

Be Glad....

for the song has no ending

An appreciation of the
Incredible String Band
past and present



Fit and Limo

You probably won't have heard of Fit or indeed Limo - but you should. They are a pair of talented German professional musicians who record under that name also as 'The Shiny Gnomes'. It is their Fit & Limo guise which interests us as they have just released an EP entitled 'This Moment: Fit & Limo Play the Incredible String Band'. It's an EP of ISB cover versions - 'This Moment', 'Come With Me', 'Three Is A Green Crown' and 'Chinese White' and the sound is quite uncanny. To say it sounded as though it was coming from 20-odd years ago would fall short of the mark 'authentic' is perhaps the best term, because it is. So much so that you might think it was Robin and Mike doing it for a laugh. It's that close. Even down to the instrumentation used such as shenai, sitar, autoharp, clay drums, etc. The sleeve is even more mind-boggling and is psychedelic to the point of luridness, all greens, blues, yellows and pinks. This is only being released in Germany but by the time this issue is out I should have ten copies for sale at £5.00 inc p&p. Don't miss it. A true collectors item. Send £5.00, preferably in note or p.o. form to the editorial address, together with an sae for return of money if they have all gone or a note saying you don't mind waiting to see if I can get any more. It really is something special and has enjoyed considerable play here at Roberts Towers.

HELP!

This is a 'Be Glad' 'I'm Calling You My Cosmic Boy' announcement!

To the two guys (age 19+ who got the train to Kings Cross immediately after the films at the Rio. One with long hair, the other shorter. You sat next to me on the Dalston train. I had long brown hair, long shorts and a blue Cure T-shirt. One of you had bought a R.W. CD. Please get in touch!

Contact Lee on 062081611 or 0315581170

CONTRACTUAL PROBLEMS?

If you'd have been all geared up to see the ISB perform at Hull's City Hall on Sunday 1st November 1970. Disappointment would have been the order of the day. It was cancelled - and we have the contract to prove it! The extract below confirms all the relevant details and impresses on us that two and half hour concerts were more or less the norm in those days. The best bit though is the bit about getting paid in cash on the night a la Chuck Berry. Questions remain; why was it cancelled? And how much is £750 worth in 'today's money'?

T.B.T. as req. £750 payable by	Equipment for a 2 hour concert	To complete of performance.
5.30pm	6.30pm	7.00pm
6.30pm	7.00pm	7.30pm
Total Salary		£750.0.0.

Handwritten notes:
 - "19/4/70" at top
 - "6.30pm B.M.T." in the first column
 - "7.00pm B.M.T." in the second column
 - "£750 payable by cheque on completion of performance. IN CASH ON NIGHT" in the third column
 - "just" written in the bottom right corner

nd agrees to be responsible for the salaries as set out in rtsite hereby undertakes to fulfil the said performances.

Please turn a blind eye

By MICHAEL CABLE

U. The Roundhouse, Chalk Farm MOST of the audience that packed The Roundhouse for this 'surreal parable in song and dance' had come purely for the songs of The Incredible String Band.

They were not disappointed. The music is good—original and often exciting—but the dancing of Stone Monkey is amateur in the extreme.

Youthful enthusiasm is not really a satisfactory substitute for training and professionalism.

Stone Monkey give the impression of trying to attempt something which they don't entirely understand.

The only thing to do is close your eyes, and listen to the music.

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer 93

Incredible String Band fever sweeps the nation? Rolf Harris to do a cover version of 'A Very Cellular Song'? Well, not quite, but since the first issue of 'Be Glad...' quite a few things have taken place as you'll see later in the magazine, all of it good, and all of it timely. Perhaps the event which will have the farthest reaching effects is the article written by Marc Ellen in the June issue of Q magazine. It's not out as I write but it will apparently be a major feature with quotes from people such as Jagger, Townsend etc and hitherto unseen photographs. Should be good and will make a change from some of the adult oriented rock tripe that Q purveys most of the time. The CD re-issues continue unabated and there is news of those elsewhere.

Response to the magazine has been tremendous, information has poured in, and I've met some tremendous people through it all. My request for ISB information still stands - if you have any ISB or related newsclippings (the more obscure the better), book references, photographs (especially photographs), live tapes, tour ephemera, memorabilia or indeed anything ISB please let me know. It all comes in useful to build up what is shaping up to be the definitive ISB archive.

Also we still need people to write for the magazine. If you feel you can contribute a piece on any aspect of Incredible String Band-ness or of the subsequent careers of Robin and Mike, please get in touch. For instance I'd be very keen to receive some reviews of their respective solo gigs this year (or b/w photos of same). You know the sort of thing we publish so if you want the magazine to continue then contribute! Artwork is also welcomed. Get in touch if you have any ideas.

Likewise, if you know of any publications who might be interested in reviewing 'Be Glad' let me know and I'll send them a copy.

This issue promises to be even better than the first with a varied array of articles. Several writers try their hand at ISB song divination. Are they right? Who knows? But it reads well. A note here on what people write. Articles (unless based on interviews with the people they are about) are by necessity spun from the writers own thoughts and beliefs, using back up material

'Be Glad.....' Issue 2 Spring 1993

which others have written/researched. This will inevitably lead to some facts being distorted or even unintentionally 'made up'. This is, of course, unintentional but readers should be aware that not everything they read may be 100% fact. Essentially writers are acting as historians and history is only what has been recorded so errors are bound to creep in.

I did have various items planned for this issue which due to space considerations didn't make it. One was a 'Notes & Queries' section in which reader queries which either I haven't answered personally or are quite common are dealt with (or at least we'll give it a try). This will have to start next issue but in the meantime if you have any such queries please let me know and I'll do my best. The main one (just out of interest) seems to be "Where's Likky". A good question, but one to which no-one knows the answer!

And lastly, although I hope you've noticed by now, the appearance of 'Be Glad...' has changed somewhat too due to the acquisition of a new DTP system which makes it easier and quicker to prepare the magazine. Hope you like it.

You'll notice a questionnaire has fallen on the floor. This is an attempt to gauge what people like/don't like want/don't want. Please fill it in and return it and we'll publish the relevant results in the next issue. Sorry I couldn't afford to supply a stamp and envelope but the magazine just about breaks even and any profit is used up in telephone calls, postage and general ISB research.

The concert flier this issue is self-explanatory. They were used for many different venues on that particular tour but the gig at Edinburgh's Empire Theatre (during the Edinburgh Festival and part of the autumn 1970 tour) was the only one (I think) which had the little addendum at the bottom advertising separate shows with

different material. It was also the only show on the tour which commenced at 11pm - the others all being the usual 7.30. Those were the days eh?

Thanks this issue go specifically to the following people: Mark Anstey, Adrian Whittaker, Grahame Hood, Stephen Robbins, Sandy McNair, John Talyer, Clive Harper, Raymond Greenoaken, Jim Hill, Sir Ramc Hobbs, and to anyone else who knows they helped but I've omitted, all without whom etc etc.

Contents

ISB Info	4
Heron News	5
Be Glad Film	6
Big Ted's Grave	10
ISB/ Pentangle	11
'U'	15
Dr. Strangely Strange	21
Did I Write That?	27
Earthspan Revisited	28
Cocoa With The ISB	31
The Craneskin Bag	32
Ads	33
Rare & Unreleased	34

Plus various bits and pieces here and there. Enjoy!

'Be Glad for the song has no ending' is published twice a year, in May and November from Andy Roberts, 84 Elland Road, Brighouse, West Yorkshire, HD6 2QR (0484 721993).

Each issue costs £3.00 and subscriptions are available pro-rata. Articles and letters are welcomed for inclusion in the magazine and I'm always happy to write or speak to ISB fans and to answer any questions they may have (if I can!).

Next issue due Nov 1st 1993.

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Various things of note which have either happened or are due to later this year.

The CD re-issues go on unabated, with the '1st album', 'Big Huge' and 'Changing Horses' due out later this spring, to be followed by 'I Looked Up' and 'U' (all on Elektra). Robin Williamson's Merry Band's 'Journey's Edge' is also due imminently (from Demon). Record stores seem to be taking the String Band more seriously now than they did originally and most of the large chains, and many smaller shops, have a special 'ISB' section to frighten the teenagers with.

And they are selling well. The Elektra CD re-issues have the highest sales of any current or re-issue Elektra product and 'Hangman's' actually charted (albeit fairly low) when it was re-issued last year. You can't keep a good album down can you?

Mike Heron's new and re-issued stuff is mentioned elsewhere so we'll leave that for now.

Plans for the 'Be Glad' video to become commercially available are afoot (see also the enclosed questionnaire) and it may be out by later this year. It's definitely worth seeing I can assure you.

The BBC Radio Scotland documentary which went out over Christmas is to be re-broadcast and it may well also receive an airing on Radio 1 or 2 so scrutinise those schedules. For those who didn't catch it it was a valiant attempt to track the ISB's career from the early days, featuring interviews with people who knew the band closely. It's not definitive by a long way, but it's a start.

The only tour date I have for Robin so far is an appearance at the Glastonbury Festival in late June, where he is appearing with John Renbourn. Should be good....

On the printed word front there is the Q magazine article, and Tower Records own magazine 'Pulse' will also be doing a feature on the band to accompany the next batch of Elektra reissues. Rick Sky of the Daily Mirror (a big ISB fan apparently) has interviewed Mike and something should be appearing there eventually (let me know if you see it eh?). Finally I hear rumours that BBC Books are

ISB INFO

doing a book about the Peel Radio Sessions and there will be a section on the String Band's many radio shows, so that should be worth waiting for. Publication date given as 'late summer/autumn'.

'It's been said before. Confucius has an edge on even an Incredible String Band but he could not, did not, does not, sing with a flat voice and hawk eyes cut out of Scottish welsh wet blue skies not smile with an endless smile, nor lose his tooth not to find another, nor die a martyr once to rise again shining on a wire tripped stage.'

Danae, OZ

Since last issue's details about the German ISB video where they perform 'Everything's Fine Right Now', more details have emerged. It appears that there is a Japanese Video Laser Disc collection of selections from German TV pop shows and that this performance is on it. That's all I know though, so if anyone wants to track it down and send more details in I'd be more than pleased to let you all know.

Another video has appeared from one of the band's Julie Felix 'Once More With Felix' appearances. When it plopped through my letter box I thought it must be the session featuring 'Fine Fingered Hand' and 'All Writ Down' but no, 'twas 'Half Remarkable Question' and 'Painting Box', with Robin in hippy finery and Mike looking like he'd missed an audition for the Beatles. Both songs are mightily tremendous and linked by some amateurish but 'of its time' psychedelic art. Julie Felix joins them for 'Painting Box' and her singing is appalling but she tries I suppose, Mike's tapping his feet for all he's worth and they look to be having a

thoroughly good time - but then they could be smiling at Ms Felix's vocals!

And no, I won't bootleg it for you but I'm always happy to show it to interested people. If anyone can date it from that info I'd like to know. Also, can anyone remember just how many Julie Felix shows they did? Two for certain but I also have a clipping from a TV Yearbook which shows Robin and Mike at another (alleged) Felix show and Robin is playing a hand-drum - is this the 'Fine Fingered Hand' session or (it seems more likely) something earlier (possibly 'Mercy I Cry City')? I'm open to hints and suggestions.

As the Woodstock festival footage is now slowly being gone through (and being marketed with things like the 'Hendrix At Woodstock' video - remarkable in itself - see it at all costs), there is hope that the ISB's performance will emerge and be made available. Also I contacted John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, 60s underground mover and shaker, and he has a written record of filming the String Band in the 1960s - but can't find the film! We live in hope though. If you can remember anyone filming them anywhere, either at a gig, festival or TV show please let me know and we'll try and track it down. One source of confusion here is were they filmed doing 'U' at the Roundhouse? Some of you who were there (most in fact) say no - but some say yes - I want to know so rack your brains please.



Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Used, as we are, to Robin Williamson's hectic tour schedules it may come as some surprise to discover that 1993 would appear to be Year of the Heron! It's true, this year Mike takes on a high profile both on the road and with recorded product.

Firstly, the Glen Row Tapes have been re-issued on CD. This takes the 'best of' the three original Glen Row cassette releases and brings them together on one CD. As few people ever bought volume one, never mind the other two (which had limited releases), this is a good move, allowing us to hear the better songs in crackle-free clarity. The Glen Row tapes are out on the Voiceprint label sometime in May 24th (details in the ad. across the page).

As luck would have it both the sleeve notes and the cover artwork come courtesy of 'Be Glad' people. I wrote the somewhat pretentious sleeve notes and 'Be Glad' contributor Raymond Greenoaken conjured up the artwork. Tracks include..... aww I'm not telling you that, save to say they didn't include the godawful 'Racetrack' but a major stand-out is the re-working of 'Red Hair' from Liquid Acrobat, and (for me anyway) 'Ghosts of Paris' which, whilst not particularly grabbing on first listen tends to grow quite a bit...and Mike's vocal on the "crisp

Mr Heron? Yes it is !

white wine from the Loire valley" bit is rather wonderful.

It really is good. Mike's songwriting stands the test of time and his lyrics are always intriguing. Buy it - you won't be disappointed.

That was then, this is now and there are even better treats on offer. The new Heron band, 'Mike Heron's Incredible Acoustic Band' (y'know I'm sure that name sounds familiar!) have a CD single out currently. Self-titled (again on the Voiceprint label) it's a four track CD consisting of 'Tom & Alexei', 'Leaning On My Heart', 'Killing The Dragon' and 'Favorite Sins'. This is a limited issue CD so buy now while stocks last as they say. It will also have considerable airplay in the USA as it's part of the Voiceprint 'Radio Sessions' series.

All in all It's an accomplished

collection of 'grown up' songs played by excellent musicians and I can't wait to hear them done live.

The band is touring in '93, and even as you read this they will be polishing their plectrums in readiness for a tour of England, Scotland and Wales, with European dates to follow.

Tour dates so far are:

June

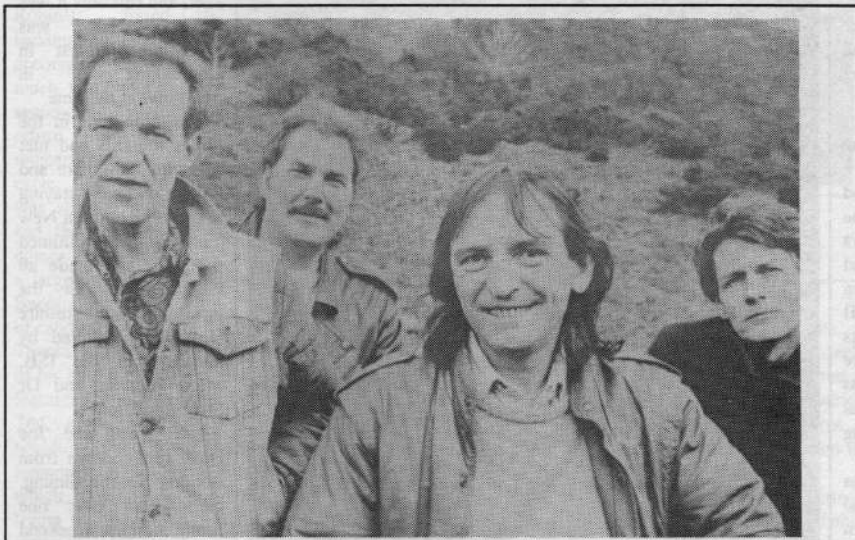
- 4th - Leeds, Duchess of York
- 5th - Hebden Bridge, Trades Club
- 6th - Splisbury, Spilsby Theatre
- 7th - Nottingham, Old Vic Tavern
- 8th - London, Weavers
- 9th - Cambridge - The Boat Race
- 10th - London, Spotlight Club
- 11th - London, Mean Fiddler
- 12th - Aylesbury, Limelight
- 14th - Bath, The Bell
- 15th - Southampton - The Joiners
- 16th - Gassy Jacks
- 18th - London, Willesden Library Theatre, TBC
- 19th - Southport, Arts Centre
- 24th - Birmingham, Hibernian
- 25th - Southend, The Grand
- 27th - Brighton, Concorde Bars
- 28th - York, Fibbers
- 29th - Hull, Adelphi

If you want more up to date info on other dates as they are announced write or phone me at the editorial address.

I will be endeavouring to get a few of

the gigs so if you're there please say hello (I'll be attempting to flog copies of 'Be Glad'). And if anyone wants to volunteer to hand out fliers for 'Be Glad' at the gigs I can't attend please get in touch and I'll send you a load. If you know of anywhere in the towns listed which might put up posters advertising the gig, again let me know and I'll get some to you.

The band have a 90 minute set together so get out there and give them some support!



It's a band - it's acoustic - it's incredible and it's Mike Heron's!

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

BE GLAD FOR THE SONG HAS NO ENDING

BY
ADRIAN WHITAKER

After completing the first ever Hendrix film Peter Neal and John Marshall were looking for a new music/film project. For them, the 60s fusion of music and ideas and the energy that came from it, could fuel an approach to film-making which used images to illustrate, comment on or underline the age-old theme of artists as society's licensed dreamers, reflecting back to us our own shared mythology. The Incredible String Band had to be the next subject.

The connection was made through Austin Marshall, who Peter had first met when doing a BBC folk programme on Shirley Collins (married to Marshall at the time). Her sister, Dolly, had of course played on 'Hangman's'.

'Be Glad' evolved much like the Hendrix film had done; rather than a conscious overall plan, the subject dictated the next steps. Funding came in dribs and drabs, and filming was carried out over a year long period beginning with the success of 'Hangman's Beautiful Daughter' and ending at the turning point where the ISB became Scientologists and started a more consciously direct, less allusive and elliptical approach to songwriting and performing.

The earliest sequences in the film are a Festival Hall concert from March 1968; BBC's Omnibus put up some

money for what they fondly imagined would be a straightforward, balanced concert/documentary programme. There were only two cameras and a limited amount of film available so Peter pre-selected some songs, including those in the film and a version of 'A Very Cellular Song'. He remembers the BBC showing brief clips of the concert at the time, probably in a folk music documentary.

The interview segments were next. Dick Steele, a Newsweek staffer had been despatched to Scotland to meet Mike for a feature to coincide with the ISB's May visit to the States. He was rapidly cast in a straight man role for the interview, with a rather stoned Mike trying to suppress giggles. The

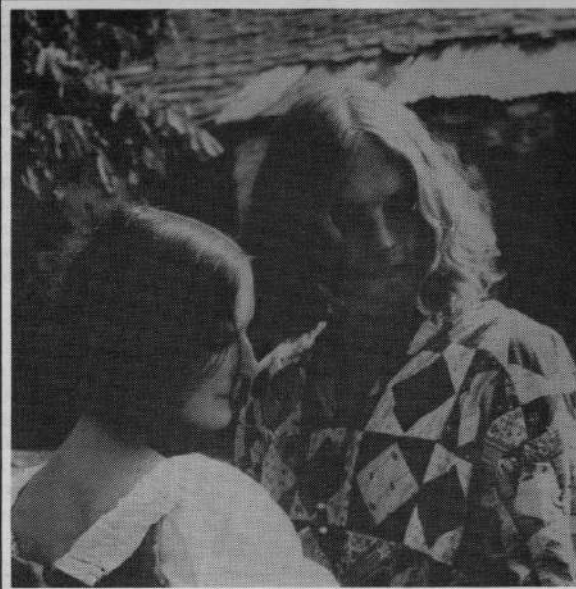
communication problems are underlined by an image which sets them side by side as 'Air', the space between them, plays in the background. However, it looks as if a more coherent interview did take place off camera - and you can read a sort of reconstruction of Steele's eventual article below.

Peter Neal saw Robin as a magician/wizard figure, and so his cameo bits are set in leafy forest glades with Licorice and his dog, Leaf (!). A visit to guitar-maker John Bailey was also shot in the same period.

The fable, 'Pirate and the Crystal Ball' was devised totally by the ISB. Joe Boyd referred to it at the time as pretty much Robin's idea, which is borne out by comments Mike made later, and certainly it was Robin who was expressing interest in film-making in interviews at the time.

Whilst on tour in the States the ISB had met Malcolm le Maistre and Rakis (who were staying in the same hotel in New York), and then outlined the story and made all the costumes in the infamous Pembrokeshire farmhouse inhabited by members of the ISB, Stone Monkey and Dr Strangely Strange.

Peter Neal and Joe Boyd drove down from London for the filming, carried out over one hectic summer weekend in 1968. Time was tight, as Peter had to be back



Be Glad for The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

at work in London on Monday morning, and much of the detail was improvised on the spot. Mike and Robin wanted an intimate atmosphere for the fable, without the presence of a large film crew, and Peter's earlier film apprenticeship aided him in being a one-man version. He'd rented a camera with an enormous lens, meaning that shots could be filmed from up to half a mile away, enhancing the fairy-tale quality of the images.

The basic story-line, set around the Pentre Ifan cromlech (an ancient burial mound, now just three stones and a cap-stone) was that of a Pirate (Rakis), who attempts to control destiny by stealing a crystal ball from the three fates (Rose, Licorice and Uiscebo). They enlist Herne the Hunter (Malcolm Le Maistre) to set matters aright and the Pirate is duly judged by the Gods (who else but Mike and Robin!), found lacking and, to the accompaniment of much arm-waving, sentenced to return to the reincarnation cycle. This scene was shot at night and the 'lightning' comes courtesy of a large amount of Bacofoil and a lot of candles!

There's a brief sequence as 'memories of his past life' flash before him, which features a guest appearance from Big Ted, pursued by a knife and fork wielding roadie (Ivan Pawle?). Peter Saunders, who shot the still photos which illustrate this article, is seen trying to suck up the earth through a straw, but Joe Boyd's cameo (dressed as Mr Universe, standing on a roof in a leopardskin loincloth!) was edited out.

Much of the visual material in this section came from a collection of old photos and prints amassed by Robin.

Finally, a baby's cry is heard and the Pirate starts all over again as the Miller's son, Mr & Mrs Miller are played by Big Ted's real-life owners, the local farmer Luke and his wife.

Also filmed at this point was a sequence where Mike and Rose wander down a country lane, hand in hand (as Peter's tribute to the old 'Start-Rite' ad!).



Malcolm Le Maistre as Herne the Hunter in a scene from the 'Be Glad' film

There was a considerable food shortage at the farmhouse (apart from the inevitable bags of brown rice, which no-one could be bothered to cook) and at one point the entire 'cast' decided to go out for a meal - in costume!

Unsurprisingly, Pembrokeshire restaurants in 1968 weren't too receptive to this sort of thing, and they ended up eating fish and chips in the back of the van.

Filming finished late on Sunday night and the journey back to London was

fraught. The car broke down and Peter, Joe, Mike and Rose were forced to knock up the nearest farmer and cadge a lift, finally arriving in London at six o'clock in the morning.

The ISB produced a tape of instrumental music to accompany the mime (most of which is on the soundtrack lp), and some time was spent editing these together before the final element of 'Be Glad' was shot, a studio session at Sound Techniques in Chelsea. This was probably in early

1969; the ISB were already changing horses, and the atmosphere as somewhat tense. Apparently there'd just been a fairly major row, so Peter had to wait for things to settle down before filming could get going. A couple of straightforward song performances were needed to round off the film, one each. Robin chose 'The Iron Stone', and Mike 'All Writ Down'. Peter Neal also filmed a studio version of 'A Very Cellular Song', which he later intercut with the Festival Hall footage. As an alternate Heron song for this section Mike stuck with 'All Write Down', presumably as more representative of

new directions.

The ISB eclectic approach was wittily mirrored at the editing stage by intercutting various visual references to world cultures (folk dances, lantern slides etc), and the film was completed in 1969.

Omnibus cried off - 'too advanced' for their audience - and the film was eventually released in the summer of 1970. After an unprepossessing debut at a tiny cinema (upstairs at the

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Hanover Grand Hotel!) it moved on the the Paris Pullman and then an extended run at the ICA (the promoter disappeared with the proceeds from this!), and was bought by TV companies in Holland, Sweden, Germany and by America's NET Educational Network. Sadly in never took off in the way that David Speechly at Cineindependent had hoped; he decided it didn't warrant the expense of producing the enlarged 35mm print needed for more extensive distribution.

'Be Glad' played at various British university cinemas in the early 70s, but never did much more than cover its distributors costs - certainly none of the participants ever saw a penny back from it. It disappeared without trace in the mid-70s (followed shortly by its distributors Cineindependent!) The story resumed at the Rio, Dalston, in February 1993.....



That dream ticket to Dalston!

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

Critical reaction to 'Be Glad' was muted. The Guardian sniffily called it, "a busy little film which persists in highlighting the whimsical and serio-comic aspects of the group's style". Melody Maker gave it a brief, favourable mention and Sight and Sound called it, "loving and unexploitative...brings out the ISB's disconcerting combination of music, myth and magic." Below are two of the more interesting reviews, from the

Evening Standard's Alexander Walker, and the BFI's monthly film bulletin.

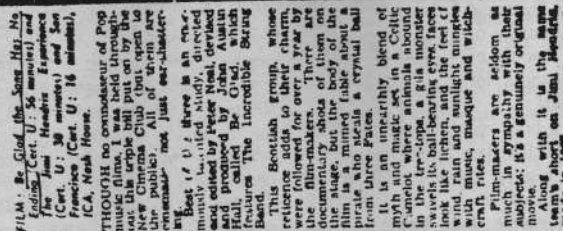
BE GLAD for the Song has no Ending

Great Britain, 1969

Director: Peter Neal

Cert: (not issued). *dist:* Cineindependent. *p.c.:* Cosmologies Productions. *p:* Austin John Marshall. *assoc. p:* Joe Boyd. *sc:* Peter Neal. *ph:* Brian Grainger, David MacDonald, Peter Neal. *col:* Eastman Colour. *ed:* Peter Neal. *m/songs:* The Incredible String Band; including "All Writ Down", "Mercy I Cry City" and "The Iron Stone". *location sd:* Derek Rye, Michael Cox, Paul Robinson. *studio sd:* John Wood. *featuring:* Mike Heron, Robin Williamson, Rose, Licorice, Dick Steele, John Bailey. THE PIRATE AND THE CRYSTAL BALL: *ph:* Peter Neal. *l.p.:* Rakis (*Pirate/Miller's Son*), Malcolm le Maistre (*Bird/Hern*), Rose, Licorice and Uiscobh (*Fates*), Mike Heron and Robin Williamson (*Gods*). 1,800 ft. 50 mins. (16 mm.).

Possibly the first pop music film to content itself with demonstration rather than explanation, *BE GLAD* . . . was filmed over a period of more than a year with the close co-operation of the Incredible String Band (Mike Heron, Robin Williamson and their ladies, Rose and Licorice) who devised the final twenty-minute fable especially for it. Lovingly and respectfully made (its producer has described the group as "apostles of acid enlightenment"), the film's first thirty minutes are of somewhat humorously presented documentary material: footage from their Royal Festival Hall concert in March 1968, including an amazing Noah's Ark inventory of their numerous stringed and other instruments; *Newsweek* reporter Dick Steele interviewing Mike Heron ("If I could describe my songs I wouldn't sing them"); and a visit from Robin and Licorice to Edinburgh guitar-maker John Bailey, with the camerawork momentarily turning the rows of polished instruments hanging on his walls into a Spanish oil-painting. At their best, Robin Williamson's lyrics evoke a fairy-tale Camelot country, so that for once the shots of couples walking through sunlit forests seem entirely relevant. Similarly, since the band's performances are an amalgam of music, magic and pantomime, the transition to the final fable—of a pirate who attempts to alter destiny by stealing a crystal ball from three Grecian-looking fates—seems utterly natural. The fable itself, first, haunting excursion into electronic music, is enchanting; ornately costumed, simply mined, beautifully capturing that combination of child-like innocence and philosophical seriousness that makes the group unique.



FILM: *Be Glad, the Song Has No Ending* (Cert. U: 16 minutes) and *The Incredible String Band* (Cert. U: 30 minutes) and *Sea of Cortez* (Cert. U: 16 minutes), ICA, Nash Heare.

ALTHOUGH no connoisseur of Pop music films, I was held throughout the simple but fine scenes to the screen. All of them are presented not just as-is, but as if they were in an entirely new, vivid study, directed and edited by Peter Neal, devised and produced by the band themselves. The Incredible String Band.

This British group, whose retention adds to the value of the film-makers. There are documentary shots of them on the stage. But the best is a pirate who steals a crystal ball from three Fates.

it is an unearthly blend of music, magic and pantomime. In the tre-tre-tre, a girl monster swallows a ball-bearing eye. Faces look like they've been cut out with music, masque and witchcraft rites.

Film-makers are seldom as good as they are. This is a gem. Along with it is the same team's other film, *Sea of Cortez*. Along with it is the same team's other film, *Sea of Cortez*.

WHAT DID ACE REPORTER DICK STEELE REALLY MAKE OF IT?

I get the feeling that Dick Steele might have played up his straight man role just a little bit. Certainly he wrote quite a sensible article for Newsweek which, for reasons best known to them, remained unpublished. Through the miracles of archivism, 'Be Glad' is privileged to print extracts from it for the first time:

Robin: "My songs reflect my insights into the relationships between people and nature. They're just thoughts really. They reflect the various roles I assume (gypsy, etc.)."

Mike: "Songs mix music and thoughts - they're a register of feelings beyond definition."

Mike dug out books to try and explain, including 'The Centaur' by Algernon Blackwood (about the insincerity of modern life and published in 1911), Douglas Harding's books on comparative religion, Thomas Traherne's Christian mysticism and stuff on Indian mystic verse. "Western music is too personality conscious", he told Steele. "Eastern music is suited to imagination, to half-felt experiences and dreams. Dreams are real - they happen to the mind".

Mike had only just moved from his parents' home to the cottage shown in the film a few weeks previously. It was in an area called Roman Camps, alongside the railway tracks, surrounded by junkheaps and piles of shale. He was curious to see what kind of music would emerge from it. As seen in the film he was already starting to revise his opinions about the awfulness of city life.

Steele wrote of the ISB's spontaneity - as Mike and Robin lived and wrote separately and didn't always rehearse fully, sometimes concerts were the first time they played together. Mike said songs were, "never the same each time - they were affected by the time and the

environment."

Steele described the ISB as part-time workers, not overly keen on piling up lists of things to be done. Robin told him he didn't see himself as a musician, just as "living". Music involved dying because you had to give so much to it. He liked creating, but not being a figurehead, and was interested in developing his pottery and poetry, and in films. He was interested to see how the year would develop, without trusting too much about the future.

Finally, Steele stressed their kinship with people everywhere - Mike saw them as "world citizens" - and said both were eager for their first US tour that summer. Mike was expecting to be influenced, "especially by the West Coast". Steele rounded off the article by saying that they'd return with nothing planned, and nothing radically changed - that they wouldn't alter their basic lifestyles. He was wrong!

LOOKING FOR 'BE GLAD' - ADVENTURES IN ARCHIVISM

My search for a showable print of 'Be Glad' is a lengthy saga. It started after an ISB article I wrote for 'Musing Music' in 1987 generated several enquiries about the film's current whereabouts. I decided to trace it, and after many 'phone calls I found Peter Neal, who told me that the one remaining print was too badly damaged to be shown - but if he could obtain funding (he was dubious) he'd have a new print made.

I'd given up on the idea until an article on ISB re-releases in Record Collector magazine last year, rekindled my enthusiasm. This time I decided to track down the original distributors, Cineindependent (long since defunct).

After searches at Companies House, obscure queries to the British Film Institute, and getting someone to search through hundreds of film canisters in a lock up garage in St John's Wood it was fairly clear that no other prints had survived! In addition, Universal Film Labs had gone

bankrupt, meaning the negatives had also gone missing!

By now I'd got the Rio cinema interested in an ISB retrospective (the manager turned out to be an ex-fan!). The Rio boasts a particularly 'tolerant' 16mm projector, so eventually Peter warily agreed to let the projectionist check out his print - which is how I ended up, one afternoon last November, in an audience of one watching 'Be Glad' again twenty two years after I'd last seen it! Though slightly buckled, it was in good enough condition to be watchable.

In another subplot Alan Mawdsley had also tracked Peter Neal down and pressed him to release the film as a video; Mike and Robin had finally given their consent last year. The negatives were needed to produce a decent video master, so, by now seriously into my archivist bit, I offered to help find them.

After the collapse of Universal it turned out their films had been stored, uncatalogued, on pallets in a barn in Cambridgeshire. Thousands of canisters had sat there rusting, until summer 1991 when the owners of this cinematic cemetery decided to sell up and go to India. By another coincidence, when I traced their new custodians, a film archive near Heathrow Airport, the 'Be Glad' reels had only just been identified and catalogued. There was one tin marked 'Prologue', which raised hopes that we'd found the long-rumoured out-take of 'A Very Cellular Song'. When we ran through it at Screen Ventures (Peter Neal's current production company), it sadly turned out to be nothing more exciting than a couple of minutes of John Peel 'explaining' the ISB appeal!

Currently, Peter Neal is working on funding for the production of a state-of-the-art video master, and with a bit of luck 'Be Glad' will see video release later this year. 'Be Glad' subscribers will be the first to get the details if and when this happens.

Many thanks to Peter Neal - both for having the foresight to document what the ISB were up to in 1968, and for finding the time to be interviewed.

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

THE SEARCH FOR BIG TED'S GRAVE!

Located high in the Preseli hills of Pembrokeshire is the farm where much of the script for the film 'Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending' was dreamed, written and acted out. Not long before, Robin and Mike had been in New York where they met a young dancer by the name of Malcolm Le Maistre who, with his friend Rakis, was trying to get a record deal. Malcolm returned to the Mystic Isles with the ISB and a lovely farmhouse was found in a small valley not too far from the main road, but far enough away from civilisation. The location was a beautiful one, surrounded by gently rolling hills and with a history going back to stone age man, remnants of the Bronze Age and echoes of Celtic Myth, not only in the language but in the landscape too.

Not far from Penwern is the ancient megalith of Pentre Ifan. This is also known as a cromlech and this particular cromlech was probably built by the Irish, as they lived in the area, or by the tribe who lived there and who followed Irish customs. They built this tomb using a giant capstone weighing some 17 tons and supported by three stones. The stones around the cromlech suggest that the covering of the grave was a far more ritualised affair than at first thought. The information at the site provided by CADW (the Welsh Office Department that looks after ancient monuments) states that the tomb was covered in several different layers with the final covering being of quartz, giving it a white reflective hue, so indicating that it was a special place, probably sacred. On excavation of the tomb no human remains nor any funerary items were found.

The view from Pentre Ifan is quite spectacular, overlooking Penwern farm, even though it cannot be seen from the farm. One speculates that Robin was very inspired to have been in this place, even though now there is very little evidence to say that the ISB

The landscape in which 'Be Glad' was filmed is obviously an intrinsic part of the film. Here Stephen Robbins takes us on a walkabout of the ancient sites and legends which must have been never very far from the String Band's imagination during their time at Penwern.

had ever been here. Nor is there any musical evidence other than the music to the film, a song about a pig which haunts me and a song about the Wood family. It is all very magical.

Overlooking Penwern and Pentre Ifan is a large mound of stones. These stones are about one and a half miles away and look as though they are part of a quarry - it is in fact a large cairn called Carn Meibion Owen ('Owen's Son's'). For what purpose did Owen bury his sons there, and who was Owen? Owen Llawgoch - Owen Red Hand, who will come back to help the Welsh like Arthur.

A few fields away is the probable site of another cromlech; Pen Parc stones - two small standing stones, while a couple of miles away in a small village called Brynberian (where it was rumoured that Robin and Liccy had lived) is a very mysterious grave called 'Bedd y Afanc', or the Grave of the Monster. This is a long, low grave on a bleak moorland where the only forms of life are the plants that love an acid-rich soil, overlooked by the Preseli Hills - on top of which are the remains of hut circles, a stone circle called Arthur's Grave and quarries from where the stones for Stonehenge were cut.

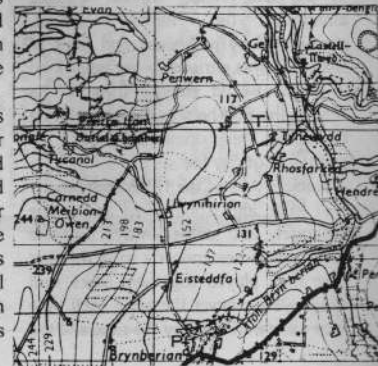
Bedd Y Afanc has a story that this was the grave of a water monster which attacked the local cattle and lived in a pool until the villagers killed it one night. This beast or water monster was probably an otter. The grave itself is long and low and is probably the remains of an Irish burial site, as these graves are fairly common in Ireland and the Irish did occupy this

part of Wales.

Another site of interest, not too far from Bedd Y Afanc, is the remains of a stone circle. Not much now remains of the site, only one large stone and two fallen ones. This site too is on bleak moorland and overlooked by the Preseli Hills of which one in particular is of interest. Carn Ingli, the cairn of the angels is where St Brynach had a cell and this is also the hill which Lady Charlotte Guest could see when she lived in the village of Nevern at the time she was working on the Mabinogion. Who knows what magic was being weaved by our bards Mike and Robin as a result of living in this area? Mike to a lesser extent as he didn't like communal living too much and preferred to live with Rose at various places, one being mentioned in the song 'Thomas Traherne Harding' in which Mike refers to "a basement". That basement being in York, where he met a follower of Douglas Harding, zen follower and author of 'On Having No Head'.

So, the quest for Big Ted's Grave has led us around the Penwern area - an area rich in pre-history, myth and legend - but alas with no grave for Big Ted to be found. Mind you, I've been up to Arthur's Grave on a cold, frosty day when there was no wind, and invoked and called out 'Big Ted' - and a wind sprang up!

The spirit of the String Band lives on still in Pembrokeshire.



Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer 93

THE INCREDIBLE PENTANGLE CONNECTION

BY
CLIVE HARPER

Was there ever a band like the Incredible String Band? Or, for that matter, was there ever a band like the Pentangle? The answers - if one conveniently ignores the Dr Strangely Strange and Dando Shaft albums from the same era - are probably 'No' and 'No'. Still, for two acts grounded in the mid 60s folk scene; using acoustic instruments; with a vaguely rock appeal; and fusing, deliberately or haphazardly, all manner of different esoteric influences into their music, there were bound to be comparisons.

At one stage, during 1968, there was even a flurry of publicity on the theme of rivalry between the two acts. The Incredibles had already recorded two albums and achieved some degree of celebrity, while the Pentangle - who had developed their unique sound over a year's worth of weekly appearances at their own club, The Horseshoe, in London - had just released their first (self-titled) recording, and were due to play a massively publicised 're-launch' concert at the Royal Festival Hall, on June 29th 1968. Coincidentally, the Incredibles were due to give a prestige performance at the Royal Albert Hall on the same date. To understand what happened next, you need to know something of the reputations of both group's managers at the time - Jo Lustig for the Pentangle, Roy Guest for the Incredibles.

Jo was a brash, loud American who'd previously worked with Nat 'King' Cole, Jule Felix and Nico. His personality may have been over-the-top, but his acumen as a PR man was second to none, and he can single-handedly be credited with turning the the Pentangle, almost overnight, from a popular (part-time) London club act into a major league concert attraction. Roy Guest's reputation was no less

"Jo was a brash, loud American, who'd previously worked with Nat 'King' Cole, Julie Felix and Nico"

formidable. He'd come from the thriving Edinburgh folk scene of the late 50s/early 60s, and was by now established as a top promoter of folk type acts in London. In fact, he had actually put the Pentangle on at the Festival Hall a year before, in May '67 (months before their acquaintance with Lustig), although this was only a one-off association. Like Jo, he was known as a man who could successfully use the tools at his disposal to put bums on seats. Martin Carthy recalls one occasion in the 1980s when, years after he'd retired, he 'came back' and managed to sell out the notoriously cavernous Fairfield Hall in Croydon - for a mixed-bill folk concert without a single 'big name'. Such were the people behind both bands at the time. John Renbourn, the Pentangle's lead guitarist, recalls the situation:

"There was a bit of touting around" he said, "of this so-called rivalry between the Incredible String band and ourselves. Pentangle was managed by Jo, Roy Guest was looking after the Incredibles, and I think between them they cooked up some idea that if they put a sort of rivalry number about, then we'd both get big crowds. In fact, Bert had lived with Robin Williamson and Clive Palmer in Edinburgh, and they were all very close..."

So, in fact, the very idea of rivalry or competition was ludicrous, although Jo and Roy were right about the publicity

aspect of the thing. The Melody Maker took it all very seriously at the time (or, at least, were happy to play the game and get some good copy). The only drawback was that, with all competitions, there have to be winners and losers, and as you'll see from the joint review of both shows, someone had decided it was the Incredible's turn to lose. In fact, the Pentangle remained flavour-of-the-month with that particular paper (the most influential of the time) for two or three years, which did them no harm at all. The Incredibles were more sporadic visitors to its pages.

Both Robin Williamson and the Pentangle's Bert Jansch had grown up in the Edinburgh/Glasgow folk scenes, and the pair (together with Clive Palmer, from London) had shared a flat in Edinburgh around the '62 period. There was involvement in a couple of pretty outrageous folk clubs around this time too - one of which was Clive's Incredible Folk Club, in Glasgow. English blues guitarist Wizz Jones was an early guest:

"Well, Clive Palmer I'd known in London" he said, "and then in Paris. I didn't see him for a while - he'd moved to Scotland - and then I had a letter from him saying 'I'm now in Glasgow and I've got a band called Clive's Incredible String Band'. So I went up and did this gig - I was playing with Pete Stanley - at the Incredible Folk Club; the residents were Clive's ISB, who were to become the ISB. And that night Davey Graham was booked as well, and Archie Fisher - so it was a really good night!"

It was an amazing club; it was in Sauchiehall Street, it was upstairs and there was only one lift - only held about ten people - and they used to get hundreds of people up there. Totally

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

illegal, but it was a good all-nighter...Then after that the Incredibles came down to London to record for Joe Boyd, and when they got to London they were doing Old Timey and bluegrass music, but Joe said 'Do you have any of your own material?' Robin and Mike said 'Yeah, we have' - 'Well let's do that instead'. So that's how most of the songs on that album are Robin and Mike's, 'cos Clive didn't have much except a couple of things he'd got from me - so that first album was quite accidental..."

Curiously perhaps (with this in mind), Bert, even today, cites Palmer as a major influence on his songwriting. Not having heard a single note of Palmer's music though, I can hardly comment! Incidentally, a track that first appeared on an obscure Danish version of Bert's *A Rare Comundrum* album in the late 70s, called 'Three Dreamers', is an oblique reminiscence of these flat-sharing days in Edinburgh. The song can be found more easily on his excellent 1990 album *The Ornament Tree*.

Another club that possible predates Clive's Incredible Folk Club was a Tuesday night gathering at Edinburgh's Crown Bar. Bert, in a 1974 interview in *Zigzag*, recalls the situation:

"...I got involved with Robin Williamson, Clive Palmer and Jill Doyle (Davy Graham's sister) and we started our own folk club at the Crown Bar in Edinburgh. In fact Archie (Fisher) and Jill started it first, on Thursday nights, and we - Robin, Clive and me - formed another one on Tuesday nights...and I think this is where the division started. Archie's club became very much more traditionally orientated, whereas ours went the other way - contemporary and more freaky stuff for the stoned heads, as you might say..."

Bert has given several different versions of when and why he first came to London over the years. In the *Zigzag* piece he recalls it like this (although it's described on this occasion as his *second* trip down):

"I came down with Robin

INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

THERE IS no bigger concert-hall in London than the Royal Albert Hall—but the phenomenal Incredible String Band filled it to bursting with about 7,000 people on Saturday.

They've just returned from a second, very successful American tour, and their recent album is selling at an encouraging rate—but does this explain how two young Scots can, with no instrumental help or even amplification, fill such a vast mausoleum?

Not really. The answer lies with the Incredibles' songs of nature, beauty, love and life. The audience want an escape from concrete, neon, plastic and steel; the Incredibles give it to them.

Robin Williamson, dressed in flowing red robes, sang his songs, played the usual bewildering variety of instruments, and at one point donned a black wig with a red plume and leapt around the stage beating a drum in what looked like a remarkably authentic Dervish dance.

Mike Heron wore trousers covered with coloured streamers and a green hat with flowers in it. His strong voice transfixed the whole audience during his "Very Cellular Song" and his sitar-playing wove incredible magic.

We were even treated to some new songs like "His Own Bone," "The Circle Is Unbroken" and the long "Mays"—a rare privilege indeed.

Folk-singers are not notorious for the vast audiences they

attract. Obviously the Incredibles have far transcended such labels. Judging by the response they received on Saturday, "prophets" or even "philosophers" would be much better names, though not completely accurate either.

A beautiful, gentle, happy evening. The Incredibles, it seems, can do no wrong at all!

—HUGH NOLAN

PENTANGLE

ON paper, the Pentangle should not work. All four musicians are creative and sensitive, so that one would imagine personalities would clash onstage. But it does and did work at the Royal Festival Hall last Saturday. Combined with the strong and pure voice of Jacqui McSue, it was an evening of music that will be remembered.

Everyone in the Pentangle had a solo and also permuted with someone else in the group. The music they play and sing cannot really be labelled. Everything is fair game for the group to play.

The guitar talents of John Renbourn and Bert Jansch, both having big-selling modern folk albums of their own, played amplified acoustic guitars, both faultlessly, and John Renbourn's solo improvisations were out of this world. Bassist Danny Thompson had an outstanding solo in "Haitian Fight Song" and drummer Terry Cox, apart from his drum breaks, played glockenspiel with John Renbourn, on a set of little tunes that had the packed audience howling for more.

—GAVIN PETRIE

An early away match for the I.S.B., with Colin Harper contesting a win for the Pentangle but Hugh Nolan just gets in a late "prophets or even philosophers" which takes the game for the I.S.B.

Williamson, looking for work, and the first place we got a gig was at 'The Troubadour'. We also met Anne Briggs during that visit..."

In 1992, he remembered it like this [I'd asked him if he'd come down looking for work]:

"No" he said, "just an adventurous spirit. I first came down to London with Clive, 'cos we got stoned one day and he said 'Have you ever been on an aeroplane?' I said 'No', so we got an aeroplane down to London - in those days it was Britannia. So there we were in London - 'What do we do now?' sort of thing!"

Legendary traditional singer Anne Briggs is only slightly less vague:

"I got involved in folk singing in 1962" she said, "when I had left home. And in the meantime Bert Jansch had moved down from Edinburgh to London to seek fame and fortune in the big city. This was 1962 - I think. I'm pretty sure it was. It might have been 1963 by then, because it was over

the winter period - so it might have been early '63. But anyway, Bert was around at about the same time that I finally sort of made it to London myself. I found myself staying in London at the same time as Bert, and he had come down with Robin Williamson, if I remember right. And Clive. We all shared a flat in Earl's Court - a temporary flat..."

Bert and Anne had known each other before this, but certainly Bert (despite this pivotal foray down to London), if not the others, remained largely based in Edinburgh for the next couple of years, although he was regularly building up gigs all over the country - particularly the North of England. He also travelled, like all folkies did in those days, around Europe and North Africa. His first record appeared on Transatlantic in 1965, he made a few more, shared flats with John Renbourn, and then formed the

Pentangle at the end of '66. By then, the Incredible String Band had made their first album. In 1967, with the release of *The 5000 Spirits...*, they started going places. One of those places was Manchester's Free Trade Hall, in November '67, where they were on a bill with Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, Dorris Henderson, and Al Stewart. It was described in the *Meoldy Maker* as "a survey of all that's happening on the folk scenes", or words to that effect.

During this period, the Pentangle were resident every Saturday night at the Horseshoe, in Soho. The Incredibles were never advertised guests, although Clive did appear on the bill on at least one occasion. That was February 11th 1968 - a couple of weeks before they signed with Lustig - and given that Bert was *also* meant to be playing that night at Newcastle City Hall, Clive may well have sat in with the Pentangle. Bert was in Newcastle as one of the support acts on the

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Watersons' 'Farewell Tour'. He'd either failed to turn up or turned up stoned (depending who you ask) at the previous show in Manchester. He was hardly likely to do the same thing again. This time it was the other support act, the Incredible String Band, who didn't turn up. The press statement said something about needing a rest, but it sounds like pretty feeble stuff! Bert was only booked for those two shows on the four-show tour. The final show was at the Albert Hall - with the ISB on the bill - and Waterson member John Harrison remembers it only too well:

"It was a complete and utter embarrassment" he said. "You had the Incredible String band on one side - which was the new initiative, or whatever, - and the traditional thing on the other side. There were two separate audiences, and you know how you can count on the fingers of one hand perhaps the number of embarrassing experiences that you've had, where you wished the earth would open up and swallow you, or Scotty would beam you up - well that was mine!



"The audience were very, very noisy and they didn't really want to see the Watersons, or hear them. They wanted more Incredible String Band - and Roy Harper, I think was the guest supporting act. They were not interested in traditional music, so it was like a football match, noise-wise. When we came onto the stage, Mike [Waterson] was in a blue funk of some kind - he couldn't think. I struck a note on the guitar to start and he said 'I can't hear it'. I struck it again - bang! 'I still

can't hear it'. What I did then was the most stupid thing I've ever done. I thought 'perhaps it's not in tune' - so I foolishly left the stage to check it. Well, of course if you're at the back of the Albert Hall you don't know this - they just see the guy's gone off... After that we settled down into a complete and utter rigid performance. There was no kind of rapport - we turned in to each other, sung to each other, did the last number and walked off. It was annoying."

Associations with Clive and Robin petered out for a while, as everyone went about their own business - although Bert, Anne and Clive (who had by then just formed C.O.B.) did get together for a one-off concert at the Festival Hall on June 30th, 1971. It was a concert by default, really, as Pentangle manager Jo Lustig had actually booked the venue for a Van Morrison showcase. Van pulled out at the last minute (and apparently got sued), and Bert and his pals were drafted in for what was Bert's first solo performance since March '68. It was C.O.B.'s first performance ever.

Shortly after that, on July 24th '71,

the Pentangle and the Incredibles were together on the same bill for (remarkably) the first and last time, at the Lincoln Festival, held at Tupdene Manor Park. Earlier that month, Lustig had signed a deal with CBS Records to, basically, bring them a job lot of

would-be folk superstars. 'Electric Folk' was the industry buzz word at the time, and CBS were keen to jump on the Island/Transatlantic bandwagon. Jo was to provide the label with "finished recordings from artists he has selected from the folk field." The CBS press release went on to suggest that Jp was "in a position to select for CBS those with a folk background who have the best chance of having universal appeal."

This was, in theory, a fair bet. Jo would continually manage to find and latch onto numerous folk-based people who would rise to prominence under his management - Ralph McTell, Steeleye Span, The Chieftans, Mary O'Hara, etc. Unfortunately on this occasion he'd lost his magic touch (at least commercially).

Earlier in the year, Pentangle bassist Danny Thompson had produced an album (on RCA) for another Lustig protegee Gillian McPherson. This would be the blueprint for the CBS deal: artists already under Lustig's management were allowed to select and produce an artist of their choice. Ralph McTell produced C.O.B.'s *Spirit of Love*; John Renbourn produced Wizz Jones' *Right Now*; Bert Jansch (allegedly - though he's not credited) 'produced' Anne Briggs' *The Time Has Come*; and somebody else under his wing (any ideas?) obviously produced Therapy's *Almanac*. There may have been one or two other recordings under these circumstances - again, if you've any information, I'd love to hear it - but they were all commercial disasters at the time, and classic folk collectables ever since!

From October to December 1972, the Pentangle played what became their final tour. It wasn't planned as such, but as a group they'd been falling apart at the seams (for various personal and business reasons) for quite some time. Contrary to last issue's Clive Palmer feature, the tour was the first time C.O.B. had played with the Pentangle - and also the first UK tour the Pentangle had played with a support act of any kind whatsoever. In fact, there were two support acts - C.O.B. and Wizz Jones - which was a little over-the-top, but probably linked in some way to the CBS deal. Wizz recalls the experience:

"That was their swansong really" he said, "it was their 'farewell' tour, which was quite an amazing event really. I don't know whether it was meant to be their farewell tour, but it certainly turned out that way. It had kind of gone sour [for the Pentangle]; they'd been going for so long that I think it had got a bit automatic for them, but the amazing thing was that the management chose to put Clive's Original Band and myself on the same bill, which made the whole thing a bit

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

impractical really. I think the idea was to give Clive's band and myself a bit of a leg up, but really the bill was top-heavy - there were too many people on the show, I thought - either Clive's band shouldn't have been on or I shouldn't have been on! But we were all glad of the tour.

"But it was an incredibly shambolic affair. Danny Thompson, who's probably got one of the most powerful personalities of anyone I've ever met, made the whole tour for us others who weren't in the group a real memorable event. After every gig Danny would come back to the hotel and he would have this sport of persuading - bribing- the night porter to open the wine cellar. And he cleaned out every hotel wine cellar on that tour. I mean, the kind of stamina that you needed to do it...! I mean, God! I wasn't used to it - I'm not a heavy drinking man...and Clive's Original Band, they were all fighting amongst themselves, so it was a real shambles of a tour really! But it was good for me - I mean, it got me to a bigger audience, so it was good from that point of view!"

The tour was a 27 date affair, from October 10th to December 8th. By the new year, the Pentangle were finished. And that's that, really. Except to add, as a post script, that Bert was very keen to include Robin Williamson in his BBC documentary *Acoustic Routes* (filmed in '92 and due to be shown c. Easter '93). Unfortunately, Robin - who lives in Los Angeles - couldn't be reached at the arranged time because of a) the L. A. riots, and b) the fact that he's not very keen to give out his address even to old pals like Bert. Nevertheless, his 'First Girl I Loved' is performed in the film (superbly) by Wizz Jones, and will be included in full on the soundtrack CD. And then there's this Renbourn connection....

THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND by Robin Denselow

IN TERMS of output variety and problems alone, the Incredible String Band never cease to amaze me. They have released album after album (verging from exquisite to self-indulgent) have plunged headlong into a disastrous music and dance show, have been plagued with splits in the group, and the temporary departure of one member to make a solo album.

Their Royal Festival Hall concert on Saturday night showed that for the time being at least the contradictions have been resolved and the unsuccessful experimentation of the last lean year or so has suddenly fallen into place. The band has had to accom-

modate Robin Williamson's growing interest in adding a visual theatrical element to his songs, and Mike Heron's drift towards heavy rock. With the addition of Malcolm Le Maistre an accomplished multi-instrumentalist who formerly led a dance and mime troupe, they can now launch successfully into very funny mime and drama sequences and mix visual impact with music that plunders time and space for its influences.

They can now only be described by that degraded word unique. Saturday's concert was an exhilarating, surreal bombardment. It included a delicious camp thirties spoof a Carter family

country song, a powerful extract from Heron's forthcoming rock album, and—most extraordinary of all—a delicate new First World War narrative song sequence "Darling Belle," which used oboe, electric bass, organ, and harmonica to evoke an atmosphere somewhere between Rupert Brooke and L. P. Hartley with the minimum use of period music. Each song was entirely different in mood, style, and instrumentation; skiffle followed mime, followed ballad, followed jig, followed rock sequence, and everything actually worked. The Incredibles deserved a concert like that; now they deserve the recognition.

Rosemary Lane

the pentangle magazine

A 32 page quarterly magazine packed with news, reviews, features and information on the PENTANGLE, old and new! "Who's going to buy it?" they said (and that was just the band!). But it's here. It's ROSEMARY LANE, and it's about the PENTANGLE, their friends and associates from way back.

Issue one, out in March, is packed with news on the forthcoming release of BERT JANSCH's *Chameleon* recordings, JOHN RENBOURN's association with ROBIN WILLIAMSON, PENTANGLE's BBC sessions dilemma, BERT's remixing of his rarest album, PENTANGLE's bizarre German bootleg debate, full details on their NEW ALBUM and SPRING TOUR dates; and a lot more besides...

On the reviews front, we've all the recent CD compilations, and a look at PETER KRITLEY's solo album, and HAMISH IMLACH's outrageous new book. PLUS a tantalizing preview of *ACOUSTIC ROUTES*, the BBC documentary on BERT JANSCH with DAVEY GRAHAM, MARTIN CARTHAY, ANNIE BRIGGS, WIZZ JONES and BILLY CONOLLY.

Features include a beginners guide to the PENTANGLE and part one of the definitive tour of the PENTANGLE's vintage film and TV appearances. Also, the first instalment of a regular "Collector's Corner" by legendary folk mail-order avenger MICHAEL YOUNG!

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INTERESTING ITEMS

* Key Mail Order, of PO Box 149, London SE26 4RY (081-676-0708) were, as of a couple of months ago certainly, selling a set of six 'psychedelic postcards'. Two of these are of early I.S.B. gigs and are a wonderful little collectors item. I think they cost about £3.00 for the set. Destined to be rare I suspect.

* American folk/roots magazine 'Dirty Linen' is advertising Robin Williamson 'Mid-Winter Festival Posters' 13" by 16" signed and numbered by artist Lahri Bond (who has also written about the ISB in D.L.). They look pretty damn good in the ad. but I haven't been able to get one yet myself. They are \$12 in the US and it says to enquire about overseas rates. Get scribbling to: Lahri Bond, Heartwork Studio, 21 Meadow Street, Hadley, MA 01035, USA.



Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

"...and it ended up in 'U' which was the ultimate mixed-media, and I was pretty much outside, thinking well it's nice to see this develop but it's not that much to do for me".

That's Mike Heron, speaking on the recent Radio Scotland ISB documentary, about what is probably the Incredible String Band's most paradoxical work - 'U'. Both album and shows are quite often given poor treatment in any articles about the ISB and they rarely feature highly in any ISB fans' conversations. Was it really "A surreal parable of song and dance" as the shows subtitle proclaimed, or just a mish-mash of bad dancing and interminable tunes?

Following my introduction to the music of the String Band in 1974 (better late than never!), I idled around 'Relics' and toyed with 'Liquid Acrobat' and '5000 Spirits' but the biggy was always 'U'. Neither of my two ISB gurus hit me with 'U' straight away. Keep the hard stuff 'til later eh? Get him hooked first then show him what's possible - it seemed that way.

Stranger still was the fact that, odd rumours abounded concerning 'U', and it was widely held that the only, and they meant only, way to hear it was with the aid of some powerful psychedelics, and futhermore, in the somewhat befuddled way of the times, it was intimated that various songs alluded to the use and effects of said psychedelics.

Obviously none of these hoary hippies had read the music press when 'U' came out or they would have known what it was supposed to be about. But you know how hippie mythology worked and of course I swallowed it whole, in all senses of the word - and for years I don't think I ever listened to 'U' in a 'straight' frame of mind. When I eventually did it sounded exactly the same! Maybe there's a moral in there somewhere.

First intimations of 'U' came in the music press of 1969, with Robin saying "It's just a psychological extension of what we're already doing", and although the String Band had used dancers on stage in their early days, (Mimi & Mouse - anyone have any information about these two?), 'U' was

U

Sir Ramic Hobbs
— probes the paradox —

to be different, very different. Robin again, "We'll include dancing, and write the whole thing on a romantic theme".

The dancing was to be supplied by 'Stone Monkey', a dance troupe formed from the ashes of the 'Exploding Galaxy' - (in)famous for their house in London's Balls Pond Road where all manner of what have you apparently took place.

The ISB met up with two members of the Exploding Galaxy (by then calling themselves 'Stone Monkey'), quite by chance, in the infamous New York hotel, the Chelsea. In her book 'At The Chelsea' Malcolm Le Maistre's mum recounts how he and Rakis, a fellow Exploding Galaxy member, landed at Kennedy Airport, "Deepdyed enemies of the 'fuzz'", and took up residence at the Chelsea where they spent a lot of time "recording the sound of water, seated on the floor with a big bowl filled from the tap, splashing it melodiously." As one did in those days.

After unsuccessfully trying to persuade MGM records to sign them they placed a notice in the hotel which read:

Trans-Media Activators, Creators
Sound/Light/Dance are Needed to
EXPLODE...Exploiters of Mantric
Sound structures, Chinese Ballet
Quaki-Quali Akashic Records, Tantric
Flesh-poems, Chakra Actuations
And more and All
Point Cosmic 0
NOW Contact
Come See Stone Monkey
Room 604
Transcend
Time/Space/Inertia/Inhibitions
Masturbation/New York hang-ups

Robin and Mike saw the notice and Malcolm and Rakis were brought into the ISB's enclave, immediately altering and expanding the whole venture, with Robin being able to materialise and realise more easily his multi-media visions.

The first of these was the 'Be Glad' film, which also featured Malcolm and Rakis and was a direct precursor to 'U'. As 'Be Glad' is featured heavily elsewhere in this issue we shall move swiftly on to Christmas 1969 when the ISB plus members of Stone Monkey took up residence in a row of cottages on a country estate near Peebles in south Scotland.

This was Glen Row, to be featured in many an ISB photo-opportunity over the next few years. Previously to this the ISB had lived in a variety of situations, most recently Robin, Likky and various members of Dr Strangely Strange had lived at the Penvern commune in Wales, where the 'Be Glad' film was shot. Mike apparently wasn't too keen on communal living and so a row of simple cottages where each member could have their own space, yet be very close, seemed to satisfy the need for community without communality.

The Guardian's Robin Denselow visited Glenrow during rehearsals for 'U' and found it all a little strange, "If it is to be the success in London it deserves it won't be because it is intelligible, or because of the dancing, but because it is funny and frightening and the music by Williamson and Mike Heron is among their finest yet."

Denselow expressed some doubts, full of insight in retrospect, about the validity of a multi-media, multi-coloured pantomime in the early 1970s, when the underground was beginning to fracture, but concurred with the views of most String Band devotees, before and since, writing that, "Williamson knows what he believes and pop fashion has no place in his work."

During this interview Williamson pointed out one of the keys to understanding the ISB's work when he revealed that the early albums "explained what a state of awareness is", and that 'U' would be about "that original-awareness lost and regained". Denselow concluded with a portent of things to come, "In America there

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

should be no problems, in spite of the plot and dancers, reaction in Chalk Farm should, at least, be interesting." It was, in both places.

The show opened at London's Roundhouse, in Chalk Farm, on April 8th and ran for ten days, alternating evening shows only with days of matinee and evening performances. The cost? A mere 20/- for the most expensive days. The Roundhouse, a converted locomotive turning shed in Chalk Farm, had been the venue for a number of other well-known underground extravaganzas so the London audiences were primed for an event of this nature. Excellent advertising preceded the event and attendances were generally good with several of the rock pantheon at the time, such as Marc Bolan, showing up to see and be seen and no doubt to pinch some ideas.

Sadly I was too young and geographically challenged to attend myself but in the interests of accuracy 'Be Glad' contributor Adrian Whittaker remembers it like this:

GOOD

-The musical performances. Hearing songs like 'Queen Of Love' live was breathtaking. Songs which don't come across so well on the record ('Glad To See You', 'Rainbow') fed on the energy a live performance generated.

- The pace of the show. The need to have quick change-overs between the songs meant that, for the first time, the band had a collection of guitars in different tunings in easy reach. Previously there had been interminable re-tuning breaks between songs.

BAD

-the dancing. A poorly-performed foot-thumping mishmash of obscure multicultural references. The ISB were capable of representing eclecticism at its best and Stone Monkey were the flip-side of the coin.

-the 'plot'. Trying to work out the 'U-shaped story' was a bit like trying to find a consistent narrative thread in 'Sgt. Pepper'. They should've come

clean and called it a 'collage' or summat.

-having to explain to my sceptical mum why I was spending all my pocket money on tickets to see 'U'. I'm sure she thought it involved mass drug-taking (sadly it didn't).

The reviewers, through which history and the majority of people at the time saw the performances, were generally not over-keen on the whole event.

'Incredible' Panto But Much Too Long', was one headline. 'Minority Pop' another. The writer here, Derek Jewell informing his readers after he had seen the show that, "the dead-weight of boredom is too much".

being "masterful" was less complimentary about the dancing. Stone Monkey were, he suggested, "an appalling group of amateurs...nowhere as good as...Pan's People". It was this same piece which provided the oft-quoted damnation of Stone Monkey's terpsichorian techniques as "sad groping and vacuous hand-waving". Harsh words indeed but it did seem to accentuate the point that London might have been a bad choice for 'U', provincial audiences and reviewers may have been more appreciative.

Actually all the critics weren't totally against the live version of 'U'. Rolling Stone's man in London for the event, Jan Holdenfield, checking the


show out prior to its American debut, was reservedly impressed with Stone Monkey but strangely referred to the String Band's music as being "Fifties folk diluted by time, expanded by dope, and derivative". In yet another attempt to find out what the whole thing was about he queried the PR rep for the show, only to be told:

"To me it started on another planet and everyone was very innocent and just loved and played with each other and there was no evil, nothing bad. Then for one reason or another, they were all stranded on another planet, going through time and space and everything, and they


appeared on the planet we're on and became aware of it and showed, to me, and brought to the surface, how ridiculous and synthetic the things in our life are."

So, not much help there then.

Robin, in the same interview, was more concise; "It's about love across time and space. It's in a U-shaped direction, going from a high level of awareness in the beginning to a low level of awareness and then up to a high level of awareness and communication." Aware by that time that audience and reviewer reaction was quite critical he added, "It requires imagination. It's got a do-it-yourself message. We keep getting different flashes on it. I like incredibly vague, rambling structures. Of course they don't seem vague to me." The



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Music Press ad. for 'U'. 69 shillings and ten pence to you sir!

Reviewer Tony Palmer, writing in the Observer, was nothing less than cruel, commenting that "Heron and Williamson have peddled their dirge-like wailings on disc and in the concert hall for some while now.....They specialise in synthetic Orientalism and hope that the obscurity of their vision will be mistaken for wisdom". Palmer finished his 'piece' by saying that Heron and Williamson rarely give press interviews (not strictly true anyway) because "they have nothing left to say and have left all to the fairies". Tony Palmer had apparently fallen into the generation gap with only his pipe and slippers for company.

But even that bastion of the English underground, IT, had some harsh things to say about the stage show. Miles, whilst considering the music as

dissonance was beginning to emerge between the imaginative, creative vision of the String Band and the inability of audiences and critics alike to keep up with it, a problem that was to dog every album and venture post - 'Wee Tam' leading to the sort of thinking which has that it was the girls/Malcolm/Gerard Dott/scientology which 'ruined' them. In your dreams.

The overall message seemed to be that while the music was good, if not fantastic, it was the dancing and stage show which failed miserably, in fact I could only locate one reviewer who actually liked Stone Monkey's contribution to the show, Gary Von Tersch of Rolling Stone, who suggested people "catch the full show with the presence of the ensnaring Stone Monkey....".

Perhaps because Heron was the most distanced of the band from the multi-media idea he was able to see the flaws in the show and in retrospect to be quite frank about them: "The show was not presented as a TV show would have been...There was no leader. Every one of us, 12 in number, was a producer and director. This gave the impression of disorder. The Incredibles have a certain magic on stage, and the Stone Monkey tried very hard to blend in with it, but I suppose it didn't work as well as it should have done". Mike went on to suggest that if anyone in the audience disliked anything about the performance it was because they weren't in a happy mood, their feelings being reflected back at them.

This apparent dislike of the performance side of the U coin is quite ironic really considering the ISB were merely mirroring the artistic aspirations of the underground, and if 'U' was run on the basis that all concerned were writers and directors then surely that was the anarchism the underground demanded in action, and yet the flaws inherent in any venture involving low-budgets and joint decisions (surely the

acme of hippidom) were seized upon and villified for the next twenty years by both audience members and music writers alike.

What did audiences and critics want? Slick professionalism in Carnaby Street tailored outfits? Dance routines choreographed by Lindsay Kemp? Lionel Blair and Una Stubbs cockneeing it up as Bad Sadie Lee and the Queen Of Love? Surely the audiences got exactly what they asked

now being magnified.

The show ran its intended number of nights at the Roundhouse then costumes, backdrop and instruments were packed away and 'U' was probably the last real 'happening' London ever saw.

'U' moved to the US where, originally, a sponsor had been found to underwrite the costs of the US performances. This deal collapsed and the String Band had to finance it themselves, needing a six sold-out nights at the Filmore East to make it financially viable. Sadly it wasn't to be. Perhaps the fact that they were on the week before 'Tommy' opened had something to do with it or perhaps it was simply because the imagination had gone out of New York, just as it had in London, scattered by the events at, and repercussions of, Woodstock and Altamont. These festivals together with the Isle Of Wight in the UK and to a lesser and later extent 'U' marked the end of the media love/hate involvement with 'hippy' and the hardcore hippies, those who had chosen it as a way of life, were moving out of the big cities to 'get it together in the country', or just re-locating to smaller towns.

Whatever the case the audiences didn't turn out in enough numbers to make the event a viable proposition and Stone Monkey returned to the UK, leaving the String Band to continue the 'U' tour on a music only basis. Stone Monkey went east, the ISB went west, to Boston, Cincinnati and San Francisco.

In the final analysis the stage show of 'U' was just too late. The 60s, temporally at least, had drawn to a close, its young generation for the most part now 'growing up' in the accepted sense, nostalgia for those times not yet with us, and not usefully marketable. But the explosion of imagination which psychedelia had engendered in some was still expanding with ever-increasing energy, flawed maybe but at least attempted, and a bright



for and should have expected. As for critics, they rarely like anything bright and colourful as a matter of course in case it means people are having good old-fashioned FUN.

Perhaps London, jaded by the events of the late sixties, always wanting to move on even if it didn't know what to, was just too sophisticated now for events of this nature, too self-conscious to have fun and be part of someone else's fun as in the days of the UFO parties and suchlike.

The 'Times' certainly thought so, Michael Wale reservedly commenting, "A worthy enough experiment but with the often tenuous eastern music and mumbo jumbo fixed firmly in the drug period of 18 months or so ago it all seemed rather dated". The split was now obviously beginning to show between those who lived their culture and those who merely commented on it, any 'generation gap' that existed

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

counterpoint to the heavy 'progressive' music which was slowly gaining ground. And whether you like to discuss these things or not the drugs had changed, from good acid to green microdot, mind expanders to downers, and belief systems were slipping slowly but surely from amazement at the universe to anguish at how to pay the mortgage or to refuge in some bizarre, spartan religious sect; the 'U' generation loosing out inexorably to the 'me' decade and in those terms alone the 'U' performances were fitting epitaph to the 60s.

Now, well it doesn't really matter too much I don't suppose but it was a grand adventure proving beyond a shadow of doubt that not all those brightly coloured people with their strange ideas about life the universe and anything vanished on the stroke of midnight, December 31st 1969.

"It's good, but it's not my favourite ISB album" is a phrase oft heard whenever the gatefold colour-fest that is 'U' is raised in conversation amongst people who should really have given up listening to music and taken up crocheting many years ago but Miles' wish that "hopefully an album of the 'U' music will be issued" was duly granted when the album of the performance of the idea of the thought was issued in November 1970.

Heron's comments which open this article are by far too modest. Out of the eighteen tracks seven are actually Heron compositions, with two major ones, 'El Wool Suite' and 'Rainbow' opening and closing both album and performance and his is an integral part of the whole 'U' phenomenon, whether intentional or not.

One writer called 'U' "perhaps the most difficult to approach of all String Band albums". That is certainly the case but as with most things 'difficult' perseverance invariably pays off. I make no claims whatsoever to be able to match the songs to the story or even understand any of the songs themselves but.....but I digress.

Slip the album from its sleeve and onto your turntable and straight into 'El Wool Suite' a stunning piece of atmospheric music to open with. Like a morning raga it picks, plucks and thrums at first, warming and welcoming the listener, then the clay drums kick in and off we go with the

musical landscape of 'U' opening before you.

Robin's wife to be, Janet Shankman painted, and drew scenes from this mythical realm between 1968 and 1971. The drawing below comes from the 'El Wool' series and as you can see is very String Band. Janet's 'El Wool' creation was obviously behind parts of 'U' at least. In a letter to a fan she described it as being "...an imaginary planet that I like to draw. It had many lovely people on it and the favourite



game was creating - they created water where they liked, unicycles, things to juggle, music, strange shapes for themselves, disguises for fun etc".

'The Juggler's Song', a metaphysical juggler tosses his cosmic balls to a jolly sing a long tune, time in the U-niverse is created for us and we're into an exploration of the problems of temporality, courtesy of Robin's 'Time'. A slow and mournful meditation, just Robin's voice and guitar setting time free to do its thing.

'Bad Sadie Lee' - God knows. It's just a bizarre cowboy song, yodela yodelipi, yodeli don't you know.

'Queen of Love' - what can you say? One of Williamsons finest compositions (and one of his own personal favourites), a fantastic, rich song. I always get an image of it being sung at a medieval court somewhere, don't know why, that's just how it strikes me! Voice and instruments eventually melt it to an end leaving you sighing and swooning with happiness and sadness in equal parts.

The arrangement, romantic as it is, wasn't, surprisingly done by Robin, but

by Tom Constanten (cue sound of readers scratching their balding heads - sorry girls - and thinking "I've heard that name before"). And so you have, if you are devotee of the second best band in the world - the Grateful Dead.

Tom Constanten was an occasional keyboard player for the Dead and responsible for the rather curious Aoxaxoma album. Constanten met Robin Williamson whilst waiting for the helicopter to take them to the Woodstock festival. Both were into

Scientology and spent some time in conversation. Later, via another Scientologist, Peter Grant, (who played banjo on 'Bad Sadie Lee' and also guested on the Dead's Aoxomoxa) Constanten ended up working on 'Queen of Love'. Shall we

tell what Constanten thought of the ISB?

Interviewed by Ken Hunt in the now sadly-defunct Swing 51 Constanten says, "I have nothing but pleasant memories of working with Robin, Mike, Licorice, Rose and Janet and Joe Boyd, their producer.

Robin has an elfin, patrician quality about him that gives extra momentum to a song...one of the things I noticed about it, it makes it believable when he sings a ballad, that he was actually there when the legendary events happened, as if he fell into this world from a different age perhaps. Their recording sessions were as placid as the Grateful Dead recording sessions were chaotic..."

Flip the record to side two for another opening Heron instrumental 'Partial Belated Overture'. 'Partial' we always used to call the 'rubber band' song and it does have a boingy sort of feel but with the Shenai squeaking away on top of it

Into Heron's first biggie, 'Light In Time Of Darkness/Glad To See You'. Hymn-like, simple but plaintive piano

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

and bass accompany Mike's bell-clear voice, leading to a rousing end chorus of 'Glad', with Mike leaving you in no doubt that he is pretty damn "glad to see you". Alright so the lyrics are wetter than a haddock's bottom but it's the overall effect that matters.

'Walking Along With You' I don't really like, Rose's vocal is a bit thin and the tune isn't up to much either, piano's too plinky-plonky and so on. File under 'Cosmic Boy'.

'Hirem Pawnitof' - a jiggy type thing, all motley sidekicks and zen enlightenment from a tray. Nothing special but a great crowd pleaser with 'Fairies Hornpipe' tagged on at the end somewhat turgidly. 'Bridge Theme' closes side two and 'Bridge Song' opens side three and may be a Scientology reference to the 'Bridge To Total Freedom'. Or then again perhaps not. Piercing vocals from Likky and excellent lead guitar work from Robin make this track a perennial favourite. The almost religious wail-athon of considerable proportions brings us nicely to.....

'Invocation', something very special indeed, is one of my personal all-time favourite String Band songs. I say 'song' using the term loosely as 'Invocation' is really just what it says - an invocation - one which invokes the power which moves and *is* everything. "I make reverence to you, round wakefulness we call the earth".

In an age when now numerous so-called 'new agers' and self-styled pagans talk about ecology and pantheism etc we would do well to remember this song. Musically it's just Robin's best incantatory voice shimmering above Greg Heat's 'voice sitar', which drones in the background. Eerie.

Don't dash out and ask at your local music emporium for a voice sitar, apparently the one the ISB used was a one-off, described in answer to a fans query as being, "a flat board about 4ft long fitted with the same number of strings as the drone strings on a sitar and it includes an electric pick-up and a sending device, enabling you to feed any sound into the instrument, which will vibrate the sympathetic strings. The vibration is picked up and fed back out of the instrument. This is what was done with piano and violin on 'Invocation'. Our voice sitar is the only

one of its kind in the world....".

'Invocation' is another of Robin's self-confessed favourite songs which makes two on the 'U' album out of five or six he once listed in an interview. Proof enough for me anyway that 'U' is of far more significance in the ISBs musical canon than it is given credit for.

What *can* you say about 'Robot Blues' - from the same stable as 'Bad Sadie Lee' out of 'Big Ted' it's fun, fun, fun 'til daddy takes the oil can away. 'Robot Johnson' indeed - I ask you!

'Puppet Song', simple - man gets confused-asks wife-tackles politics-takes on money and hot-foots it to meet God, who of course is dead cool about it all and lays it on the line. - You're in charge, have fun and for god's sake get on with it. It's a dirty job being an infinite mind but we've got it to do. The music isn't up to much but the lyrics and message are fine by me - and true. There's nothing more I can say.

Side four, the home straight, now and 'Cutting The Strings'. One writer described the lyrics as being about, here we go again, "the theraputic and liberating effects of Scientology" - and that was written by a Scientologist so he should know. "Free to make my own tomorrow.....Free to be me, Free to be free". Robin and Likky's voices soar, and the music backing is distinctly Indian until just near the end when a sort of circus feel enters the proceedings for the "Free to be" verse.

'I Know You' is one of the couple of Likky compositions (along with 'Sunday Song' on Earthspan) and it makes me wish she'd done more. It's just downright strange, achingly beautiful voice and even a whistling solo! ISB trainspotters should note that the 'wing' motif occurs in both songs! The girl obviously just had a thing about winged beings!

And now the grand finale, Heron's 'Rainbow'. "Golden threads of autumn streak the purple sky", and so forth, it sounds as though Likky has hardly moved from the mike after doing 'I Know You'. These days it's easy to dismiss it as being hippy shit of the nature the punk wars were fought for but even twenty three years later it still has integrity and sounds as if it were actually meant. Everybody gets to sing their little hearts out and it builds

slowly to a rousing crescendo and you just know, even without having seen the stage show, that the story is resolved and in that they all lived happily ever after. 'Rainbow' is a glowing suffusion of the String Band at their very best and by the time the last "I have seen you there", has faded into the distance you're sated but perhaps just a little sad and alone in the world because it's finished. Taking 'U' off the turntable is like an old friend or lover leaving, inevitable. But you know he/she'll be back so it's ok.

The whole idea of 'U' (to me anyway) seems as though it is intended to create a mood or atmosphere, like a raga or a good classical work, and I find it best to listen to it in the morning or at dusk. It just has that effect on me. Try it over the period that the light just begins to fade - you'll see what I mean.

Hey, sorry about that momentary weird interlude there, back to the *facts*.

The String Band's following was still such that the album could reach number 34 in the charts in October 1970 before vanishing a couple of weeks later. 'Tommy' it was not!

Concept album, music, stage show and yes we can say things about the album sleeve itself. A gatefold (common at the time but in retrospect a rare art form) the 'U' sleeve was yet another psychedelic extravaganza although the band having now eschewed drugs in favour of scientology the psychedelia was drawn from a new perception of the world rather than drug-inspired vision.

The front cover is basically taken from the poster used to promote the shows two figures, each with two faces, doing shoulderstands to form a 'U' shape. Multi coloured clothing abounds and the two balls hint at 'The Juggler's Song'. The sleeve might have been designed by Bob Heimall but it was Janet Shankman who did the cover art.

Open the gatefold sleeve and yes, it looks as though Janet did the two paintings inset also. Masterpieces of hippy art the lower one is a vision of the world dreamed alive. Where are the originals now I'd like to know? I'd climb a slippery pole to have that on my wall. Photographs from the stage show adorn the gatefold with the fruits of fevered costum designing being widely evident. Does it look silly? A bit

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer 93

- but only to non-Stringheads. Spot the silly dancer and, look, there's 'Time' (dancer with cardboard clock on head!), 'Bad Sadie Lee' resplendent in Chad Valley cowgirl outfit, 'Hiram Pawnitoff' (hairy hippy in highway man garb shock) and so on. It shows people having child-like, but not childish, fun. How many adults can do that these days? There was also a lyric sheet in some versions of the album, probably the US release. I had to buy three copies over the years before I got that.

A programme was produced for the 'U' performances - and one of the best String Band programmes at that. Printed on high quality glossy paper the cover was the same as the album cover and the inside gave the cast and characters in order of scene appearance. The track listing in the programme reveals three songs not on the album, 'Long long road' (Heron), 'Beautiful Girl Speaks' (Heron) and 'Be Close To Me' (Williamson). 'Long Long Road' crops up on a couple of live ISB tapes but as for the others, they are lost forever to the memories of those present at the shows. The centre piece of the programme was a photo of ten of the people involved in 'U' and the back page gave us some blank verse from two members of Stone Monkey and Malenie (who was later to run the Friends Of ISB newsletter and information service).

It's an essential item for the collector of ISB memorabilia but you'd be lucky to pick one up these days for less than £20

Elements of 'U' found their way into future String Band performances by way of the small plays and skits which often accompanied songs. The actual songs from the album were rarely done again live and gradually 'U' became just another rare record in the catalogues, its sound kept alive by only a faithful few.

So there we almost have it. It's not catchy and it's not immediate, requiring attention and concentration - best listened to as a whole piece if possible and ideal for having a good contemplate to, but it is much underrated, both album and performance.

I think Robin may think so too. He certainly did in December 1970 following the album's release, sticking to his guns about the entire concept in an interview with Micheal Watts, "It

had a lot of hard reviews," he said, "but a lot of critics were unwilling to give something of themselves.....by watching 'U' they were required to think for themselves."

Just as Liquid Acrobat marked the transition between acoustic and electric String Band, 'U' hinted at the end of the 'hippy dream' period, the reaction to it indicating that critics and audiences alike wanted something more focused and clearly defined. Imagination within the String Band was never at a higher level but it couldn't be matched by the concert going public or the reviewers. Like Frank Zappa said, "You can't do that on stage anymore." Hello 1970s.

'U' - when all's said and done - it's just a collection of songs and some memories now. That it can still be listened to with enormous pleasure and is due for CD re-issue later this year is testament to its lasting effects on people. The last word goes to Mike Heron:

"We do not try to tell people what to think - to give them an entity to accept or reject. We want to give them a seed on which they can imagine".

'U' was that seed and that's why we're still listening to it.

Stringword

You wanted a crossword and here it is. A relatively easy one to start with. Next issue's will be a killer though. Clues below. I'm not going to print the answers as if you need much help with any of these it's definitely a bad sign. Should provide you with a diversionary fifteen minutes though.



CLUES

Across: 1. (+1 down) Relative larva (6,11) 5. See 13 across. 7. See 15 across. 9. Town in which you can go skating on Happy Valley pond (9). 13. (+5 across): Stupid girl!. 14. OK this - from 'Hard Rope & Silken Twine'. 15. (+7 across): Get bid on changing horses! (3,3). 17. Mike's composition from 'Be Glad' (3,4,4). 18. See 10 down. 19. ---- Neal, director of 'Be Glad' movie (5).

Down: 1. See 1 across. 2. (+8 down), Where Darling Bell's skirts were lifted (5,3,6,4). 3. -- Sleep Blues? 4. Connects Dust with Diamonds? (2). 6. Follows the Half Remarkable Question? (3). 8. See 2 down. 10 (+16 down and 18 across) A native of Wild Wyoming (3,5,3). 11. "A treasure map from ---- the Flap" (5). 12. Restless on 'Earthspan' (5). 16. See 10 down.

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Strangely Strange - But Oddly Amiable!

Grahame Hood goes strangely
where no-one has gone strangely
before.

"A lament (Valentia's) was a sober finale to the career of Dr. Strangely Strange, who passed away in the early hours of Sunday night at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London. Of volatile character, the deceased was always regarded with anticipation by those who followed his uncanny way of life. Indeed it is ironic that his friends and admirers should find themselves in mourning at a time when Strange seemed closer to harmonic creativity than at any time during his long and chequered programme.

"Always one to work in a series of energetic outbursts intermingled with periods of fluidity and reflection, the Doctor began the year ambitiously, committing himself to research, aimed at combining traditional and contemporary folk elements in one group identity. His death resulted from the breakdown of this machinery. Nevertheless his work has not been in vain. He has kindled musical imagination, and results should arise like the phoenix hereafter." (Review from Melody Maker 20/5/71).

Da Capo al fine.....

Somewhere in the vaults of an American newspaper is a photo of a bunch of leather-clad Dubliners purporting to be the backing band featured on Ian Whitcombe's hit record, 'You Really Turn Me On'. In fact, few, if any of the people in the picture had anything to do with the record at all (the full, sordid, story can be read in Ian's highly entertaining book 'Rock Odyssey') but had simply been asked to pose and look the part. One of them was Ivan Pawle.

At the time, Suffolk-born Ivan was a

student at Trinity College, Dublin, and was also playing in a rock band doing mainly Shadows and Buddy Holly stuff. He graduated in 1966 and headed for swinging London, but soon decided he liked Ireland better and returned to Dublin the following spring.

In 1967 he met Humphrey Weightman, who played piano and guitar, influenced by the likes of John Renbourn and John Fahey. Humphrey had studied English at Oxford and, with Ivan, was asked to make a tape for film-maker Ian Sinclair who was shooting a film, 'Allen Ginsberg In Europe', for a German TV company. Ivan composed music to back a reading of Blake's 'Ah, Sunflower'. They recorded the music in the painting studio of a friend called Tim Goulding, who had just returned from Sweden, where he had been studying weaving techniques.

Another friend at Trinity was Tim Booth, who had repeated a year and was asked to put together an 'entertainment' for freshers week in autumn 1967. Tim played guitar, often in open tunings, and liked Dylan,

The name, by the way, came from a favourite saying of a friend, one Jim Duncan, who was wont to say of any event "That's strangely strange; but oddly normal". The 'Doctor' came from the Marvel Comics character Dr. Strange.

country blues and traditional stuff. He asked Ivan and Humphrey to help out and Dr Strangely Strange was born.

Adverts put out by Island records for the first album had the phrase "Strange L'Estrange". That may be your actual French but it's not where the name came from!

Flashback to the stage of the Dublin University Folk Club.....

In a letter to the author Ivan admitted, "I cringe to recall some moments. We did 'Ode to Billie Joe' with different words, 'Hey Joe', some esoteric instrumental compositions (!), 'Bound for Germanie', 'Wild Thing' with ocharina (sic) and saz (a bouzouki-like instrument from the middle East - GH) and I really can't remember what else".

In a Melody Maker article (20/6/70) Booth told Karl Dallas, "Ivan was playing ocarina and Humphrey and I were playing guitars and Humphrey broke all the strings on his guitar. But the man from the Irish Times still regards it as our best gig ever. He was really knocked out by it."

Another person impressed was the A&R man from the American ESP record label, he was interested in the Strangelies but they did not feel they were ready to record and declined his overtures.

Humphrey didn't stay around much longer and returned to England, turning up a few years later as a member of the band Carolanne Pegg formed when she split from Mr. Fox. Her 1973 album on Transatlantic (TRA266) features one song, 'Man Of War', co-written with Humphrey, though he doesn't appear on the album

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

itself.

He was replaced by another friend from Trinity, a political science student called Brian Trench, who was a good all round player with jazz and R&B influences. Brian got Ivan and Tim working harder on their harmony singing and the Mk2 version of the band began to gig regularly in pubs. This version of the band lasted until the following year when Brian's political beliefs led him to Europe to ferment revolution in France and Germany. By 1970 he was teaching art in Birmingham.

Enter yet another old pal, Tim Goulding. Tim played recorders, whistles and fiddle (a bit). He had also just bought an old harmonium, which seemed like an interesting addition to the group sound. Dallas again: "Goulding seems to have brought in a sort of churchy feel to their music which keeps breaking through like sudden shafts of sunlight".

Tim and Ivan had already demoed some of their own songs with Brian and continued to do so with Tim G. Another member appeared around this time; Caroline Greville, romantically involved with Booth, and always known as 'Linus'. Linus was another student at Trinity, and though described by Ivan as, "more of a muse than a muso", contributed recorder, autoharp, percussion, vocals and lyrics to the overall sound of the band.

Goulding's girlfriend, 'Orphan Annie' Christmas, owned a house in Mount Street in Dublin that became known as 'The Orphanage'. All the band members lived there at various times as well as lots of other passing visitors. Tim Booth later moved to another house in Sandymount which became known as the second Orphanage. Hence the title of the first track on side two of the first album! 'Sound's' writer Steve Peacock, a great fan of the band, describes the atmosphere of the Sandymount house; "he (Booth), Ivan Pawle, Tim Goulding and Linus were practising in

the front room. The house was littered with musical instruments - drums, guitars, whistles, a harmonium, and percussive devices of many kinds - and an atmosphere of gentle, musical, vaguely insane happiness hung over the place. Later we all went down to a bar in the centre of the city where they were to play among the laughter, chatter, beards and Guinness bottles. At first it seemed a strange environment for their blend of traditional folk tunes and mad flights of fantasy, but when

'Orphanage', and the second Thin Lizzy album was called 'Shades of a Blue Orphanage' after Lynott's band and guitarists Eric Bell's band 'Shades of Blue'.

Robin Williamson brought the band to Joe Boyd's attention and he eventually caught up with them at a gig in Carlow, where they were supporting Gary Moore's Skid Row. Ivan doubts if Joe was too impressed but he agreed to record them. Budgets were obviously tight, but the Strangelies knew that Sweeny's Men had managed to record an album over a weekend and so had little doubt it could be done. They succeeded in finishing the album in a day and a half, allegedly without overdubs! Joe Boyd placed the finished tapes with Island records and 'Kip Of The Serenes' came out in 1969 on ILPS9106.

The cover showed the band sitting on large rocks by the side of the Dargle river in Wicklow. Linus is playing percussion, Tim G. recorder, Ivan guitar, and Tim B. seems to be beating time on the body of a mandolin - while wearing a chicken mask.....perhaps he'd forgotten to wash his hair....

'Kip's' best known track is of course 'Strangely Strange But Oddly Normal', which owes its relative fame to its inclusion on the Island sampler record 'Nice Enough To Eat', which everyone bought 'cos it was so cheap! (1911 was it not?) Owners of the 'Young Ones' spin off book 'Neil's Book Of The Dead', will of course recall the track as being one of those which Neil claims made him "what he is today". 'Ducks On A Pond' by the ISB is on the list too....

Two guitars are joined by Goulding's treble recorder, and the album opens with Ivan's 'Strangely Strange But Oddly Normal', a song of little real substance but highly enjoyable nonetheless. The band show just how powerful a sound they could get with just two guitars, three voices, and Linus' enthusiastic tambourine bashing on top.

Is the spoken intro to 'Dr Dim and Dr Strange' a quote from some great



The good Doctor steps out.....

they played the music fitted perfectly the time and place. It was all part of the unreal, romantic magic that pervades the parts of Ireland that I love".

The orphanages saw many famous names pass through; Robin Williamson met the band on his first trip to Dublin to buy a harp, and often afterwards, young hopefuls like Phil Lynott and Gary Moore received advice and encouragement. Lynott acknowledged the debt by calling his first band

literary work? No matter, these guys had all been to University after all. (Actually, Tim G. hadn't, but Linus had). "Catman the minotaur?" Dr. Strange has this to say, don't you know.

Booth's 'Roy Rodgers' is at least a little more lyrically accessible. Two guitars again, with percussion and harmonium, full of comic-book imagery, even including a comment on the bizarre link between Rupert Bear and origami! Then down to earth with the last verse in which Tim admits, "I wrote this song on my bank overdraft...and the sub-manager said that I owed lots of bread." When the recent CD re-issue of the album came out this track was several times referred to as '£68 In The Red' - a sum well worthy of a sub-manager's wrath in those days... "but I've got a record deal...I'm gonna be rich..."

'Dark Haired Lady' belongs to the late sixties mock-troubador tradition exemplified by the Stones' 'Lady Jane' and Cat Stevens' 'Lady D'Arbanville', all thee and thy, though distinguished by some bluesy guitar licks and the jazzy middle eight (music reviewers cliches, we got 'em). The cello-like sound came from a Stylophone with the vibrato switch taped firmly on. Said Stylophone was fortunately nicked after a gig at Les Cousins in London. Phew!

I think the last track is called 'Riding On The West Cork Hack', though there seems to be some controversy on this! (Well that's what it says on the cassette of the original Island album). This track initially made me question the "no overdubs" line. If it's Tim G. playing the fiddle, who is playing recorder? Linus? Then who is the percussionist? Ivan must be playing the organ, so that leaves Tim B. Then who is playing the glockenspiel? Or the kazoo? Actually I suppose they could have done it at a push, they seem to have been quite adept at rapid instrument swapping.

Over on t'other side, the band's domestic arrangements obviously inspired 'A Tale Of Two Orphanages', perhaps written after some confusion over the rent? "No point in kicking up a row/There's nobody here but me". 'Harvey' is apparently Henry McCulloch, from Sweeny's Men in their last days, and then (in 1969) backing Joe Cocker

in The Grease Band, and even appearing in the Woodstock film with his Les Paul goldtop guitar! He later played with Paul McCartney in Wings. Was that as good as being immortalised by the Strangelies? One can but wonder.

'Strings In The Earth And Air' proved one of Pawle's finset moments, played initially simply on guitar and violin, Goulding then moving over to harmonium, which perfectly matches the mood of the song;

Twilight turns from amethyst
to deep and deeper blue
The lamp fills with a pale green
glow
The trees of the avenue
The old piano plays an air,
sedate and slow and gay
She bends upon the yellow keys
Her head inclines this way
Shy thoughts and grave wide
eyes
and hands that wander as
they list
Twilight turns to darker blue
with lights of amethyst".

This song was covered by Robin Williamson on his 'Myrrh' album, staying pretty faithful to the original version, with the exception of some added instrumentation.

Goulding's 'Ship Of Fools' follows and doesn't appeal to me much, I'm sorry to say. Featuring organ rather than harmonium, and what sounds like electric bass (though it could be organ bass pedals) it aims for epic status but misses. "Child skipper, baby mate, ship of fools becomes the ship of fate".

'Frosty Mornings' is hardly a jolly little number either, Ivan obviously having one of those days when he just doesn't know what to do with himself. "Jumping on a bus/jumping off again because/ there's no place to go/and it's going to snow". "Sitting on a floor/waiting for a friend to score/Climbing up a tree/to see if it is

he." He cheers up slightly by the end and the song ends with everyone joining in with the "shoo-be-doowah's". The eagerly awaited friend obviously came up with the goodies.

Still, Booth saves the day by strumming a few chords on his mandolin, as we launch into his 'Donnybrook Fair'. An instrumental intro with mandolin and treble recorder ends with a short flourish which gives Tim B. time to put down his mandolin and pick up his guitar before the song proper begins. He unveils a long string of Irish literary and historical characters, a few thinly disguised. For example I am reliably informed that the Number 10 bus does indeed go to Donnybrook and Patrick Pearce did have a squint, about which he was very conscious, to the extent of always trying to be photographed from a flattering angle. The Mighty Cretin Showband were better known in Dublin as the Mighty Avon Showband, and apparently a fine example of that noble musical genre!

In the book 'Irish Rock' by Mark Prendergast (1987), the author writes "The song shows their attitude towards the Irish showband by the use of the word 'cretin' and the line 'lead the pikemen from the rear', which cleverly alludes to the regressive side of showbands and certain forms of nationalism. The unicorn is obviously the new enlightenment of the new generation". "All good people you must stick together...stay down in Donnybrook Fair". Goulding plays a funfair organ interval which again gives Booth time to change back to mandolin. The band then take their revenge on all the people who expected an 'Irish folk band' to be Dubliner/Clancy clones. They sing the psalm 'The King Of Love My Shepherd Is', to the tune of 'Waxies Dargle', returning to the "What will you have/I'll have a pint" part of the folk song and ending with the psalm again, sung to the 'proper' tune. Booth once said in an interview, of the audiences expectations; "I suppose they thought we weren't doing songs like 'The Holy Ground' because we couldn't, but we could if we wanted".

Here endeth the album.

In Britain, the band signed with the

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer 93

prestigious Blackhill agency, who got them a good deal of work on the folk club and colleg circuit. Around this time Linus was asked to leave the band. Ivan: "We sacked her in trying to streamline our operation, which was a pity in a way, but economic factors prevailed at the time. Linus is still a good friend, has three children and lives in County Galway and sings with a band up there now". (Letter to author, 1987).

A working pattern developed where the band would tour in Britain for a few months then return to Ireland to work there, on music and on their other interests. When in the UK they would often stay in a commune in Colchester. Ivan and his family also lived for a while with the ISB at Glen Row in Peebleshire. The Strangelies usually travelled from gig to gig in Tim G's Renault 4L, towing a pig trailer containing the harmonium and their amplifiers! Electric instrumentation had started to creep into their work, this was as much from frustration at being unable to properly amplify their acoustic instruments as from any desire to rock out, but the music inevitable changed because of this. Another factor was that the harmonium was suffering from all the travelling it had to do. They made a lot of effort to get a good sound from the combination of instruments they used and spent a lot of time with amplifier manufacturer Charlie Watkins of WEM trying to find solutions to the problems they had.

We have already mentioned the Strangelies friendship with the ISB, and Ivan was asked to play organ on Robin Williamsons' 'Creation' on the 'Changing Horses' album. Though it cannot be denied that the ISB influenced the Strangelies it must also be said that 'Big Ted' owes a fair tip of the hat to the good Doctor, and 'Sleepers Awake' almost everything!

The band recorded tracks for their second album over the next year and it would appear that the record was finished by June 1970, as Karl Dallas previewed it in his Melody Maker article on the band published on June 20th. In another article published in October Tim G. mentioned some of the tracks on the second album had been recorded "nearly a year ago"!

In mid 1970 the Strangelies recorded a Peel session for the BBC on which

they played two numbers from the new album; 'Ashling', and 'Mary Malone of Moscow'. In the Dallas article they discussed the use of drums on the forthcoming record, having used Dave Mattacks on some tracks. They mentioned that they were considering adding a drummer (though they thought that D.M. would be too good for them). At a gig in Burton-On-Trent at the end of July, Neil Hopwood introduced himself and offered his services. They liked the look of him and invited him over to Dublin with his drum kit. Then they were four.

'Heavy Petting' was actually released on 11th September, by which time Neil had rehearsed and was playing live with the band.

As on the first album, Joe Boyd had produced the recordings, and he offered the completed tapes to Island Records, who passed on them ('Kip' not being a million seller), 'Heavy Petting' ending up on the then-new Vertigo (swirl) label instead.

The sleeve was the first thing to catch the eye. An early design by Roger Dean, though not in the style for which he became famous (Yes/Osibisa etc.), it featured fold over flaps containing the record, with cutouts in the flaps through which the bands' face peeped through. The odd building at the top was part of Booths' parents house, his father being an architect. The band later admitted that the sleeve was not quite how they had planned it to come out, but accepted that "it's the music that matters".

'Petting' is a wonderful album. They used several other players to augment the arrangements, Dave Mattacks as already mentioned, and Gary Moore, then with blues-based band Skid Row, who adds his effective lead guitar to several tracks, 'Brush' Shiels, Skid Row's bassist and old friends from Sweenys Men, Johnny Moynihan on bouzouki, and Andy Irvine on mandolin. The third Sweeney was Terry Woods, of whom much more later...

Linus is also on two tracks, though whether they date from her period with the band or later is not known.

The Peel tape gives an interesting contrast with the tracks as they appeared on the album, basically Ivan or Tim B. now played bass on many numbers and they had definitely got

rockier.

The album opens with Gouldings' 'Ballad Of The Wasps', which was once introduced live thus:

"This is a cautionary tale. It's an anti-drugs song, about some friends of mine who were unwise enough to fall asleep beside this river in Ireland, and while they were asleep they thought they'd been turned into wasps. When they woke up, unfortunately, the had been! They tried to jump of this rock, but their wings wouldn't work. So this is a sort of Country and Western story...one, two, three, four...".

Says it all really! Moynihans' bouzouki is especially good on this track, duetting with Ivan on mandolin. Very silly chorus too! 'Summer Breeze' by Booth is another enjoyable track, slightly funky in a folky sort of way, Ivan playing bass and Tim B. on electric guitar. This track also appeared on a Vertigo sampler album, 'The Vertigo Annual 1970'.

Pawle throws in 'Kilmoyadd Stomp', which contains the oft-quoted line "There's no meaning to my song and if'n you've found one you'd be wrong". One for the critics. I am told the lyrics were a gentle dig at a band member who was getting interested in Scientology...Again 'Stomp' is structurally rock oriented, though DSS could no more have been a conventional rock band than fly! Dave Mattacks gets a credit for playing 'coffee beans' for godsake...!

"The upkeep tonight is for the collection of the harmonium..." thus 'I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes' another example of the 'backstreet corrugated iron chapel' school of singing the Doctor did so well (I think I've just invented a new musical genre!). See

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

'Sleepers Awake', mentioned earlier...."What is this life so full of care/we have no time to stand and stare/no time to stand beneath the boughs/and stare as long as sheep...or cows".

So to 'Sign On My Mind'. Slow and slightly mysterious, it provides a framework for improvisation; firstly between Ivan's whistle and Andy Irvines' excellent mandolin, and then later for a powerful but restrained solo from young master Moore. He should go far that boy. It's in 'D', if you want to play along....

Terry Woods (of whom more later etc...) said of the Strangelies, "their music was inclined to be all humour and wit", and this was rarely better illustrated than by the opening track on side two, 'I Gave My Love An Apple' (one of Booths)...

It starts off by ripping off the 'Tennessee Waltz', before launching into the sad (though frankly unlikely) tale of a doomed lovmatch. "But she only said don't hit me on the hump and beat me up with her sponge...(yes she did)..." Eh? "And I never even told her about the time I loved a nun". Indeed. get along there Garibaldi Moorhen! Cue guitar solo. Fun fun fun.

We leave Booth sitting down there in Sandymount waiting for another one to come.

Pawle's 'Jove Was At Home' is much more in the style of the first album and also features Linus on autoharp, which may indicate it is one of the older tracks on the lp. It features the old formula of two guitars and recorder and includes a contribution from Heather Woods, of the Young Tradition group. Ivan also wrote the following, instrumental, track 'When Adam Delved', which again harks back to the band's original acoustic sound; baroque recorder overlaid with bluesy guitar runs from Booth.

Tim B. excelled himself lyrically on 'Ashling' (an aisling is a dream poem). "As I walked out one old lady dog-walking day/I spied a thin young woman she was tightly laced in grey/I removed my hat, straightened my back and to her I did say". This song is based on the traditional Celtic 'seal maiden' legends, though Tim's seagull girl gives herself away; "I know you are a seagull girl/I can tell it by your beak" (not a good lyric, that line.). He

redeems himself though, haunted by the encounter, "It's over now she's far and gone leaving me with my load/The hedges grow, the beetles work and the gardens not been mowed/I sit and think and I play at cards and I wonder why she's goed/or did she fly or was it

Now what can all that be about I wonder...? Once I went so high...That I never came down again...

Last track. Sunday evening in the iron chapel. Goodnight My Friends.

Around the same time, Ivan and the two Tims sang on the recording

sessions for Mike Heron's solo album, 'Smiling Men With Bad Reputations', though this was not released until the following April.

In early November 1970, the four-piece band recorded an 'In Concert' for the BBC. John Peel introduced the band as; "Ivan Pawle on acoustic and electric guitar, mandolin, and Tim Booth on bass, acoustic guitar and mandolin, Tim Goulding on keyboards, harmonium it says here, I assume that's harmonium, and

recorder, Neil Wood (sic) on percussion, and they all sing...".

Considering the album was not long released, it is perhaps surprising that they only played one track from it, 'Ballad Of The Wasps', the other two being two tracks unheard of since; 'Red Rape' and 'Horse Of A Different Hue' (also known as 'Long Pig' in some tape-trading circles - ed), the latter being a wonderful track, fully equal to anything they actually recorded. John Peel was at pains to point out that Red Rape was a kind of birdseed, a point borne out in the chorus; "Who's going to be my sweet canary now?".

In an interview published in October, the band mentioned they were hoping to start work on a third album which Ivan wanted to call 'A Rabbit Wet My Sleeping Bag', which he felt has a certain Zappa-esque touch. Other articles mentioned how professional they had got, they even had a van now!



Tim G: "Don't look Ivan -there's some people staring at us from 1993!"

Ivan P: "Nah, that's a telephone box - don't worry, the acid'll wear off soon."

I to whom this thing was showed".

'Mary Malone Of Moscow'. Ivan gave this tale to the MM, believe it if you wish (I don't). Ivan came into the discussion again by saying that the words of one of the tracks, 'Mary Malone Of Moscow', were difficult to sing. That was because they were written by a madman, literally, returned Tim (Goulding), going on to tell one of their favourite stories of the Dubliner who writes strange messages on the walls of the city streets. "He has been seen by some people. Apparently he writes on the walls with a piece of chalk which he hides under his coat". Further information came from Ivan, "He must be quite an old man, because all his references are dated".

"I can't believe this cosmic joke/I tried to break the news; it broke!/Well's bone dry, friends gone away, no supply./Mary won't you help me, the goings gotten heavy again..."

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

It couldn't last...

At the end of the year Tim Goulding announced that he wanted to leave. The official reasons being that he wanted to concentrate on his painting. Ivan added that he had got married and felt himself unable to reconcile professional and domestic commitments. 'Irish Rock' adds; "Goulding quit the group, finding the rigours of touring a debilitating factor on his inspiration. He returned to Ireland to continue painting, eventually finding spiritual peace in a Tibetan buddhist monastery in Scotland".

The parting seems to have been amicable and it appears the door was always open for his return. He was also on the cards to record with them and perhaps play on Irish gigs. The Incredible String Band offered Ivan the chance to replace the recently departed Rose Simpson in its ranks, but he declined. Now where did I put Terry Woods' phone number...?

"Terry and Gaye join Dr Strangely Strange" sayeth the Melody Maker in January, "and plan to retire to Scotland to rehearse and do some gigs, at the end of the week" (a rather ambiguous sentence that one!) "...their material will be a mixture of Strangely Strange songs, Woods' numbers and traditional."

Terry Woods had been a third of Sweeney's Men, an Irish trio who in retrospect blazed a trail away from the formula folk of the Clancy and Dubliners variety, to pass the baton on to the likes of Planxty, who developed many of the Sweeney's ideas to produce music of real class and quality. Sweeney's Men recorded two albums, the first of which is almost a prototype for the first Planxty lp, though crude in comparison. The second Sweeney's album is far more interesting, getting quite acidy in places! Backward recorded bouzouki would you believe!

According to Pete Frame in his Fairport family tree, Ashley Hutchings, on leaving Fairport, tried to join Sweeney's Men on bass, an experiment which led to Steeleye Span, a combination of Gaye and Terry, Maddy Prior and Tim Hart and Ashley. As is well known, this combo recorded the excellent 'Hark The Village Wait' album without ever gigging, differences of opinion between the Woods' and the Prior/Hart faction splitting the band.

The Woods had been trying to get their own band together when the call came to join the Strangelies.

Hopes for the Mk6 band were high, Tim Booth playing bass most of the time, Ivan mainly on keyboards, Gaye on dulcimar, concertina and autoharp, Terry on almost any instrument you could think of, Neil on drums. The Woods brought a new discipline to rehearsing, they started to really work on the music. In an interview with Steve Peacock in Sounds (Feb. 1971) they were able to say, "We really expect great things of this band". They were asked about Goulding, Ivan - "He might be going to go off to India on a bicycle. He's going to do a warm up lap by cycling round Ireland this summer. However, as yet he hasn't got a bike, so it might not come off". He was a wag that Ivan!

They did ten gigs in Ireland after only the briefest of rehearsals, and went down well. Sounds announced dates for February, which shows the variety of the places they played, 5th-Thames Poly/6th- Guildford Youth Club/12th- Stirling University (with Elton John!)/13th,14th- Traverse Theatre Club, Edinburgh/17th- Big Apple, Brighton/19th- Oyster/20th-Durham University/23rd- Manchester University/25th- Hypnotique Club, York/27th- Les Cousins, London.

In March Terry and Gaye were interviewed in MM about how they had fitted in with DSS, and they revealed that they still wanted to record the album they had been planning to do before the call came, but realised it might be a while before they could. "It will be 60% our own music and 40% traditional. Most of our music will be written in the traditional Irish vein".

The Strangelies started off on a European tour of France, Belgium and Holland when the announcement came that they would be splitting up at its conclusion. The last European gig turned out to be at Waterloo, of all places. Gay and Terry wasted little time in announcing their intention to start a new group featuring bass, steel guitar, percussion and uilleann pipes. Ivan wanted to play a gig every Christmas, Neil Hopwood was going to give up being a pro-musician and Tim Booth wanted "time off for dreaming." (He ended up doing solo

gigs actually).

The Strangelies had one more booking to fulfill, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, on Sunday 16th May, supporting Al Stewart. Reviews were all enthusiastic, most tinged with sadness at the circumstances.

So what went wrong? Reading between the lines it seems to me that the alliance with the Woods was a gamble that ultimately went wrong, perhaps they should have called it a day when Goulding left. The potential was there but...

Not quite the end though. The following year, many may have been surprised to read that the original band had reformed for a tour of Ireland, beginning in February 1972. The new version of the band (Mk7, I make it) was Ivan, the two Tims, Don Knox on fiddle (later in the group Spud), drummer Derek Boston, and Steve Bullock, who played bass and also sax. This tour was greatly enjoyed by all concerned and they ended it feeling perhaps that Dr Strangely Strange had finally been laid to rest with the respect due to him.

Gaye and Terry went on to form the Woods Band and record an album for the Greenwich Village label (1971 GSLP1004). It didn't feature steel guitar or uilleann pipes as promised, but it is a very enjoyable piece of work. Several of the songs they played with the Strangelies were on the album: 'Valencia Jig', 'Promises', both being among the songs mentioned in reviews of the Mk 6 band. Another song mentioned as being in the DSS Mk6 repertoire, 'Van Diemens Land', turned up on a later Gaye and Terry album, 'Renowned'. The album is not the third DSS one, but gives an insight into what might have been.

In 1980, the two Tims and Ivan came together to record the soundtrack for a film of Booth's, 'The Prisoner', based on the W.B. Yeats poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. They had all three continued to write and demo their songs and have reformed since on numerous occasions when commitments allow, normally in the summer months. In a somewhat belated attempt to be 'more accessible' they are now simply known as 'Strangely Strange'...news of positive sightings/future plans welcome!

".....We sang pyjama'd mad songs to the rim of the moon and caught the man's eye as he winked his green-cheese approval. In smocks embroidered and sewn with love we laughed in the morning sun and sheep talked and pandas growled and played Chinese games of great antiquity.....

Above the garden, in the woods, pine needles turned russet at the feet of the bracken and field mice sang to lady-birds as they hung out their washing. Rabbits collected old silver and mirrors and walnut cake. These were the days of our first innocence and the Incredibles have turned on them a telescope through time and sound. In the first books of learning, over stout kitchen tables were pictures of wonder from other day countries. Dancers, with jade temples on their heads and bodies swirling in jewels sewn onto damask and silk and satin, moved before golden light Gods with myriad fruitful arms and song names.

DID I WRITE THAT?

Yes, John Peel, ace DJ, champion of the new sounds such as Lawnmower Deth, do you remember writing this for the programme produced to accompany the 1968 ISB tour? Well you did. Four pages of it! We know what you mean John but really, rabbits collecting walnut cake? I think not. London must definitely have been 'swinging', if not positively swirling round when you wrote this.

Monks pass lightly over blue lawns dressed in simplicity and the knowledge of good Flowers trace

paths to lakes without bottom and peacocks display coloured galaxies. There are towers standing there made of pearls and spells and shining white stone carved from the quarries of Heaven itself. All of the foothills of mountains are there with dark men and hair-shapeless animals hung with boxes and baskets readied to climb narrow paths to the sworn and stormy citadels of God. Pilgrims are standing, purified, on the banks of the Ganges and Katmandu is the crown of the world.

The Incredible String Band can and will waft such places and times all around you and into your lives and it is good indeed that you will hear them.

If you, dear reader, have any suggestions for text to go in this section, where we unearth some particularly purple, but loveable writing about the ISB, please write to the editor.

Cuttings you may not have seen.

Rose leaves the Incredibles

ROSE SIMPSON is leaving the Incredible String Band. And the band's planned February/March tour has been cancelled. Rose plans to go to Los Angeles to learn sound engineering, and the String Band will recruit at least one and possibly more new members. An announcement is expected next month on the new line-up, but at the moment there are no definite plans because Li-quorice is in the States and nothing will be decided until she gets back.

A spokesman for the Incredibles said on Monday that Rose had been interested in sound engineering for some time, and had got very interested in it during the band's last American tour. Though the decision might seem sudden, she felt that having come to the decision to leave, it was better to make it final now before they got involved with any new projects. There is definitely no ill feeling between Rose and the other Incredibles.

EXCUSE me, Robin and Mike, but I think I have to get off here. Yes, I know you're about to lift the Royal Albert Hall bodily into infinity like a pink flying saucer but I don't think I can make the trip.

It's been a nice journey so far. I liked your music in the days when you were still likely to drop in the odd bottleneck blues on traditional Scottish tunes and I understood the reasons, I think, why you stopped playing them.

I enjoyed the journey through the world of mystical animals, the pussy cats and wise old hedgehogs, with Mike, and the Ingmar Bergman world of death and lost innocence in Robin's ballads.

Then when we left the misty lands of saga and travelled east, I still enjoyed the scenery, though I found the place a bit too exotic as a permanent home. I had a good time at your concert last Saturday but most of the time I felt too much like an atheist in church for my own comfort.

I mean, it's nice to see you and your friends enjoying yourselves on stage, and if 5,000 people want to watch you cavort about while thumping the bejessus out of a drum, fine. I liked it too, what is a poor critic to say about this sort of performance. Criticise your dance steps? Let's face it, you'll never give Nureyev any sleepless nights.

May I say, as an old friend, that I think you've become a bit obsessed by travelling for its own sake? May I, as an old friend, warn you against people who applaud absolutely everything you do? When your audiences begin to think you can do no wrong, that's when things can go very, very wrong indeed.

So I think I'll get off the Incredible String Band's mystery tour right here. Do call if you ever pass my way again, won't you? — KARL DALLAS

Be Glad For the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Eyebrows have been known to rise when I dare to say that Earthspan is my favourite ISB album. No cohesion, some say. Over orchestrated. It marks the point when they stopped writing songs and started Composing.

Well I like it, and in the footsteps of Jim Spiggot I shall continue to tell What It Means To Me.

My introduction to the music of the Incredible String Band came when my parents moved away from Peebles to a small town about thirteen miles west of Edinburgh when I was fifteen. A new estate had been plonked on the edge of the town and it was definitely Them and Us. Our neighbours two doors up were seemingly verging on the bohemian. they had a Dali print on their lounge wall; the son had built a synthesizer from a kit; the mother gave me a bottle of ouzo for mowing her lawn; the son lent me '5000 Spirits'.

I loved it, mainly because all the girls I fancied had long red hair. (There's a fair few like that in Scotland). Thank you Mrs Bassett!

A couple of years later I was getting competent on guitar. I bought 'relics' to replace the borrowed '5000 Spirits'. I bought the songbook. I could play a few things in it. I fancied (erroneously, naturally) that I knew a bit about traditional music and I bought a mandolin for £2.50 in a Guru Mahariji charity shop! (It cost me half as much again in WD40 to ungunge the tuning heads!). More by accident that design I was working as an assistant cartographic surveyor, using my A level in geography, where I was put to work with a guy called Malcolm who was regarded as a bit weird due to his fondness for railways. I quite liked

EARTHSPAN REVISITED BY GRAHAME HOOD

trains too so I spent 1973 and '74 travelling around Scotland making maps. I bought my copy of Earthspan in a Dumfries junk shop for 90p. The bloke claimed it was brand new but I saw where the owners name had been rubbed out. he also had a genuine Fender Stratocaster which someone

feel that I felt traditional material had. 'Sunday Song' too fascinated me, and still does. My mother played violin (not fiddle!) and often used to play 'Black Jack David'. I had a go on fiddle but could never quite get it, though I fiddled along with 'Black Jack David' until I accepted that fact!



No jokes about 'smiling' or 'reputations' please!

In retrospect we can see that Earthspan was an important album for the band, it was the last on which Likky appeared and showed Malcolm rising in prominence, or perhaps simply Robin and Mike allowing him to. A review of the album in 'Time Out' rather cruelly said, "I can only suggest that for two outstanding musicians (Robin and Mike) to give space to bring on lesser talent (Malcolm and Likky) is an act of generosity and should perhaps be seen as such" A little unfair, that.

Perhaps too, someone, be it Band/Record Company/Management thought it was time the band were better presented. The sleeve shows this; a collage of colour photos showing Mike as the serious composer, and relaxing with Suzie Watson-Taylor. Robin smiling in a roll-neck sweater and a corduroy jacket. Likky is portrayed as the child-like figure, playing on a swing, holding a young bird, and sitting at the piano with her hair in braids. Malcolm...well, you can choose between the one with the least tasteful checked jacket until Ralph C. Nesbitt's pal Jaimsie Cotter came

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

along, and the one that looks as if he is trying on his mother's clothes while she's out at the shops....

They became accessible ("if you would like to write to the band - and please do"), though it would be another year before the bands' hairdresser would get a credit! Did people go in to the shop and ask for a "Robin Williamson cut please!", "Certainly sir, and will there be anything else...?"

The album was recorded during March, July and August '72, and released in October. Reviews were generally good; the aforementioned 'Time Out' review concludes, "If you like moments of celebration to lighten your care-worn days, and relieve you of the desire to fit a cow-catcher to the front of your car and ram every silly bastard who gets stuck across a junction when the lights are in your favour, then you could do worse than step into this album for a spell". Have a nice day, George.

A few years later, the author of 'Electric Children', was to say, "with Earthspan...the ISB reached its second peak. Here the musicians brought electric instrumentation under their control which, coupled with the superb orchestrations scored by Mike Heron, allowed them a far wider canvas than ever before. And also of significance is the emergence of Malcolm LeMaistre as a songwriter, with his dry surrealism and acute powers of observation. Earthspan is a superb album from any point of view, mixing elements of rock with those of jazz, traditional folk, and classical music to give a result that is as impressive for its variety as for its originality."

Well, let's dissect the album track by track shall we? (About time you cry!)

Enter Malcolm with 'My Father Was A Lighthouse Keeper'. One reviewer (Sounds?), was confused from the start, "Why? Why? Why?" asks the seventh line, presumably an expression of solidarity with the listener. So we are left to wonder - is Malcolm LeMaistre's father a lighthousekeeper? Was he ever a lighthousekeeper? He doesn't know and neither do we."

When I was re-reading a book on Scientology to check some facts on the Sea Org (see Seagull, later), I came across the quote from LRH about the 'E-Meter', "It sees all, it knows all, it is

If the Incredible String Band are about anything then I'd reckon it is joy; a feeling, totally inexplicable in critical terms, that seems to communicate most readily with an area near the bottom of the spine. Maybe that's a more clinical analysis: I wouldn't know. It's rare, however, that a gig or an album leaves you behind without implanting a few tweaks up the lumbar region.

In spite of his rather mystifying and obscure chat (Witness TO 113), Robin Williamson's music continues to surprise. His two songs on the current album, 'Restless Night', and 'Moon Hang Low', synthesize just about everything in a spectrum containing Bowie, Young, Morrison, Sinatra, Count Basie and still turn out like Robin Williams. It's a pity that there are only two full-blown numbers by him, but full-blown they emphatically are.

There are those who would prefer an ISB of just Heron and Williamson. They do seem to be the major talents at work musically and lyrically. I can only suggest that for two outstanding musicians to give space to bring on less-talented is an act of generosity and should perhaps be seen as such. In any case there is a lot of generous mutual support in the band (running off the ball if you prefer) and always has been since the days when Lakky's voice flickered around the chorus on 'Painting Box' a few years back.

Delight merchant Michael Heron leads the most recognisable String Band numbers on this album; the church organ backed 'Antoine', and the old standard 'Black Jack David', with something new happening on each succeeding verse, voices and instruments underpinning each other in that delightful way that is their trademark. Finally, 'Seagull'; a complex structure of meandering themes that are beautifully resolved, and an altogether-now sing song finale.

On their best form the Incredibles are unforgettable and can be forgiven the occasional lapses. I'm sure that there are those uptight enough to judge them as little more than purveyors of pseudo-mystic, mongrel, mediaeval-type garbage. Perhaps for them the arsenal will be reinforced by some of the material on this album. But, if you like moments of celebration to lighten your care-worn days, and relieve you of the desire to fit a cow-catcher to the front of your car and ram every silly bastard who gets stuck across a junction when the lights change in your favour, then you could do worse than step into this album for a spell.

George Hallett

That Time Out review in full

never wrong," and the following interpretation suggested itself. I may be wrong!

The lighthousekeeper is a religious

figure, probably, though not necessarily LRH. He tends a light which is there for all to see, though he is not responsible for those who fail to see it ("saw the waves getting steeper/saw the ships going down"). He cannot help those people. He has had many past lives, has "seen the waves slip by and the stars explode, and seen those things again. Re-incarnation is a fundamental part of Scientology. The beach is life and Malcolm is bored by the things he finds there, his lover (faith/opinions) has proved false. The people who sit smiling and eating in their cars have come to the beach but cannot appreciate its beauty. Malcolm's lover returns to him and he is happy again. His father looks down and sees all and knows all. Fin. The accusations of lack of cohesion could not be more justified than by the first and second tracks; Heron's 'Antoine'.

As is reasonably well known, 'Antoine' is a tribute to the composer Hector Berloiz, "the first of the European Romantic Composers"

In a biography of Berloiz by Robert Clarson-Leach I found an account of the incident which inspired at least the first verse of Heron's song. "As a child Hector attended Mass every day and received Holy Communion on Sundays. He took his first Communion on the same day as his sister Nanci, at the Ursuline convent where she was a boarder. He was called to the altar first, extremely conscious that he was surrounded by young girls dressed in white. When he had received the Sacrament he became aware of the beauty of the music that followed, which turned out to be 'Quand le bien-aimé reviendra' (When my sweetheart returns to me), a somewhat curious choice for Holy Mass. However, this appears to have been the boy Berloiz's first conscious musical experience, though it would be ten years before he learned what the tune was and could put a name to it."

'Antoinne' is distinguished by the power of a church organ, and fine string arrangement, on which Robin was helped out by Bristol-based musician Stuart Gordon, who played violin and viola. Gordon had previously been a member of Canton Trig, and the Shortwave Band, with whom he recorded two albums.

Robin's first composition on the

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

album was a moody, jazz-tinged piece 'Restless Night', written following one of those nights when you feel you are the only person in England not serenely akip.

'Sunday Song' next. Help! I have to confess I don't know what its about, though the temptation to go Hubbard-hunting is storing. "A million men almost remembered" - past lives? "Golden dawns" - the pre-Crowley sect which has been said to have inspired LRH? "Fold our wings away in the day" - superior beings - Thetans?

There is some lovely imagery though; "Venus fell for awhile in England" (a bit Blakesian, that!), "Air was sweet as milk", "Kissing petals, swishing tails". And, most enigmatic of all, "Strange surprise, grass being green, on planet Earth, galaxy 13". Musically it is powerful stuff, Malcolm on best bellow and Brian Davidson (of the Nice) on suitably bombastic drums.

Flip the record over (or not if you have the CD!) and we find the highly enjoyable 'Black Jack David', which is of course merely 'Black Jack Davy' from 'I Looked Up' in new garb. I like both versions myself, for different reasons. Island liked it too and put it out as a single, backed with 'Moon Hang Low'. This was the first single the band had released since 'This Moment/Black Jack Davy' (mucho royalties to Mike!), over two and a half years earlier. The song itself owes a great deal to the many verions of the 'Raggle Taggle Gypsies', though told in the first person.

Robin's 'Banks of Sweet Italy' follows, and continues to show his increasing skill in writing in the traditional ideom. It's a lovely song, especially the lines "A golden ring is a precious thing/red stockings and shows of green./A dwelling place with painted door/a wide bed to love you in". The song ends with the strong hint that Likky's darling boy may soon be

needing the help of Malcolm's dad.....

'The Actor' was a collaboration between Malcolm (lyrics) and Robin's music, and certainly shows his "acute powers of observation", as mentioned in an earlier review. There is something of a period feel to it, caused mainly by the world-weary piano and vocals at the beginning of the chorus. 'Composition' rather than song? It still worked. As did 'Moon Hang Low', slightly sleazy supperclub jazz, with Robin the crooner unleashed. I like it very much, though as has been said before in the pages of 'Be Glad', the ISB were starting to write in varied styles for no apparent reason other than to show they could. The credits wryly note that the trumpet solo was written (ie not played) by Robin. Hotlips Williamson by proxy.

Earlier remarks re. 'Sunday Song'

also apply to 'The Sailor and the Dancer'. Without proof, one must resist the temptation to Hubbard-hunt, though the first line at least fits. "Passing through the arches" is downright masonic! Nice imagery though, the arches, the old one of the flying ship, and the unfurling bodies of the new dancers. Like the harmonium too.

Which brings us very nicely to the end. 'Seagull' is almost certainly inspired by a voyage Mike made in 1972 on the Appollo. The Appollo was a former cross-channel ferry which was bought by the Scientologists as a training ship. This was known as the Sea Org and was notorious for the high standards of discipline on board and the punishments handed out to transgressors, including being shut up in the chain locker and even physically thrown overboard. Small wonder Mike was a little nervous about the trip! He has doubts, he needs a sign to show him it's alright. But he starts to enjoy himself, "It's very true/there's nothing to complain of here/you know I've tried and not found an enemy to fear, here/There's safety in the warm thoughts all around me/Adventure in this strange port quay". And ultimately, following an unusual electric guitar/whistle duet, it is "alright, out on the rolling sea". All strength to the Commodore, as the sleeve notes said.

The inner sleeve also announced the arrival of Gerard Dott, whom we could applaud on the next tour. "No Ruinous Feud" was five months away. Ulp!



Robin looks pensive as yet another fan discusses the relative size of basic life-forms

HELP!

As part of 'Be Glad's attempt to look at each ISB album Grahame's final sentence is a timely reminder that eventually we will have to deal with 'No Ruinous Feud'. Is there anybody out there who wants to cover it? Let us know please.

YOU'RE BRINGING WHO HOME FOR SUPPER?

JOHN TAYLER SHARES HIS COCOA WITH THE INCREDS

On the first of March 1969, the Incredible String Band were due to appear at Bristol's Colston Hall. I had introduced a couple of friends - the local curate Terry and his wife Rosemary - to the joys of ISB listening. Naturally we were going to the gig, but I was a bit surprised to learn that Rosemary had had the cheek to write to them inviting them to a supper party afterward. I was even more surprised when they accepted!

After a concert that finished with a stunning performance of 'Creation', the ISB with Joe Boyd in tow found their way to a crowded living room in the suburbs. Their slight reserve soon melted away amid candle light and herb cookery smells and their smiles and accents grew broader. A collection of ethnic music was playing, to which Robin paid particular attention and asked questions from time to time.

Joe Boyd settled his tall frame onto the floor, endeavouring not to look like an important man with a lot on his mind. He remained politely taciturn until the Jersey-born Rosemary managed to draw out the New Jerseyite Boyd with some gentle banter about which was the 'real' Jersey. When someone asked him exactly what a manager's function was, he informed us that a manager's job was to make sure things did not go wrong. His voice might have belonged to Sisyphus.

During the concert I had noticed Licorice's habit of fixing a stare on various members of the audience. I was intrigued by her Mona Lisa expression, but soon found out the reason for the tight-lipped smile when somebody made her laugh. One of her front teeth was missing. A dentist present offered to fill the gap for her but she declined, apparently having an aversion to anything artificial.

Rose was the most garrulous of them all and chatted away energetically when she was not attempting to eat Mike.

When I showed her the 'Fool' lp, she waved it excitedly at the others announcing that Simon and Marijke had made a record. (That should remove any remaining rumours that the ISB had a hand in it.)

My main impression of that evening is that of sitting in a swarm of anecdotes. For example, we learned that Big Ted was a bona fide creature of enormous proportions, who had a habit of raiding their kitchen for rice and other food. According to Mike, he had even swallowed a bottle of tamali sauce which might well have caused his demise. Their answers to questions ranged from the disarmingly direct to the deliberately obscure:

"Why are you called Licorice?"

"Because I eat it."

"What does 'wearing black cherries for rings' mean?"

"Well, what does it mean to you?"

They were quite candid about personal feelings, making no secret of the fact that Licorice and Rose did not get on at all. Scientology was credited with their ability to tolerate each other.

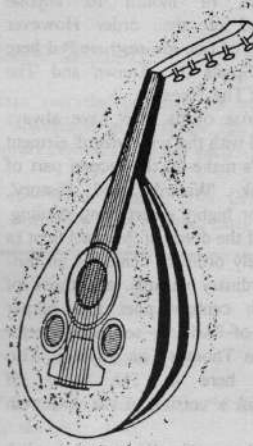
Cheerfully they admitted their ignorance of any chords. "Happy Traum will work them out" smiled Mike - a remark clear to anyone who owned the song books. An example of their ability to instinctively make music came when Licorice picked up an ocarina and asked what it was. On being told that it was a musical instrument, she experimented and within minutes was picking out a tune on it.

Eventually they decided to entertain us with a few songs. Mike's quarry blasting vocals at close quarters have to be experienced to be believed. After 'The Minotaur's Song' we were treated

to an old spiritual, 'This Little Light Of Mine'. They then managed a rendition of 'Creation'. This was followed by a medley consisting of 'Take Your Burden To The Lord' and two Dylan numbers - 'I Dreamed I Saw St Augustine' and 'I Shall Be Released'.

Eartha Kitt could never have dreamed that 'Old Fashioned Girl' could be rendered in ISB style, but that is exactly what followed. 'Air' came next, based on an old Tahitian melody, according to Mike. This impromptu gig was rounded off with 'Big Ted'.

All too soon they were off again, leaving several people glad that they had picked our particular bend of the road to stop at for a while.



Did you have a chance encounter with the Incredible String Band? A meeting with Mike perhaps, or a even a ruminate with Robin? 'Be Glad' would like to know if you did, and we'll print the best ones. Send 'em in!

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

THE CRANESKIN BAG

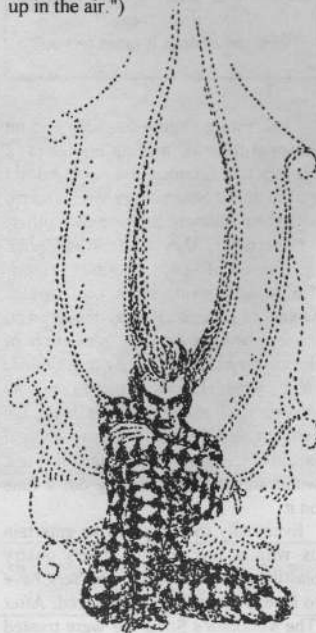
Essential reading for all you ISB devotees out there - particularly those of you who have enjoyed Robin's solo 'Stories & Songs' performances of recent times. The book is divided into four parts, the first of which (Calendar Of Journeys) concentrates on the "interplay between this world and the otherworld", a favourite theme of Robin's storytelling sessions. As he states in his foreword, the most common motifs of Celtic folktales are voyages to the otherworld (Tir-na-nog; perceived as being ever-present beside our own), a fool who succeeds, tasks done for love, and so on. Sadly some of the Celts' earliest tales are lost forever, as the Druids (the Priestly class) were not in the habit of either writing them down or passing them on by word of mouth to anyone uninitiated into their order. However the bones of two are restructured here in 'The Spoils Of Annwn' and 'The Battle Of The Trees'.

For those of us who have always identified with the 'wily wizard' element in Robin's make-up the second part of the book, 'Wizards And History', makes for highly entertaining reading. Marvel at the deeds of Michael Scot (a deceptively ordinary name for an out-of-the-ordinary wizard), and those of the 13th century poet and harper Thomas of Earliston, somewhat better known as Thomas The Rhymer. Also included here is 'The Story Of Goddodin', a version of the Arthurian legend.

Part Three, 'The Wise And Foolish Tongue' includes the aforementioned 'Battle Of The Trees' (Cad Goddeu). In the full text there appears the voice of Blodeuwedd, the maiden composed of flowers, who will be familiar to all who possess 'Songs Of Love And Parting'. The story ends with the dire warning Robin has often imparted from the stage, namely that "Whoever spends the night alone on the top of Cader Idris or under the Rock of

Sandy Macnair dips into 'The Craneskin Bag: Celtic Stories And Poems.' Collected and told by Robin Williamson.

Arddu on the Llanberis side of Snowdon will be found in the morning dead, mad or a poet." (It is further said that whoever would be a poet must - like the author? - "take up harp and sorrow and the wandering road.") Also in this section is one of my favourite pieces, 'Wee Jack And The Old King'. If you've doubled up laughing at Robin's rendition of this outrageously tall tale you may find it falls a bit flat on the printed page, but I still found myself grinning inanely at the idea of Wee Jack sawing his own head off and sending it for help when he found himself stuck up to his neck in a rock. (Which had luckily served to break his calamitous fall from "thousands of feet up in the air.")



Some of the fourth section, 'Heroes And Destiny', will also be familiar territory for hardcore Robinwatchers, with the tale of Conall Crovi and his pressing problems with the King of Erin and some troublesome giants.

These stories focus on the hero's confrontations with and acceptance of death, as opposed to the methods employed by wizards, who may seek to outwit destiny if they can. Also included is 'Lleu', one of the great classics of Celtic mythology. And no collection of Robin's tales would be complete without a polite nod in the direction of Finn Mcool, of whom it is said (as I'm sure you all know) "that if a day goes by without his name being mentioned the world will come to an end." Closing the book is 'The Dialogue Of Ossian And St. Patrick', which concerns The Craneskin Bag itself - "a bag of magical treasures", once the property of Manannan, the Son of the Sea.

This fine volume will make an indispensable gift for the darling belle or cosmic boy in your life to browse through, with an ISB album of their choice playing softly on the turntable. In much the same way it's good to hear the latest offering from an artist or band before seeing them attempt the material live, you can now get a kick out of seeing Robin on his next tour and, hearing him embark on yet another Tall Tale, turn to your mates and say knowledgeably "Ah yes, I know THIS one!" (Whereupon he digresses completely from the original point and changes the ending, as you slink off to the bar to hide your confusion.)

Finally a wee message to Robin himself if happens to be reading this - all of us up here in your hometown realise we were very privileged - indeed SPOILT - by your three visits throughout 1992, so may the road (to Edinburgh) go on rising before you again in '93!

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

Ads 'n' Info

Robin Williamson

'Be Glad' readers who would like to receive Robin's extensive list of recordings, writings and current tour dates should write to:

Robin Williamson Productions
BCM Box 4797
London
WC1N 3XX
England



Mike Heron

The Glenrow Tapes

A CD compilation taken from the three volumes originally released on cassette format in the 1980s, with the accent being on Volumes 2 & 3. Complete with new artwork, sleeve notes by Andy Roberts and much improved sound quality. £11.75 inc. p&p

The Voiceprint Radio Sessions

A four track CD of Mike's new acoustic group, recorded primarily for worldwide radio syndication. This is a limited edition EP, unavailable in the shops, and destined to be a collectors item. 20 minutes of contemporary Heron. £6.00 inc. p&p

Send cheques/postal orders (sterling only) to:- Mark Anstey, 196 Old Road, Brampton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 3QW. Both CDs to be released early May.

Badges

Thought you were too old to wear a badge with a band's name on it? Maybe, but how about something enigmatic? 'Be Glad' have produced a badge which will confuse your friends and family but at the same time means something to 'those in the know'. The badge is 1" diameter, in colour and sports the String Band maxim 'Amoebas Are Very Small', in an intriguing typeface. They should be available from early May and cost a measly 50p each, including p&p. Please send a 50p coin or p.o. to the editorial address.

Smaller Ads

* Licorice - where are you? I want to say hello - C.B.

* WANTED - Video of Julie Felix show 15/2/69 (All Writ Down/Fine Fingered Hand). Will pay or trade audio tapes. Adrian Whittaker, 71A Colvestone Crescent, Dalston, London E8 2LJ.

* WANTED - Any ISB tour programmes/posters/songbooks etc. Money or trade. Write to PO Box 6, at the editorial address.

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer 93

RARE, DIFFERENT OR UNKNOWN THE ISB LIVE SONG DEBATE CONTINUES

The Head. The final dozen or so lines of this piece were incorporated by Robin into the 'Mabinogi' production with Moving Being in 1983 as an uplifting finale to the proceedings (a slightly modified version of 'Time' from 'U' was also featured).

Won't You Come See Me: A personal reflection: (I only ever heard this song a couple of times, but 22 years on I can still remember it perfectly - words and music - but for one verse which I'd partially forgotten, and which Paul has obligingly supplied. Thanks mate!

Raga Puti: I wonder if the title is an ISB pun - the actual title is Ragupati, and it's an Indian devotional song, much used by Gandhi during prayer meetings.

Whistle Tune: You wouldn't guess it from the intro on the 'In Concert' tape, but there's two distinct tunes here, the first is obviously the Williamson/Le Maistre confection, the second is apparently a traditional Peruvian piece. Not mentioned by Paul is the fact that Licorice is featured on the arrangement too, on tenor (four-string) guitar.

Wild Cat Blues: I remember this as 'Black Cat Blues, but I may be wrong on that. It sure wasn't Robin on clarinet, despite his testimonial for Sidney Bechet. Gerard Dott, as ever, was on clarinet duty, Robin confining himself to mandolin.

Frisco Love: This one drifts elusively through the mists of conjecture, but I believe it to be a song the ISB featured in their Feb '70 concert at Newcastle's Exhibition Hall. Robin took the lead vocal on it, so it's likely to be a composition of his; the line-up was Robin- semi-acoustic guitar, Mike- electric guitar, Rose - bass, Licorice -

drums. Robin broke a string halfway through the song, jettisoned his guitar and appropriated Mike's, leaving Mike to restring the abandoned instrument and re-enter the arrangement towards the end. Rather a dull song as I remember.

'Twas In The Month Of January: Not English as Paul suggests, but a traditional song from the West of Ireland. Robin and Licorice sang it on the spring '71 tour, as reportedly they used to do it at some point in the past when they were employed together as housepainters.



Hercules: This was also unveiled on the spring '71 tour, and is thus of earlier provenance than Paul suggests.

Come Hither: This dates to late '69, and if I remember aright was featured

on the same Top Gear session as Gather Round. I can recall nothing else about it whatever.

Florence: As Mike Heron hinted, this is included on the Glen Row Tapes, vol 3. The title refers to the city of Florence, which (the song suggests) may have been the scene for one of the author's romantic entanglements. The song alternates between the slow reflective passages (partly sung - oo-er - in Italian) and livelier interludes similar in feel to the rockier parts of Ithkos. In the 'Musin' Music' interview that refers to the song, mention is made of 'Moorish Tune', implying that it too originated as an ISB song (but this is rather ambiguous). It too can be found on Glenrow vol.3.

Now, some additions to the canon.

Joe's Waltz: A piece of amiable fluff from Robin, featured on the autumn '70 tour, a sort of jug-band waltz with Robin leading on fiddle and crooning a faintly amusing lyric honouring the unsung heroes of society, like taxi-drivers and plumbers. Admirable sentiments, otherwise unmemorable.

Faraway Look: The title is my own guess. This may well be one of the unlikeliest pieces the ISB ever essayed. According to Robin, he was waylaid on the streets of Edinburgh by the wife of the Lord Provost of that city, who praised his work and thrust a piece of verse of her own into his hand, suggesting he might like to set it to music. Though initially dubious, he was charmed by the sentiments of the verse and complied. I remember only the opening line - "I can see that faraway look in your eye". Hence the suggested title. Part of the Newcastle Exhibition Hall Feb '70 concert, it featured Mike on sitar and concluded with a comic

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

dialogue between Robin and Mike that seemed to bear no relation whatever to the song 'Odd, or what'?

Blind Boy Fuller song: I've no recollection of the title. Performed by Robin on guitar/voice and Mike, harmonica/voice on the Autumn '70 tour.

Pure Fun: Referred to in a review of an autumn '71 concert. Apparently a ragtime piece with Malcolm hitting various pieces of junk in an enthusiastic if unpolished fashion. Sounds suspiciously like 'Evolution Rag' to me. But read on....

Skiffle Song: This evidently dates back to the period when Licorice was with the band. Robin exhumed this song at an Edinburgh concert a few years back, boldly attempting to render Licorice's vocal part. This might conceivably be the same song as 'Pure Fun', above.

? A review of a Melanie concert in June '74 contains the following information: "Special guests who joined Melanie for a few numbers were the Incredible String Band, who... performed a number written by Mike Heron especially for the evening." Alas, no further details of this mystery composition were forthcoming. Melanie, however, was clearly impressed, and cooed as they filed off, "That's my very favourite group in the world anywhere" - which, for the flint-faced NME reviewer, "summed up my least favourite mentality in the world anywhere." Plus ca change, eh?

It's worth pointing out that the final track on Melanie's 1974 'The Way I See It Now' was recorded at the same event and features Robin on kalimba and Mike on backing vocals. Mike also plays guitar, Moog and sings very tastily elsewhere on the album: 'Evie' and 'Meanwhile The Rain' on 'Mike Heron's Reputation' album came from the same studio sessions.



Malcolm looks somewhat aggrrieved to learn that Johnny Rotten's chance attendance at a 1974 ISB gig was the catalyst for the entire Punk movement!

St Giles and the Dragon: The 'El Ratto/Hercules/Giles Crooked-Deal' trilogy became a tetralogy in January '74; 'Sounds' reviewer Steve Peacock drew a delicate veil over the proceedings.

Finally, it might be of interest to draw attention to a few pieces that appeared on vinyl in significantly different form from the concert versions. 'Painted Chariot' in its full-blown spring '71 concert format bears only the faintest resemblance to the indecently brief version included on 'Liquid Acrobat', being well over ten minutes in length originally and containing, to my certain recollection, a different opening verse, also some notable thrash-metal cello from Robin. By the time 'Restless Night' appeared on 'Earthspan' it had acquired a new second section and shrugged off some of its earlier verses. The original version was broadcast on Top Gear in early '72.

One might be forgiven for thinking that the few seconds of 'Eyes Like

Leaves' on 'Liquid Acrobat' is all there is to it: not so, for at Leeds City Hall in March '71 (the day after the 'In Concert' broadcast was recorded) Robin performed the full piece as a fiddle solo.

It's my belief that 'Living In The Shadow' shed some of its lyric between its live performance at Newcastle City Hall, 1st October '1971 and the 'Sounds Of The Seventies' broadcast the following month; the latter, to my ears, has a suspiciously truncated feel, though I wouldn't swear to it.

And lastly, though we're outside bootleg territory here, it may not be well known that the version of 'All Writ Down' on 'Be Glad.' is also missing a verse, which may be found on the rather smoother version featured on the b-side of the 'Big Ted' single (November '69).

ISB TRIVIA

* The String Band invaded that bastion of niceness, 'Desert Island Discs' a while ago when Dr Steve Jones included 'Evolution Rag' as a song he'd like to be marooned with. Sue Lawley wasn't too impressed - "sniffy" was the word my informant used.

* ISB trainspotters may be interested to know that the ISB have been used/quoted/mentioned in a number of books (if you know of any more let us know!). Besides 'Be Glad' artist Alan Frewin getting in a mention in his novel 'Rabbit Back and Doubled', Earth Mysteries author Paul Devereux used a quote from 'Circle Is Unbroken' in his book 'Earthmind', Fantasy writer and musician Charles de Lint has used ISB lyrics for chapter headings in his books. Rumour has it that well-known novelist Nell Dunn used 'The Water Song' as a motif in one her books. More on this in a later issue.

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending - Summer '93

INVOCATION

You that create the diversity of the forms
open to my words
you that divide and multiply it
hear my sounds
I make yield league to you
ancient associates
and fellow wanderers
you that move the heart
in fur and scale
I join with you
you that sing bright and subtle
making shapes that my throat cannot tell
you that harden the horn
and make quick the eye
you that run the fast fox and the zigzag fly
you sizeless makers of the mole and whale
aid me and I will aid you

I make a blood pact with you
you that lift the blossom and the green branch
you who make symmetries more true
you who consider the angle of your limbs
who dance in slower time
who watch the patterns
you rough coated who eat water
who stretch deep and high
with your green blood
my red blood let it be mingled
aid me and I will aid you

I call upon you
you who are unconfined
who have no shape
who are not seen
but only in your action
I call upon you
you who have no depth
but choose direction
who bring what is willed
that you blow love upon the summers of my loved ones
that you blow summers upon those loves of my loves
aid me and I will aid you

I make a pact with you
you who are the liquidness of the waters
and are the spark of the flame
I call upon you
you who make fertile the soft earth
and guard the growth of the growing things
I make peace with you

you who are the blueness of the blue sky
and the wrath of the storm
I take the cup of deepness with you
earthshakers
and with you the sharp and the hollow hills
I make reverence to you
round wakefulness we call the earth
I make wide eyes to you
you who are awake
every created thing both solid and sleepy
or airy light
I weave colours around you
you who will come with me
I will consider it beauty

Robin Williamson 1970