section, "following my fortunes...", though still a bit shaky to begin with, really got the evening going as they all rocked it up and came together very well.

Then Painting Box, which also seemed to drag somewhat as it started,

followed by Air—and during the opening chanting there were voices all over the place! It was Air, one of their greats, and it wasn't bad, but I've heard it done better. Robin seemed quite awkward at moving from whistle to backing vocal during the verses.

Waltz Of The New Moon was next, and I must have been paying less than full attention (what with people bobbing up and down in front of me), because I thought Robin had lost a verse (as he did at Bloomsbury), but then I wasn't so sure, as he came back to the bits I thought were missing.

Then Big City Blues, a number new to me at Bloomsbury, remarkable for Robin's use of slide guitar. Enjoyable then as it was now. Next, Eyes of Fate may have been the highlight of the set, it was intense and convincing, though suffering a little from uncertainty as to who was to sing what when. Incidentally, Robin pointedly sang "effort and contrariness", whereas at Bloomsbury (on the Friday) it seems to have been "echo and contrariness".

Strings In The Earth And Air was pleasant as at Bloomsbury, but there was perhaps an inappropriate rough edge to it this time. Then came Maker Of Islands, which also had a roughness, a lack of the delicacy that both of these songs really need. It was here in particular that Bina and Mike were singing together, and that shows promise but needs more work.

You Know What You Could Be came next, and I think this has been

elevated to the status of Everything's Fine Right Now—but I wish they'd go back to that instead, it's practically an anthem after all. The final number was Empty Pocket Blues, which is also an anthem and was a good choice to finish on. I didn't expect an encore at this kind of show, and though there were calls for more, no more came.

I'D NOT HEARD OF THE DELGADOS before this: obviously fine people, as they were very enthusiastic to the point of hero-worship about the ISB, or so I'm told. I'm afraid I didn't stop to see them, despite John Peel having expressed the hope that everyone would stay all evening. Probably if I wasn't so dependant on rail travel I would have stayed. I'd seen them as it chanced on TV during the preceding week, and found them pleasant enough.

I'M A LITTLE EMBARRASSED to write so coolly of the ISB: it's almost as if I'm giving them the benefit of the doubt. I've never been so critical of them, at least not since 1974; but it was nonetheless a wonderful show. I'm just a little sad at how much better it could have been, and had been at Bloomsbury, Edinburgh and elsewhere, if they only had the chance to put more into it. I guess when they were all living together they could concentrate on playing together all the time, and there's no chance of or desire for that kind of lifestyle these days.



As in the days of yore, Robin lured members of the audience onstage at St Donat's and Bloomsbury to blow whistles and tinkle assorted bell-like things. Anyone recognise themselves here? We can finger a few of the Bloomsbury volunteers, seen on the two pictures to the left. Fourth from the left is *beGLAD*'s ace concert photographer Jenny Bolders, third from the left is Adrian from Penistone (that is not a misspelling), and second left, reprising his celebrated 1968 appearance, is a heavily-diguisid Salman Rushdie. Own up, the rest of you—let us know who you are, and we'll print a full line-up next issue.

BACK TO STAY?

Raymond Greenoaken
weighs it all up

IT'S OFFICIAL, THEN. After twenty-six years in Rock 'n' Roll Valhalla, the Incredible String Band are strutting the stages of our land again. We're not talking one-offs here; we're not talking fly-by-night Robin 'n' Mike or Robin 'n' Clive reunions. Our heroes are digging deep into the *ur*-repertoire, booking in rehearsal time, planning tours (albeit relatively undemanding ones) and looking to the future—and all unapologetically under the ISB banner. The quintessential Sixties band are reinventing themselves for the 21st Century. And the massed ranks of Stringfandom, keepers of the faith these long grey years, are united in our joy—aren't we?

Well, yes... and no. In any venture such as this, there's inevitably a sense of apprehension. Will they still be able to cut the mustard? Do they still know the route to our collective G-spot? Can they retain their fidelity to the String muse and at the same time avoid simply becoming (as one commentator put it) a "chicken-in-a-basket" version of their younger selves?

The recent history of popular music is littered with ill-judged reunions and reformations; hard-won reputations have been tarnished more often than burnished. And the ISB have more to prove than most. These days, they're routinely cited as pioneers or even inventors of World Music. Yet they re-enter the arena at a time when developments in that genre have far outstripped their own pathfinding efforts. Then there's the matter of presentation. Audiences now expect a level of slickness and sophistication in live performance that was utterly unachievable three decades ago; and of course, even by the measures of those more innocent times, a typical ISB concert would be notable for an unrepentant indifference to such qualities. This, in short, is the dilemma: will ISB 2000 be perceived as little more than a living fossil, or can they evolve to meet changing expectations while still retaining their essential, irreducible Stringness?

On this issue, the press was divided. The two Bloomsbury concerts attracted a ruck of broadsheet critics. Antony Thorncroft in *The Financial Times* came, saw and was conquered. "It was an endearing occasion, good-natured and not too worrying," he cooed amiably, and concluded: "...the signs are that a welcome revival and re-assessment of [this] seminal band is under way." At *The Times*, Nigel Williamson, a Stringhead of old, was in sterner mood. "The years have not been kind to the Incredibles," he wrote, "and this was a creaky old show." Mike was "too retiring," his voice "reedy, sometimes inaudible". Clive "strummed a lifeless banjo". Robin fared better, attracting praise for his multi-instrumental capabilities and for *The Eyes Of Fate* and *Waltz Of The New Moon*, which "sounded as evocative as ever". But "antics [that] once seemed charming... now appear merely sloppy", and "anybody under 45 who didn't share the memories would conclude that the Incredible String Band 2000 really aren't very good".

Over at *The Guardian*, Adam Sweeting—clearly a man without even a nodding acquaintance with the ISB's oeuvre—uncorked the vitriol with undisguised relish. "A performance of... shuffling ineptitude," he frowned, consisting of "pottering erratically around the hinterlands of their back catalogue". At times Sweeting's piece sounded like a medical report, dwelling professorially on Mike's loss of voice and Clive's lumbago. A self-caressing, wilful obtuseness was the prevailing tone. He gravely informed us that Chinese White was "about" magic Christmas trees and Ducks On A Pond was "about" ducks on a pond. Nor did the audience escape a cynical sneer. "I wouldn't be surprised if the entire audience has now gone to live on a commune in Wales," he hooted by way of conclusion.

We might smile sadly at such journalistic blockishness, but the three reports together represent an instructive cross-section of critical

opinion. Thorncroft of the *FT* approached the assignment in an informed and open-minded fashion, willing to see the event in terms of the bigger picture. Williamson of *The Times*, an experienced roots and World Music commentator, felt constrained to appraise the ISB in the context of current developments and trends in that genre, allowing himself only the occasional quiver of nostalgic fondness. Sweeting of *The Guardian*, donning the hat of the smug metropolitan critic, chose to present the concert as a freakshow for the sake of a few cheap laughs. What is missing here is the voice of someone to whom the ISB actually *means* something profound and life-changing: a Mark Ellen, for example. Or a Grahame Hood, come to that; or a Steve Pilley. But you can't pick and choose in the matter of media coverage. And on balance, our heroes seem to have got the thumbs down from the Third Estate.

DOES IT MATTER? SHOULD WE CARE? The simple answer, I suppose, lies in how it was for *you*. This was, after all, a show aimed straightly and truly at the heart of the String constituency. Unlike the 1997 Bloomsbury concert, which featured only a light sprinkling of ISB classics, the set list for 2000 drew deeply from the ancient well. Neither Mike nor Robin will have expected stony-faced contemporary critics to be ensnared by references to magic Christmas trees or Fire King's daughters bearing water. Of course, no-one who actually paid money to be there had any problems with such stuff. Similarly with Robin's bells and whistles routine, in which various audience members were lured onto the stage to accompany a Stanley Holloway-esque rendering of *Smoke Shovelling Song*. This was a sort of ritual of confirmation that meant far more to a String devotee than its simple entertainment value. Whereas for Nigel Williamson, now a grown-up journalist in some need of a sense of humour implant, it was a "bizarre" spectacle and "merely sloppy".

We might be tempted to take a lesson from history in this matter. The orthodox view is that the ISB went off the boil artistically when they began trying to appeal outside of their established following. Nor were they alone in this. Commentators trace a similar graph of decline in the careers of other "special-interest" artists, from Captain Beefheart to Metallica. Don't go near the mainstream, children! You know it makes sense...

"I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE HAS NOW GONE TO LIVE ON A COMMUNE IN WALES"

Let me just throw a few titles at you. Chinese White, Ducks On A Pond, Painting Box, This Moment, Smoke Shovelling Song, Waltz Of The New Moon, Air, The Eyes Of Fate, Strings In The Earth And Air, Maker Of Islands, You Know What You Could Be, Empty Pocket Blues, October Song. These comprised the body of last summer's set: a baker's dozen from the very top drawer of the ISB repertoire. And yet, lyrically at least, they're replete with the sort of references that are guaranteed to send the Adam Sweetings of this world into a torrent of titters. There's no squaring this particular circle.

If this were just a one-off series of concerts, there would be nothing much to fret about. But if the ISB are set to be a going concern again, even on a part-time basis, they'll have to make some concessions to contemporary taste. There's no shame in this; indeed, not to do so would be to meekly accept the status of a "chicken-in-a-basket" act, peddlers of soggy nostalgia to ageing baby-boomers.

In fact, there was evidence aplenty that our boys are on a different trajectory. Robin's Dylan Thomas *divertissement* *In My Craft Or Sullen Art*; the canny Cajun-ification of *You Know What You Could Be*; Clive's *Big City Blues*, throbbing with turn-of-the-century energy. Plus Robin's telling remark in the aftermath of the Friday Bloomsbury gig: "I feel there's terrific potential in this line-up." Those are not the words of a man content simply to reheat yesterday's chicken. The fact that Mike's recent compositions *Della* and *Birdsong* were up for inclusion in the set list also strongly suggests that ISB 2000 is seen by all parties as a living and developing entity. The paradox is that the ISB could so easily be hamstrung by the size and excellence of their own back catalogue. There's enough there to keep several careers afloat without even thinking about turning out any new stuff. But their instincts, I think, are towards a dynamic balance of the old and the new, and the three principal songwriters are all well-equipped to take the band forward into the 21st century.

HIS VOCAL ARABESQUES ON WALTZ OF THE NEW MOON ROLLED BACK THE YEARS LIKE SO MUCH LINOLEUM...

In this respect, it was both interesting and heartening to catch the band on Radio One's *Peel Show* in November. Peelie previewed five of the songs recorded at the Bloomsbury for inclusion on the forthcoming live album. All but *Big City Blues* were golden oldies, but, outside of the context of a reunion concert, they sounded (to these ears at least) as much of 2000 as of 1968, Fire King's daughters notwithstanding. They show, in other words, a band unafraid to refashion their classic songs in a way that acknowledges the passing of time but also honours the original vision.

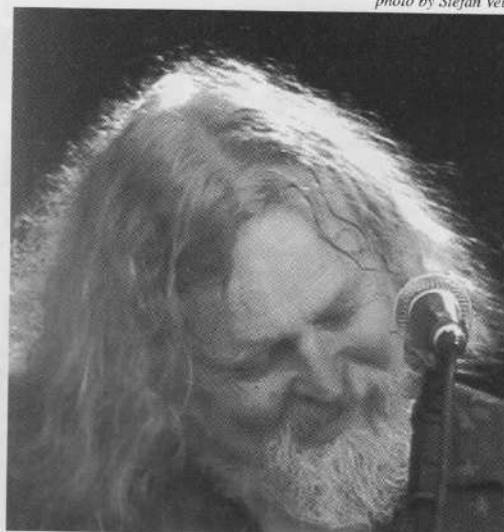
And, by the by, these recordings are also useful in showing that, *pace* the *Times* and *Guardian*, Mike had not by any means lost his voice—his singing on *Maker Of Islands* is clear and authoritative, and full of passion. Peel himself, no slave to easy sentiment, quaintly and fondly referred to them throughout as *The Increds*, and seemed quite charmed by the music. "I hope John Walters [long-time Peel producer and String fan] is listening to this," he said at one point.

And the encouraging thing is that their audience seems willing to follow them on this one. I've heard no caws of "Wot, no sitar?" this time around; nor did the non-appearance of the half-promised *tabla* player induce any cries of lamentation, at least not in my hearing. I reckon the current line-up can muster all the resources they need to do full justice to the String heritage without freezing any of it in time.

SO MUCH FOR EDITORIAL PONTIFICATIONS. Let's look now at the individual scores. Robin, as expected, handled most of the between-song banter. He cannily realised, however, that the classic repertoire was best served up without introductions, thereby enhancing the sense of delighted surprise when the likes of *Ducks On A Pond*, *This Moment* and *Waltz Of The New Moon* were unveiled. He moved easily as ever between guitar, fiddle (sounding eerily gimbri-esque on *Maker Of Islands*), whistle and mandolin, and was in magisterial voice. His and Mike's two-part harmonies on "Will your magic Christmas tree..." were, for me, the honey on the muffin. And his vocal arabesques on *Waltz Of The New Moon* rolled back the years like so much linoleum.

Mike, as at Edinburgh last December, seemed happy enough to hover on the edge of the limelight, this time forsaking guitar duties for keyboards and the odd puff on the harmonica. The absence of guitar raised a few eyebrows, even within the String camp. "Mike doesn't want to play the guitar too much anymore. I'm not sure why," confessed Robin in a post-concert interview with our chums Alfredo and Pipo from Argentina. From where I sit it looks like a confidence thing—his guitar had always been discreetly buried in the mix on gigs with the *Incredible Acoustic Band*. I personally thought his strumming gave the old-timey stuff a nice swing at Edinburgh; but with Clive occasionally doubling on guitar this time round, the sound was satisfyingly stringy throughout. As mentioned above, Mike's singing was well up to par. His voice may not have the power of old, but there's now an appealing fragility to it that somehow makes the songs sound more real, more lived in. But, yes, it would be good to see him taking a more prominent role instrumentally...

photo by Stefan Veit



Certain misgivings had been expressed as to what Clive could bring to songs that postdated his involvement with the ISB. Would the banjo be too dominant, or just sound out of place? Not to my ears! It sounded great on songs like *You Know What You Could Be* and (naturally) *Empty Pocket Blues*, and the colouring it brought to *Waltz Of The New Moon* and *Eyes Of Fate*, where it wove delicately in and out of the arrangements, was both apt and appealing. It was nice to hear a bit of small-pipes from him, as it was on the Robin 'n' Clive tour, and it would have been nicer still if he'd pulled out the clarinet and brought a flavour of the G. Dotts to the odd number. Next time round, perhaps? Vocally, he provides an effective contrast to Robin and Mike, who are both fairly stylised singers, and have become more so with the passing years. Clive's singing is, and has always been, entirely innocent of affectation, which not only suits his own songs but hit exactly the right note on *Air*, where he took the lead vocal.

Lawson was, as ever, the consummate professional, enhancing the arrangements with his technical expertise and melodic inventiveness without ever baying for attention. And Bina—well, I know some of you have problems with Bina's involvement. If you were of a cynical cast of mind you might conclude that she was some sort of Linda McCartney figure, a non-musician dragged into the band by an indulgent husband. Well, let's not forget that it was the ISB who set that particular ball rolling when they conferred full membership on Likky and Rose. If the principle held then, surely it should hold now. Bina's contribution clearly doesn't rest on any pretensions to virtuosity; rather she provides what most will agree is an integral element in the classic String Band sound—the texture of the female voice. Sure, they could have hired some slick chick with four octaves and a slit skirt, but that would somehow be a repudiation of core String values. The ISB was always about keeping it in the family, and about blurring the distinction between musos and non-musos. Bina's lack of experience was detectable in the occasional off-key note and an uncertainty whether to hit the off-beat or the on-beat on the tambourine. But if you think such things were never a feature of ISB concerts, then you really *can't* remember the Sixties! Nevertheless, this was her baptism of fire, and I predict you'll hear her in more confident mood come January. Anyone who was at the Carmina event will know that she can sing, and sing well.

SO, ONWARDS AND UPWARDS... It will be interesting to see what the ISB pull out of the hat in the forthcoming January concerts. Will they be looking backwards, or will they—aptly enough, given the time of year—be facing Janus-like in both directions, paying due attention to their glittering past but focused just as firmly on the future? All aboard the painted chariot—it's going to be an interesting ride.



nearest tubes: Euston/Euston Square

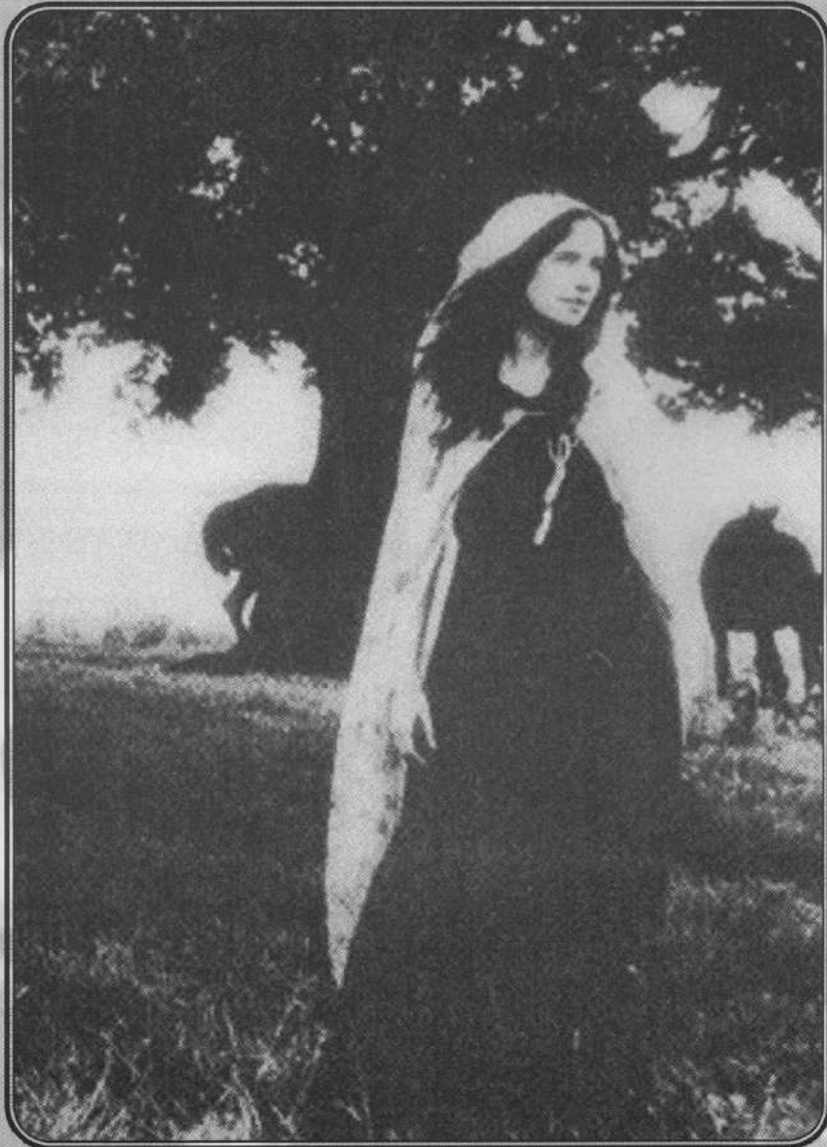
Bloomsbury Theatre

Photos by Jenny Bolders

BOX OFFICE 020 7388 8822

The long-awaited
Likky feature

PART TWO



The Girl on the Silver Bicycle

Adrian Whittaker
pops the questions to Frances
Harding, née McKechnie

LIKKY'S ELDER SISTER FRANCES, after a long period working in arts in the community, is currently a lecturer in Oriental Studies at the University of London. *beGLAD* first became aware of her in October 1997, when she turned up on the Pig's Whisker guest list at the Bloomsbury concert. Our thanks to Frances and her husband David for agreeing to be interviewed, and for their hospitality.

“ Likky was born at home. I remember the day she was born (2nd October 1945), we went out to play in the communal gardens at the back of the block of flats where we lived. We came upstairs, Connie and I (my older sister) and there we are, we had this little tiny baby girl. She was always a clever child, she was easily the cleverest in the family and talented in many ways. Musically she was very talented. My mother and my older sister played the piano and she did too. I remember her always dancing whenever there was music. I suppose we all did. There weren't the opportunities then as there are now, of course, for different kinds of dancing. Scottish country dancing, that was the big thing, they played for half an hour on the radio. This was in Edinburgh, in Viewforth.

I heard that your family were Irish Catholics: is that right?

No, that's a fantasy. We are Catholics but we're Scottish Catholics. We're McKechnies, which is one of the small sects of the clan of MacDonald—and then there's particular MacDonalds, the ClanRanalds.

they come from South Uist. My father, his own father was a Skye man. Yes, we were Catholic.

What did your parents do?

My father was a tradesman—he was an electro-plater, so he made things silver, which was very magical; and one thing he did for Licorice was—it must have been her fifth, sixth or seventh birthday—he electroplated or chromium-plated, anyway he made it silver, a little two-wheeler bicycle, so she was the only kid on the street who had this silver bicycle. It was really wonderful.

My mother never worked. There was a different attitude then; I think she loved being a housewife. Anyway, I would say that for all of us a great sense of music comes from my mother's background, whereas I would credit my father with a sense of the visual arts. He liked to draw.

I suppose the big thing in Christina's early life was, just before her third birthday in October, she became ill with peritonitis. I remember her in her cot, very unwell, and lighting the three candles on the birthday cake and this little child just barely raised herself up to blow the candles out. Then she was taken off to hospital. She was there for three months with peritonitis. For that time we didn't see her at all, my sister and I. I think my mother probably saw her for a only short time once a week, so it was a dreadful wrench for my mother. Likky must have felt very distanced from all of us.

In fact she survived it and, again, I remember when she came home. We had a new doll for her, a big baby doll and a pram which was really quite an item to buy in those days—I'm talking about the late '40s. I can just see where the pram was sitting and the baby doll in it, and then Christina coming home, still just three years and three months.

SHE WAS A VERY CLEVER CHILD...

Then she went to St. Peter's school, the same primary school that we all went to. I think she was more or less first in her class all through school. We were all graded in those days all the way through, and certainly she became Dux (leader) of the school when she was eleven. She was a very clever child. I don't know that she ever really enjoyed secondary school to the same extent.

She was starting to write poetry then and took part in poetry readings—I suppose that was by the time she was 16. She wrote that lovely little poem, "Whatever the seasons, my feet always walk on dead leaves..."

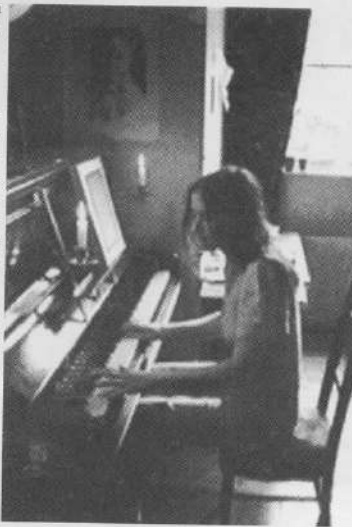
Of course, the main thing was she went to work in the Buchan potteries in Portobello—she was painting designs on cups and plates, I think some of them are quite valuable now! She left school to do that. I had got married by then, so I'm kind of fuzzy on that point in her life; we had gone to live in Nigeria in 1963.

The story runs that she left school to marry Bert Jansch...

Yes, I think that's absolutely true. I certainly know exactly where the banns were put up, in what was then a registry office up at Bruntsfield. My husband David can tell you the story much better than I can [see page 18—Ed]. A friend of ours saw these banns up and said "I see that your sister's getting married. Frances,"—and we knew nothing about it! There is a whole funny story which I'm sure Bert Jansch could tell you.

Doesn't this involve your father getting cross and giving him a clout?

I don't think he ever laid hands on him, no, I don't think he did that; but he certainly went to a well-known bar and told him to back off his little girl! That marriage never took place, anyway.



Lik—she tickled the ivories at an early age

But what I do know is that, prior to that, if I'm not mistaken, she and Robin had already met up when she was fifteen. There weren't clubs or anything like that in those days, but we did go to a place that the churches ran up at Bruntsfield, at Morningside. It was actually called Holy Corner, because there was a church on each of the four corners. We went to a sort of dance that was held there every Saturday. I've a feeling that's where she first met Robin, and then by chance they met again in later life. It was in the interim she went to marry Bert.

Do you have any of her poetry from the early days, or memorabilia, old photos?

Probably—not here, in Scotland. She was bridesmaid at both my wedding and my sister's wedding, so she's there in the photos looking very pretty.

Were you in touch with her in the period she was in the band?

We were just coming back—it was at the time of the Biafra crisis in 1967—but then we didn't live in Edinburgh either. We had small children, so we were pretty well out of a lot of things. We did manage to get to one concert they had at the Usher Hall, and we all went afterwards for a Chinese meal, Robin, Mike, Licorice, Rose as well. That was nice. But yes, we saw her sometimes. She called round at our flat a few times with her baby fox...

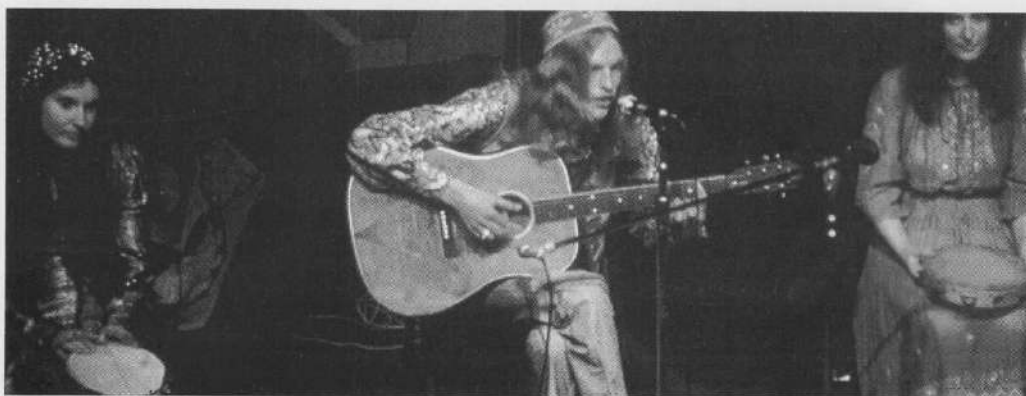
Would you say she was quite ambitious about her musical role?

I wouldn't say ambition was a word I at all associate with her. Is that something that's thought of her?

Joe Boyd said that she was pretty keen. In autumn '72 there was this whole period when it was announced she had left the band and gone on an "extended holiday", from which she never actually came back.

Yes, I would imagine that whole Scientology thing must have really enveloped her. I think that sort of thing must have happened without my being aware of it. I really wasn't very involved then.





Onstage with the ISB at the Fillmore East in 1969; instrumentation suggests they're in the middle of Maya

SHE DIDN'T TELL MY MOTHER SHE WAS GOING —IN FACT, SHE EVEN LEFT HER BAG BEHIND!

Did you follow what she was up to in the States?

No, we lost touch for a long time.

When did you start hearing from her?

I suppose it would have been the middle '80s. She would write to my older sister rather than me, never saying very much. I'm not sure that she hadn't become a born-again Christian—I remember a letter from her recommending prayer as the answer... I know that she got married in the late '70s. David went over to see her in LA in 1976. She and Brian Lambert were rehearsing a new band with a couple of session musicians in the flat at the time, and he was given a copy of L. Ron Hubbard's autobiography to read while they finished. Of course, he put it down and went out for a walk instead.

I think later on she was involved with someone else, who died. She loved him, she really loved him—he was an American Indian, he had been wounded in Vietnam. I think that was a great tragedy in her life, that really was. I wouldn't know when that happened, early '80s probably. She wrote to my sister, all the time saying life was tough, that she was painting and sometimes working in a health store and sometimes doing gigs around clubs. That seemed to be more jazz music than anything else. She also went back to College at some stage; I'm not sure what she studied.

She always came across as a bit otherworldly...

Oh, I think she was quite fey—and yet I don't know why, we're a very practical family!

The last time you heard from her?

I think the last address we have for her is in Sacramento. I've moved around a lot too, so she probably doesn't have any permanent address for me, but my older sister, my late sister, she always stayed in the same place. So she does have that address, and she knows she can always get in touch, which of course we wish she would, we very much do.

After you met Mark Anstey at the Bloomsbury concert, there was talk that you and he were going to try to organise a search, using the Internet...

Yes, I never really got anywhere with that. I didn't initiate it—at that time I didn't even know you had a web site. What I did do, though, was that I phoned and got people to go to the address I had in Sacramento, but that was ten years ago.

I gather she came back to see your mum in the mid-'80s?

Yes, my mother was already quite ill then, and she came back to Edinburgh to see her in 1986. She didn't get in touch with me, of course. I've always moved around with my family, so I expect that's part of the reason why. In fact, she didn't see anyone else at all—and when she left, she just disappeared. She didn't tell my mother she was going—in fact she even left her bag behind. She must have just rushed off and got the next flight back to the States.

The last letter from her is dated 1990, and that's certainly from Sacramento. She seems to have had some major surgery and is recovering, but is not feeling either strong physically or entirely at ease mentally. She had a tough time, I think. I feel a sense of not belonging must have first asserted itself from her early illness—a near-total separation from the family at three years old for three months.

It's nice, I think, that she was able to sing and compose songs and play music as much as she did; she was certainly a very free spirit. Such a pity she got trapped by Scientology, and maybe she wasn't strong enough to shake it off without it leaving its mark on her.



Marriage Lines

David Harding remembers Likky and Bert

A friend told me about the bans—"Bert Jansch, musician, to marry Christina McKechnie, ceramic artist". I went round to talk to Bert about it, up a spiral staircase to one of those old top-floor Edinburgh tenements. It was unfurnished, and the fireplace was the rubbish tip. A 6' 2" black guy, who was a sort of minder figure in the music scene back then, was sitting in a corner whittling—he made bows and arrows. Anyway, we fixed up that Bert, myself and Christina's dad would all meet up in the Crown Bar to talk about the suitability of the marriage—which we did. In fact, the discussions were very reasonable—I don't think there were even any raised voices. And as you know, after that Bert went off to London without her.

But there's a postscript to the story! Years later, towards the end of the Sixties, I was at a big post-show party after a concert by the Dubliners and the Fureys at the Usher Hall, and Owen Hand, who I'd known around the folk scene for some time, came up to me. We started chatting and he asked me if I remembered that time in the Crown Bar when I'd told Bert Jansch to back off. "You didn't realise," he said, "but there were ten of us in that bar watching you, ready to wade in and beat you up if you'd so much as laid a hand on him!!"



Likky and Bert—
they almost made it to
the altar

Likky's Memoir

from The Balmore Tapes

Smoking in my bath tonight, the ash fell on the scar that like a crushed white lily sinks in my hairless belly, and I remembered you. I could see you nailed in the lizard bath(?), your head up like a tortoise in surprise, your eyes saying nothing, coy bubbles and wisps of smoke. Your eyes said nothing, only your hands drumming on the side of the bath, off for your proud hills beckon.

(Ticking clock)

I was right in the middle of working out a change step four down the stile step to manage the double curve with the Rothsea train line under the bridge in three steps, when who should arrive in a strange Land Rover there but Frank, who went to my primary. Really there was no need for him around the place. He asked where Robin was. I was alone in the house, father pottering about nearby. And after he knew he was away giving drum lessons, he offered to give drum lessons too.

Perhaps if your Robin doesn't come back I could go and give drum lessons instead.

Oh, really, it was just a tiny wee thing he had to teach. Like this...

(Drumming)

And if he can play the most superb complicated rhythms for three hours non-stop, I think he'll manage this little job alright, thank you.

Well, perhaps I could help with bicycles?

I don't think so, I said, now busying myself cooking inside the cave. Daddy had just gone out to mend the handlebars of his bike, and really as a bicycle mender he seems to be quite adequate.

What about a chimney sweep, then?

Chimney sweep! Hey, what do you think she's been doing all morning but chimney sweeping? cried Father, neatly flying into the cave room on his bike which was made of palm leaf sculpture, like paper sculpture. And he'd solved the problem with the handlebars very nicely, using split cane in a circle. I looked up proudly, absently too.

She's a great chimney sweep.

(Ticking clock)

• for likky •

if you were a broken beggar winking at me from the pavement
an inmate of an institution with a wicked cackle
or long since dead and born again a beautiful baby
i would not regret life's lottery
but from a mountain cave in arizona
a wise woman watches the world
speaking to us in dreams.

on the night of halloween nineteen ninety two
i stared at the flames for hours after the last guest left
and stumbled home to my boat to sleep
i dreamt i was with the incredibles
licorice was mad but i cured her madness
by having sex with her in the head to toe position
then we went to the mansion of the malevolent magician
and by sliding a chip sideways out of his big toe
the magician and all the fabric of his mansion came undone
and we fell from the balcony landing softly on the lawn
i awoke with this song fully formed in my head

"there is no evil, just the fire of pain
either you face it or you don't
if you don't face it, you'll be comfortably cool and sane
but if you face it you'll be blazing
there is no truth in words, they're just the door to thought
there is no ugliness except where love is short
there is no evil, just the fire of pain
either you face it or you don't
if you don't face it you'll be comfortably cool and sane
but if you face it you'll be blazing."

Edward Pele



CARMINA

SACRED SONGS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff
Saturday 21 October 2000

"Carmina is a selection of texts that I feel would have instantly struck a chord in the hearts of the wise people of early Britain. For the early Celtic church had its own 'take' on the scriptures, inclining to view the sacred in all works of nature and to proclaim the indwelling glory and innocence of life. And these ancestors were filled with a sense of kindred, humility and lack of pomp. They understood at first hand the power of the sea, the gale's force, the breadth of the sky and the deepness of the night..." R.W.

Steve Pilley took the pilgrim's way...

photos by Alan Mawdesley

THE SUN CAME OUT ONCE I GOT TO CARDIFF, and shone on a leafy city full of yellowing limes. I met up with the continental contingent (Peter and Riemer), and we walked out to Llandaff Cathedral. At four in the afternoon the doors were closed but we could hear a very familiar voice booming out. Trying the door, we found we were able to sneak inside and briefly—so as to whet and not spoil the appetite—peek at Robin and Bina and the dancers rehearsing.

Llandaff Cathedral features, in among its ancient architecture, a four-legged modern arch that stands in the centre of the space some fifteen foot high, and balanced on top is a tall cylinder—perhaps another fifteen foot—fronted by a statue, presumably of Christ. The overall effect is bizarre, a little disturbing, and certainly incongruous.

Beneath this central arch is stretched reassuringly a banner decorated with the branches of a tree, the background half white and half bright red—the tree of leaf and flame, I suppose.

On the left hand side of this stage area under the arch is set Robin's harp. In front of the stage the pews are arranged in an oval shape, to allow an area for performance. Further back from the stage the pews converge in a more traditional arrangement, with an aisle down the middle leading to the rear of the church and the entrance. So from the door there is a space in the shape of a spear leading to the tree of leaf and flame.

ROBIN BEGINS THE EVENING AT 7:30, explaining that Carmina is Latin for songs, especially for magical or sacred songs. He then tells a brief tale, a Welsh story of Caradog son of Bran, and towards the end begins strumming on the harp. For a moment at the very beginning the electronics aren't quite adjusted to the acoustics and the sound is too resonant, but once that's fixed Robin is noticeably

taking into account the characteristics of the venue. When he speaks his voice is breathy, almost a whisper, using the atmospheres generated in such a place rather than letting them overwhelm the sound, tuning his voice to the nooks and crannies and vaulting roof of the Cathedral. From where I sit, this is much more successful, more controlled, than at Edinburgh (though I believe there were some difficulties with the sound for those at the back at Llandaff).

Carmina consists of both live and pre-recorded songs, with live dancers illustrating many of the pieces. The format enables Robin, Bina and Lawson to produce a much fuller sound, without (as it transpired) sacrificing the immediacy of a live concert. Lawson, indeed, whose contributions were central to the sound, didn't perform live, but sat in the front row to enjoy the experience he was helping to create.

DE PROFUNDIS WAS THE FIRST MUSICAL PIECE, and it was pre-recorded. Between Peter's knowledge of Latin and Riemer's book of Psalms we identified this as Psalm 130: Out of The Depths Have I Cried Unto Thee O Lord.

It was a little disconcerting to begin with, to see Robin and Bina sitting statue-like behind the harp at stage left, while the portentous sounds of Robin's chanting boomed out, backed with chanters and what sounded like a very breathy and full jew's harp—though it could perhaps have been a didgeridoo.

The lights go down to nothing during this piece, leaving just a little light entering the windows from the Cardiff night, as Robin's voice booms out of those depths, reminiscent at once of a baroque vicar enchanted in chanting, and something else, wild and ecstatic, gleefully embracing the strange words.

De Profundis is about 11 minutes and 20 seconds long.

In Principio starts in silence as the six women who are to provide the dance element of the performance come from behind the Tree of Leaf And Flame backdrop. They wear pale blue robes, with a scarf wound about the head as a hood or veil. There is perhaps a nunnish suggestion in the hoods, immediately denied and contrasted with the shade of the blue, the bare arms with blue tattoos, and sensuous dancing.

THEIR VOICES MINGLE IN BLUESY ECSTASY...

The music, again pre-recorded, is a delicate suspension of vocal and instrumental harmonies, with Robin and Bina singing in response to one another, their voices and the instruments combining every once in a while to rise in crescendo. The harp accompanies Robin's voice in unison, note for note, but for other passages, or with Bina, there is a great roll of the harp stretched out with mandolin harmonies trembling in the way so special to that family of instrument.

It becomes clear now how important Bina is to the proceedings. Her voice has grown, and there is increasing confidence and boldness. The pre-recorded parts of Bina are particularly strong. I daresay some will continue to criticise her voice; but I feel that she and Robin have been concentrating on the strengths of her voice, to great effect—a unique sound (another!) with much emotive power.

As the piece progresses, the dancers move slowly down the aisle, repeatedly stopping to bow east, south, west, north; then two of them unveil a third, in a kind of birth ritual, I suppose, until over the eighteen minutes of *In Principio* all six of them are unveiled, down at the far end of the aisle.

In Principio is, I think, the Genesis story of the creation—I couldn't find a psalm that begins with "In the beginning"—and I take the unveiling dance to represent the six days of creation.

As the dancers graduate to the far end of the church, blue light throws their giant shadows to either end: onto tall wide pale stone pillars at one end, onto the *Tree Of Leaf And Flame* at the other.

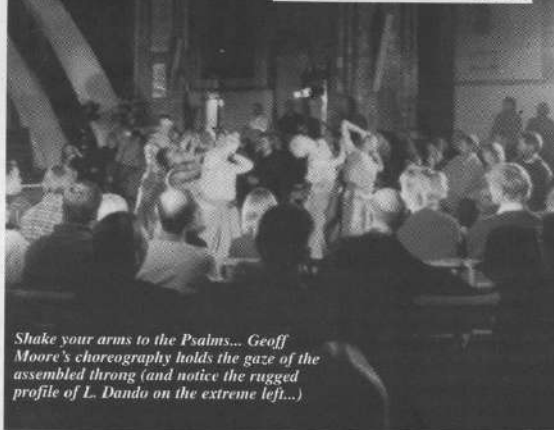
Next, *The Earth Is The Lord's*, listed in the program as *Domini Est Terra*, which we were able to match with Psalm 24. This one is live, with Robin chanting the words of the psalm, in Latin, while Bina echoes them in translation. The first part is spoken while the unveiled dancers process slowly back up the aisle, and each offers a fat candle to the earth at the foot of the backdrop. Then the music starts, a joyous celebration around the words *Domini Est Terra*, pre-recorded with mandolins and whistles and Robin and Bina singing, their harmonies blending perfectly, and a South American sound to it all.

One by one, the dancers pick at handfuls of earth then fly off down the aisle, the first speed they've shown so far, and at least as graceful as their slow movements. Robin and Bina sit down quietly at the harp again—but no longer still, they're rocking. The music moves to a climax, and the dancers manipulate their long scarf veils and each other in what must be very tricky moves executed with perfection and obvious joy.

Domini Est Terra lasts for five or six minutes. Then it's the *Te Deum*, live with Robin on the harp. I remember the *Te Deum* from my own childhood as a psalm-like chant that wasn't included in the Book Of Psalms. Here it is a magnificent anthem with the Williamsons' voices mingling in bluesy ecstasy to chant "Sanctus": a very memorable rendition, Bina singing now in Latin, and very strong, nearly as strong as Robin on occasion.

After 2 or 3 minutes they fell silent and the lights went out, and we gradually realised that the first half was over and began a lengthy applause. Robin had walked half off the stage when he came back almost apologetic and said "Oh, there's an intermission now, about fifteen minutes". It began to dawn on us that we were witnessing something very special that evening. I hope the CD—not due out until March, I've heard: I hope it'll be sooner than that—I hope it will convey the spirit of the *Carmina*. The dancing is integral to the whole thing—but no, this music does stand on its own, it's still something extraordinary.

IN DARKNESS, A GREEN LIGHT COMES UP on the *Tree Of Leaf And Flame*. The pre-recorded music has the sound of steel drums, but somehow it's not Jamaican in flavour, it's more Hawaiian perhaps; but maybe there's an Australian-aboriginal feel to it as well. Bina starts the singing, and again she's very strong, with Robin singing verses between her chorus (*I think*) as *Bonum Est Confiteri Domino* (Psalm 92: *It Is A Good Thing To Give Thanks Unto The Lord*) progresses. The dancers re-enter, from the rear of the church, each bearing a ten-foot high branch. (I couldn't make out what tree had provided these: it could have been birch from the leaves, but the bark looked more like cherry or rowan—both of which the leaves told against. Poplar? Anybody know?)



Shake your arms to the Psalms... Geoff Moore's choreography holds the gaze of the assembled throng (and notice the rugged profile of L. Dando on the extreme left...)

I was sitting in the third row of pews in the oval at the front of the church. But even from this vantage a lot of what the dancers did was lost to me. I daresay that some of those towards the back had a better view, but I was told that the sound deteriorated towards the rear. The temperature in Llandaff, at least, was right, and Robin had made clever use of the acoustics in his singing and storytelling, and for this work the ambience of a cathedral is almost indispensable; but I can't help thinking that cathedrals are not the best places for a live gig.

Bonum Est Confiteri Domino lasts around 4 minutes 45 seconds.

Now Robin speaks of his childhood days, when his school in New Malden forced him to learn and to hate both Latin and Catholicism. "School has a smell that lingers," he says, "as I've said before", and introduces the next psalm, that he had been forced to sing all too often in those days: "This is how I sing it now, me and Bina."

Qui Habitat In Adjutorio Altissimi (Whoever Dwells In The Service Of The Most High—Psalm 91) is in Robin's own style, reminiscent perhaps of some of the songs on *Island Of The Strong Door*. Robin sings and harps live, with Bina joining in with harmonies in the chorus. No, psalms don't usually have choruses, do they?—They do now! At the end Robin plays the most astonishing, hard, piece of harping: you'll have to wait for the CD, I've never heard anything like it. Peter and I turned to each other and said "Wow!" as it finished.

Qui Habitat In Adjutorio Altissimi lasts six minutes or so.

Straight into the pre-recorded *Caeli Enarrant Gloriam Dei*—The Heavens Declare The Glory Of God, Psalm 19. Exotic sounds: influences from North Africa, the Middle East and India—Robin's and Bina's wandering voices added the Indian feel. Harp, various drums, something I don't recognise, a bit like a sitar without the sympathetic strings—it could be harp and some kind of flute or whistle together. I get to thinking about what's happening here: the staid and assured voices of the church are gently, oh lovingly, subverted, ravished, by other, older, lovelier, traditions: traditions like those that the church itself had subverted and ravished in its time.

After 6 minutes 20 seconds of *Caeli Enarrant Gloriam Dei*, Robin now delivers the sermon, a brief meditation on the nature of God as everything and in everything, and he asks again the half-remarkable



They went that way, officer...

sheer unspeakably strange question of being here at all. Bina speaks with him for much of the two minutes or so, and their voices melding together, live, in a spoken piece, shows just how well they work together, and how thoroughly they must have prepared for this.

Then comes the Benedicite, a piece I believe (like the Te Deum) that is like the psalms but not of the psalms. An orchestral piece—pre-recorded of course. Trumpets come in at the beginning, establishing a regal and triumphant mood. Strings add authority to the sound, but Robin's and Bina's voices make it something different, something their own, I guess.

The dancing too is grand and crescent. Benedicite, after about six minutes, finishes with an "Amen". The lights go down and we begin to applaud. Robin, Bina and Lawson and the dancers come to the front and the lights go up for their bow. The applause continues. We see them in the wings hugging and congratulating one another, and yes, congratulations are what they deserve. We continue to clap until they come back for another bow. Then it's over. What an experience!

HE ASKS AGAIN THE HALF-REMARKABLE SHEER UNSPEAKABLY STRANGE QUESTION OF BEING HERE AT ALL

ROBIN'S HAD SUCH A STRONG YEAR—I hope he's enjoyed it at least as much as I have. When I saw him at the Square Chapel in April, there were moments of sheer power in the evening that I'd never felt before, not to that level. And again at Bloomsbury, what a sublime experience that was, so many magic moments. Here—and having built up quite a lot of expectation over a long period—it was one single long magic moment, a deliberate ecstatic mood induced with delicate craft and art and teamwork, building to a great wave of triumphal joy.

Enough trying to describe the ineffable. Robin's voice was very strong indeed throughout the evening, and has been reaching new heights this year. At Bloomsbury there were moments when he sounded like he did in the ISB, and the "whisky and cigarettes" voice that someone credited him with recently was all smoothed over. Tonight he seemed flawless, clear, note perfect. He bent words and notes way beyond what could reasonably be expected of them, and Bina went with him much of the time. His adventurousness matched his most experimental singing with the String Band, and was perhaps even more successful.



Voices in the vastness



*Curtain call for one and all...
Robin, Bina and Lawson stage left*

Views



ROBIN WILLIAMSON The seed-at-zero

ECM 1732 CD 543 819-2

THIS PROJECT IS A LANDMARK for Robin for several reasons, not least in its artistic excellence. It's also his first for the German label ECM, an internationally acclaimed label which releases mostly modern jazz and improvised or experimental contemporary music. Apparently, Steve Lake at ECM, a longtime enthusiast for Robin's work, invited him to suggest a theme or approach for a CD; Robin's reply was an album of improvised versions of Dylan Thomas poems. Robin has made no secret of his love of the work of the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, who lived between 1914 and 1953, and of how much he respected Thomas as "a very honest and wonderful craftsman". At Steve's behest, Robin has also revisited some of the most memorable songs from his post-ISB catalogue.

Taking its title from a typically thought-provoking Dylan Thomas poem, this fine new CD brilliantly conveys the depth (and breadth) of Robin's response to Thomas's poetry. Robin has averred that Thomas was partly responsible for his own love of words, from hearing broadcasts of the radio play *Under Milk Wood* as a child. His realisation of the sheer power of words has been developed and honed through to this day in his own art. Thomas's use of intoxicatingly forthright imagery and symbolism allied to a charming, profound yet simple (and then quite innovative) blend of the

commonplace and the strange appealed strongly to Robin, and was to figure as a major influence on his own writing style. In 1980, Robin performed in a music-theatre production *Prospect Of The Sea* (titled after Thomas's 1937 short story) in collaboration with dramatist Geoff Moore; Robin sang and intoned Thomas's texts to his own improvised harp and guitar accompaniment. He was struck then by the musical potential of the poems, and had reportedly long harboured the intention of investigating this possibility further. It's worth remembering also that Thomas himself had a fondness for folk music, once saying that it was the language of the Scottish ballads, and the rhythms of the Bible, that had made him want to be a poet in the first place.

Like Robin's own lyrics, a great many of Thomas's poems have multiple layers of meaning, but his use of language is very immediate and genuinely poetic, with a completely natural creativity in the adoption of literary devices such as assonance and alliteration. And if you delve deeper, you'll find that Robin and Dylan Thomas share many themes and preoccupations. However, this is not the place for an in-depth analysis of such matters; instead, to concentrate on the album...

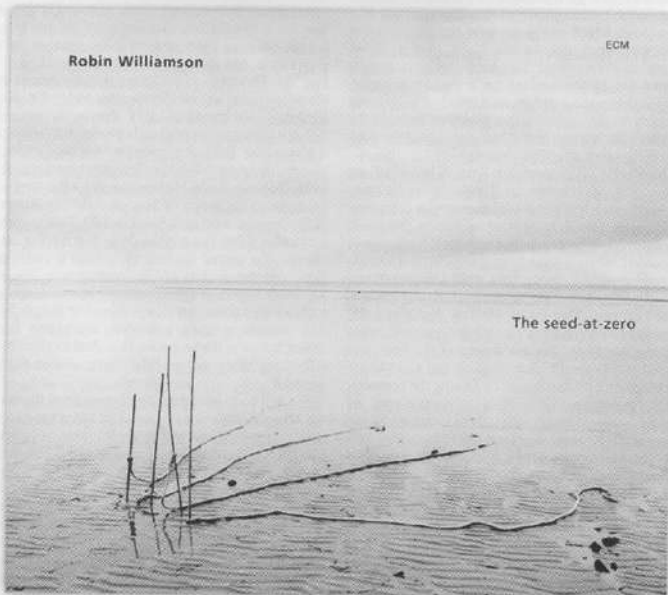
Although it started life as Robin's tribute to the work of Dylan Thomas, it grew apace during the course of the recording sessions as Robin considered Thomas's deeper poetic roots. Other sung poetry was added to the project, as you will see from the track-by-track discussion below. In fact, the project developed into a virtual treasure-trove of Welsh verse—all in settings by Robin himself—balanced by a selection of Robin's own songs. Lest any readers consider this sounds unduly esoteric or reeking of an overdose of pretentious cultural aspirations, I actually believe that with this project Robin has been inspired to

create what is arguably his most satisfying album in recent times. Here, Robin truly embodies the notion of what he himself calls the "inspired voice", with "older mysteries coming through the singer or narrator". That's not to deny the worth of any of Robin's recent projects, pretty excellent as many of them have been and therefore mighty hard acts to follow, but I really do feel that *The seed-at-zero* represents an artistic high. It's compelling and thrilling—by which I mean often frisson-inducing, in a way quite closely corresponding to my first hearing of many of Robin's early String classics. Here he is seen to pull together his multifarious talents, his various strands of activity, in an intense but never unapproachable way. Quite simply, it's on another plane from, say, *A Job Of Journey Work* or even *Ring Dance*, and thus our artistic expectations are bound to be different. I honestly believe it to be one of Robin's most rewarding solo ventures to date (and there are a lot to choose from!).

Taking the tracks in turn is probably the best way to convince you:

The World—Against all expectations (though not at all illogically, as it turns out), the album opens not with a setting of Dylan Thomas but a stark unaccompanied setting of a short poem by the Welsh mystical poet Henry Vaughan (1621-1695). Straightaway, one can sense the distinct lineage from Thomas, which can be traced right back through William Blake. This setting really is other-worldly, at once stark, elemental and primitive, with no instrumental distraction. The poem's very concept and awesome imagery are matched in Robin's extraordinary setting; the worldly universality is also in turn reflected in the meandering melismatic vocal line. Robin's skill in using the whole amazing range of his voice comes into its own here too: his vocal adventurousness still retains a quality of puckish chubbiness, but he's not concerned with effect, rather with conveying a calm intensity by means of his mature vocal dexterity. Whispersome moments convey the visionary wonder of the poem. And there's plenty of Robin's characteristically descriptive vocalising, almost but not quite onomatopoeic, bringing out the true essence of the words—as with the words "ring" and "calm". Spine-tingling moments like the elongation of the word "days", or the prolonged, shuddering, shivery expression of the word "bright", which melodically has wandered all over the staff. Robin's singing has over the years acquired a fantastic sureness of purpose, and this new recording shows just how assured and accomplished a singer he has become (and he was always incredible...). You can hear it straight away in features like the calm assurance of his pacing, his control over light and shade, and the beautiful, softly pulsing yet finely controlled vibrato at the ends of phrases. There's Robin's way of twisting the vowels round in a very individual way, with a slight distortion of the basic phonetic vowel sound which, however, does not obfuscate the actual sense of the words themselves (as in "saw", "nag", "horse", "heart"). He has also developed a trait of quite often drawing out the final consonant instead of the vowel (as in "ring", "drowns", "now")—this goes against the conventional singing technique of elongating the vowel sound instead.

I've discussed features of Robin's singing style here at the outset rather than remarking on them piecemeal throughout this article, but they can be picked up throughout the album. Whatever the stylistic considerations, I'm convinced that, vocally, Robin's never been stronger, and there's not a hint of waning prowess with advancing age!



The seed-at-zero—The simple folksy guitar introduction belies the dense nature of the lyric, widely regarded as one of Thomas's most difficult and inscrutable texts. Robin shows a sure grasp of the poem's structure, which is deceptive in not reflecting the primal concerns expressed by Thomas regarding the very creation and destruction of life itself. This is perhaps one of the less immediate tracks on the album in terms of accessibility of ideas, though the musical setting admirably avoids distracting us by virtue of its appealing straightforwardness.

Skull And Nettlework—A reworking of one of *Ten Of Songs*, originally recorded in 1988 during the period when Robin was experimenting with electric and synthesised instrumental textures. The previous version prominently featured the bright tones of electric guitar, and the arrangement (though attractive enough in itself) tended to lead to an underappreciation of the rather fine lyric. It's full of themes and imagery familiar from Thomas's writing—there's that omnipresent, contradictory, simultaneous preoccupation with procreation and mortality, expressed in language juxtaposing elements of common folk heritage, myth and legend and a recurring emphasis on equine imagery and the power of taming; often complex ideas are interwoven in a way with which I'm sure Thomas himself would have identified. The darker, more mature vocal timbre of this new version, together with the rippling solo harp backing, perfectly mirrors the basic concept of seamless ongoing and continuing tradition.

Holy Spring—This is a spoken reading of a Thomas poem which was written following a bombing in the Second World War, dealing grippingly with finding the strength to survive and battle through the worst of situations (the notion of discovering the holy spring incidentally recalling the locating of "weary well", of which more anon). Here Robin's in deep and husky, purringly expressive storytelling mode, and the effect is absolutely riveting. Holy Spring leads straight into **To God In God's Absence**. Compared to the magical rendering that made it the highlight of Robin's *Island Of The Strong Door* album for me, the new version is missing a certain rich opulence in terms of instrumental (guitar) texture, as well as the florid oud-like passage with percussion near the end (OK, we were probably spoilt with that fine version!). Here Robin's vocal seems more resigned perhaps, though that initial throaty roar is harsher this time round and (uncharacteristically, and the only occasion on the entire disc that I thought it worth remarking on) a tad strained-sounding. Importantly, too, the *Island* version of *To God In God's Absence* was also prefaced by a spoken intro, but on that occasion it was a Christmas toast that was possessed of a delightful frosty twinkle in the eye of the yuletide fire; it surely can't be a coincidence, though, that the very ambience and content of that "toast" was highly reminiscent of Thomas's *A Child's Christmas In Wales* and *Under Milk Wood*...

Lament Of The Old Man—A sensitive and well controlled unaccompanied setting of Robin's translation of a short poem attributed to Welsh bard Llywarch Hen, with story-like spoken interpolations.

In My Craft Or Sullen Art—Another Thomas setting, with guitar accompaniment. The introductory flourish is reminiscent of *The Iron Stone*, but here it turns the opening pages of a concise but pointedly expressed "writer's manifesto". Its suitably freeform style of performance reflects its improvisatory nature. Robin's fine guitar work reinforces this impression, picking out individual chords and notes from chords in response to the words.

Verses At Balwearie Tower—This is another revisit of an earlier song of Robin's, this time from 1981's *Songs Of Love And Parting* album. (Robin was inspired to write it when he visited the ruined medieval tower which had once been the home of Scottish cabalist & philosopher Michael Scot; it's the one with that intriguing, and unwitting, paraphrase of Keats' epiphany in the very last line.) This song has also appeared elsewhere in Robin's

officially recorded output, as the September segment of the live *Songs For The Calendarium* release. The newest version replaces the cittern accompaniment of the original version (with its lighter tone) and the folksy guitar style of the *Calendarium* version with the harp. The earlier version has arguably a softer poise in its floridity, but the poise of the latest version is more reflective, in keeping with its autumnal nature, and this version gains much from Robin's mature tone (and relish in the deeper range of his voice) as well as his technique of conjuring or picking on individual words or phrases, as though out of the ether itself. This latest version (like the *Calendarium* one) employs a repeat of the concluding phrase "long ago" at the end, a useful method of emphasis. There's another appearance of the seed motif here too—"no seed becomes a tree". A reading of true depth.

Can Y Gwynt—As an interlude, here's a teasing little riddle from the Welsh tradition, attributed to Taliesin and told with plenty of wit, much in the manner of a comparable segment from one of Robin's story albums.

By Weary Well—A wonderful Robin original, titled after the spring to be found on Arthur's Seat in the middle of Edinburgh, a place of cosmic and personal significance. The song made its first recorded appearance on Robin's 1979 album with the Merry Band, *A Glimt At The Kindling*, then on the roughly contemporary *Live At McCabe's* set. The latest version has just a guitar accompaniment, and, taken at a lower pitch, is appealingly straightforward. It's also shorn of that instrumental postlude that sidesteps gaily out of the original version. Another song which has a thematic confluence with Dylan Thomas.

The Bells Of Rhymney—This Pete Seeger song (well, the tune Robin uses as a base is approximately that written by Pete Seeger) is perhaps an unexpected choice in the exalted company of the Welsh poets, but turns out to be a most interesting reading, unaccompanied and sparse, with many characteristic Williamsonsisms as Robin embellishes Pete's melody line in a truly extraordinary way. Just savour the waggish repetition of the "if" syllable in "Cardiff", the richly pealing tone he imparts to the word "silver", the dolefully drawn-out "sad"; and the "Wye" sounds homonymic—it almost becomes a questioning in Robin's delightful pun. The feel of joyful improvisation makes you think it was recorded in just one take.

On No Work Of Words—This Thomas setting has the fullest texture of any on the album, mixing in a mandolin which enters to court the guitar at the moment when the writer's block of the "blind shaft" is encountered. This lends the piece a slyly humorous, almost jeering tone, helped by the quasi-blues descending progression used. The restless quality of the guitar accompaniment mirrors the writer's frustration, and a final slam shuts the door on it all rather effectively.

The Barley—This complex lyric of Robin's I see as a sort of response to Thomas's seed-at-zero poem; certainly it's a worthy counterpart in its very impenetrability. It's rendered spoken at first, with occasional sung interjections, in true bardic manner, then when we get to that wonderful Thomas-inspired section about "one goat skipping, lamb scampering, lark risen morning" the sung phrases predominate. The guitar rhythm, hitherto quite static, becomes more full and dense, yet still simple in execution. At "the crossbones of the year" my mind went straight back to *Skull and Crossbones* (obviously a pirated image!). During the course of this concentrated close-on-seven-minute epic, an awful lot of ground is covered (so to speak) by the barley! To be sure, that's not the whole story with the central metaphor, which like the best work of Thomas himself is tantalisingly multi-layered in its imagistic potential yet incredibly powerful even on its simplest level. The Barley strikes me as a most apt companion piece to *Cold Days Of February*, in fact.

Hold Hard, These Ancient Minutes In The Cuckoo's Mouth—Another new Thomas setting with just guitar accompaniment, placing a Robert

Browning-like sardonicism in a strident, snapping, sneering, oft cocky vocalisation within the mock-grand natural settings of nature's glories, perfectly realising the juxtaposition of scenarios.

Cold Days Of February—A new version of Robin's song that originally came out on the ISB's swansong album *Hard Rope And Silken Twine*; there and in the version which appeared on the later-issued (but roughly contemporaneous in recording terms) *On Air* CD, the sixth line of the first verse had been changed to "While their friends cried/cry o'er their bones unburied" from "In Belfast or the streets of Derry". (I didn't find out about this until much later, and even now I can't really see why the original lyric would have been considered to be in poor taste.) Both of the aforementioned versions carried a musical setting that closely aped *The Circle Is Unbroken*, to such an extent that I remember at the time getting worried that the band were having to resort to plagiarising their own material! The third version to appear was that on *Songs For The Calendarium*, which transformed the song into something almost cheerily folksy (yes, I know that's a contradiction in terms!), with guitar accompaniment, but at least it restored the original lyric to its proper context. But for me the version on this new release is surely the definitive one—sung unaccompanied: to coin a phrase—as nature intended! Stark, compelling and masterfully wise, allowing the lyrics to register their full impact properly for the first time, I reckon.

Poem On His Birthday—This might unkindly be described by some as the album's token eleven-minute epic, but the bluntness of that phrase would deny the epic scope possessed by even the shortest of the other Thomas settings. Here the feeling of bardic improvisation is tangible and spellbinding in the extreme. To discuss the literary impact of this amazing poem with any credibility would require vastly more time and space than we have here, so I can only briefly venture the opinion that it's one of Thomas's poems that comes closest to Robin's own expressive sensibilities in terms of response to nature, mode of expression and a myriad of other jewelled cadences. In other words, it seems almost tailor-made for Robin to interpret: the resonances are so uncannily apposite. Robin's interpretation is in the finest bardic (sorry, that word again—but there really is no alternative) tradition. He begins in spoken mode, to simple harp accompaniment, but when the text opens out into the "cavernous, swung wave's silence", the mixture of sung and declaimed text is potent indeed, sheer magic is woven from the very finest of syllables, each one so telling and true. It's the ultimate demonstration of the intimate on a grand scale, and absolutely enchanting.

For Mr. Thomas—I hate to say it, but anything is bound to seem an anticlimax after *Poem On His Birthday*. Nevertheless, this timely revisit of Robin's tribute to the poet still cuts the mustard. On this occasion, Robin foregoes the celebratory wine-glasses in favour of a simpler guitar backing. In 1981, Robin outlined his inspiration for the song in the notes to *Songs Of Love And Parting* album: "I first heard *Under Milk Wood* on BBC Radio when I was nine. I was lying in the dark. War surplus ear-phones of a crystal set had my head in a vice-like grip." In the context of *The seed-at-zero*, it's an inevitable but oh-so-fitting parting-glass. In keeping with Robin's other reworkings of earlier songs, this new version is more reflective, necessarily less robust but none the worse for that. And to close the CD in any other way wouldn't have seemed right, would it?

So, if it's not been patently obvious from the outset, this definitely is a release to be taken seriously, a very important one within the Williamsons canon, and certainly not a mere diversion to fill the time between re-formed ISB gigs. So, too, it's not for the faint-hearted—but then the best of Robin's work has always been challenging to the listener, both in the physical attributes of the sound and the musical and verbal content. I wrote in a recent review of *The seed-at-zero* for *Traditional Music Maker* magazine: "This really is an extraordinarily good album, even by Robin's extraordinarily high standards, and

it should at a stroke restore faith in Robin for those (and there are some, I know) who feel he's been artistically treading water since the heady ISB days." I stand by that sentence, and I don't feel I can sum up the album's impact any more accurately here and now. Quite honestly, I believe that, more so than any of Robin's recent projects/reunions/reworkings, this new release is the most completely persuasive demonstration to date of Robin's high degree of natural competence in so many fields—as singer, musician, instrumentalist, word-setter, interpreter, story-teller and (not meaning to sound pretentious) a genuine man of letters, occupying his own unique and lasting niche in the culture of the British Isles.

David Kidman

LIVE

MALCOLM LE MAISTRE

The Pine And The Eagle
St Bride's Centre, Edinburgh
11 October 2000

ISAW THE PINE AND THE EAGLE on a wet Edinburgh night in the St Bride's Centre, a high-ceilinged former church. About forty people had braved the weather to see this, one of two "open" performances, the rest of the tour being for schools. As we settle down, the stage lies draped under white sheets, fronting a painting of mountains. During the show, the set itself proves to be as versatile and engaging a performer as the actors. Birdsong twitters quietly in the background.

Let's get the ISB anorak questions out the way first—Does Malcolm appear? Only as part of a crowd scene at the beginning. Does Malcolm sing? Not solo, although many voices are heard and he's probably in there. Does he sing any ISB songs? No. What does he do? He directed it, wrote the score and plays most of the music live, offstage. Is the music any good? Most definitely. Giles Crooked-deal? Be sensible.

The prologue is a land auction somewhere in the Scottish Highlands. As well as the crowd of Green demonstrators (including a grizzly-looking supposed lighthousekeeper's son), the protagonists are a bunch of animals, a lawyer, an auctioneer and the Creator herself. The auctioneer is revealed as the Destructor—the spirit of invention and technology—and the action of the play is the story of their interaction and conflict throughout the history of Scotland. From the outset we're shown that the Destructor isn't simply the baddie—he represents the part of human intervention shaping as well as destroying nature. As he says, "Her story is my story". As often happens, the supposed villain of the piece is more engaging than the hero(ine); the Destructor is a wag—more Ian Beale than Beelzebub. And he has all the best music!

The narrative ranges from the Ice Age to today. The thread is maintained by two gossiping Muppet seagulls, who were probably the weakest link in the show, not really as funny as they were meant to be. We also follow the fortunes of Fox and Pine Marten, the sympathetic animal characters, and enjoy occasional appearances by the Creator and Destructor. Bears, beavers, Romans, Vikings, industrialists and aristocrats come and go, contributing to the degradation of the Highlands. Not forgetting Scotland's answer to the Plagues of Egypt, the midgie, in an ingenious costume suggesting a swarm of the little nasties.



Those dratted midgies...

A song is never far away, and Malcolm's humour and pop sensibility steer the show away from both cuteness and earnestness. A drum machine introduces marching Romans, who then sing a wistful song of homesickness to a haunting whistle and mandolin backing. Midgies and Bo Diddley Beaver (if you're wondering whether he's related to Gloria Beaver, you're sad!) frolic to rock'n'roll that's more Jonathan Richman than String Band. The Vikings provide the best turn of the early part of the show with a raucous call and response chant over off-stage drums.

Trees rise and fall from the simple but ingenious stage, which has doors and flaps everywhere evoking everything from a talking tree to a smelting furnace.

The demise of the last bear in Scotland (not counting Robbie Coltrane) evokes a tender accordion tune, *Which One Of Us Will Be The Next?*. But the devil has the best tunes, and the hit of the evening is *Chaos*, where the stage is transformed into a steaming, smoking smelting plant with hammers and drums clanging and thundering in a red glow from beneath the stage. The title belies the obvious structure, purpose and dramatic build of this powerful piece. It's anything but chaotic.

The ridiculous follows the sublime, as the industrial revolution gives way to the Destructor's most devastating secret weapon—sheep. A true Malcolm Le Maistre moment, this, as three fleecy dancers miss each other's steps and copy each other's mistakes to the vamping of ukulele and kazoo.

Finally, the Destructor is put on trial, but saved by the intervention of the Creator, who decrees that the children in the audience should form a jury to decide his fate. A jury of children is taken sidestage to reach its verdict. Tonight its decree is that he should stop polluting and take better care of the planet, or face the direst punishment—eating bear poo for a year! There's a suggestion for John Prescott. It was a surprise to see in the final curtain-call how few actors there actually were filling the animal costumes and nooks and crannies of the set. Forty smiling faces left the theatre, and when we got out, the rain had stopped.

The Pine and the Eagle is one of a number of plays and workshops. Malcolm's Environmental Arts Theatre Company has produced over the last nine years, for children and adults. The soundtrack is available on cassette. For more information, contact Suzanne Mitchell, Administrative Director, Environmental Arts Theatre Company, New Street Studios, 6 New Street, Edinburgh EH8 8DW. Tel 0131 558 9889. Email: environmental.arts@virgin.net

Norman Lamont

ROBIN WILLIAMSON

Canterbury Environment Centre
2 November 2000

ART EXHIBITIONS, ECOLOGY lectures, Hallowe'en stories, films, food, mythology, archaeology, puppetry, storytelling, poetry, music, ceiliidhs—and the craic. The Celts In Kent festival 2000 offered all this and more through the first half of November, all over the county of Kent. This was the eighth year of the festival, and according to the festival brochure, "It was launched in 1993 when Robin Williamson set the artistic pace for years to come with his bardic mix of songs, tunes, poetry, stories and musicianship".

And Robin is back as one of the artists in residence for this final year of the festival, as the sponsors Kent County Council seek to broaden their scope, with plans for a "world cultures festival" in years to come. Robin played three consecutive evenings, in Maidstone, Canterbury and Cranbrook, as well as a short lunchtime session in Canterbury. I caught the gig at the Canterbury Environment Centre on a damp but cheerful Thursday evening. I met several friends there, (as well as my son, who's at Canterbury University) who'd been to the lunchtime and previous evening's show and were able to give me a comparative view of those.

The Environment Centre is a former church, as are so many of Robin's solo venues, and it was interesting to consider the acoustics in the light of the recent Llandaff and Edinburgh concerts in working Cathedrals. The fact is, the sound was fine at St Alphege's (I think that was the name of the former church). Even though old stone walls and stained glass windows were still in place, the building must have been carefully adjusted to deaden the echoes that are so appropriate to a church service and so undesirable at a Robin Williamson concert.

Robin started with a slow harp tune called *A Pity That Youth Does Not Last*, which merged into a faster tune (which was surely the fast version of *The Blackbird*). This then evolved into the *Dialogue of Ossian and St Patrick*, a story from *The Craneskin Bag*, Robin's 1989 book of Celtic stories (also known, I believe, as *The Wise And Foolish Tongue*). The *Dialogue*, in fact, includes the story of *Mananan Mac Lir* and the *Craneskin Bag* from which the book takes its name. Next came *If Wishes Were Horses*, as he moved from harp to guitar (and was able to discard those specs which kept sliding down his nose as he told the tale). And Robin was in fine singing voice, as he has been in recent gigs. *Horses* he took fairly slowly and quietly, making it a delicate lament, which after a (rather clumsy to my ears) guitar break moved into *Take A Heed Of Me* Sometimes, from the *Ring Dance* album. This upped the pace somewhat, though never achieved



No beGLAD photographers were present at Canterbury, so here's a couple of Snapper Green's shots of our man from *The Boardwalk* in Sheffield back in April 1998



the bitterness of the recorded version. It's a song I've never given much time to, seeming as it does to contradict his frequent advice to be bold, restless and take the world by the horns, as it were. This version seemed harmless enough, and ended in some pleasant diddling—there was rather a lot of diddling in tonight's show, though he never really encouraged us to join in.

Then came "School's got a smell that lingers," by which the extended version of *Me And The Mad Girl* was introduced. Hardly a surprise, that one; it seems to be one of Robin's favourites—and why not!—but next I was shocked to hear "that the emperor of China used to wear..." Yes, he did *Waltz Of The New Moon* all by himself, on guitar. It worked too, and very well, though I missed the harp runs that Lawson has been able to provide in the recent ISB renditions. Again, his voice was in top form, and he got through the song with hardly a mistake in the lyrics. (He made—and recovered from—some dreadful howlers on both the previous occasions I've heard the song). Sweat was breaking

out by now as he hunched over the neck of his guitar, concentrating on the fingering, and blinking almost painfully while swaying from side to side in waltz time. The *Waltz* patched, seamlessly as usual, into *Ivy Sing Ivy* from 1986's *Songs For Children Of All Ages*. This featured some excellent guitar playing and slick fingerwork between the verses.

Then came the *Nocturnal Intermission*, together with pleas to buy his CDs even if only to prop up a wonky table. I learned now that he had been chattier yesterday, and that he had played a different set at Maidstone. *Waltz Of The New Moon* had not been in yesterday's list, but he had played it at the 45-minute (free) lunchtime concert today.

The second half opened with *The Wonderful Supper At The House Of Lude*. I always expect a story when I hear that title, but the harp tune that carries that name is familiar enough. The second half began on a high with this tune, and just got higher and higher. It moved into a faster tune which I couldn't place, and then meandered into *Black Is The*

Colour, a tune I'd been enthusing over just the previous night, so that one really hit home.

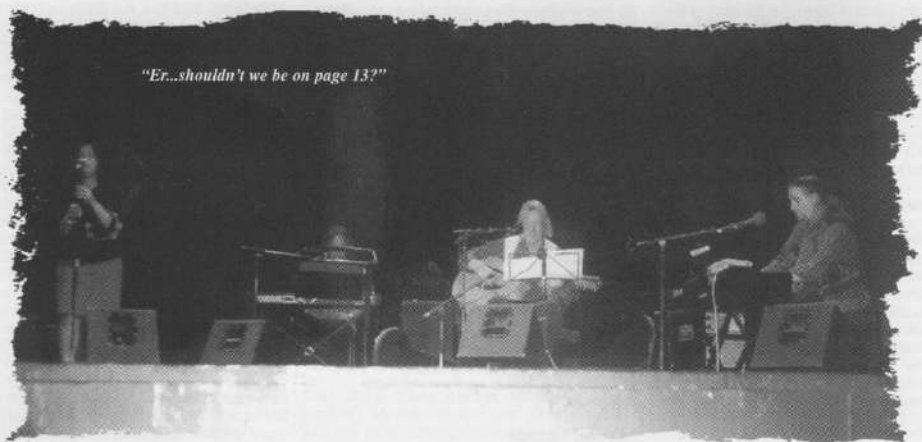
Back over to the guitar, and the next tune was *The Loan Of A Glass Of Beer*. A perfect folk club song, but for Robin, an opportunity for some more diddling and some more storytelling—he interleaved the verses with the tale of Adam and Eve. You know the one: "God, why did you make women so soft?" "So you would like them, my boy"... I'm not going to give away the punchline. This moved back through the fruitless attempts to borrow ale and on into *Hughie The Graham*, another number I have a great affection for, and on this occasion it was superb, and I knew I was witnessing yet another ecstatic concert where Robin's music takes flight in a series of *Wows* that we can only marvel at and succumb to. Yet I was told that yesterday's gig hadn't taken off in the same way, despite his being more chatty and its not being by any means a let down. But so many of the concerts I've been to in the last year have done: Robin and Clive at Cecil Sharp, Robin at Square Chapel, Halifax (April 2000), ISB at Bloomsbury, and (especially) the *Carmina*. Seems I've been very lucky in my choice of concerts.

The next sequence started unfamiliarly with a song that appears to be called *My Singing Bird*. But Robin interwound the verses with some entirely familiar thoughts and stories. "I find myself becoming sentimental with the passing of the seasons," he said, and went on (very unseasonably) to remind us how the unfolding leaves of horse chestnuts in May look like the little green skirts of dancers. "Suffer me an indignity of summers," he pleads, and after another verse of *My Singing Bird* it's the poem that introduces *I Pray To God In God's Absence on Island Of The Strong Door*. It seems the poem—which could perhaps be called *Here's To Midwinter*—and the song are separate entities, and since *Pray To God* itself reappeared on *The seed-at-zero* without the poem it was fitting that the poem was standalone here. Though the two do go together admirably, they throw new light on one another.

Back into another verse of *My Singing Bird*, and then it was "May the road rise before you", and I knew we were coming to the end. After prolonged applause and the inevitable cries for more, John Rice—I hope I got the name right—took the stage. He's the organiser of the *Celts in Kent* festival, and he told us a little of the history of the festival and the future plans, and even sang a comical verse himself. Then he called Robin back for one last song. "The only other song I know," said Robin, and gave us a beautiful down-tempo *Irish Rover*. Having been introduced to—and learned to love—this song in versions by the *Pogues* and the *Dubliners*, a quiet version was a surprise and a delight.

And to finish it all off: some more diddling.

Steve Pilley

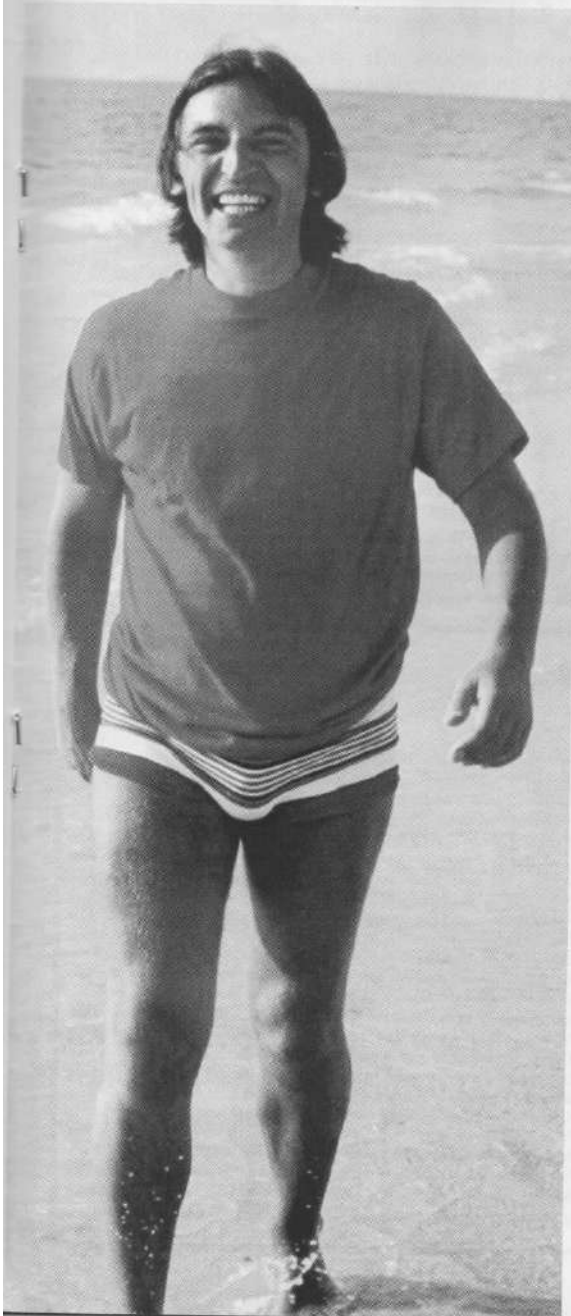


"Er...shouldn't we be on page 13?"

the **CURSE** of CASABLANCA

First he lost his trousers—then he lost his album

Martin Williams considers the strange case of NBLP 7186



ONE OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS about the Be Glad website (which I discovered before the *beGLAD* mag) was getting to know about material that had somehow passed me by. Foremost amongst these must be Mike Heron's fourth non-*ISB* album, generally known as *Casablanca*. In fact, *Casablanca* is the name of the record label; the actual title is simply *Mike Heron*.

"What on earth is this?" I thought, reading the details of tracks: some were familiar (*Mexican Girl*, *Blackfoot Side*), others not. A bit of digging around revealed the awful truth. Mike had recorded the album in 1979; it was in fact released (but only in America) on the ill-fated *Casablanca* label (more on them shortly), whereupon Donna Summer, also a *Casablanca* artist, got into a legal battle with the company, who hit financial trouble. The net upshot was that *Mike Heron* was withdrawn from circulation and impounded. Probably only a few hundred copies were ever sold.

By any standards, that must be a pretty traumatic event for an artist, especially one seeking to re-launch himself as a solo singer/songwriter. Whether a tour was planned to promote it, I don't know, but if so it never happened. So I felt very sorry for Mike that such a thing could occur. What has prompted me now to write this article is that I have, at last, acquired a copy of the album—and it is absolutely fantastic.

From feeling sorry I have gone to feeling outraged and angry. It seems so unjust that a great work like this should be lost—truly a crime against art, and against Mike. (Incidentally, I have sent Mike a cheque for what it would have cost me to buy the album now, as that seems only fair, through the good offices of *beGLAD*. I gather they would be willing to do the same for anyone else in the same position.)

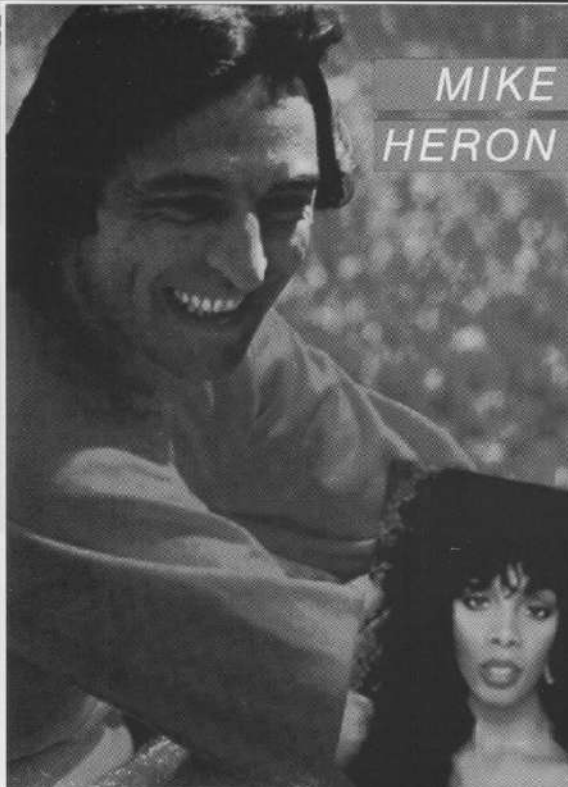
SO, WHAT'S IT LIKE? The first few seconds of the first track are a real shock—none of the minimalism of the *Glen Row Tapes* here, although after a while you realise the track is *Brooklyn Miracle*. No, this is a mega-production job, with layer upon layer of sound—in this case, very boppy bass, Hammond(?) organ (both from Jon Bavin), drums (Liam Genockey, on all tracks), snaking guitar riffs (Frank Usher), girly doo-doo-dah backing vocals (from Betsy Cook) and a super sleazy sax (Mel Collins). A bit of a culture shock, but really great once you're into it.

Next up is *Mexican Girl*, less angular and syncopated than later versions I've heard. Layers of brass and multi-tracked vocals; the scope of this album starts to become clear. Obviously a favourite with Mike himself, judging by its ubiquity; this is presumably how he wanted it to be, given time and money (and this album must have consumed lashings of both)—a comment that could be made for most of these tracks: that's partly why they are so fascinating.

Third is (*Treat Your Woman*) *Like A Star*, a new one to me, not having *Glen Row Volume 3*, and just as astonishing. Very danceable, with a stomping four-on-four beat that *Status Quo* would have been proud of, plus that anthemic quality that marks out so many of Mike's songs. The influence of Frank Usher on lead guitar is also making itself felt at this point. Immensely commercial: I wonder if this had been conceived as a potential single...? How different it might all have been.

Blackfoot Side next, and probably the clearest lyrics of any take of this. I can't agree with Stephen Robbins (*beGLAD 14*) when he said the *Glen Row* version is better. The backing vocals are not that hot here (sadly, as it is quite a crowd, including Susie Watson-Taylor), but the pianica (harmonica sound-alike, not featured on any other take of this I know) is great and the bass part from John Gordon is stunning.

Fifth track is *Tail of the Miracle*—another new one for me—but here



Mike and Donna—
he hasn't spoken to her since



MIKE HERON

A FEW OTHER DETAILS: the album's producer was Hugh Murphy, famous particularly for Gerry Rafferty's Baker Street, which perhaps explains the prominence of the sax and lush production generally. Rafferty of course was previously in a band called The Humblebums, with Billy Connolly—another twist in the tangle of connections that surround the ISB. Engineer is Steve Lipson who also features on backing vocals, rhythm guitar and synthesizer on various tracks. It was recorded at Regents Park Recording Company, which is presumably in London, and released with catalogue number NBLP 7186.

The front cover features the always Smiling Man looking very happy in close-up, whilst the reverse shows an equally happy Mike striding through the surf on a beach somewhere, together with individual musician credits for each track—see the accompanying text box.

SO WHAT BECAME OF IT, and Casablanca itself? Come to that, why Casablanca? Goodness only knows to the latter question. They were a busy company in '79, issuing thirty albums from artists as diverse as Donna Summer, Woody Allen, the Village People, Cher, numerous funk bands—and one album intriguingly entitled *Reality—What A Concept*, by one Robin William! No relation... How Mike got there I have no idea. But, in Mike's words: "...it was sub-sold to Casablanca in America, and then at that time Donna Summer sued Casablanca and Casablanca went down the sink. Neil Bogart, the guy who ran it, committed suicide, and the whole company went completely flat, nothing to do with me... The whole thing has ended with Phonogram, who seem happy to do nothing with it. Ever so many people have tried to get it off them but they just won't budge." (from an interview with Mike Heron in *Beat The Retreat*, 16th April 1987)

SO, THERE YOU HAVE IT, the heaven and hell of the music industry. It's too late for this album to make the impact on Mike's career that it should have done, but I hope that he will increasingly get at least the artistic recognition for it that he so justly deserves. ☺

Many thanks to friends from The ISB Email List who have helped to make this article possible, especially Chris and Jay.

the lyrics are much harder to discern. A towering arrangement again, with sax to the fore and great swirling keyboard parts, but overall my least favourite track, to date at any rate.

THEN BACK TO THE VERY FAMILIAR with *Lonely Never Win*. Great to have a really good mix of this, streets ahead of the *Glen Row* version. Another Mike favourite, this song was used as the opener for all the '87 tour gigs, and you can see why in this totally full-on version, which again features ripping saxophone, this time from Don Weller.

Audible lyrics again happily feature on *A Beginner's Guide To Past Lives*. The song is strong only for its lyrics really, which are basically a rant about those that naively romanticise the past: "It's good to be here, especially from there, it's a modern world with you, baby."

And then the jewel: *Gaugin In The South Seas*. This is just so beautiful I can hardly hear it without choking up. A favourite since first hearing on the '87 tour, this take is an absolute gem, with every aspect of the recording perfect. What else can you say?

Penultimate track is *Child In Your Eyes*, another fine Heron song, with interesting lyrics. A very '70s sound here, with good string arrangements by Nick Rowley over synth/keyboard stuff. When suddenly a clarinet appears it makes you think: Gerard!!! But it isn't... it's Richard Harvey.

And so finally, *Tearproof Days*. This is definitely Mike the Singer/Songwriter that he spoke of in subsequent interviews. Starting with simple but elegant piano, the arrangement develops into a veritable power ballad that leaves you feeling emotionally drained and, well, stunned. This is one powerful album.

The Cast

Central to the recording are two Glen Rowers—**Frank Usher** on guitar and **Jon Bavin** on keyboards/bass. Frank was of course in Heron, and Jon later went on to run a recording studio for Bob Dylan. A close look at the other credits reveals a surprisingly jazzy line-up, recruited, we would guess, by Hugh Murphy.

Liam Genockey (drums) has an esoteric track record, ranging from free jazz with Howard Riley and Trevor Watts to singer-songwriters Gerry Rafferty, John Martyn and Bert Jansch. He also had a regular gig with Steeleye Span for a few years.

Don Weller (sax on *Lonely Never Win*) played extensively with jazzers like Harry Beckett and Dick Morrissey and R & B types such as Jack Bruce and Charlie Watts.

Frank Ricotti, session percussionist extraordinaire, is most at home playing vibes and percussion with jazzers like Bobby Wellins and Mike Gibbs.

Pete Winfield (keyboards), session man who had a hit with 18—*With A Bullet*.

Mel Collins (sax) has played with just about everyone you can think of, including King Crimson, Camel and Clannad.

Multi-instrumentalist **Richard Harvey** (from baroque rock band Gryphon and confessedly an ISB fan) contributes Pan pipes on *Gaugin* and clarinet on *Child In Your Eyes*.

Singer-songwriter **Betsy Cooke** is a constant presence on backing vocals (augmented by Susie Watson-Taylor on *Gaugin* and *Blackfoot Side*). She's co-written songs with Linda Thompson and was part of a 1980 Richard/Linda T. recording session (producer—Gerry Rafferty). She later had a minor hit with *Love Is The Groove*.

Slide guitarist **Richard Brunton** went on to play with Richard Thompson but had also done mid-'70s work with Pete Sinfield (and the inevitable Mel Collins).

Engineer **Steve Lipson** guests on rhythm guitar but rose to fame later as a producer for Trevor Horn's stable.

Which leaves **John Gordon**, bass on about half the tracks including *Mexican Girl*, *Blackfoot Side* and *Gaugin*. Someone of that name played on a 1984 album by country guitarist Wes McGhee and—a better bet—was in Roger Waters' mid-'80s *Bleeding Heart Band*.

Adrian (with thanks to Tom B and Andy R for additional research)



In the DEEPNESS of a SUMMERS NIGHT



CLIVE PALMER: A COMPLETE DISCOGRAPHY

GRAHAME HOOD

brings you the facts and figures

Part 1: Official

Edinburgh Folk Festival Vol. 1

Decca 4546 (1963)

Clive Palmer and Robin Williamson

Jazz Bo's Holiday (trad. arr. Williamson, Palmer)

A short but sweet banjo and guitar workout, complete with (dubbed on?) applause at the end. The sleeve notes say: "...typical of the 'curio music' that flourishes in odd pockets all over the folk scene... They just blew into a club, played and sang, blew out again. Robin is quite well known locally as a singer. Clive—well, nobody knows much about him except that he comes from around Nottingham, and plays, as you will hear, fabulous ragtime banjo." Clive, of course, does not come from Nottingham, but from Edmonton in North London. "I think they must have confused me with Anne Briggs," he surmises.



The Incredible String Band

Elektra EUK 254 (1966)

The Incredible String Band

Schaeffer's Jig (Schaeffer); How Happy I Am (Heron); Empty Pocket Blues (Palmer); Niggertown (Morley); Everything's Fine Right Now (Heron)

Reissued on CD Elektra 7559-61547-2 (1993) I expect you all know about this one.

The Two Sides Of Hamish Imlach

Transatlantic XTRA1069 (1968)

Hamish Imlach

"I arranged all the songs and played on some of them (banjo and kazoo)." A later Imlach album, *Old Rarity*, lists a Clive's Song credited to Palmer. It's a country blues with prominent harmonica, opening with the lyrics "Been around this great big world...". I reckon it's a rewrite of the traditional American song Don't Let Your Deal Go Down, albeit in a minor key. Clive is not listed among the musicians on the album, and he has no recollection of the song.

The Only Friend I Own/ A Leaf Must Fall

Liberty ? (1969)

Famous Jug Band

Single issued in May from the forthcoming album.

Sunshine Possibilities

Liberty LB582363 (1969)

The Famous Jug Band

Can't Stop Thinking About It (Tunbridge); Nickolson Square (Palmer); He Never Came Back (trad.); A Leaf Must Fall (Palmer); Shaky Train Blues (Berryman); The Only Friend I Own (Berryman); Black Is The Colour (trad.); Saro Jane (trad.); Train On The Island (trad.); The Main Thing (Berryman); Breakfast Blues (Berryman); Sunshine Possibilities (Berryman).

Reissued on CD Wooded Hill HILLCD 25 (1999) with two tracks, God Knows and Chameleon (Berryman)/Rabbit Hills (Chapman), from *Chameleon*.



My Side Of Your Window

Transatlantic TRA209 (1969)

Ralph McTell

One track only, Blues In More Than 12 Bars (McTell), features "Clive" on banjo and fiddle, as well as "Mick" (Bennett) on percussion. The song is not that good, to be honest.

Spirit Of Love

CBS 69010 (1971)

C.O.B.

Spirit Of Love; Music Of The Ages; Soft Touches Of Love; Banjo Land; Wade In The Water; Scranky Black Farmer (trad. arr. COB); Evening Air; Serpent's Kiss; Sweet Slavery; When He Came Home
All selections Palmer/Bidwell/Bennett except where indicated.

Blue Morning/Bones

Polydor 2058-260 (1972)

C.O.B.

Both songs by Palmer/Bidwell/Bennett

Moyshe McStiff And The Tartan Lancers Of The Sacred Heart

Polydor Folk Mill 2383 161 (1972)

C.O.B.

Sheba's Return/The Lion Of Judah; Let It Be You; Solomon's Song; Eleven Willow; I Told Her; Oh Bright-Eyed One; Chain Of Love; Pretty Kerry; Martha And Mary; Heart Dancer
All selections Palmer/Bidwell/Bennett

Reissued on CD Elogy E550/1 with Blue Morning/Bones (1995)

Suns and Moons

Rainyday (1978)

Bob Devereux and Clive Palmer

100 copies only, originally issued on cassette.
Later reissued on CD: Pigs Whisker PWMD5020 (1999)

Queen Of All The Gypsies; Blackbird (trad); It Used To Be Different; Morris Room; Man Behind The Mask; Sacco's Last Letter (Seeger); Girl From The North Country (Dylan); Suns And Moons; D Tune (Palmer); Turkey; House Carpenter (trad)

All music by Palmer, lyrics by Devereux, except where stated.

The CD changes the running order, starting with Girl From The North Country.

This album was paid for by Martin Val Baker. "A couple of months later Eddie Starkey paid for the other recordings on *Just Me*."—MVB

And Guitar

Autogram FLLP509 (1978)

Pete Berryman

Dordogne Summer; Rose Cottage; The Alternative High Society
All selections Berryman

One song, with intriguing lyrics, and two instrumentals, featuring Clive on banjo. Tim Wellard is on some tracks too.

Just Me

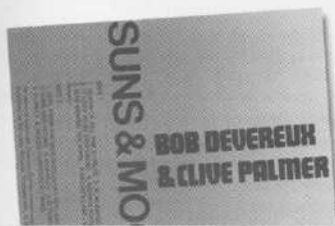
Autogram ALLP258 (1979)

Clive Palmer

East Virginia (trad); Bamiyan (Palmer); The Blackbird (trad); Girl From The North Country (Dylan); Cripple Creek (trad); Gentle Maiden/Gunnerton Fellicuddy (trad); State Of Arkansas (trad); House Carpenter (trad); Downtown Dandies (Palmer); Summer's Night



C.O.B. circa Moyshe McStiff: Clive, Genevieve Val Baker, Mick Bennett, John Bidwell



(Palmer); The Wandering Minstrel (trad); Foggy Mountain Breakdown (Scruggs); Jack in The Box (trad); Melody in D (Palmer)

The Blackbird, Girl From The North Country, House Carpenter, Melody in D (aka D Tune) are the same recordings as on *Suns And Moons*. These two albums were released only in Germany.

Charlie Cool Quartet

DDSO11 (1987)

Charlie Cool Quartet

2/3 Petite Fleur; Yiddish Tune; Autumn Leaves; Erev Shel Shasha Nim; Mott The Operator; Pennies From Heaven; Mame Is Geganen; Ne Me Quitte Pas; Summertime; Yiddish Tune II; Indian Summer

Clive plays clarinet; the band were very into Jewish Klezmer music at the time.

The Archive Tapes

Rainyday (1989)

Bob Devereux and Clive Palmer

Please Understand Me; Flowers; Changes; Yew And Beech; Taffy; Fair-ground; Bear's Paw; Higgledy Piggledy; Suns And Moons; The Queen Of All The Gypsies; Morris Room; Mr Origami; Seal Isle
All lyrics by Devereux. The melodies for Yew And Beech and Taffy are traditional; Flowers and Mr Origami are set to Edwardian banjo tunes from the Palmer archives; all the other music is by Clive.

The tracks *Suns And Moons*, *Queen Of All The Gypsies* and *Morris Room* are the same as on *Suns And Moons*.

Woronzoid (double sampler album)

Woronzow WOO10 (1989)

various artists

Coventry Carol (anon. arr. Palmer, Jones)

A "medieval banjo workout" from the *Banjoland* album with Wizz Jones, recorded by Peter Eden. The tapes were acquired in 1988 by Nick Saloman and he stated his intention to release them on his Woronzow label. Didn't happen in the end.

House Of Images

(1992)

Clive Palmer

Pretty Boy Floyd (Guthrie); Fear A Bhata (trad); Soft Dark Eyes (Palmer); Absent Friends (trad); Moving-On Song (MacColl); Swanee Echoes (trad); Trail Of The Buffalo (trad); Country Lanes (Palmer); Cold In China (Palmer)

Charlie Cool Goes West

(1993)

Charlie Cool

Pike County; Roll On Buddy; Sally Anne; Lily, Rosemary And The Jack Of Hearts (Dylan); Lonesome Road; Salty Dog; Cripple Creek; All The Good Times; Foggy Mountain Breakdown (Scruggs)
All selections traditional except where indicated.

Charlie Cool reinvent themselves as a bluegrass band. This tape was made to sell at their regular Friday night gig at The Old Coastguard, Mousehole, Cornwall.

At The Pure Fountain

Pigs Whisker PWMD5017 (1999)

Robin Williamson and Clive Palmer

Come A' Ye Tramps And Hawkers; Pretty Fair Maid; Paris (Palmer/Garner); (I Can't Help It If I'm) Still In Love With You (Williams); Relax Your Mind; Cam Ye O'er Frae France; Rise When The Rooster Crows; A La Belle Etoile; Bless You (For Being An Angel) (Lane/Baker); Sally Ann; The Show Must Go On; Wae's Me For Prince Charlie; Salty Dog; The Night Of The Ragman's Ball
All selections trad. arr. Palmer/Williamson except where indicated.

Just Like The Ivy And Other Favourite Songs

Pigs Whisker PWMD5021 (2000)

Williamson, Palmer, Dando, Williamson

You've Been A Friend To Me (Carter); Going Across The Sea; Boston Burglar; Downtown Dandies; Blind Fiddler; Just Like The Ivy (Casting/Mills); Bonny Cragside/Neil Gow's Wife (Gow); The Storm Is On The Ocean; Empty Pocket Blues (Palmer); Salty Dog; Rambling Boy (trad., new words Williamson); Side By Side (Woods)
+ Paris (Palmer)

All selections trad. except where indicated.



Part 2: Otherwise

Songs available officially are not listed except when in substantially different versions.

Post-ISB lineups (all dates approximate)

Famous Jug Band (late '68 to summer '69)

Clive (banjo/guitar/violin/vocals)
Pete Berryman (guitar/vocals)
Jill Johnson (vocals)
Henry Bartlett (jug/vocals)

Stockroom Five (mid '69 to '70)

Clive
Tim Wellard (guitar/vocals)
John Bidwell (guitar/banjo/dulcimer/vocals)
Mick Bennett (percussion/vocals)

Novelty Band

Offshoot with Tim/John/Mick

Temple Creatures (1970-71)

Various lineups with Clive/John/Mick plus Demelza Val Baker (bongoes), Chrissy Quayle (vocals)
Last version was John/Demelza/Stephen Delft (guitar).

C.O.B. (June '71 to Spring '74)

Clive/John/Mick
Genny Val Baker played congas on the Pentangle tour (Winter '72)

C.O.B. Mk2 (Spring '74 to Summer '74)

Clive
Henry Bartlett (jug/vocals)
Chris Newman (guitar/vocals)
"Caretaker" band formed to play contracted gigs.

Bob Devereux and Clive Palmer ('76-'78)

Bob Devereux (vocals/percussion)
Clive (vocals/banjo/Northumbrian smallpipes)

Rhombus ('78-'79)

Clive/Bob/Tim Wellard
Dick Reynolds (keyboards/synth/guitar/vocals)

Charlie Cool Quartet (1987)

Clive (clarinet/vocals)
Tim Wellard (guitar)
John Bickersteth (piano/accordion)
Paddy MacDonagh (double bass)
with:
Venny Ravenhill (vocals)
Gina Val Baker (vocals)

Charlie Cool (1993)

Clive (banjo/vocals)
Tim (guitar)
Matthew Pullum (bass)
Gina (violin)

Unofficial Recordings

Clive Palmer and Robin Williamson c.1964

- 1) Johnny Cope (trad.)
- 2) Johnny Lad (trad.)
- 3) The Working Chap (trad.)
- 4) Do You Think I'm Lying (trad.)

Four tracks recorded at the St. Andrews Folk Club in November 1964 by Geoff Harden of Belfast.

Johnny Cope is a pretty standard version on the well-known Scots tale, learned from Hogg's *Jacobite Relics* and backed by guitar. Clive takes lead vocal with Robin joining in on the chorus. Johnny Lad features Robin on lead vocal with Clive on banjo and choruses. It uses a different tune to the one most often associated with the song (the Corries' version for one), as Robin is about to explain before he is drowned out by the banjo!

The Working Chap features just Clive's remarkably Scottish-sounding vocal backed by Robin on whistle and choruses, in a song about the struggle of a poor working man "working life out to keep life in". It is printed in Ewan MacColl's book *Folk Songs And Ballads Of Scotland* (Oak).

The last track title is a guess. Robin on lead vocal and whistle and Clive on banjo play a nonsensical Glasgow street song to a tune almost identical to Yankee Doodle. Poor sound quality makes it difficult to distinguish all the words, but the chorus sounds like "Hey boys, do you think I'm lying? It's only the way of God".

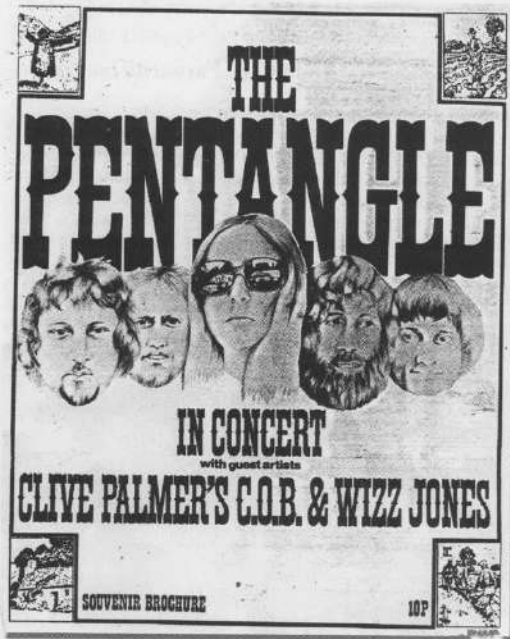
Clive Palmer and Wizz Jones c.1967

- 1) Swanoa Tunnel (trad.)
- 2) Come All You Fair And Tender Ladies (trad.)
- 3) Country Blues (Standing Round In Nashville) (Boggs)
- 4) Old Maid In A Garret (trad.)

From a tape owned by Wizz.

1) is a fast-paced bluegrass-style song with Clive and Wizz singing alternate verses. Banjo and guitar.
2) is a banjo and guitar (sounds like an autoharp too) version of the well known US folk song. Both these tracks were broadcast on the Wally Whyton's BBC radio programme *Country Meets Folk*.

What sounds like double bass and autoharp is in fact just Wizz's



Treading the boards with Pentangle in 1972. The mysterious bearded gent second from right is believed by experts to be Bert Jansch.

guitar, the battered old one, held together with leather strips cut from a belt. "It was his old Foley, it had a beautiful ring to it," Clive recalls.

3) Solo banjo recorded at Wizz's house. Another of Clive's "cowboy blues" numbers from the same stable as State Of Arkansas. Written by Doc Boggs. John Renbourn did a version of it on *Faro Annie*.

4) A version of the well-known Scots/Irish ballad learned from Pete Seeger. Solo banjo as 3) but a bit jollier...



Wizz Jones

The Stockroom Five/Temple Creatures

The Mitchell Tapes (Volume 1)

1) Exotic Shuffle (Palmer/Bidwell/Bennett/Val Baker)

A self-penned instrumental with fiddle, banjo, guitar and percussion. Clive played the fiddle, and the "banjo" was actually a banjitar (or a guitjo if you must), a guitar neck on a banjo body played by John Bidwell. (Clive later taught John to play 5-string banjo which they used in C.O.B. on duets such as Banjo Land.)

2) Step It Up And Go (Cannon)

By jug-band legend Gus Cannon.

3) Milwaukee Blues (Poole)

A variation on the "Casey Jones" theme by Charlie Poole, learned via Tom Paley.

4) Kisses On The Sly (Macon)

A lovely humorous piece from Uncle Dave Macon. "He would have learned it from Vaudeville. His father owned a theatrical hotel in Nashville. This would have been a music hall hit of its day."—Clive.

5) Buddy Won't You Roll Me Down The Line (Macon)

Another Dave Macon song inspired by a strike in Coal Creek in which the mine owners used convict labour. "He was very politically active, which was unusual for those sort of redneck Kentuckians."

6) Bound To Go (trad.)

Uncle Dave again!

7) Twelve Gates To The City (Davies)

Acapella version with Clive on lead vocal, done in a similar style to Scranky Black Farmer. One person can be heard saying "I'm really lost here!" From Rev. Gary Davies via Pete Seeger.

8) Falconer's Glove (Palmer/Bidwell)

A slow instrumental with fiddle and guitar. Clive and John, probably recorded in the caravan in Mitchell.

9) Balalaika solo

Again, probably recorded in the caravan. A dog can be heard barking outside. Chrissy Quayle told me that at one point Clive was playing balalaika almost to the exclusion of any other instrument.

Clive thinks that these songs date from the period when the Stockroom Five were mutating into the Temple Creatures.

Martin Val Baker Tape

("What, only the one?"—Gina. Make of that what you will...)

1) Rise When The Rooster Crows (trad.)

The Stockroom Five play another Uncle Dave Macon number, with Clive on lead vocal and banjo, plus guitars and percussion. Ten times better than the *Pure Fountain* version.

2) Been A Wagoneer (Macon)

Uncle Dave yet again. "I'd rather ride a wagon and go to Hell than go to Heaven in an automobile."

3) Summer's Night (Palmer)

A song by Clive about the joys of living in the caravan. Banjo, guitar, dulcitar and percussion. This version has two more verses than the *Just Me* version, but they are no great loss.

4) Child Of The Season (Bidwell)

A song by John, sounding very much in the style of Eleven Willow.

Guitar, dulcitar and, I think, balalaika. Would have fitted well on the first C.O.B. album.

5) instrumental

Guitar and fiddle. See Falconer's Glove.

6) Wild Mountain Thyme (McPeake)

Guitar, percussion, balalaika(?) and recorder. Lead vocal by Tim Wellard. Clive doesn't think he's on this and that it is by The Novelty Band, who did more straightforward folk material.

7) instrumental

8) instrumental

A pair of slow numbers with guitar, banjo, balalaika and percussion. No titles are recalled.

9) Osiris (Palmer)

Solo vocal with banjo ("From Clive's 'Egyptian Period,'"—Mick Bennett).

10) Grapes Of Life (Tunbridge)

A moving story taken from Wizz Jones' repertoire, and written by his longtime sidekick Alan Tunbridge, about the suicide of a young misfit: "The wrongest number rang the telephone/Just in time to find nobody home." Tunbridge wrote the opening song on *Sunshine Possibilities*, as well as many quality songs for Wizz. Banjo/vocal.

11) My Home Town (Lehrer)

A well known piece of black humour by the American satirist Tom Lehrer; with banjo and vocal.

12) instrumental

Prominent bongoes/tabla(?), organ and vocals.

13) instrumental

Pretty much as above!

15) Raga (trad.)

Raga Puti Raga ("Learned from an album by Ravi Shankar's brother—or somebody. Lots of people were doing it."—John Bidwell) Ravi's nephew Ananda, actually.

Organ, bongoes, whistle and vocals

The above three tracks are all by The Temple Creatures.

16) Hail Now (Devereux/Palmer)

By Rhombus. Most of their material came from Clive's and Bob's repertoire and live versions exist of Changes/Higgledy Piggledy/Morris Room/Wade In The Water/Rise When The Rooster Crows. Hail Now is a chant to the coming of Spring.

C.O.B.

Live at the Medway Folk Centre, Old Ash Tree, Chatham 25/1/72

I Told Her; Music Of The Ages; Bones; Sweet Slavery; Wade In The Water; Oh Bright-Eyed One; Scranky Black Farmer; Blue Morning; When He Came Home; Spirit Of Love; Lion Of Judah; Nile Roses (?—an old Hebrew tune); the encore, instrumental with organ and clarinet.

Recorded by Geoff Harden. Apart from the encore, no material that was not officially released, though some arrangements are slightly different. Clive plays mainly guitar with a few tracks on clarinet, John mainly on organ with a few appearances by the dulcitar. No banjo, balalaika, recorder or whistle.

The introductions throw some new light on things, though. Bones was based on a song by Matt McGinn; Wade In The Water was originally an ecological protest song; and Lion Of Judah is about, and dedicated to, Haile Selassie! The encore turned up again with the title Erev Shel Shasa Nim on the Charlie Cool Quartet album. Perhaps surprisingly, considering the seriousness of the albums, C.O.B. live are actually quite amusing!

Rhombus

Live at Polgooth Fair near St Austell 8/8/79

Heart Of The Storm (Wellard)

Two guitars and some nice synth storm noises. A rather too ambitious melodic twist in the chorus!

Clive with Gina and Tim 1995 Rehearsal Tapes

When The Train Comes Along (Macon?)

One of the four tracks of Clive, Gina and Tim rehearsing for the November 1995 "Back Again" gig at Camden, the other tracks being Side By Side/Empty Pocket Blues/Turkey In The Straw.

Train is a country-style song, at a guess by Uncle Dave Macon.



Gina, Clive and Tim at Camden in 1995

photo: Nick Boyes

Part 3: Where are they now?

1965/66 **The Incredible String Band** recorded an album's worth of material. Tape bought by Joe Boyd to prevent its release?

1967 **Clive and Wizz Jones** recorded *Banjoland*, an album of banjo instrumentals with producer Peter Eden. Due to have been reissued in 1988 on Woronzow and again in 2000 by Rollercoaster. Ask again in ten years time. Clive assures the world that we can live without it.

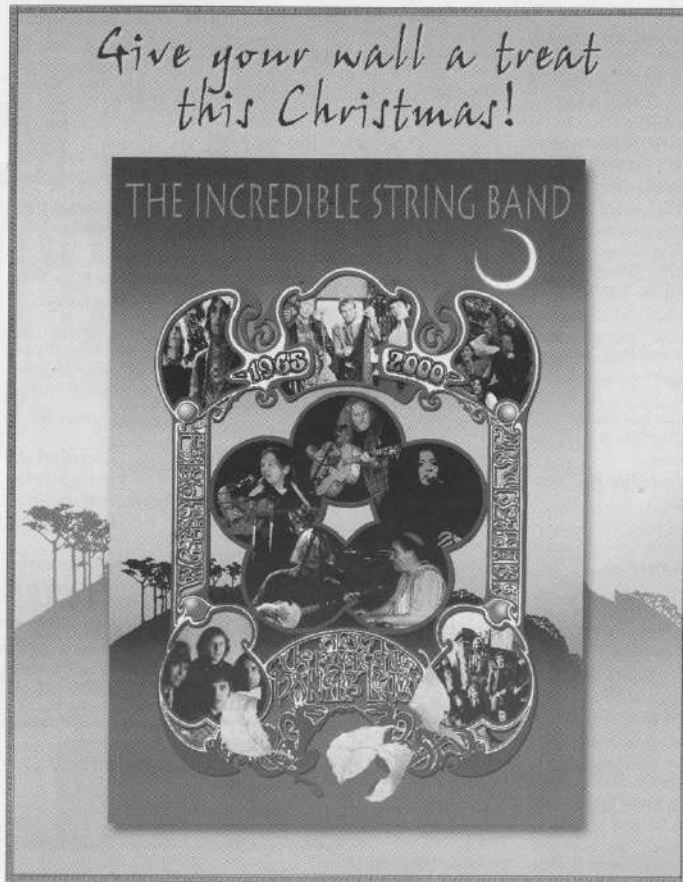
1969 Out-takes from the first **FJB** album. Recently rediscovered, they may possibly be included in a reissue of *Chameleon*.

1970/71 Lots of material recorded in Cornwall, including a tape of **The Temple Creatures** which they were very pleased with.

1979 **Rhombus** supported The Merry Band at St Ives. Gig recorded and presumably broadcast on German Radio.

2000 Stephen Robbins caught the tail end of a religious radio programme which featured a church choir singing a version of Let It Be You as Let It Be Me. Who stole it from whom? ☹️

Thanks to: Clive Palmer and Gina, Henry and Jenny Bartlett, Martin Val Baker, John Bidwell, Stephen Robbins, Tony Corden, Mark Anstey, Chrissy Quayle.



This full-colour A3 poster (420 by 297mm) was specially created to celebrate the reformation of the Incredible String Band in August 2000. The design incorporates ISB line-ups from all periods of the band and features various subtle references to The Waltz Of The New Moon. This is a limited edition print and is available exclusively from Pig's Whisker Music at—

£5.00 + £1.82 p&p UK
£5.00 + £2.42 p&p Europe
£5.00 + £3.10 p&p Rest of World.

Cheques payable to
Pig's Whisker Music,
P.O. Box 114, Chesterfield,
Derbyshire S40 3YU,
England.
Tel: 01246-567712
Fax: 01246-567713
info@pigswhisker.com

Views

Jonas Dalrymple and David Kidman get to grips with the latest batch of String-related releases

VASHTI BUNYAN Just Another Diamond Day

Spinney SPINNEY001CD

Every so often in human history, there occur brief, miraculous periods when things happen that could never happen at any other time. The cusp of the 1960s and '70s—say between 1967 and 1971—was just such a period. I'm not thinking of moon landings or *The Magic Roundabout* here. No, it was a time when you could persuade an established record company to release an album like *Just Another Diamond Day*.

Vashti Bunyan, despite having Andrew Oldham grafting for her a year or two earlier, had a public profile so low as to be subterranean. Nor was she prepared to trek around the live music circuit promoting her product. And yet, despite having "Commercial Suicide" embossed on every groove, *Diamond Day* came fluttering out into the world on the Philips label in early 1970. If everyone who claims to have bought a copy is telling the truth, sales might actually have nudged into double figures.

The fourteen songs on it could only have been created in that strange, magical period. Delicate as a moth's wing, delivered in a semi-whisper of a voice, they were perfect pastoral miniatures distilling the simple delights of travelling rustic byways in a horse-drawn caravan. If your musical tastes inclined to Steppenwolf or Slade, their charms would certainly have passed you by. If, however, you were ensnared by the "child's-eye" perspectives dispensed at the time by the likes of Donovan and our own dear ISB, this was an album that would seep into your very soul.

And here it is, thirty years on, finally available on CD and with four bonus tracks: three from the A. Oldham phase, and one a proto-version of the closing song on the original album, Iris' Song For Us. Welcome as these tracks are, you should forswear them for the first few plays, for *Diamond Day* is a song-cycle with its own inner consistency, and casts its glamour best when listened to as a self-contained and self-referencing entity.

One of its chiefest attractions to *beGLAD* readers will inevitably be the fact that Robin W. appears on three of the tracks, playing fiddle, mandolin and Irish harp. (There's also an uncredited whistle on Rose Hip November which sounds suspiciously Williamsonian to me.) I confess that's why I originally bought my vinyl copy back in '71. He's on good form, too; his plunky pizzicato fiddle on Jog Along Bess would charm the bladder out of a goat. There's able support elsewhere from the likes of Fairport's Swarb and Si Nichol, Christopher Sykes on keyboards and rag-time guitar titan John James on the mysterious dulcichord. Robert Kirby, better known for his work with Nick Drake and The Strawbs, serves up some sympathetic and rather lovely arrangements for strings and woodwinds.

But all this, good as it is, is window dressing. As the blessed Saint Anthony of Blair might say, there are three things that make *Just Another Diamond Day* unique and irresistible: the songs,

the songs, the songs. As I hinted above, they are songs that probably couldn't have been written at any other time. Like the album's title suggests, they hang like fourteen glittering dewdrops on a cobweb, each one containing a tiny, perfect world within it. Don't be daunted by unpromising titles like Glow Worms, Timothy Grub and Jog Along Bess. Just leave your cynicism hanging on the hatstand and let them take you to a place you never thought you'd visit this side of your second childhood. Then let them take you back there again. And again... See you there, by the Rainbow River.

For additional info, check out Vashti's website at www.anotherday.co.uk

J.D.



Vashti in 1999; photo Don Stout

SHIRLEY COLLINS The Power Of The True Love Knot

Fledg'ling FLED 3028

Produced by Joe Boyd and first released in 1967. *The Power Of The True Love Knot* saw Shirley and sister Dolly refining their distinctive take on traditional song: "chamber folk", you might be tempted to call it, built around Dolly's decorous, classically-inflected arrangements for flute organ and occasional cello, and Shirley's gentle banjo-dulcimer, a curious but pleasing hybrid made by John Bailey (maker of our Mike's post-Spirits guitar, don't you know).

Shirley's singing has a plaintive, bleating quality that not everyone cherishes, and may seem artless to the casual listener. But she has a way of getting under the skin of her material and letting it tell its own story that is the mark of a true traditional singer. She retired from active service back in the early Eighties, and Dolly sadly died a few years back (see our obituary in issue 8). For such reasons alone, this is a welcome reissue. There's more, however: three of the tracks feature what

Shirley referred to at the time as "spontaneous musicians"—those not following Dolly's scores, in other words. In the sleeve notes they're referred to rather winsomely as "two handsome gipsies" and also as The Medieval Percussion Band. Their names are Robin Williamson and Mike Heron.

This was one of the very few occasions both Robin and Mike appeared on anyone else's album together. In their Medieval Percussion guise, they spill a merry rattle-bag of finger cymbals, claves, African drum and whistle onto the American ballad Richie Story. Seven Yellow Gipsies is accompanied solely by their combined handclaps. And Robin puffs his Indian shahanaï to beguiling effect on The Maydens Came. It was described as "some ancient, out-of-tune woodwind" by one reviewer, but sounds both tuneful and eerie, a more rugged partner to Dolly's flute-organ.

The sounds they make hint strongly at the instrumental textures of *Hangman's*, which they may well have been recording around this time. The Seven Yellow Gipsies accompaniment could be a dry run for Bid You Goodnight. (Legend has it that Mike originally tried sitar on that track, but thought better of it. If so, it would have been his recording debut on the instrument.)

The Power Of The True Love Knot has been rather overlooked in Shirley's oeuvre. For one thing, it was released on Polydor, who were less than diligent in keeping "minority" albums in print. It had already been deleted when Shiril and Doll made their quantum jump in 1969 with the epochal *Anthems In Eden*, which has tended to overshadow their earlier work. Unfairly so, for *Power* is a work of considerable grace and quiet beauty. A pie and a pint of the finest ale to David Suff at Fledg'ling for fishing it out of time's oblivion and buffing it up (with a nice if perhaps incongruous painting by his own hand on the cover, depicting a rubber-armed, semi-naked girl—well, why not?) for our renewed delectation. You can get it from our chums at Pig's Whisker Music—see their contact details on page 5—for £12.99, which includes p&p (£13.99 for overseas buyers).

J.D.



Shiril and Doll getting knotted...

TIM GOULDING

Midnight Fry

Sweet Ticket Music STM CD001

So far as we know, this is the first solo venture from any of our pals in Dr Strangely Strange, and the opening track might lead you to suspect someone had slipped the wrong disc into the jewel case. Buzz-saw guitars, yelping synths and funk bass is not the sort of recipe you expect from the man who brought us *Ship Of Fools* and *Mary Malone Of Moscow*. But this album is moving steadily away from the Strangelies' home territory, and offers (to quote the helpful description on the back cover) "stunning vocals, ambient soundscapes, chill-out interludes, cutting-edge samples—all prepared in a bowl of World and Celtic spices by Ireland's finest contemporary musicians". Sounds like the good Doctor is making House calls these days...

This is certainly Tim G. in crossover mode, blending the skittish rhythms of the contemporary dance scene with mellower sounds from the world of Roots. And very capably, too. The album's showpiece is the 8½-minute *O—Mané*, a rich raturouille of dance grooves, jangly Irish folk, Miles Davis interludes, ethnic drum talk and the sound of falling water. Nevertheless, there's enough here for admirers of the Doctor's recent *Alternative Medicine* to savour. Broken Relations has that patented Dr S. S. loping Country feel, *Footsoldier* is a smoky, bluesy thing, and, best of all, *Piece Of Cod* conjures up the old tin chapel sound of '70-'71 period Strangelies with quasi-religious meditations on the rugged beauty of the Beara peninsula. *Piece Of Cod* (a sort of Biblical pun, cf. the piece of cod that passeth all understanding) was actually in the band repertoire at that time—I remember hearing it at a Newcastle Poly concert in early '71—and makes a welcome return to the repertoire.

Father's Song is obviously dear to its author's heart, being the only lyric to be printed on the album sleeve. It rather touchingly articulates Dad's realisation that his daughter is ready to spread her wings. "The more I want to guard you/The less I'll intervene/But leave some room for me, sweet Coleen". The dedication "for Camille" confirms that it was written from experience.

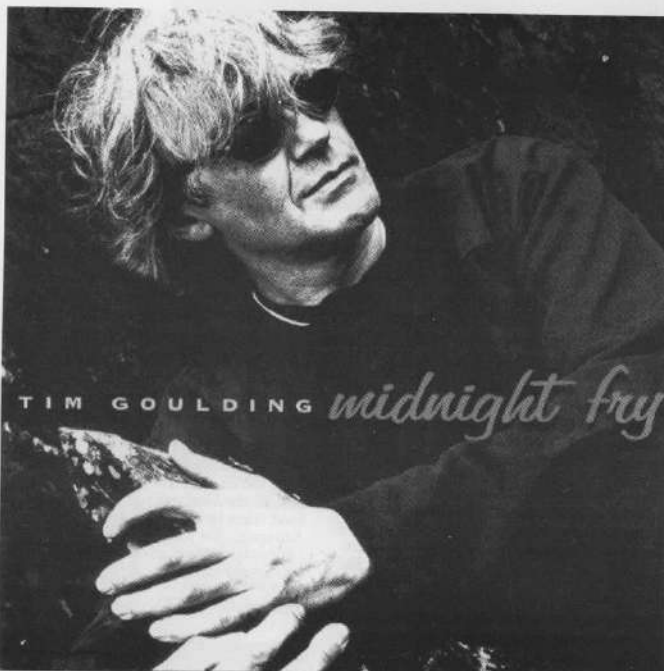
The album plays out with a bonus track, obliquely credited to the Timmi G. Project, called *Toast Your Own* in keeping with *Midnight Fry*'s culinary theme. It's probably the oddest piece on the disc. It kicks off as a fluffy Pickettywitch/Brotherhood Of Man-style pop ditty before being gradually submerged beneath muezzin wails and portentous synths.

There's a cast of thousands—a couple of dozen, at any rate—credited to the Timmi G. Project, called *Toast Your Own* in keeping with *Midnight Fry*'s culinary theme. It's probably the oddest piece on the disc. It kicks off as a fluffy Pickettywitch/Brotherhood Of Man-style pop ditty before being gradually submerged beneath muezzin wails and portentous synths.

We hear that Tim Goulding has been touring the album round Ireland with a seven-piece band, and is looking to put a tour together in the UK sometime next year. It's hard to say whether his niche is in the dance scene or the folk scene, but anyone with open ears and a mind to match should enjoy what he's cooked up here.

Midnight Fry is available from Pig's Whisker at £12.99 (£12.99 overseas), p&p included—address on page 5. If you're online, pay a call at Tim's website at beara.org/TimGoulding

J.D.



ALLIE FOX

Diving For Pearls

Vixen VIX002

Allie's a singer-songwriter based in the Scottish Borders, but though she's been performing solo up and down the country for some years, this is her debut CD. There's a telling maturity about Allie's writing, with a sure grasp of structure married to admirably direct expression of often difficult sentiments through a simple but effective poetic language.

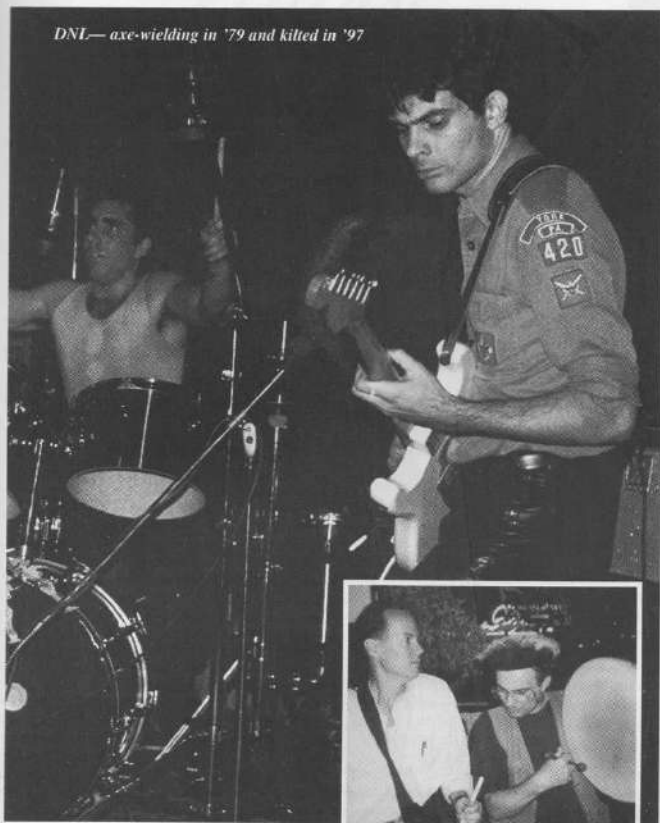
Many of her songs deal with disillusionment, though tempered with optimism (for example, *Back Street Girl*, *The Meaning Of Love* and the title track all have direct messages of encouragement and hope for us), and displaying sensitivity and poignancy without a trace of self-pity (just listen to the gorgeously wistful *Birdwoman*). As a singer, she has a fine range, clear diction and a strong vocal presence, with distinct shades of Sandy Denny—not in any imitative sense, but more in the rounded purity of her emotional expressiveness.

Allie's also an accomplished fingerstyle guitarist, but with a light and airy touch that comes from having learnt the virtue of restraint. Innate musicality is also a feature of the musical arrangements, which, though accessible and listenable, also possess a vibrant contemporary edge. The album's producer, Iain McKinna, has done a grand job here, bringing extreme clarity to often relatively dense instrumental textures with the quality of relaxed poise that he brought to his earlier project, Mike Heron's *Where The Mystics Swim*. That connection is carried further too, with the presence of other Incredible Acoustic Band members Dave Haswell (busy as ever on sundry items of percussion) and guitarist John Rutherford (who contributes some truly beautiful solo work). The melancholy of *I Was Wrong* is enhanced by Jimi McRae's border pipes and a sympathetic, understated string arrangement by Allie's late brother Malcolm.

The subtle freshness and tenderness of the musical settings aptly mirror those very qualities in Allie's songs; the musical idiom is primarily melodic and mellow contemporary folk, but the occasional departures (like *Joe Louis Blues* and the intriguing combination of swamp-cajun and



DNL—axe-wielding in '79 and killed in '97



Soho-blues on Moon Over The Rooftops) are also rather invigorating.

In short, if you admire well-crafted and meaningful songs, sensitively arranged, then treat yourself to Allie's inordinately fine CD; to be sure, whenever you dive into this CD, you'll emerge with a glistening genuine pearl of a song. Obtainable direct from 01750 20538, or MAC Distribution 014- 221 2500; or see the website www.vixenrecords.com

D.K.

DAVID NIGEL LLOYD

Death In Los Fumos

Silk Purse SPCD 3404

This chap's most recent release *How Like Ghosts Are We* was reviewed in *beGLAD 14*, and at the time I made a mental note to check him out, but (usual excuse!) due to the pressure of other deadlines I never got round to it. So a request from our illustrious editor to bend an ear or two to a brace of David's earlier releases was extremely timely. I'm glad to report that they were well worth the effort, too—*Death In Los Fumos* particularly, I thought. It's the less orthodox of the two, certainly, for it presents a sequence of songs, song-poems and poems interlaced with instrumental passages and found sounds. The insert note tells us that "these poems and lyrics were not written to be a musical drama. Instead, they are by-products of events occurring during a winter in a city named Los Fumos...". A strongly individual musical and



poetic mind is at work here, obviously—and so it proves on listening to the CD.

DNL's vocal delivery—both singing and speaking—is both compelling and attractive. Instrumentally, he has an acute ear for the achievement of maximal effect with minimal means; despite the large number of different instrumental colours used, you never get any sense of overkill or undue saturation. The spirit of innovative experimentation familiar from early String days is present here, and some of the melodies have a distinctly "trad-inspired-String" tint—check out the wondrously catchy little tunes on guitars and mandolin that comprise Dirk's Farewell To Los Fumos immediately prior to the closing spoken four-line poem Invocation (another happy parallel, if only in name!) that (seemingly intentionally) mirrors Intonation at the very opening of the CD, where that very poem leads straight into a beautiful Asturian Spanish-inflected guitar passage Dirk Musagetes, enhanced with distant seagulls.

Musical influences and reference points continue in a similarly wide vein throughout—Arabic music, Harry Partch, folk, blues, you name it! And a later track dares to expand on Wild Mountain Thyme (don't tell the folk police!) before escaping off into a twisted variant of Jumpin' Jack Flash, for example! Perhaps the weirdest section is Whopping Great Lies, which pits spoken or intoned lines against an eerie didgeridoo backing. Oh, and need I mention that

Robin Williamson gets a name-check in the "thanks" column of the insert?

This is a brave and original album, which even after four plays I don't think I've got the full measure of, so admittedly it may take a while to yield up its considerable riches to those listeners who, say, would feel more comfortable with a sequence of slightly more straightforward songs and/or tunes—in which case, proceed directly to *An Age Of Fable* (do not pass Go, do not collect £200).

D.K.

DAVID NIGEL LLOYD & HIS MOJAVE DESERT CEILIDH BAND

An Age Of Fable

Silk Purse SPCD 3402

This album is listed as dating from 1987; though the insert notes are dated 1999 and detail 1996 revisions to texts. Confused? Well so was I... Anyway, on *An Age Of Fable* DNL presents what the insert describes as "a blend of traditional and original songs". Sometimes the word "blend" can be taken absolutely literally—for instance, *And Keep Our Foe At Bay* is a convincing latter-day take on *The Lowlands Of Holland* that places its tune and general structure in the context of a soldier away at the Vietnam war. In a similarly inventive fashion, *A Small Boat Journal* seems to take the melody and rhythm of the *Mingulay Boat Song* as its starting-point but transmutes it to a personal search on Santa Cruz (there's a great use of whistles and tabla on this track). The three completely trad selections, *Rosemary Lane*, *Rosin The Bow* and a tune-set, are well managed (the latter particularly interestingly handled), and effortlessly and sympathetically preserve the musical department of the traditional idiom.

Then, David's original songs run a consistently intriguing gamut between the simple poetic *Rebecca Rebecca* (dedicated to his wife) and the more tongue-in-cheek *Blue Interview* and *Poor Little Englishman*. David also gives us an evocatively understated setting of William Blake's *London*. As always, accompaniments are selective and well-judged (guitars, fiddle, bass, a little percussion here and there), proving that you don't need a fully-fledged "real" ceilidh-band line-up or fancy arrangements to bring the songs alive. Contact +01 (805) 321 9061 Stateside, or (01274) 817121 in the UK.

<http://davidnigelloyd.iama.com>

D.K.

THE DEBUT SINGLE

Boy Band Killed In Toxic Pill

This Edinburgh-based duo had a CD-single *Motion Sickness* reviewed in *beGLAD 15*, and on the strength of this six-track mini-album of some 23 minutes duration (which would seem from the track listing to contain within its ranks the same two tracks that formed that debut single, unless they're re-recordings—of which there's no indication), I'd concur with the comments in that review, almost without deviation (and risking repetition, but not hesitation, in recommending it therefore!). Yes, minimalist and introspective but strangely appealing, and certainly increasingly addictive after a few plays. But that also means that it's well nigh impossible to determine whether this new release marks any kind of development or progression from that earlier release. One track



(Intermission) is faster-paced (and repetitive), and it strongly reminds me of something else (still trying to place it...). This time, the insert at least includes full lyrics, but the continued absence of any information on the personnel and instrumentation is irritating. Neither is a contact number or address included—so you could do worse than try Philip Hawkes on 0131- 661 7808 as given in *beGLAD 15*.

D.K.

DAVID HELFAND Beyond The Sea Of Reeds

Oregon-based harper and multi-instrumentalist David Helfand has been paddling his canoe skilfully along those well-frequented creeks marked Celtic and New Age. Here, however, he points his prow further afield. *Beyond The Sea Of Reeds* is a series of musical impressions arising from a recent visit to Israel and adjacent areas of the Levant. The (Celtic) harp may sound an unlikely instrument on

which to essay music so strongly redolent of that region. But why not? The harp is frequently referred to in the Bible, after all—that other David was reputedly a dab hand on it—and it sounds nowise out of place here.

The opening—and longest—track, Caravan, sets the tone, with sumptuous, rippling harp lines counterpointed by David Burham's violin. Truck two, Dreams, adds mandocello to the mix in a languorous swirl of sound that evokes the waters of the Nile. Next up is Scrolls Of Compassion—a likely reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls—, a solemn, devotional piece with atmospheric bangs and rumbles emanating from a nearby synthesiser.

The harp then drops out of the programme as David moves to guitar, keyboards and mandocello—which sounds craftily saz-like on Ki Eshmarah Shabbat. Influences from more westerly parts of the Mediterranean begin to infiltrate: Nomads has a strong Moorish flavour, with Tom Brooker's passionate vocal drawing on the traditions of Spanish canto hondo.

The two final tracks, To Feel Your Prayer and Ma Na Vu, restore the harp to prominence. The latter piece has a distinctly Alan Stivell (circa *Renaissance Of The Celtic Harp*) quality to it, and both

tracks turn to good advantage the way the bass notes on the harp merge into one another. Classicists hate this sort of thing, whereas the new generation of Celtic harpers exploit it with relish: "the ringing of the harp space", as it's known in those circles.

Other than Mi Chamocha, which has a lyric relating to the parting of the Red Sea, and the above-mentioned Nomads, all the tracks on the album are instrumental. The messages conveyed are therefore largely impressionistic, drawing their efficacy from the evocative timbres of the instruments and the skilful deployment of Semitic modes. Close your eyes and you'll feel the sun's heat on your eyelids. It's the cheapest way to travel...

(By the by, The Sea Of Reeds is the more accurate translation of the Semitic name traditionally rendered as the Red Sea.)

Contact David at 370 W 17th, Eugene, OR 97401, USA. Website: www.davidhelfand.com

J.D.

JOHNSON'S ACOUSTIC CIRCUS The Sky Is A Big Hat

24852 CD2

Roy Johnson could tell you a tale or two. He's been there, done it, and—as you can see from the album cover—bought the t-shirt. Roy was numbered among the stewards at the legendary Hyde Park free concert by the Stones in '69. The band he was in at that time was taken under the avuncular wing of John Peel, who occasionally paid their rent and stood them lunches in the BBC canteen. They reciprocated by giving him unrestricted access to their bath, a mod con absent from Peel's own flat.

Roy was a prolific songwriter during that period, but chronic ill-health curtailed his musical activities for a long time. Within the past couple of years, however, he's been writing again and running a songwriter's club in his home town of Liverpool. *The Sky Is A Big Hat* is his second CD to showcase his recent songs (we reviewed the first, *The Dewsbury Songs*, in issue 14).

Despite sounding like a band in both senses, Johnson's Acoustic Circus is essentially the man himself, augmented on a couple of tracks by chums on electric guitar and tin whistle. His instrumental arsenal includes guitar, mandolin, hand drums and the singular "foon", an adapted 12-string that sounds like a cross between a dulcimer and Pete Townsend. It's used to mesmerising effect on The Evergrowing, possibly the best song that COB never wrote: a mysterious, drone-based tour de force.

The most notable development from the *Dewsbury* album is Roy's use of mandolin, splashed as it is over most of the seven tracks here; it's used to especially potent effect on the two instrumentals, Sir Frederick Nelson and Dance With The Yorkshire Horse. Trad. folk influences are generally stronger here than on *Dewsbury*, though, here as there, you can detect Beatle-y White Album touches.

The Sky Is A Big Hat represents only a small proportion of the songs Roy has produced in the past year or two. We at *beGLAD* have been privy to much of his oeuvre, and can confirm that the songs and tunes here are a pretty good reflection of his output in general. High-class writing, and singing and playing to match. It's time Peelie took him under his wing again.

Contact Roy at 28 Dewsbury Road, Anfield, Liverpool L4 2XG, tel: 0151 2862974.

J.D.

One-man band...



Sounds of the Seventies

MIKE'S ROCKIN' YEARS 1975-78

Bill Allison boogies on down in
the first of a two-part series

WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN. I am a dedicated follower of Heron. The guy's music is wonderful. Check it out for yourself. You just can't help but fall immediately in love with it. I keep telling you how good it is. I'd like to tell the man himself. How about it, Mike? Can I come and do a quick interview and tell you how important your music is? My email is at the end of the article.

A few thank yous in advance too. Because this is a good fanzine I can write in this way. In fanzines you can do anything that you want to, can't you? [We draw the line at bestiality and nude hang-gliding. Bill—stern Ed] Several issues ago, I started my Mike Heron 1987 Tour article by saying that this was a beginning and the ideas were open to modification. In a follow-up issue Neil Nicholson, keyboard player on the tour, added exactly what was needed. An insider's point of view. Thanks Neil. I did try and interview you several times several summers ago, you know that, but you were even more elusive than me.

For this article I'd like to thank all those ISBees who have kept the faith over a very long period of time: Stephen Robbins, Paul Bryant and Chris Taylor. I'd particularly like to thank Mike Potter, whose tapes and cuttings have formed the bulk of this article. (These I borrowed over ten years ago and haven't returned yet—someday soon, Mike, someday soon). Thanks guys. I'd also like to thank all the people who tried to buy my Mike Heron compilation CDs *These Songs They Are Different* from Mark Anstey as described in *beGLAD* several issues ago. Maybe someday it will come come along. Maybe someday.



MIKE HERON: rockier

How right they were...



ON TO THE ARTICLE ITSELF now after that long introduction. Do you remember what Robin Williamson says in the movie *Rehearsal*, after Mike Heron plays him the introduction to Ithkos? He says "...and that's the introduction?". Now onto the article. Phew. At last.

My friends in management circles tell me that the flavour of the month is something called "joined-up thinking". Me, I can't even do joined up writing. This article, however, is another attempt to link up parts of Mike Heron's long and illustrious musical career and provide some joined-up thinking. Nevertheless, it's just another beginning and will need adding to in later issues of *beGLAD*. Please feel free to join in.

In the final week of October 1974 the ISB were doing more than talking of the end. It had come. The band broke up. *Finis*. I don't want to write about the end of the ISB. That's for another time.

In the first week of December 1974 *Melody Maker* Steve Lake, in a big article called "Mike Heron's Reputation", was announcing that Heron had completed a new solo album. The record would be on Neighborhood Records. Mike was auditioning a new band. Mike said that he had already retained Graham Forbes, John Gilston and Malcolm Le Maistre from the ISB. Lake then goes on to review the album in some detail. He suggests that the album reminds him of Bruce Springsteen. This was, of course, when Bruce was a fairly well-kept secret. It was before he had become the future of rock 'n' roll. It's a real compliment.

Mike talks about the fact that the tracks were done with session musicians, albeit named luminaries of the then British Folk Rock scene, including one Richard Thompson on lead guitar on the first track. Another well-kept secret. The Thomas Hardy of rock 'n' roll. Another compliment. Mine this time.

Sounds in the same week also ran a big Mike Heron article, "Smiling Man With Good Reputation". In this, Heron says that he stayed in America when the ISB split and got a deal with Neighborhood Records. Melanie's husband, Peter Schekeryk, owned the label and Mike says that he did a lot of work on Melanie's then new album playing Moog. On his return he went straight into the studio to cut his own album with Schekeryk producing. Eventually, Schekeryk only produced two tracks, *Evie* and *Meanwhile The Rain*, of which Mike was later to say that he hated the production and felt that the song should have been taken at a slower pace. He says that he wrote most of the album while he had been in America for three months. He wrote *Easy Street* for Georgie Fame to record, but Georgie never did. The songs, he said, came from being steeped in music for all that time, listening to good FM stations.

That's stuff that can be gleaned from the articles themselves. We should try and put them on the Be Glad site. Let me add a couple of other ideas. Graham Forbes has gone on record as saying that the *Reputation* album was basically the next ISB album. He has said that the ISB were performing songs from it on their last US tour. I don't know if readers can confirm this. I've never heard tapes from the last US tour. Do they exist? I know that over the years I've also heard people refer to the ISB Neighborhood demos. Although, again, I've never come across them either.

What is for sure is that the sleeve notes for the album *Mike Heron's Reputation*, now thankfully released on CD by Unique Gravity, so you can hear it yourself, say that the album was recorded during October and November 1974. Robin is on two tracks. The ISB officially broke up at the end of October. Melanie actually repays Mike's favour and sings back-up vocal on two tracks, the same two that Robin is on. "This is going to be a band."

I'm also interested in the idea that Mike suggests his music reflects what he is up to, or immersed in at any given time. That's not really a revelation if you think about it. Mike had been the hippy-dippy who had conjured up most of the flower power stuff. Right time, right place, you might say. A good ear and a good imagination. Good skill in being able to empathise with and understand the sensitivities of others in the band and work out what the audience wants. Mike Heron always displays these qualities in his music. This Moment is a showcase song for the ISB at their zenith. Perfect material for four voices, two male, two female, call and response, two acoustic guitars. A Mike Heron song. He actually ends the *Melody Maker* piece by saying, "I'll be trying to do more than just play straight versions of old and new Mike Heron numbers. This is going to be a band."

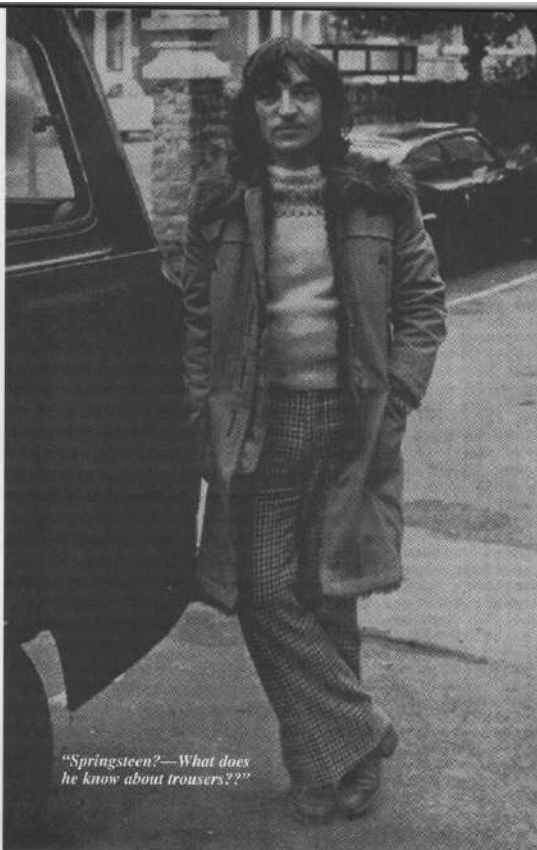
In December 1974 Mike put the rest of the band together. He said that he auditioned dozens of people. Completing the line-up were Dave Barker, formerly with pub rock band Phoenix, on keyboards and Mike Tomich, an inspired and imaginative bassist once with If. Tomich was a rock veteran, having played with nearly everybody from Marty Wilde to the Bonzo Dog Band. He had even appeared on *Top Of The Pops* with Pickettywitch!

The band went on the road in March 1975 as support to the Andy Fraser Band on a major tour. The gatefold sleeve album *Mike Heron's Reputation* also hit the shops at that time. On the strength of Mike Heron's reputation, *Mike Heron's Reputation* was reviewed extensively in the music papers.

THE ALBUM WAS A CROSS BETWEEN ELTON JOHN AND SIMON AND GARFUNKEL

The reviews were honest. Bob Edmonds in *NME* made reference to the fact that someone had said that the album was a cross between Elton John and Simon and Garfunkel. Heron offers a clutch of undemanding melodies performed with sensitive craftsman hip, he says. Steve Peacock in *Sounds* suggests that this is a Mike Heron solo album—a transition between the ISB and his new thing. It is a strong album, he says, and promises well for the future. Steve Lake in *Melody Maker* says that, taken as a whole, this is a bold departure for Heron and one charged with energy. Hopefully, he ends by saying, Heron's next album and his live gigs will confirm this upward trend.

It is not my intention to review the album here. As I've already pointed out, you can now get it yourself from Unique Gravity. You can review it. [We already have, Bill: see *beGLAD 9*—Ed] However, let me



"Springsteen?—What does he know about trousers??"

just add a couple of ideas. I think that's a good strong album. The songs are good. It sounds, as Mike said, like an FM album. It's a good playing album that you can listen to over and over again. It works. Those of you who recall my Mike Heron compilation will recall that I included two tracks from it, *Down On My Knees* and *Singing The Dolphin*. I like *Down On My knees*. It's a good song and Richard Thompson's guitar makes the track something special. *Singing The Dolphin* is one of the best songs in the Heron canon. It is a lovely song with a beautiful melody.

The band hit the road after the album's release. The music press, notably Lake and Peacock, continued to laud Heron and ran large interviews throughout the first few months of 1975. There were recurrent themes in these interviews that Mike referred to again and again.

He points out that *Reputation* is allowing him to concentrate on his singing. He reminds people that Buddy Holly and Fats Domino were his original rock influences long before the ISB. He says that he has been able to return to them and their music, which he feels communicates directly and he wants to concentrate on this. He says the band won't perform any ISB stuff.

He is constantly questioned about Malcolm's role in the new band. He says "Malcolm asked if he could join the group and I felt a little weird about it at first, but we discussed it and decided that his contribution would primarily be a visual one. This means that we probably won't feature his writing."

Mike points out that this band will be a band. It will grow and develop and he will write for the band. He also says that he will continue to write off-beat songs that don't fit into any category and he will record them and stick them away on tape for use somewhere later.

MARCH		APRIL	
15th	LONDON	25th	BIRMINGHAM, Town Hall
16th	BRISTOL, Colston Hall	29th	MANCHESTER, Free Trade Hall
18th	LEICESTER, De Montfort Hall	31st	LIVERPOOL, Royal Court
19th	SHEFFIELD, City Hall		
20th	LELHAM, Town Hall		
21st	NEWCASTLE, City Hall		

LET'S NOW TURN TO WHAT the live gigs did confirm. From 1975 eight live tapes seem to be in existence.

Imperial College, London 1/2/75
Residential Boy/Down On My Knees/Meanwhile The Rain/Only A Streetlight/Easy Street/Born To Be Gone/Without Love/Strong Thing/Call Me Diamond/Warm Heart Pastry

London School of Economics 8/3/75
Down On My Knees/Evie/Strong Thing/Only A Streetlight
This is only a partial record of the concert.

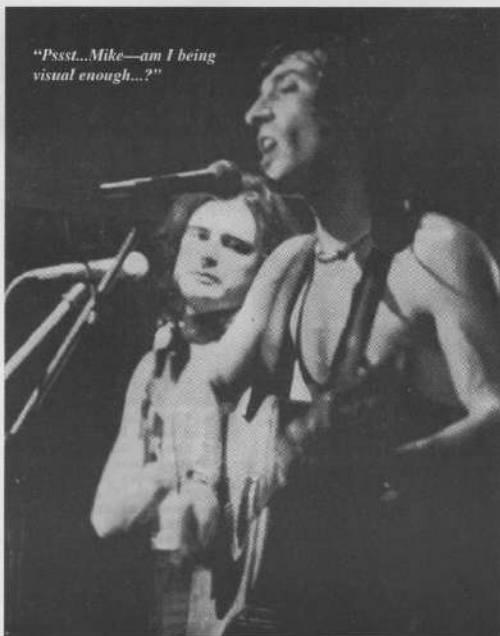
Rainbow Theatre, London 15/3/75
Residential Boy/Down On My Knees/Call Me Diamond/Only A Streetlight /Draw Back The Veil/Warm Heart Pastry

BBC John Peel Session Recorded 15/4/75
Sold On Your Love/Are You Gonna Hear The Music?/Draw Back The Veil/Residential Boy

BBC Radio One In Concert 26/4/75
Residential Boy/Down On My Knees/ Draw Back The Veil/Strong Thing /Are You Gonna Hear The Music?/Call Me Diamond

Nashville Rooms, London 16/5/75
Residential Boy/Draw Back The Veil/Strong Thing/Only A Streetlight/Down On My Knees/Are You Gonna Hear The Music?/Warm Heart Pastry /Call Me Diamond

Let's consider these first. On the evidence of the tapes, good, bad and ugly sound quality, as these things tend to be, several things stand out. Reputation was certainly a band. A good live gigging band who worked together well. Remember, four of the six had worked together as a unit for some time, although this band, this sound and these songs as performed live on these tapes sound nothing like the ISB. It must have been strange for Mike, John, Graham and Malcolm at first to play in some of these places—clubs rather than bigger venues. It would have had an effect on everything. Furthermore, the sound is not like the album and on the live gigs (rather than on the radio sessions) there is little attempt to recreate that studio sound.



"Pssst...Mike—am I being visual enough...?"

IMPERIAL COLLEGE
Prince Consort Road, S.W.7

Saturday, Feb. 1st

**MIKE HERON'S
REPUTATION
& NICO**

Admission £1 advance. £1.20 door

Feb. 8th

No. 204

Road.

THE FRESHERS BALL
MIKE HERONS REPUTATION
+ SUPPORT + DISCO

SATURDAY, 11th OCTOBER, 1975
at 8 p.m.

MEMBERS 75p NON-MEMBERS 90p

You will notice that new songs have already made their appearance, although it is possible that Draw Back The Veil and Strong Thing were performed by the ISB on that last USA tour. Mike talks about Are You Gonna Hear The Music? in those music paper interviews mentioned above. He says that he has written it as a showcase piece for the new band. Warm Heart Pastry and Call Me Diamond are of course rock, songs from somewhere else. Reputation songs of another kind, so to speak, which suit the band perfectly. You could argue, especially if you listen to the tapes, that this is the band that Mike Heron has known and loved for all these years. Sold On Your Love is a song that we will return to later. It is of interest that it didn't make an appearance in a live gig for a long time, only on the Peel Session, after which Mike saved it for something special for three years.

The band certainly cooks. The songs from the album soon outgrow that form and version. There are long extended guitar work-outs, expanded keyboard parts and drum rolls. Mike and the boys seem to be getting their own back. And, of course, new songs soon pop up. For this band, too, Mike demonstrates that quality I highlighted at the start of the article. But he's not a hippy-dippy now. He's a writer for a rock band. Right time, right place. A good ear and a good imagination. Good skill in being able to empathise with and understand the sensitivities of others in the band. This band is heavy!

The only thing that changes the flow of the set is Malcolm's showcase number. During these early months it was Only A Streetlight. It is bizarre to hear a tap-dance number in the middle of these long band work-out numbers on these tapes. It must have been even more bizarre to see it.

I suspect that the tapes I have listed were mostly one-off Mike Heron's Reputation gigs. The Rainbow gig on the 15th of March was the opening date on the Andy Fraser Band tour, on which Reputation played support. Andy Fraser, you may recall, had been in Free. We don't really know at this stage how many gigs Reputation played. In those early articles Mike also suggested that the band would tour America after the Andy Fraser tour.

However, the next artefacts we have come from the Autumn of 1975. Two London clubs, small theatre gigs. Graham Forbes had left the band because of a difference in musical direction and Frank Usher joined on lead guitar in August of 1975. Frank had been one of the Newcastle upon Tyne musical mafia for most of his life. In late 1970 he moved to Scotland to play in a local band with John Gilston and met with the ISB.

Greenwood Theatre, London 5/10/75

Residential Boy/Draw Back The Veil/Strong Thing/Warrior/Can't Keep Me Here/Singing The Dolphin/Travelling Man/Stranded In Iowa/Call Me Diamond/Are You Gonna Hear The Music?/Only A Streetlight/Warm Heart Pastry

Dingwall's, London 17/10/75

Residential Boy/Draw Back The Veil/Let Me In/Strong Thing/Are You Gonna Hear The Music?/Stranded In Iowa/Can't Keep Me Here/Singing The Dolphin/Travelling Man/Only A Streetlight/Call Me Diamond

The band, the sound and the set list have all changed. There is still the heavy stuff. Stranded In Iowa makes its appearance. There seems to be an attempt to offer variety of pace in the show. We get the heavy long work-out stuff as heard before. However, we also get an acoustic guitar, harmony section. This is kicked off on by Mike saying he doesn't really want to do ISB songs, but he digs right back to sing Can't Keep Me Here from the first ISB album. The band do a lovely version of Singing The Dolphin with acoustic guitars and Dave Barker on flute.

IN DECEMBER 1975 Mike was interviewed by Paul Hunter of *Liquorice* magazine. Mike said of Singing The Dolphin: "They're having an optimistic dream and they allow the dream to take over. It's like the beauty of delusion. It's a strange song."

"It's almost cynical, really quite bitter. It's about these two sailors in the middle of a war situation, sailing out of this really filthy harbour. They're involved in heavy fighting and they probably won't survive and they both know that. One of the guys has an older friend who has helped him at various points and he looks on him as a bit of a guardian. The guardian looks upon the young lad who he's showing the ropes. Don't worry son, you'll be all right, that kind of thing."

"And it's just the climax of their relationship where the young guy is finally cracking completely. He's gotta go off and sail into battle yet again, and he's going totally round the bend. So they focus their attention on their shared dream which had been to go to this coral reef and everything would be peaceful and dolphins would be swimming. And it's not awful real—the chances of them getting that together are very slim. It's an optimistic thought that they are having, and it's probably therapeutic to them. But at the same time it's not a clean optimism."

It's tempting to hear that song as an eulogy for the ISB and for Mike and Robin. It is literally a rite of passage song. A lovely extended metaphor. While we're making comments like this, it's also possible to consider that Residential Boy touches on Mike's relationship with Robin too. Mike's songs always seem to touch on the reality of what he is doing. Reputation invariably started their shows with Residential

Boy. Is this more of a calling-on song in an attempt to clear the past, a changing of the guard, than Are You Gonna Hear The Music? for each show?

The shows also feature a zippy little number called Travelling Man with acoustic guitars, a twelve-string in there somewhere if my ears are not tricking me, and sustained harmonies. The song is about the need for the road. It went down very well with audiences. However, it seems to have disappeared, gone onto those tapes of weird songs that are put away. This is one worth digging out.

The shows also reveal a light touch reworking of Call Me Diamond. Two other new songs make an appearance. One seems to be called Let Me In, which Malcolm and Mike sing together. For some reason I think that this is a Malcolm song. The other is a song called Warrior. Mike says that it is a song about comics and characters like Conan the Barbarian. It is a song that showcases some serious rather than light-hearted dancing on Malcolm's part. It's a song that changes pace and direction several times. In the Paul Hunter interview Mike is asked about the song. He says, "We've shelved that one for the moment. I don't think that anyone in the group was very convinced that it was working."

It's possible that the band played gigs in Europe at this time. However, by December Dave Barker had left. He wanted to rest but also felt that he needed a change in musical direction. He was replaced by Dave Sams, who had started out as a classical pianist before pop music zapped him. It was at this point that Reputation mutated into Heron, and our story moves into a new phase.

This is the end of Part One of this article. Help, please, on that last ISB American tour. Also gig dates for Mike Heron's Reputation and other information that will help flesh this out to its fullest. Cheers. I'd also be interested to hear from anyone with stuff on MH in 1976-78, for inclusion in Part Two in *beGLAD 18*.
allisonw@supanet.com



Heron and his Reputation: "We just flew in from L. Ron H.'s yacht—boy are our arms tired."

THE SOCCERPOP TWINS.

On the left we have Lou Macari of Manchester Utd. the well-known pop star, and on the right Mike Heron (ex-Incredible String Band) the football star... OOPS!

Of course Lou's the footballer and Mike's the pop star—but both Scotsmen keep being mistaken for each other, by friends and fans alike!

One thing they do have in common (and abundance) is talent!



SURELY SOME MISTAKE...

A curious case of mistaken identity—doubtless dreamed up by some underworked publicist—propelled Mike into the kiddie comics in 1975. The ferretette opposite appeared in the boy's comic *The Hotspur*; a photo of Mike and Lou duly turned up in the NME (above), though nobody there seems to have realised that Mr M. was not a Reputation member. The accompanying article was generously entitled *A Hippie's Decay Halts* and came with an early, faltering example of the Humorous Photo Caption, since exalted into a mature art form by the sub-editors of *beGLAD*.

STRAIGHT IN AT 180!

THE ISB'S COMPLETE CHART PLACINGS

Mike Swann brings you the ultimate anorak article

ONE OF THE (MANY!) REMARKABLE ASPECTS of the music of the Incredible String Band was how successful it was chart-wise during the late '60s and early '70s heyday of the band. Considering the almost wilfully uncommercial approach they took; that they were never interested in pop stardom; and that they were perhaps the only major act of the time not to employ the services of a publicist—considering all that, their substantial chart success is all the more noteworthy.

These "commercial" achievements are in fact much greater than many people realise, given the esoteric nature of the band's music; in fact, the ISB hold unequalled chart achievement records. In the four years from Autumn 1967 to Autumn 1971 they chalked up seven hit albums in Britain, all of these being "regular", non-compilation sets; among British bands, only the Rolling Stones bettered this figure in that period. Taking America into account as well, they charted with nine LPs. The double *Wee Tam And The Big Huge* failed to make the lists in Britain (see my article in *beGLAD 7*), but—as separate single LPs—had no trouble in the U.S. Had the British charts not been on strike when *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending* was released, they might well have had ten!

ONE OF THE MANY ASPECTS of the band that I researched for my unpublished book on the ISB, *A Decade Of Delight*, was their chart career. This is admittedly a bit "anorak", but I feel it does provide a usefully objective study of the band's achievements, and one can discern some fascinating issues and "anomalies" arising from all this.

I covered the chart positions not only in the "official" organs of *Record Retailer/Music Week* (UK) and *Billboard* (US) and other "main" charts such as *Disc/Melody Maker* and *N.M.E.* here (plus *Cashbox* and *Record World* in America), but also in minor or specialist charts published in the music papers, such as the "Folk" charts of Virgin and Comet shops lists. From these you'll see that every single regular album the group released showed up on a chart somewhere, as did the two solo albums that Mike and Robin released while still in the band, indicating that—despite certain "critical" claims to the contrary—the band remained extremely popular right up until the split, a fact which has to be measured against the increasingly competitive music scene in the early '70s.

BRITAIN'S TOP 40									
WEEK	LAST 3 WEEKS' POSITIONS	WEEKS IN CHART	TITLE	Artist	Label	Number (stereo follow)			
1	1	2	1	14	JOHN WESLEY HARDING	Bob Dylan	CBS SBPG		
2	3	1	9	7	SCOTT 2	Scott Walker	Phillips SB		
3	5	6	3	160	THE SOUND OF MUSIC	Soundtrack	RCA Victor S		
4	6	4	4	20	DIANA ROSS & SUPREMES GREATEST HITS	Supremes Tamla-Motown STML			
5	7	10	8	9	HANGMAN'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER	Incredible String Band	Elektra EUKS		
6	4	8	10	14	FLEETWOOD MAC	Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac	Blue Horizon -/BF		
7	5	7	15	15	HISTORY OF OTIS REDDING	Otis Redding			

29 May 1968: *Hangman's* hits no. 5 for a second time

The critics have often tended to make much of the fact that *Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* was, easily, their most successful album in the UK, and so back up their claims that it is also easily their *best* album, whereas in the US it was *only just* their biggest (and that only in the "official" *Billboard* Top 200s), with *I Looked Up* being their only entry on the smaller *Cashbox* chart, and *Liquid Acrobat* their most successful in the *Record World* lists.

Had not the disastrous marketing of the *Wee Tam* double set in the UK wiped out such a sizeable portion of the following built up by *Hangman's*, it could have been a much different story for the band over here.

I HAVE INCLUDED HERE all the positions on all the charts here and in America that the band attained, and, as mentioned above, what shows up most clearly re the US is the enormous variation that exists between them. Charts are always done on a sampling basis anyway, so it is possibly best to take an "average" of these to get the complete picture, but, even allowing for that, certain real anomalies do show up.

Here, for instance, the band's albums (apart from *Hangman's*, which did seem to do best on the "official" *Record Retailer* list) often seemed to fare better in the *Melody Maker* charts than they did on *R.R.* (later *Music Week*) listings. Looking at the way their chart career panned out in the *Guinness* books, one could get the impression that it was a slow decline through the middle period, with just *Liquid Acrobat* peaking at a fairly low no.46. However, *Music Week* was by then including budget albums (which they weren't in 1969/70), and the "full-price" version of the chart used to appear in *Sounds*, which showed *Acrobat* in fact reaching no.28, higher than any since—which rather goes against the general "critical" view of the slow decline (and, interestingly, this album received almost unanimous critical praise at the time of its release).

Sales figures, which I managed to wheedle out of Island Records when I was researching my book, also indicate that there was an almost 50% increase between *Changing Horses* and *Acrobat*. Further to this, *Melody Maker* had *Acrobat* peaking as high as no.21 (and this while budget LPs were being included), the closest any post-*Hangman's* release came to reaching "proper" Top 20 placing anywhere.

REFLECTING THE INCREASING COMPETITION for chart places, both *Earthsan* and *No Ruinous Feud* outdid the middle-period sets, yet failed to reach the main charts here (though they both registered on the US *Record World* lists). In addition to doing well, as can be seen from Top 10 peaks, in Virgin charts, which favoured "progressive/underground" rather than mainstream acts, both these sets did show up on a *Music Week* listing. My research uncovered a regular monthly feature on recording studios, accompanied by a

Top 40 listing entitled "Soundscape Scoreboard" This was an "official" British Market Research Bureau chart of monthly sales of British-only albums, and showed in their respective first months of release both *Earthsan* (39), and *No Ruinous Feud* (a reasonable no.34). The *Feud* placing in particular shows how very close it must have been to a Position on the "main" Top 60 chart. It was only available from the second week of March 1973, yet The Who's *Tommy*, just two places higher on this list at 32 and available for the whole month, had shown up for a week on the main chart during March!

All this does seem to indicate that, even though the band had seven entries on the main British album chart (listed in the *Guinness Hits* volumes), they were somewhat unlucky not to have had several more, and at higher peaks than those mentioned.

1968, however, was when, matching their critical acclaim, the ISB had their greatest chart success. Having reached the Top 5 twice with *Hangman's* in late April and, again, in late May that year, perhaps their most remarkable showing ever in the charts was the third week in July when two String Band albums were listed at the same time.

These were the debut LP (which had had to be content only with no.1 listings on "Folk" charts at the time of its release, as had *Spirits* initially before it cracked the main chart in Autumn '67), finally breaking the chart at 34, while *Hangman's* was in its slow descent at no.16. In this very same week, they first showed up on the American *Billboard* chart, with *Hangman's* at No.174. (It eventually peaked at the dizzy heights of No. 161).

Incidentally, if these positions seem somewhat pathetic, one has to remember the enormous size and competitiveness of the US market, and that British acts, despite the post-Beatles "invasion", did not do that well over there. I have a copy of the *Billboard* chart for that *Hangman's* peak-week, and just nine British acts had albums in higher positions. The band however repeated the "two albums" phenomenon in America in early April 1969, when the separately-released *Wee Tam* and *The Big Huge* peaked at 174 and 180 respectively, having failed to dent the UK charts at all.

ANOTHER UNIQUE CHART RECORD that the band hold is their American success. While, as mentioned, certain (if not most) albums did better on *Cashbox/Record World*, they charted seven LPs in the "official" *Billboard* Top 100, from nos.161 to 196, between July 1968 and March 1972. No other act in the entire history of the US charts has managed to chart as many as seven albums, yet have none of them peak outside the bottom quarter—which surely, more than anything else, illustrates the strength of the ISB's distinctly "cult" following in the USA.

They would, of course, have had entries on charts in European countries as well, where they often had huge followings—and not just with albums. Robin tells me that Robot Blues was a hit single in France! I am also reliably told that, had the UK Singles chart been a Top 75 in the '60s and '70s (as it is now), all their singles would have been hits as well. The mind doth truly boggle!

HERE THEN ARE THE COMPLETE UK and US chart positions for all the ISB's (regular) albums from their 1966-1974 recording career; and I'm sure, if you're as "anorak" as I am, that you'll derive just as much enjoyment and enlightenment from them as I have!

RECORD RETAILER BRITAIN'S

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART	TITLE	ARTIST	JULY 17	LABEL	
1	1	1	6	NUT GONE FLAKE	Small Faces	Immediate IMI	
2	10	3	6	21	JOHN WESLEY HARDING	Bob Dylan	CBS SBPG/B
3	3	4	4	11	LOVE ANDY	Andy Williams	CBS
4	7	6	7	21	FLEETWOOD MAC	Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac	Blue Horizon BPC
5	9	8	8	14	SCOTT 2	Scott Walker	Philips SBL
6	4	2	2	8	DOCK OF THE BAY	Otis Redding	Sixx 231
7	2	5	3	167	THE SOUND OF MUSIC	Soundtrack	RCA Victor SD
8	6	7	13	13	SMASH HITS	Jimi Hendrix Experience	Trac
9	18	12	15	57	TOM JONES LIVE AT THE TALK OF THE TOWN	Tom Jones	Decca SKL
10	16	10	10	10	VALLEY OF THE DOLLS	Dionne Warwick	Pye NSPL/N
11	14	9	14	22	HISTORY OF OTIS REDDING	Otis Redding	V
12	11	21	11	27	FOUR TOPS GREATEST HITS	Four Tops	Tamla-Motown STML/T
13	21	28	—	3	CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN		Trac
14	17	11	12	11	BUDDY HOLLY'S GREATEST HITS	Buddy Holly	Ace of Hearts
15	8	13	5	20	JUNGLE BOOK	Soundtrack	Disney
16	15	14	9	16	HANGMAN'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER	Incredible String Band	Elektra EUKS7
17	13	16	17	7	OPEN	Julia Driscoll/Brian Auger Trinity	Marmalade 608
18	12	21	—	3	HONEY	Andy Williams	CBS
19	NEW ENTRY	1	—	—	SARE WIRES	John Mayall's Bluesbreakers	Decca SKL
20	NEW ENTRY	2	—	—	SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS	Pink Floyd	Columbia SCX
21	25	19	19	30	13 SMASH HITS	Tom Jones	Decca SKL
22	27	18	23	68	BEST OF THE BEACH BOYS	Beach Boys	Capitol ST
23	35	—	—	2	BOOGY WITH CANNED HEAT	Canned Heat	Liberty LBS/LF
24	25	17	35	4	NANCY AND LEE	Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood	Reprise RSLP/L
25	19	15	18	11	GIFT FROM A FLOWER TO A GARDEN	Donovan	Pye NSPL/N
26	5	20	16	27	DIANA ROSS & SUPREMES GREATEST HITS	Supremes	Tamla-Motown STML/T
27	22	—	—	2	MY PEOPLE WERE FAIR	Tyrannosaurus Rex	Regal Zonophone SLRZ/L
28	20	23	20	5	40 BLUE FINGERS FRESHLY PACKED	Chicken Shack	Blue Horizon
29	31	26	21	6	THE PENTANGLE	Pentangle	Transatlantic
30	30	29	28	30	OTIS BLUE	Otis Redding	Atlantic 586
31	36	25	33	4	BEAT OF THE BRASS	Herb Alpert	A & M AMLS
32	28	33	26	58	DR. ZHIVAGO	Soundtrack	MGM MGCMS/MC
33	NEW ENTRY	1	—	—	REFLECTIONS	Diana Ross and Supremes	Tamla-Motown STML/T
34	NEW ENTRY	1	—	—	INCREDIBLE STRING BAND	Incredible String Band	Elektra
35	NEW ENTRY	1	—	—	COME THE DAY	Seekers	Columbia SCX
36	32	34	31	4	WE'RE ONLY IN IT FOR THE MONEY	Mothers of Invention	Verve SVLP/V
37	29	22	29	40	BRITISH MOTOWN CHARTBUSTERS	Various Artists	Tamla-Motown TF
38	33	24	34	4	GARY PUCKETT AND UNION GAP	Union Gap	CE
39	39	32	36	17	DIANA ROSS & SUPREMES LIVE AT TALK OF THE TOWN		Tamla STML/T
40	NEW ENTRY	1	—	—	LADY SOUL	Artha Franklin	Atlantic

17 July 1968: in the very same week that the band enter the US charts for the first time, they achieve the distinction of having two albums in the UK charts at the same time, as the debut album, almost two years after its release, joins *Hangman's*, then in the 16th week of its lengthy chart sojourn

Melody Maker	
ALBUMS	
1	(1) EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY Rod Stewart, Mercury
2	(3) TEASER AND THE FIRECAT Cat Stevens, Island
3	(2) TAPESTRY Carole King, A & M
4	(4) ELECTRIC WARRIOR T. Rex, Fry
5	(10) IMAGINE John Lennon, Apple
6	(9) TAMLA MOTOWN CHARTBUSTERS Vol 6 Various Artists, Tamla Motown
7	(7) WHO'S NEXT Track
8	(5) MUD SLIDE SLIM AND THE BLUE HORIZON James Taylor, Warner Bros
9	(8) BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER Simon and Garfunkel, CBS
10	(6) FIREBALL Deep Purple, Harvest
11	(13) SWEET BABY JAMES James Taylor, Warner Bros
12	(12) PILGRIMAGE Wishbone Ash, MCA
13	(11) EVERY GOOD BOY DESERVES FAVOUR Moody Blues, Threshold
14	(14) BLUE Joni Mitchell, Reprise
15	(15) 2ND ALBUM Curved Air, Warner Bros
16	(20) I'M STILL WAITING Diana Ross, Tamla Motown
17	(—) FOG ON THE TYNE Lindisfarne, Charisma
18	(30) HOT HITS Vol 7 Various Artists, NRP
19	(19) WORLD OF YOUR 100 BEST TUNES Vol 1 Various Artists, Decca
20	(22) WORLD OF YOUR 100 BEST TUNES Vol 2 Various Artists, Decca
21	(29) LIQUID ACROBAT AS REGARDS THE AIR Incredible String Band, Island
22	(27) LOVE STORY Soundtrack, Parlophone
23	(—) ANDY WILLIAMS GREATEST HITS CBS
24	(—) IN SEARCH OF SPACE Hawkwind, United Artists
25	(16) RAM Paul and Linda McCartney, Apple
26	(—) TOP OF THE POPS Vol 19 Various Artists, Hallmark
27	(17) MASTER OF REALITY Black Sabbath, Vertigo
28	(23) WORLD OF MANTOVANI Vol 2 Decca
29	(—) ANOTHER MONTY PYTHON RECORD Charisma
30	(21) BARK Jefferson Airplane, Grunt



Liquid Acrobat came the closest of any post-*Hangman's* album to the Top 20—here it is at no. 21 in Melody Maker's chart on 6 November 1971

No Ruinous Feud in a BMRB/Music Week chart? The monthly British-only listing "Soundscape Scoreboard" shows Feud at no. 34 for its first month of release, March 1973

SOUNDSCAPE SCOREBOARD

TITLE	ARTISTS	LABEL/No.	STUDIO
1 DON'T SHOOT ME I'M ONLY THE PIANO PLAYER	Elton John	DJM DJLPH 427	Strawberry (Paris)
31 MIDDLE	Pink Floyd	Harvest SHN 295	Arch/MCM (London)
32 TOMMY	Who	Track 2657 002	IBC
33 ABBEY ROAD	Beatles	Apple PCS 7088	EMI
34 NO RUINOUS FEUD	Incredible String Band	Island HIPS 9229	Sound Pictures/Island
35 THE YES ALBUM	Yes	Atlantic K 40106	Adriatic
36 ROXY MUSIC	Roxy Music	Island HIPS 9200	Commodore
37 HONKY CHATEAU	Elton John	DJM DJLPH 423	Strawberry (Paris)
38 FOKTROT	Genesis	Charisma CAS 1058	Island
39 GASOLINE ALLEY	Rod Stewart	Vertigo 6360 500	Olympic/Morgan
40 FOG ON THE TYNE	Lindisfarne	Charisma CAS 1050	Trident

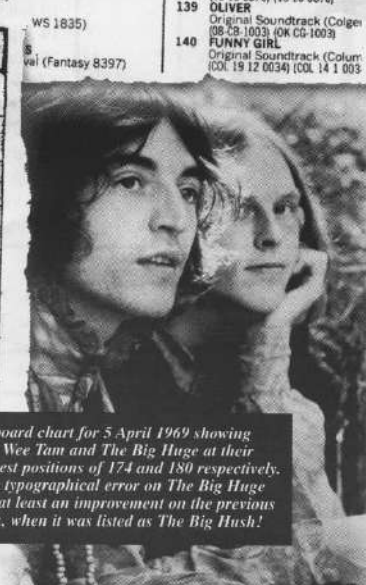
A MONTHLY chart compiled by the British Market Research Bureau for the month of March. All albums shown are

CashBox TOP 100 Albums

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>NETS</p> <p>(Atco 33-317)
33-317</p> <p>idtrack (Decca DL 79173)</p> <p>IPS
50077</p> <p>(Ampex A 40101)
S 156(161)</p> <p>CE
1399
X 6399</p> <p>DING
101 ST 483
483</p> <p>A * Z
ni (RCA LSP 4350)
1583</p> <p>VE THEM
(Decca C
12)</p> | <p>111 HERB ALPERT & THE TIJUANA BRASS
GREATEST HITS
(A&M SP 4245)
(81 4245) (41 4245) (CS 4245)</p> <p>112 BRIEF REPLIES
Ten Wheel Drive with Genya Ravan
(Polydor 24-4024)</p> <p>113 COME TOGETHER
Ike & Tina Turner & The Ikeettes
(Liberty LST 7637)</p> <p>114 FANCY
Bobbie Gentry (Capitol ST 428)
(81 428) (41 428)</p> <p>115 I LOOKED UP
Incredible String Band (Elektra EKS 74061)
(MS 4061)</p> <p>116 LET'S BE FRIENDS
Elvis Presley (Camdon CAS 2408)
(13-5025) (W-9035)</p> <p>117 MIDNIGHT COWBOY
Original Soundtrack (United Artists UA 5198)
(13-5025) (W-9035)</p> <p>118 SPIRIT IN THE SKY
Original Soundtrack (Decca DL 79173) (RCA LSP 4350)
(13-5025) (W-9035)</p> | <p>121 LET IT BLEED
Rolling Stones (London NPS 4)
(M 72167) (K 17167) (K 57167)</p> <p>122 DIANA ROSS PRESENTS THE JACKSON 5
(Motown MS 700)
(M8 1700) (M75 700)</p> <p>123 CUCUMBER CASTLE
Bee Gees (Atco SD 33-327)
(EP 33-327) (33-327)</p> <p>124 BLACK TALK
Charles Earland (Prestige PR 7758)</p> <p>125 IN THE BEGINNING (CIRCA 1960)
The Beatles Featuring Tony Sheridan
(Polydor 4504)</p> <p>126 FIRST STEP
Small Faces (Warner Bros. WS 1851)
(BWM 1851) (DW 1851)</p> <p>127 LEON RUSSELL
(Shelter 1001)</p> <p>128 DEEP PURPLE AND THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC
(Warner Bros. WS 1860)</p> | <p>131 RAW SIENNA
Sevox Brown (Parrot 7103)
(M-79836) (M-79636)</p> <p>132 OLIVER AGAIN
(Crewe CR 1344)</p> <p>133 WALKING IN SPACE
Quincy Jones (A&M SP 30
81 3023) (41 3023) (CI 3023)</p> <p>134 ROD STEWART ALBUM
(Mercury SR 61237)</p> <p>135 THE BAND
(Capitol STAQ 132)
(81T 132) (41T 132)</p> <p>136 BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED
Ray Conniff (Columbia 102
18 10 1022) (16 10 1022)</p> <p>137 BARBRA STREISAND'S GR
(Columbia KCS 9968)
(18 10 0852) (16 10 0852)</p> <p>138 ANDY WILLIAMS' GREATEST
(Columbia KCS 9979)
(18 10 0870) (16 10 0870)</p> <p>139 OLIVER
Original Soundtrack (Colgan
08-28-1003) (OK CG-1003)</p> <p>140 FUNNY GIRL
Original Soundtrack (Colum
1001 19 12 0034) (COL 14 1 003)</p> |
|---|---|---|--|

Artist	Title	Label	Chart Position
THE WARWICK	For SP3 (3)		
THE LAWRENCE & EYDIE BORME	I'll Was Was Love LSP 4115 (3)	MA SA	
WIN CAYE	and I Through the Grapevine 1 13 283 (3)		
THE NIGHT & THE PIPS	'n' Soul S 211 (3)		
THE JES	me For Living LSP 4128 (3)	MA MA	
ALPERT AND THE TIJUANA	of the Brass SP 4146 (3)		
BROWN	at the Apollo, Vol. 2 1022 (3)		
HER EARTH	g With the Animals NY 58 61194 (3)		
COSBY	M.P.H. for Soul-Savvy Arts WS 1737 (3)		
WILEY C. RILEY	at Valley P.T.A. with P.C.P. (3)		
INA FRANKLIN	na in Paris 30 8207 (3)		

3	180	174	INCREDIBLE STRING BAND	Wee Tam Elektra EKS 74056 (3)
1			LORETTA LYNN	Your Squaw Is on the Warpath Decca DL 75064 (5)
7	176	176	TU MAHAL	Wacht! Blues Columbia CS 9928 (5)
2			VARIOUS ARTISTS	Soul Explosion Star STS 2-2007 (5)
3			MARIANNE FAITHFULL	Greatest Hits London PS 547 (5)
4	387	179	PORTER WAGONER	Carroll County Accident RCA LSP 4118 (5)
3	182	180	INCREDIBLE STRING BAND	The Big Hugh Elektra EKS 74037 (5)
3	191	181	EARTH OPERA	The Great American Eagle Tragedy Elektra EKS 74038 (5)
20	173	182	PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC	Get It On Power P 701 (5)
201	183	183	ORIGINAL CAST	Ridder-on the Roof RCA Victor LOC 1093 (M) 4500 1093 (5)
1			LOU DONALDSON	Say It Loud Blue Note BST 84209 (5)
35			TOM JONES	Green Green Grass of Parrot 71009 (5)
31	181	186	MIKE BLOOMFIELD	STYVE



Billboard chart for 5 April 1969 showing both Wee Tam and The Big Huge at their highest positions of 174 and 180 respectively. (The typographical error on The Big Huge was at least an improvement on the previous week, when it was listed as The Big Hush!)

Complete chart positions for ISB albums 1) BRITAIN

ALBUM TITLE	DATE	R.R./M.W. CHART (Top 40)	M.M./DISC CHART	N.M.E. CHART	OTHER MINOR OR SPECIALIST CHARTS
<i>The Incredible String Band</i> released late 1966	Feb '67 Mar '67 Apr '67 19 July '67 26 July '67 17 July '68 24 July '68 31 July '68		<i>only Top 10 published</i>	<i>only Top 15 published</i>	R.R./M.W. 'Folk' chart 6 1 3 8 5
<i>The 5000 Spirits or The Layers Of The Onion</i> released August 1967	16 Aug '67 23 Aug '67 30 Aug '67 ↓ 4 Oct '67 18 Oct '67 25 Oct '67 1 Nov '67 8 Nov '67 15 Nov '67 22 Nov '67		<i>only Top 10 published</i>	<i>only Top 15 published</i>	R.R./M.W. 'Folk' Top 10 7 3 1 <i>No. 1 throughout</i> 1
<i>The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter</i> released March 1968	3 Apr '68 10 Apr '68 17 Apr '68 24 Apr '68 1 May '68 8 May '68 15 May '68 22 May '68 29 May '68 5 June '68 12 June '68 19 June '68 19 June '68 26 June '68 3 July '68 10 July '68 17 July '68 24 July '68 7 Aug '68 14 Aug '68 21 Aug '68	39 16 10 5 6 8 10 7 5 10 6 12 9 14 15 16 22 37 35 36 39	— — — 9 6 9 8 8 9 — — — — — — — — — — — — —	— 13 8 8 8 8 10 8 11 11 11 11 14 — — — — — — — — —	
<i>Changing Horses</i> released November 1969	3 Jan '70 10 Jan '70 17 Jan '70 24 Jan '70	<i>Top 50</i> * * * 30	<i>Top 30</i> 28 — — —	<i>only Top 20 published</i>	* 3-17 Jan R.R. chart Top 20 only
<i>I Looked Up</i> released April 1970	9 May '70 16 May '70 23 May '70 6 June '70	<i>Top 60+</i> 30 41 62 58	<i>Top 30</i> 24 30 22 —		

Complete chart positions for ISB albums 1)BRITAIN cont.

ALBUM TITLE	DATE	R.R./M.W. CHART	M.M./DISC CHART	OTHER MINOR OR SPECIALIST CHARTS	
U released October 1970	24 Oct '70 31 Oct '70 7 Nov '70	— 55 34	27 — 25		
Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending released March 1971	13 Mar '71 20 Mar '71 27 Mar '71	<i>main charts on strike at this time</i>		<i>Virgin shops</i> 28 18 11	<i>Disc Prog Top 10</i> 10
Smiling Men With Bad Reputations Mike Heron solo released April 1971	15 May '71 22 May '71 29 May '71 5 June '71 12 June '71			— — 17 17 25	4 7 11 — —
Liquid Acrobat As Regards The Air released October 1971	3 Apr '68 10 Apr '68 17 Apr '68 24 Apr '68	<i>Top 30 (50)*</i> 28 (46)*	<i>Top 30</i> 29 21 29	<i>Top 30</i> 19 14 14 21	<i>Top 15</i> 10 15
Myrrh Robin Williamson solo released April 1972	29 April '72 6 May '72 13 May '72			9 8 8	<i>Disc Folk (only week of publication)</i> 1
Earthspan released November 1972	Nov '72 11 Nov '72 18 Nov '72 25 Nov '72 2 Dec '72 9 Dec '72 16 Dec '72 23 Dec '72 30 Dec '72	39 §		14 8 5 5 7 11 19	<i>Disc Folk</i> 1 <i>(only week of publication)</i>
No Ruinous Feud released March 1973	March '73 10 Mar '73 17 Mar '73 24 Mar '73 31 Mar '73 7 Apr '73 14 Apr '73	34 §		<i>Top 50: M.M.</i> 31 10 18 25 30 46	<i>Top 30 published in Sounds also</i>
Hard Rope And Silken Twine released March 1974	23 Mar '74 30 Mar '74 6 Apr '74 13 Apr '74 20 Apr '74 27 Apr '74 3 May '74			18 16 21 21 18 24 33	<i>Comet (Prog) Top 50</i> 27 31 <i>(two weeks of publication)</i>

* Top 30—full-price only; Top 50—all albums

§ *Music Week's* "Soundscape Scoreboard"—see text

Complete chart positions for ISB albums 2) UNITED STATES

ALBUM TITLE	DATE	BILLBOARD TOP 100	CASHBOX TOP 140	RECORD WORLD TOP 150 (LATER 175/200)
<i>The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter</i>	20 July '68	174		
	27 July '68	173		
	4 Aug '68	192		148
	11 Aug '68	182		142
	18 Aug '68	178		—
	25 Aug '68	167		—
	1 Sept '68	162		149
	8 Sept '68	161		150
	15 Sept '68	172		
<i>Wee Tam*</i>	22 Mar '69	183		
	29 Mar '69	182		150
	5 Apr '69	180		149
<i>The Big Huge*</i>	22 Mar '69	183		
	29 Mar '69	182		149
	5 Apr '69	180		147
<i>Changing Horses</i>	6 Dec '69	170		
	13 Dec '69	170		143
	20 Dec '69	166		146
<i>I Looked Up</i>	4 July '70	—	122	<i>Top 175</i> 149
	11 July '70	—	119	153
	18 July '70	—	115	137
	25 July '70	196	—	173
	1 Aug '70	196	—	169
<i>U</i>	16 Jan '71	—		171
	23 Jan '71	196		
	30 Jan '71	183		172
	6 Feb '71	186		173
<i>Liquid Acrobat As Regards The Air</i>	12 Feb '72	—		<i>Top 200</i> 194
	19 Feb '72	191		144
	26 Feb '72	191		132
	4 Mar '72	189		136
	11 Mar '72	—		168
	18 Mar '72	—		186
	25 Mar '72	—		199
<i>Earthspan</i>	19 Nov '72			186
	26 Nov '72			194
	3 Dec '72			184
	10 Dec '72			182
	17 Dec '73			199
<i>No Ruinous Feud</i>	15 Apr '73			197



They're free, and they're for you!
Send your small but perfectly formed
appeals and desires to:
**beGLAD, 11 Ratcliffe Road,
SHEFFIELD S11 8YA**
beglad@taproot.demon.co.uk

WANTED

U LP

Willing to pay appropriate price + p&p.

Chris Johnston, 40 Beasant Court, London N1 4RE

0976 887769

cj@fluxx.co.uk

WANTED

ISB songbooks, first and second volumes.

Nick Boyes

01865 761416

WANTED

Has anyone got a U poster they would like to sell or trade? If so,
please contact:

Niall Reddy, 64 Rusheeny Village, Clonsilla, Dublin 15, Ireland

01-8217429

WANTED

beGLAD issue 7 (original, not photocopy).

Bengt Brunzell, Torkelsgatan 14b, S-753 29 Uppsala, Sweden

bengt.brunzell@telia.com

WANTED

Captain Beefheart: *Trout Mask Replica* vol.2 LP. Will swap for
ISB CDs

Phillip 01737 552909

WANTED

Mike Heron: *The Glen Row Tapes* CD

**José Ignacio Eguizabal, Urb. Virgen del Mar no. 8, 39110 Solo
de la Marina, Cantabria, Spain**

fax: **942 341601**

WANTED

LP *The Incredible String Band*

LP *The Big Huge*

LP *Ten of Songs*—Robin Williamson

LP *Diamond of Dreams*—Mike Heron

LP *Mike Heron* [Casablanca NBLP 7186]

CD *I Looked Up* [Hannibal]

CD *Wee Tam and The Big Huge* [Hannibal]

CD *Smiling Men With Bad Reputations*—Mike Heron

CD *The Glen Row Tapes*—Mike Heron

WILL PAY TOP PRICES

FOR SALE

LP *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*

LP *I Looked Up*

LP *No Ruinous Feud*

LP *Hard Rope and Silken Twine*

LP *Relics of the Incredible String Band*

LP *Seasons They Change* (Double Album)

LP *U* (Double Album)

LP *Smiling Men with Bad Reputations*

LP *Mike Heron's Reputation*

ALL ALBUMS £6.00 DOUBLES £12.00

ALSO WANTED

Videos/Live Tapes/Radio Recordings and I.S.B. & M.H. 45s.

Kieron M Stanley, 25 The Brackens, Clayton,

Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 4JL

REHEARSAL



This 1975 James Archibald documentary features the
Scots Guards, the Royal Opera, a boys' choir—and the
ISB rehearsing and performing *Ithkos*! There are
ONLY SIX copies left (on VHS video with box & sleeve).
First come first served! If sold out, all cheques will be
returned.

To order, send a cheque for **£15** with your name and
address to—

**Adrian Whittaker, 71A Colvestone Crescent, Dalston,
London E8 2LJ**

This includes EEC postage costs—for other countries add
on a pound, though note that the format probably won't be
compatible.

The way we
used to be...



beGLAD has been through a few changes in its 17-issue lifespan.

Why not check our past glories?—All issues from no. 8 (Summer 1996) onwards are permanently available in their original sleek form, at £3 each (£4 for issues 13-16), which of course includes postage and packing (the price is £4.50 for Europe, £5 for the rest of the world). Issues 1 to 7 (Winter 1992 to Winter 1995) remain available as bound photocopies again at £3 per issue, worldwide. All from the address on page 3. Impress your friends by acquiring the **FULL SET!**

For newer readers, we've supplied a rough guide to the contents of each issue, below. These are merely selected highlights—there's far more than we can tell you about here. Twice a year, in June and December, *beGLAD* brings you forty-eight pages packed with fact, commentary, analysis, opinion, anecdote and whimsy, lavishly embellished with photos and illustrations. Everything you could decently expect to know about the ISB, as well as about Robin, Mike, Malcolm, Rose, Likky and Clive individually, is yours for the reading.

ISSUE 1 (Nov '92) Establishing the canon...*Liquid Acrobat* retrospective...the life of Clive...*Vishangro* explained...U-turn: ISB in perspective...interview with Robin...Mike's movements; and more.

ISSUE 2 (May '93) *U* retrospective...*Be Glad*—the film...ISB and Pentangle...Big Ted's grave...*Earthsan* scrutinised...Dr Strangely Strange...more thoughts on the canon...taking the ISB home; and more.

ISSUE 3 (Nov '93) Robin interviewed again...final canon thoughts...*No Rulnous Feud*—the great debate...Bickershaw photo-feature...Lord Of Weir—his background...A look at the Songbooks...major Mike interview part 1...ISB at the BBC part 1; and more.

ISSUE 4 (May '94) *Hangman's* retrospective...comprehensive study of album sleeves part 1...the return of Malcolm le M...the Not Quite Christmas Party photo album...a look at Pooka...ISB cover versions tracked down...major Mike interview part 2...Robin at home; and more.

ISSUE 5 (Nov '94) *Changing Horses* retrospective...ISB film soundtracks...comprehensive study of ISB album sleeves part 2...ISB at the BBC part 2...Joe Boyd tells all...Woodstock...definitive guide to ISB instrumentation; and more.

ISSUE 6 (May '95) Robin's post-ISB music...ISB album sleeves part 3...Live at Leeds with Mike, Robin, Malcolm and Dr S. Strange...more thoughts on *Hangman's*...the strange life of Robert (not Robot) Johnson...Joe Boyd interview part 2...instrument guide part 2; and more.

ISSUE 7 (Nov '95) *Wee Tam And The Big Huge* retrospective...ISB album sleeves part 4...Log Cabin lore...trad. influences on the ISB...grasping the nettle of Scientology...instrument guide part 3; and more.

ISSUE 8 (May '96) Rose Simpson reveals all...Mike and Robin—the new CDs in depth...further reflections on *Wee Tam And The Big Huge*...*Job's Tears* and *Douglas Traherne Harding* deconstructed...Robin looks back...on stage with Malcolm and Clive; and more.

ISSUE 9 (Nov '96) Early ISB recordings rediscovered...*5000 Spirits* retrospective...Robin looks back part 2...recording *Reputation*—the true story...*Darling Belle* anatomised...Bruce Findlay interviewed...Graham Forbes remembers axe-wielding past...the Stone Monkey story; and more.

ISSUE 10 (May '97) Mike and Robin say let's do it again...*I Looked Up* looked over...Malcolm Le Maistre gives that long awaited interview...remembering Bardney...Famous Jug Band potted history...the alternative ISB story part 1...*October Song* dissected...Balmore memoirs; and more.

ISSUE 11 (Winter '97) Mike & Robin on stage together—pics and breathless commentary...Malcolm's interview part 2...*Hard Rope* reappraised...the Penwern period revisited...*Ithkos* in pictures...the alternative ISB history part 2...guide to the ISB's Edinburgh...String roots; and more.

ISSUE 12 (Summer '98) Billy Connolly remembers...Malcolm's epic interview concluded...more from the "Not The Reunion" gigs...First Album deconstructed...Kilmanoyedd memories...the Pig's Whisker story...return of Gilles Crooked-Deal...*5000 Spirits* reanalysed; and more.

ISSUE 13 (Winter '98) Rose reveals more...Mike's '87 tour—the facts...Malcolm on the road...the inside story of Glen Row...*Be Glad*—the album...Robin gets brassy...Mike's sitar tutorial...the Zen of the ISB...*Lordly Nightshade* under the microscope; and more.

ISSUE 14 (Summer '99) The ultimate Clive Palmer interview...The Auld Alliance—Robin & Clive together again...Myrrh & Smiling Men revisited...Then Glen Row Tapes—what went where, and why...Lawson Dando speaks out—Robin's studio wizard in exclusive interview...The Old Fangled Tone dissected in septh...Mike at the movies...Lord of Weir goes graphic...Glen Row photo album; and more.

ISSUE 15 (Winter '99) Robin and Clive on tour...Mike's "In Your Dreams" compilation...the Merry Band: four glorious years in words and photos...Winged We Were: the ISB tribute CD in detail...ISB in Barcelona...the remastered Elektra CDs appraised...the Holy Modal Rounders: the ISB's evil twin...Yellow Snakes And Ricketty Ladders—the ISB board game; and more.

ISSUE 16 (Summer '00) The Hogmanay reunion—full report and photos...Likky at last!—part one of the long awaited major feature...Mike's *Mystics* remix anatomised...*U*—the ultimate investigation...Robin talks instruments...Concerning Fuzz and Pan...Robin and Dylan—the Thomas connection renewed...Julie Felix remembers; and more.

beGLAD 7