

BE GLAD...

FOR THE SONG HAS NO ENDING



AN APPRECIATION OF
THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND
PAST AND PRESENT

What they did next.....

Robin, Mike and Malcolm's current activities

Robin Williamson

Robin is currently recording a new album - as yet untitled but likely to be either *Island Of The Strong Door* or *Brownhorn Tree*. It's all new material, all played by Robin. It will be released sometime around early autumn on the TMC label. Robin also touring extensively this year. I don't have a list of specific gigs - the April issue of Folk Roots has him listed at numerous folk fests throughout the summer so you should be able to catch him somewhere, Folk Roots should have all the relevant info.

Mike Heron

Mike is also in the studio, putting the finishing touches to his first album for 16 years years. Provisionally titled *Where The Mystics Swim* it will feature ten tracks, staples of his recent live performances but re-arranged and augmented by instruments such as Hammond organ, dobro, vibraphone, double bass and mandolin etc. The album is being produced by Ian Makinnon, who worked on Talitha Mackenzie's amazing *Solas* album. Again, expect this to be released in the early autumn, with a possibility of gigs to follow.

Malcolm Le Maistre

Malcolm Le Maistre has been quiet on the musical front - he's been writing, rehearsing and touring (in June) an environmental extravaganza in Scotland. His album *Nothing Strange* has been well received in the few reviews it's picked up in the UK. Unfortunately the only major music magazine that ran a review was Q. John Bauldie reckoned he didn't like it and gave it one star. Cruel! Readers may care to know that Bauldie is a

major Dylan fan and edits the Dylan 'zine *The Telegraph* so how someone who can laud an old groaner like Bob but remain unmoved by Malcolm's stuff is beyond me entirely. But that's the mainstream music press for you - crap. *Nothing Strange* has fared far better in Germany and garnered over twenty reviews so far, most highly

positive, some going as far as to compare his voice with the likes of John Stewart and John Cale. Strangeways, his label in Germany, have recently put a single out featuring *In 1968* and *Sarajevo*, together with three Malcolm-only unreleased acoustic tracks. See the advert on the inside back cover if you're interested.



Malcolm & Mike in late 70s futile resistance to Punk gig. Call the trouser police immediately!

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Editorial

HE. Something of a 'bitty' issue this time. You may remember that this was to be the *Wee Tam & Big Huge* special issue. Well, it's not. I originally wanted to try to cover *Wee Tam...* comprehensively and to go into the musical background of some of the songs, the ideas behind the lyrics as well as just the basic stuff. Time's winged metaphor has been travelling faster than usual of late and so I haven't got round to putting all that together, so that will be for next time. And, of course, it gives more of you time to write something doesn't it? If you've got something to say about *Wee Tam And The Big Huge*, let's have it - it's a big album, let's give it the coverage it deserves.

So instead of all that nonsense I've decided to try and catch up with things a bit and to put all the stuff I've had piling up into this issue and to update you with as many news items as I can.

A fair bit of the magazine will mention the Convention and I keep getting bursts of random memory and here I go again.....

I think most people enjoyed their selves immensely, and just as much from the social side. What stood out most to me was the standard of musicianship amongst the fans (and I say this as not being able to play very much at all and having the singing capabilities of a Russian sub-sonic weapon). The String Band have obviously been responsible for turning a lot of people into fine multi-instrumentalists and I think we had them all at the Convention. The bars and music room resounded throughout the day and night to people just pickin' and grinnin' as it were - special thanks here to Tim Moon, Tony Corden, Norman Lamont amongst others.

More recollections.....John Renbourn coming in, saying hello to Robin and vanishing again...the mandolinist jamming in the bars who had taught REM's Peter Buck to pick those silver strings...Norman Lamont's Bob Dylan impersonations (when are you putting that Dylan song on tape Norman?).....Tim Moon's version of Harper's *When An Old Cricketer Leaves The Crease*.....Ivan Pawle

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THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND FANZINE
ISSUE 6 SUMMER 1995

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giving me a hug...the hotel staff who were camp as a row of tents but wonderful with a capital W.... Alfredo from Argentina (that's a bloody long way to come for a gig, but he did!) being totally immersed in it despite knowing no-one....the presence of Nick Walton (from the cover of *Hangman's*)...the fact that a good quarter of the audience were far too young to have been first time round fans....Steve Blacknell's existence and wonderful stage announcing....and, well, you can imagine the rest I'm sure.

Many of you who attended the conference have asked if we, like the Beach Boys, are indeed going to 'do it again'. Weeeeeel, at first I thought, yeah, let's do it next October, but then I thought no - counting the Jan '94 Hebden Bridge event I'd done two in less than a year and other fish had gone unfried as a result. Next year - promise.

Being a sad music obsessive I feel compelled by a higher force to let you into what aural delights I've been delving into lately, and one such was to get to see Kevin Ayers on 2 consecutive nights. If you're not an Ayers fan already get out and buy some. He's produced some quintessentially English psychedelia in his time and some fantastic toons and lyrics. Start with *Bananamour*...but definitely check out *Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes* on *Whatevershebringwesing* which never fails to entertain. He's always

different, always experimenting with styles to come up with something distinctively Ayers. Seek out his current backing band, The Wizards Of Twiddly too - an amazing experience both live and recorded. The other old stager I've been catching up with lately is Roy Harper, currently at his best since the mid-70s. Catch him if you can and re-listen if out of touch - there's currently a *Best Of Harper* CD out at the moment for £5.99. Worth a look I can assure you. See also the news page for a couple of Harper/ISB connections.

Finally, engage in at least a minute's surreal activity of your choice in fond memory of Viv Stanshall who died on March 5th in a fire. Viv was the driving force behind the those High Priests of Pastiche, the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah band without whom life would be a chillier proposition altogether. Dada old bean.....



Robin, Malcolm and Mike play *The Circle Is Unbroken*. Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, 4th May 1972

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Here we go.....Grahame Hood responds to Raymond Greenoaken's assertion in the last issue that there is no such thing as a Chinese Banjo and to cut a long description short I believe him! Raymond is now standing disgraced in the corner and the rest of you can view an example of the said Chinese Banjo in London's Horniman Museum.....Terrapin Trucking of London (01812920085) are doing an ISB T shirt which features the flier for the October Songs gig at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, enlarged on a white shirt and pretty damn good it is too. Got mine on now.....People are always asking where vinyl (and indeed CD) ISB albums can be obtained from. The best and most consistent place is via *Record Collector* magazine, there are always plenty of people, both trade and private, advertising ISB and related albums.....Celtic author John Matthews reprints Robin's *Five Denials On Merlin's Grave* in his new anthology of stories.....On the same type of subject *Twilight Of The Celtic Gods* by myself and co-author David Clarke, due for publication in 1996 by Blandford books will contain some String Band quotes.....Be Glad reader and prolific urban fantasy author Charles De Lint (whose books have

featured ISB quotes before) has a chapter entitled 'Winter Was Hard' in his latest, *Dreams Underfoot* - wonder where he got that from?.....On the subject of ISB references in books, reader Colin Greenland's sci-fi book *Take Back Plenty* (£4.99) gives them some form of mention (haven't seen it meself) on page 248 and Allan Frewin's latest book for kids *The Mystery Club* (actually under his pseudonym of 'Fiona Kelly'), features a character by the name of Christina McKechnie, a dog called Rose, a house called Iron Stone Croft and a Mr Williamson and Mr Heron. Brainwash those kids Allan!.....Be Glad reader, contributor and net surfer, Michael Ranauro, now living in America has started an online ISB digest/fanzine - which in laypersons terms means lots of people e-mail pieces to him and he periodically sends the accumulated stuff out to their electronic mailboxes. Hi-tech stuff and it's nice to see the ISB being 'out there'. Michael has (as of early March) 70 people who are contributing and discussing on the net. The service is called *Lordly Nightshade* and if anyone has access to an e-mail system via computer you can get on the email list or contribute stuff by getting in touch

by emailing ranauro@fas.harvard.edu including some recognisable form of the title 'Lordly Nightshade' in the messages 'subject heading. It'll make sense to you if you know about such things. It's confused me but I hope Be Glad Towers will have email by the end of the year. The results of Michael's computer networking with fellow computer minded ISB fans will be downloaded - as they say - in a future issue.....Stephen Robbins tells me that subscriber Shane Youl has also put ISB stuff on the net. His Email address is shaneyoul@mel.dit.cs.iro.au. Check him out and you might find out more. Thought! doe all this interfacing ISB stuff make Hiram Pawnitoff an Information Superhighwayman?..... Speaking of unreleased stuff we've been trying to licence U from WEA for issue on CD but they want £13,000 up front so I can't see that happening for a while.....No news on the Be Glad soundtrack either I'm afraid. Island have it and won't discuss that or the other ISB rarities they have in their vaults - and they wonder why people bootleg things!.....If anyone knows of any unreleased live ISB material in excellent quality (transcription discs, quarter inch tape etc.) please let us know.....Roy Harper, who is enjoying a bit of a renaissance lately, credits the String Band in the sleeve notes to the CD re-issue of *Folkjokeopus* - in and amongst reminiscences of the 60s folk scene "Wizz, Clive, Robin and Mike are all probably still playing, but not together. More's the pity in the case of Robin and Mike" Furthermore in the latest Harper 'zine the man speaks thusly (from a late 60s *Melody Maker* piece) of the ISB, "...all I know for a fact is that the Incredible String Band's fuzz-wah idea was taken from me, please correct me Mike and Robin if I'm wrong.".....On the subject of covers *The Living Tradition*, the UK's only news stand publication devoted solely to UK trad. music featured an article on duo Maggie Boyle and Steve Tilston, revealing that Maggie has covered Robin's *October Song* on her solo album, *Reaching Out*. I haven't heard it - have you? The same issue has

NEWS

All the ISB related news we can think of as we put the 'zine together. If you've any info we can use here, send it in.



"He's behind yoouoooooo"
Robin - as wicked wizard - stalks Malcolm - as weasel in the pantomime portion of their performance at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, 1972 (Credit: Norman Lamont)

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a piece about walking in wild places or pursuing other occupations whilst listening to music and suggests macrame (think about it) with the ISB on the 'phones. We have a covers update next issue but a quick mention here for Norwegian folk/rock/psych band Smell Of Incense have covered *Witches Hat* on their *All Mimsy Were The Borogroves* album. Back to the Internet again and Stephen Robbins informs me that discussion on the Richard Thompson Email discussion group reveals that 'twas none other than Fairport Convention who supplied backing vocals on *The Minotaur's Song* (supposedly being in the adjacent studio working on their first album). This info is supposed to have come from an interview with Joe Boyd - anyone aware of this? Mr Heron's memory banks were accessed for a year or nay on this but he couldn't remember! It seems highly possible though..... Stephen also tells me he has had sight of a photo-copy of a Robyn Hitchcock bootleg tape - *Oscar* - and there is a cover of Sir Michael of Heron's *Chinese White*. Wow! If anyone has this please let me know..... Peter Cadle of famous London folk club, Bunjies Coffee House of 27 Litchfield Street has produced a book detailing the history of the venue - *Nights In The Cellar* - which features a pic. of Robin W. on the cover and one of him performing at the venue, together with a brief revue. Essential for anyone interested in London's folk history, lots of info and pictures. I think it's £3.50 from their address but if in doubt 'phone and ask on 01712401796.....Up and coming Welsh indie psychedelic folk band Gorky's Zygotic Mynci (honest!) name checked the ISB in a recent *Melody Maker* interview.....News for Pooka fans - they are currently recording an album due for release on Rough Trade on September 1st, with a single out in July and a tour to follow. Watch out for it.....The long-awaited BBC2 *Late Show* feature on the String band hasn't as yet been shown. It has been scheduled several times but pulled at the last minute. Filming took place at the '94 Convention and at Robin, Mike and Rose's homes. As an example of how the BBC, ahem, 'work' and where your licence fee goes, when they wanted to film my String Band

memorabilia display (which they'd already filmed at the Convention), they wanted it *then and there*. Couldn't wait for it to be parcelled and posted so they sent a man and a car all the way from London to Brighthouse to collect it. And it was so urgent they haven't screened it yet. Draw your own conclusions as to how everything else is done at the Beeb. Obscure traveller/crusty magazine *Smelly* ran an RW interview in issue two and illustrated him thusly



The String Band playing some jigs. Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, May 4th 1972 (Credit: Norman Lamont)



Tsk! Youth of today etc. etc.....Stephen Robbins (again!) tells me that the post ISB, pre Merry Band line up of Robins' known as the Far Cry Ceilidh Band consisted of RW: vocals, gtr. Sylvia Woods: harp. Kevin Carr: bodhran, bones, banjo. Bill Jackson: fiddle. As opposed to the family tree entry in the Convention '94 programme. We sit corrected Stephen!.....Lastly *I Looked Up*, released on CD in the US, available on import here for a while but then restricted to US sales only, will be released over here on mid-price sometime this year - so we're told.

WANTS!

Fred Janosy wants CD/LP/Tape of 'McGough & McGear' by McGough & McGear - he" buy, swap or come to any other arrangement. Contact Fred at P.O. Box 86, N.D.G., Montreal, Quebec H4A 3P4, Canada.

Your humble editor is searching for quite a few things: Any Curved Air CDs or newspaper clippings, photos, videos etc. Wishbone Ash on video (it's for my son - honest). Warren Zevon stuff - video or any of his more obscure US or UK albums, tapes or CDs. Info on the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band fanzine - does anyone know where I can get this? Also any Bonzo's/Viv Stanshall on video. I'm also interested in any old (60s or 70s) tour programmes (any band), fliers, posters, general gig memorabilia etc. I'll buy or swap for very interesting rare ISB material. Contact me by phone/letter/fax at the editorial address.

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The demise of the Incredible String band in 1974, due to 'musical differences' between founder members Mike Heron and Robin Williamson, was as inevitable as it was necessary. From their traditional folk beginnings they had become icons of the mid-sixties psychedelic 'flower power' generation and, having appeared at the Woodstock festival in 1969, seemed reluctant to admit that the dream had died and that without a radical rethink of their musical strategy, they would be destined to become as redundant as Tiny Tim.

The problem within the band was how the change should be brought about. Mike Heron was increasingly moving towards a more electric sound, while Williamson favoured a return to the band's traditional acoustic roots. This put the two of them on a crash course from which no agreement was possible.

The appearance of Williamson's first solo L.P. Myrrh, in 1972, was prompted not only by the friction

Robin Williamson - a post-ISB appreciation

My humble apologies to the author of this perceptive piece - I can't remember who sent it in! Contact me and I'll redress the mistake.

between heron and himself, but also by the fact that the introduction of Malcolm Le Maistre in 1971 had brought in another songwriter, thus limiting the compositional output of the other two on each forthcoming band album. Williamson, prolific writer that he is, soon found that he had a backlog of material that could not be used within a band context, hence the requirement for Myrrh.

The songs on Myrrh show clearly that even in 1972, two years before the break up of the ISB, Williamson was moving into a more traditional songwriting mode. To reach this conclusion we must first get by *Sandy Land*, which opens up side one and

which is as near to a pop song as he ever wrote, complete with drums, piano and pedal steel. Given that we discount this aberration, the theory holds and one can see that the surrealism which characterized so much of his earlier work, like *Job's Tears* and *Ducks On A Pond*, is gone, replaced by the more autobiographical approach of *Dark Eyed Lady* and the folk song lyric of *The Dancing Of The Lord Of Weir*. So, does it succeed? Up to a point, yes. It is clear that much of the material here is out of sync with the type of songs that appeared on ISB albums at this time. For all that, it is in many ways a flat piece of work, lacking in any real warmth, but there are good songs on it. The atmospheric *Cold Harbour* and the poignant *Rends Moi Demain* are particularly worthy of notice. Perhaps the reason for what I call the 'flatness' of the album is, in part, due to the fact that Williamson plays so many of the instruments himself, seven on *The Dancing Of The Lord Of Weir*, and consequently there is no feedback from other musicians to provide a lift for the songs. The instrumentation itself is strangely perverse at times. The oboe, which appears on four of the songs, is bleak and lifeless. The cello too sounds at odds with the material, but this is a purely personal reaction.

Quite simple, I feel that whilst the album does not really succeed, it shows the way that Williamson's muse was taking him, that the gap between himself and Mike Heron was an ever widening one and provided conclusive evidence that the break up of the ISB would happen sooner rather than later.

The release of Myrrh caused few ripples on a folk scene that was already taking Steeleye Span to its folk rock heart. By this time the ISB had become an anachronism and having floundered about, hopelessly seeking some new direction, for a further two years, Williamson and Heron finally called a halt to proceedings and would things

The traditional element was perhaps most prominent in "The Whistling Thief," a round of jig-and-reel-like instruments featuring harpist Sylvia Woods, but it was also an essential part of "The Tune I Hear So Well," a Williamson composition whose striking lyrics accompanied an enchanting blend of fiddle, guitar, harp and flute.

Surrounded by green, purple and yellow banners, seated in front of a bearded fiddle player who could pass as a leprechaun, Williamson looked and sounded like a figure from another time. Though his new songs don't have quite the same denseness or intense religious imagery of his early ISB efforts, "These are The Mystic Times" indicated that he still sees the world as a place of magic.

Another habit Williamson has retained from his days in the ISB is a fondness for little and little-known instruments. Already author of a book on traditional fiddle tunes of the British Isles, he has just finished a book on the penny whistle—which band member Chris Caswell played when he wasn't otherwise occupied on button accordion, bodhran and Scots harp.

All this was done with grace and a wry sense of humor. For the encore on his opening set, for example, Williamson chose "Hobo's Worried Bues," a Cajun tune that took several unexpected turns while Williamson sawed away on fiddle, ending up as an Eastern European mazurka.

Williamson: Still an Incredible Musician

By Larry Rohter

Robin Williamson isn't in the Incredible String Band anymore, but incredible is still the most appropriate word to describe what he and his band can do with strings. It's not just guitar, but fiddle, Celtic harp and mando cello that give his music its traditional and delightfully spirited feel.

Williamson, who's appearing at The Cellar Door with Hickory Wind through Sunday, is one of a growing number of pop artists who have returned to making "roots" music. Born and raised in the Scottish lowlands—and possessor of that region's distinctive burr even after three years' residence in Los Angeles—he has put aside the bizarre "acid-folk" style that marked his 10 years and 16 albums with the Incredible String Band in favor of a sound that has a noticeable Celtic flavor.

WASHINGTON POST: 11-3-77

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up in 1974. It was now that Robin Williamson's real solo career began.

The Jam, the Clash and the Sex Pistols were the new breed of bands that were in the recording spotlight by the time Williamson launched his first solo excursion with the Merry band in 1977. Having spent the three years since the break up of the ISB writing a penny whistle tutor, a fiddle tutor and co-writing a novel, Williamson travelled to America during this hiatus, met up with Sylvia Woods, Christopher Caswell and Jerry McMillan, formed the Merry Band and recorded *Journeys Edge*.

This is a shapeshifter of an album, with Williamson clearing the dross out of his mind, straddling the twin horses of the ISB and his search for a new direction. It is impossible to see from *Journeys Edge* which way the scales were going to tip. The later Celtic works like *Five Denials On Merlin's Grave* or *Scotland Yet* are not obvious distillations from this album. It is more the work of a contemporary singer/songwriter than of a traditionalist, and while tradition is obvious on songs like *The Tune I Hear So Well* and *Mythic Times* (which was the sound he was to follow), songs like *Lullaby For A Rainy Night* and *Rap City Rhapsody*, have a pop feel about them which he was soon to discard.

Journeys Edge is an eminently listenable L.P. It contains some wonderful playing from his new musical acquaintances, and some great songs. *The Bells* and *Mythic Times* are particular favourites of mine, but it is an L.P. where both Williamson and the other band members are feeling each other out. Williamson still seems to be searching for his true vocation, unsure which way to go. By 1978 he had made up his mind.

American Stonehenge (1978) and *A Glint At The Kindling* (1979) have their musical feet planted firmly in the traditional fold. The session men are all but gone, and Williamson and his Merry Band create a wonderful, warm Celtic flavoured hotchpotch that exudes the joy of a born-again pagan. Complex instrumentals like *Port London Early* and *The Boyhood Of Henry Morgan* flow with what appears to be effortless ease, Sylvia Woods' harp and Jerry McMillan's flute and whistle creating waves of lush notes to

accompany a revitalised Williamson's mandocello and mandolin. The songs too are ripe and strong. Williamson has never been in better voice. On *American Stonehenge* we find the sensuality of *Keepsake*, the sinister *Man In The Van*, the Hogmanay spirit of *Rab's Last Woolen Testament* and from *A Glint At The Kindling*, still

more Celtic than its predecessor, there are such gems as *The Woodcutter's Song*, played so beautifully you can almost hear the logs crackling on the Christmas fire, the roistering, ribald *Lough Foyle*, and the epic *Five Denials On Merlin's Grave*, a story of our early British ancestors, narrated with passion by Williamson, who now could well have been the reincarnation of Taliesin of old.

I can really find nothing to criticise on these two L.P.s. Individually the band members play wonderfully well and it is to them that much of the credit must go. Williamson himself says on the sleeve notes of *American Stonehenge*, "I believe that I have never worked with finer musicians than Sylvia, Chris and Jerry." Just why then they parted company after *A Glint At The Kindling* remains a mystery to me, but Williamson's

next vinyl outing makes no mention of the Merry Band.

Songs Of Love And Parting (1981), recorded in Los Angeles, finds Williamson consolidating and cementing his love of the Celtic tradition. Armed with a copy of Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the Welsh folk tales, collectively entitled

ROBIN WILLIAMSON & HIS MERRY BAND
AMERICAN STONEHENGE
CRIMINAL RECORDS
STEAL 4

One time stalwart of the little and sadly missed couple of friends help out on *Incredible String Band*, bass guitar and dobro from Robin Williamson moved to time to time. Obviously, that California after the break up list of instruments gives you the Strings — while his er-a better idea of what the stwhile partner Mike Heron album may sound like than moved so far away from any length of review, and it what were believed to be his also indicates the complexity roots that he became vir-of some of the tracks — a tually unrecognisable. complexity that they seem to Robin, however, was deter- take delight in.

mined to stay closely in touch. The opening track is *Port* with those roots — for him: London Early, a beautifully the Celtic folklore of his descriptive folk-saturated in-native Scotland, and while it strummental, leading next to seems bloody absurd to swop *Pacheco* which is west coast the dank mists, green hills influenced while retaining and finely baked haggis for the basic elements inherent in the clear skies, sandy beaches the instrumentation. Zoo and plasto-hamburgers of Blues is an extraordinary California to keep in touch compiled joke track with the with such roots he seems to lyrics abounding in animal have succeeded admirably. metaphors, puns and you

He describes his present name it. These Islands Green band of Merry Men thus develops and twists around "In a word I believe that I its theme ending eventually have never worked with finer in nearly a jig. musicians . . ." which must The rest of the album con- feel like a dagger in the ribs tinues this theme of of the String Band, but after delivering the unexpected a few listenings this ex- and making it work ad- traordinary album does both mirably. Throughout the begin to take shape and bear lyrics are excellent, and the out his statement. vocals sympathetic to the

It's a very strange collec- themes flying around them. tion of songs and in- Many of the lyrics harp back strummental ideas played by to the original purpose of the an equally strange collection old folk song — to tell a of musicians on even story, deliver a moral, keep stranger instruments. I think the faces round the camp fire they are all acoustic in- entertained. Well Robin's struments, but some of the succeeded in entertaining me tones whistling around the — even though this is by no various tracks are rather dif- way my cup of musical tea. ficult to identify with any It's refreshing to listen to degree of certainty. something that borders

Roger handles a plethora closely on being genuinely of instruments including original — but it's hard to be guitar, Celtic harp, har- original with a two thousand year old idea.

Tom Stock's review of American Stonehenge

The Mabinogion, we find him putting this material to good use on *The Forming Of The Blodeuwedd* and *Gwydion's Dream Sigil*, though written by himself, is based upon an old Irish poem. *The Parting Glass* is a traditional song, well known in Scotland and Ireland and *Return No More* is based on the Highland Clearances of the 19th century. But for all the nods to Welsh, Irish and Scottish fact and fiction there is one song here that stands head and shoulders above anything that Williamson has previously done. *For Mr Thomas* is his finest moment. Armed with a guitar, his voice and some overdubbed wine glasses, he creates a beautiful, touching and evocative portrait of the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. It is one of those moments when everything goes right. The wine glasses are a master stroke, harmonics from heaven, creating an other-worldly atmosphere through the glass darkly. Williamson snarls, sniffs and howls the eight verses of his song, his guitar one minute staccato chord, the next elegantly finger picked. It is, quite simply, wonderful.

As for the rest of the L.P., Williamson, bereft of the Merry Band, but with several back up musicians, the gaelic harp being particularly prevalent and we are left in doubt that Williamson the Celtic Bard is alive and well. It was to be seven years however before a new set of songs appeared.

This is not to say that the years from 1981-88 are devoid of interest to Williamson aficionadas. These years saw the release of a soundtrack album for a TV history of Wales, entitled *The Dragons Has Two Tongues*; *The Legacy Of The Scottish Harpers* vols. 1 & 2; a record from the stage presentation of *The Mabinogi* and the 1987 children's LP *Songs For Children Of All Ages*. 1986 saw the appearance of *Winter's Turning*, a strange collection of traditional songs and instrumentals concerning -well, winter. Personally, I just can't see the point to this album at all. The material is played competently though, but is it all so low key as to be almost apologetic. The only kick I got out of it was on noting that *The Eagle's Whistle* sound remarkably like *Sing Sweet Nightingale* from Disney's *Cinderella*. With an Arts Council grant I could investigate this

further! There is nothing so evocative of winter here as *The Woodcutter's Song* from *A Glint At The Kindling*, and at a total running time of a paltry thirty two minutes the album is poor value for money. While one must expect an artist like Williamson to experiment, this is something of a damp squib.

While all the above are interesting in their own way they are hors d'oeuvres before the main course of *Ten Of Songs* in 1988.

Mention must be made here of a cassette Williamson produced during these years. *Selected Writings 1980-83* is worthy of note, containing as it does the remarkable witty dramatic monologue entitled *The Fair*, along with two instrumental pieces. Thankfully this material has become more widely available recently due to its release on CD.

But to return to *Ten Of Songs*. Here Williamson has come home. Recorded in Cardiff with Welsh musicians, his lyrics show a stunning variety and strength. On *Scotland Yet* he recalls his early youth in a monologs of great charm and wit. the poetry of *Lammas* and *Verses At Powis* is that of the meditative and mature man he had become.

The Barley starts off with a bemused, "By God, I knew it all when I was twenty...". Here he realises he knows...what he knows. There are no traditional pieces on *Ten Of Songs*, yet every song reeks of tradition, a tradition that Williamson has married to his own work until the cracks can no longer be seen. If I have a favourite here it is *Verses At Powis*. The tune that originally took my fancy on *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* as *Old Dream* has been dusted down and ultimately transformed into a song that seems as old as an Anglo-Saxon riddle.

In 1993 Williamson teamed up with guitarist John Renbourn on the live CD *Wheel Of Fortune*. Given Renbourn's track record, I approached this with some trepidation, half expecting it to consist of 17th century lute instrumentals and the more obscure works of Turlogh O'Carolan, but this turns out not to be the case at all. It is in effect a very pleasant hours worth of two folk stalwarts enjoying playing music together. Highlights are an excellent version of Archie Fisher's

Lindsay, a new Williamson 'trad.' song in the shape of *The Lights Of Sweet St. Annes*, and a tour de force guitar showpiece from Renbourn on Randy Weston's *Little Niles*. Renbourn's vocal style is limited, to say the least, but he meanders pleasantly enough when he does sing here, while Williamson is in fine voice throughout and even finds time to tell us a story on *Finn And The Old Man's* house. All in all a very entertaining set.

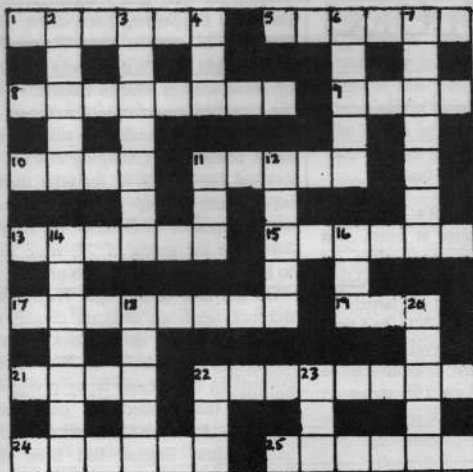
Taken as a whole, Robin Williamson's solo career has produced very little in the way of downs for his admirers, and the highs, when they have come, have been exceptional. Since six years have now elapsed from the release of *Ten Of Songs*, we can only hope that a new batch are due for public scrutiny in the near future. I for one am waiting impatiently.

ROBIN WILLIAMSON "MYRRH" (ISLAND)

MUCH LESS of a surprise than Mike Heron's solo album of last year, "Myrrh" is pure Williamson, from his arrangement of Ivan Pawle's Joyce-adaptation "Strings In The Earth And Air" (remember "Kip of the Serenes"?), through to the bouncy and optimistic "I See Us All Get Home". With occasional appearances by his wife Janet, Stan Lee Buttons, Susie Watson Taylor (flute solo on the first track) and Gerry Conway (drums on "Sandy Land"), Robin has created this by himself, working out and putting down interlocking parts for strings, woodwind, keyboards, guitars, and voices to form usually dense but often quite stark shapes of sound. It's beautifully crafted, but I occasionally get the feeling that it's a little cold — sculpted rather than grown — and unreachable. But still there's a fragile tenderness about a lot of the music, and there are some beautifully romantic songs — things like "Dark Eyed Lady", "Through The Horned Clouds" and "Cold Harbour". One of the most effective and, for me, affecting ideas he's used on the album is the combination of oboe and strings — cello and violin — which works particularly well on "The Dancing Of The Lord Of Weir" and "Dark Dance"; and lyrically he has some striking images: "...Weir's castle lifts like a crippled claw into the moon". But still there's something about the album that is very distant — you can reach so far into it, yet there is something that keeps you from knowing it completely. "Let me be your fantasy/let me kiss your wary foot/let me be your cameraman/you confidant/ your preacher and your prostitute/let me be your enemy/but over all let me be your friend." There's something unreachable about someone who is that sure of his own strength and it reflects in the music. SP. 8p47.22

Myrrh review
Spring 72 - Sounds (?)

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95



CROSSWORD

Something to blow your mind away during these spring days. Not too hard - but not too easy either. Unfortunately due to a cock-up in my filing system I can't find who sent this in. My humble apologies to you as you read this - remind me and I'll send you something nice by way of apology. No prizes, and the answers are to be found elsewhere in the 'zine



ACROSS

1. Welsh poet Robin wrote a song for (6)
2. Robin's ringmaster was wearing one (3,3)
8. Mike sang you get this every day (8)
9. The puppies would make good ones (4)
10. Mike's "sin drenched Christian" was this (4)
11. Cheerful valley (5)
13. Descartes is frightened by losing the set, rather like the tree whose bark I touched (6)
15. Politically incorrect town where Clive played banjo (6)
17. What Robin would like to do with the man he meets in October Song (4,4)
19. Scots for where Robin shoveled his smoke (3)
21. A full set of what comes natural (4)
22. Skinny royal ponders a lifelong companion, perhaps, at some point (8)
24. Malcolm lies on the beach with her on Earthspan (6)
25. Cyclops set on the shores of the blind (3,3)

DOWN

2. Should be changed in pairs (5)
3. Where the Maharaja wanted to rumba (7)
4. Don't be as upstanding on the garden wall (3)
6. One was having a little breakfast (5)
7. Mike's tribute to Berlioz (7)
11. Robin - "just - to grow" (3)
12. Half of one bought a loaf for the ducks (5)
14. White, not yellow oriental (7)
16. Sadie Lee was one (3)
18. Miss McKechnie, colloquially (5)
20. Clive had none on his song (5)
22. Ten clean ones for convent girl on *Antione* (3)

Why Are We Sleeping?

A Digest of Kevin Ayers

WAWS (A4 sized) deals with Kevin Ayers and related artists. Up tot he minute gig reviews, retrospectives, new album and tour info, interviews and photos - it's all there. WAWS also produce an excellent A5 sized discography which covers everything in every permutation that Ayer's has ever done. Both this and the zine are in-depth pieces of research. Why read the mainstream music press when you can read zines like this?

Three issue sub. for £3.00, from Martin Wakeling, 112 Parkville Road, Withington, Manchester, M20 4TZ

Hors d'Oeuvres

The Roy Harper Magazine

Hors d'Oeuvres (now at issue 26) is a professionally produced A4 fanzine dealing with all aspects of Harper's long and varied career (it even has the odd reference to the ISB). Gigs, album reviews, interviews, photos and a truly excellent CD/tape/video merchandise department make Hors d'Oeuvres a leading zine in its field.

Single issues £1.50 inc. p&p Four issue sub. £6.00 inc. p&p. From: Dave Carlin, 11 Dover Road, Botanical Gardens, Sheffield, S11 8RH.

Both these fanzines are highly recommended by **Be Glad**

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

COVERED WITH GLORY

Part Three

Solo Flights & The Rhythm Method

Raymond Greenoaken

Remember 1971, best beloved? Admit it - most of you were there, and if you had a couple of functioning brain cells at the time you'd have noticed that change was in the air. Revolution, 60s style, had collapsed into 70s hedonism. Hippiedom was in sere and yellow leaf, and in the stables of record companies on both sides of the Atlantic, the war-horses of Progressive Rock were chomping at the bit. It was at this perilous time that the Incredible String Band, having fulfilled their contract with Elektra upon the delivery of the *U* album, fell into the welcoming arms of Island Records.

Island was a company with a proven commitment to innovation and independent thought in the field of popular music, but with corporate canniness it had sniffed the air and concluded that the future lay in decibels and denim. In the light of this, the ISB may have seemed a surprising addition to the roster. Not necessarily: they arrived with an established fan base, and Island doubtless felt it could nudge them gently towards the Prog Rock mainstream. And it may have detected the faint stirrings of disaffection within the band itself.

Hitherto, the ISB had shown - to outside observers at least - an adamant unity of purpose. In the aftermath of *U*, however, a serious fracture developed in that unity. Mike, it now emerges, had felt himself marginalised by the collaborative, multi-media nature of the project (even though he contributed very substantially to the musical side of things). The misgivings he evidently felt about the direction *U* had taken the band were certainly shared by Joe Boyd, in whose view *U* was a massive shambling folly. *U*, of course, was essentially Robin's brainchild, and it was Robin's background in folk and ethnic music and poetry, and his wide reading in esoteric literatures, that had provided the foundation for the band's

style and approach. It's clear that Mike, a rock 'n' roller at heart, was now feeling the urge to explore his own musical roots rather than meekly following a path mapped out largely by Robin. Joe Boyd, meanwhile, had seen with his customary shrewdness that a sea-change was about to overtake the music scene, and if the ISB didn't go with the flow they'd sink serenely into the sediment. Joe's concerns and Mike's unrest dovetailed neatly with the move to Island. In Mike's words (see issue 4), "Joe approached me and said I think we should make a solo album and I've got a lot of people who would be interested...who'll breath on certain tracks and we'll make it an album like that." The album was *Smiling Men With Bad Reputations*, and Island happily put up the ackers for a platoon of 'eavy sessioneers, including Pete Townshend, Jimmy Page - and John Cale, who took Mike aside and persuaded him of the virtues of the Rhythm Section. The battle for the soul of the ISB had begun.

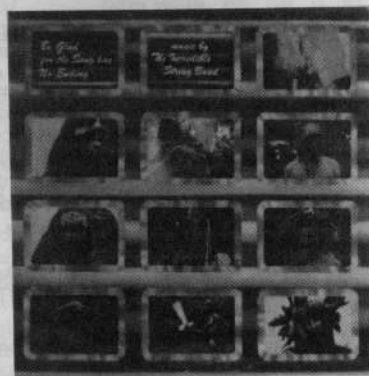
These developments were faithfully, if occasionally obscurely, reflected in the packaging of the band's releases over this period. Their arrival on island, perversely, was marked not by the release of new product but by a dusty collection of Elektra out-takes and incidental music for the *Be Glad* film, all parcelled together under the title since immortalised by this magazine: *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending*. Simultaneously, Elektra, in time honoured tradition, shoved out a retrospective album drawn from the First album - *Wee Tam* period: *Relics Of The Incredible String Band*.

Both albums came with sleeve designs by Nigel

Waymouth, who also - significantly - concocted the *Smiling Men* sleeve. It's tempting to surmise that Waymouth was brought in by Witchseason to cook up some kind of modish alternative to the hippified house-style developed in ISB cover design under the auspices of Janet Shankman. *Changing Horses*, *I Looked Up* and *U* all featured major input from Janet; *Liquid Acrobat*, which appeared in October 1971, and *Myrrh*, in the spring of '72, were also to bear her distinctive thumb-print.

On the face of it, Nigel Waymouth did not seem an obvious choice to bring ISB cover design kicking and screaming into the '70s. Waymouth boasted an impeccable hippy pedigree. Under the collective cognomen Hapshash And The Coloured Coat, he and Michael English had been the leading purveyors of psychedelic poster art in late '60s London. The ISB were well represented in the Hapshash portfolio. And indeed, for the backward glancing *Relics* and *Be Glad* albums his designs have a jaded, half-hearted psychedelic sheen to them. A weary valediction to the era of expanded consciousness.

Relics is the more successful cover of the two. The basic format for front and back consists of a plain black background with an artfully skewed b&w photo of Mike and Robin in casual pose down on the farm. (The photographer is uncredited, but is almost certainly Iain Skinner, then the ISB's resident snapper; both photos were taken during the filming of *Be Glad* in the summer of '68. In the See All The People feature last issue is another shot from the same session.)



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The front photo is a high contrast available-light shot of Mike and Robin at the breakfast table, Mike plunks studiously on a thumb piano while Robin appears to be whacking himself over the head with a tea strainer. The table is strewn with a riotous assemblage of bowls, books, candlesticks, incense burners, Rizlas, a Chinese shawm and what looks like a toilet roll but is probably something rather more exotic. Sunlight streams through the window and glints of Mike's Indian beads. The Way We Used To Be. In the back photo Robin cools his feet in a canal as his dog Leaf looks on with canine disinterest. Mike, with a puckish grin, mischievously dangles one of Robin's sandals over the water. What a world of significance could, with hindsight, be read into these innocent antics. All the lettering on the cover is hand rendered. The title *Relics Of The Incredible String Band* is a lazy pastiche of Janet's tendril-like lettering style, infilled with a rather vapid peppermint green. The track listing and recording and publishing credits are in plain majuscular script in white.

(The American - and European - edition of *Relics* comes in the form of a double album, also drawn from *Changing Horses* and *I Looked Up*, with a sleeve design by Elektra house designer Robert (Bob) L. Heimall, who had also coordinated the *U* design. A pastel ocean stretches across front and back covers. beneath the arching white lettering of the title is an eclectic silhouette-style illustration by Jacqueline Chwast. Four smiling hunkered figures, each perching on the knees of the one below in a totem-pole arrangement (one female, three male, as far as can be judged), stretch out their fingers, from which issue strings attached to assorted mannequins: a shaggy simian clutching a cracked moon, a steatopygous female, a tree-climbing hedgehog, two chubby babies with trees sprouting from from their hair and a boar-headed dancer. A

tightrope walker dressed in top hat and tails and waving an umbrella skips along the topmost string. Each mannequin is duplicated, one on either side of the central totem pole. An impudent-looking rodent squats under the lowest of the central figures. Does that capture the essence of the ISB for you, reader? The inside gatefold is largely devoted to the lyrics of the featured songs. A small photo of Mike and Robin in meditative cross-legged mode decorates the bottom right hand corner; it comes from the *Hangman's* photo-session. The overall design had clearly been composed without

arrangement of metallic-looking bars of colour, onto which, on the front cover, are superimposed twelve frames in four rows of three (or three rows of four, depending on the angle from which one views the cover). All but the first two, which announce *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending* and *Music By The Incredible String Band* in a drab, white pseudo-calligraphic typeface, are devoted to stills from the film. The top right hand frame shows Mike and Robin harmonising on *All Writ Down*; the remainder come from the *Pirate And The Crystal Ball* sequence. For those of you with an appetite for minutiae, the stills are as follows; head shot of fiddler in a goat mask (identity uncertain); head and shoulders of Herne the Hunter (Malcolm); head and shoulders of Uiscobo as one of the Three Spinners; head and shoulders of Rose as Spinner; head and shoulders of Licorice as Spinner; Malcolm sprinting through a meadow dressed as a bird; Pirate in hot pursuit of bird; head and shoulders of Licorice as Spinner in a headdress of leaves and flowers - this was also the final image in the film.



The stills themselves are attractive and evocative, but they're arranged in a deadly uniformity that drains them of much of their magic. A more pleasing, and certainly more arresting arrangement would have been to concentrate on a single image - say, the goat fiddler, or Likky-in-leaves-and-flowers - and present the remaining stills on the rear cover. But the design is executed with the bare minimum of thought or imagination; it's hard to avoid the conclusion that Witchseason was indifferent to the whole enterprise, impatient to ring the changes. This slipshod attitude extends to the credits on the rear. The ISB had always been careful to list the instruments used on their records; but here the entire second side - the incidental music for the film - is described merely as essayed by "all four on their characteristic

consulting the ISB, and as such has minimal significance to their career graph; but we thought you ought to know about it.)

As mentioned above, the *Be Glad* album, the band's first Island release, hit the shops at the same time as *Relics*. Nigel Waymouth, whether at the behest of Witchseason or not, turned in another retrogressive sleeve, awash with the tritest dayglo psychedelia. If the intention was to announce to the world that the ISB had moved on, that these tracks were old lumber swept out by a new broom, then the packaging may be deemed apt enough. On strictly aesthetic terms, however, it's a sad and unalluring thing.

The background is a horizontal

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instruments". (An educated guess at the likely instrumental credits is attempted in the Strings and Things article elsewhere in this issue.) The rear cover, incidentally, features the same bars of colour, a grey box in dayglo frame listing song titles and credits, and a circular still of the Pirate's hand clasping the crystal ball.

The next album of new ISB material - *Liquid Acrobat As Regards The Air* - was still nine months away. As we shall see, Janet Shankman's cover design continued the pastoral theme established by her earlier work. It's pertinent to note that, a few months beforehand, Joe Boyd had severed his links with the band, wound up Witchseason, and decamped back to America and the world A and R. What influence he might have exerted on the band's trajectory had he stayed with might be guessed at from his final production job for the ISB camp, Mike's celebrated flight *Smiling Men With Bad Reputations*. When Smiling men emerged at the end of April, critics jaws sagged in unanimity at the blistering vocals and sheer sonic attack of tracks like *Call Me Diamond* and *Warm Heart Pastry*. here was Joe prodding Mike down a far rockier road than heretofore. But the album falls some way short of a manifesto. It's true that *Diamond* and *Pastry* represented a radical departure from the band's existing oeuvre; and, as we've discovered via the CD reissue, *Lady Wonder* and *Make No Mistake* are of a similar stripe. But much-indeed most - of the album oozed the mellow acoustic feel characteristic of the ISB. *Smiling Men*, in fact, was an uneasy amalgam of the two contrasting styles: less a full blooded declaration of intent than an edgy hedging of bets. Mike afterwards reflected: "I think I'll want the next one I make to have a much more cohesive style." - which perhaps suggests that he regarded solo projects as the most promising conduit

for the brash rock style he was beginning to cultivate.

The album cover served only to confuse the issue. Was there any Stringhead within the orbit of Uranus who was not perplexed and even alarmed by the bizarre tableau presented here? Waymouth's brief, seemingly, was to produce a sort of negative image of the typical ISB cover. The resulting design has earned its perpetrator an antechamber to himself in Sleeve Designers Hell.

In a simulated Bedouin tent made entirely out of Bacofoil, Mike, coat hanging loosely from his shoulders, appears to be offering a pineapple to an exceedingly motley collection of

The most generous interpretation is that, yes, it is a joke, but one that simply doesn't come off. By mid '71 the ISB were ripe for ridicule as old hippies in danger of outstaying their welcome in the cynical '70s, and sending yourself up can be an effective way of drawing the satirist's sting. But the trick lies in doing it with a certain grace and with your dignity left intact, and this, sad to say, the *Smiling Men* cover frankly fails to achieve. But a message can be extracted, at least with the benefit of hindsight: Things are gonna change round here.

The inner gatefold is altogether less unsettling. On a background of what looks like sandpaper, the song titles and recording information are rendered in Mike's careful, artless hand. He modestly omits his own instrumental credits. My tentative efforts at restoring them are as follows; *Flowers Of The Forest* - acoustic guitar; *Audrey* - ac. gr. elec piano; *Brindaban* - ac. guitar; *Feast Of Stephen* - ac. gr. *Beautiful Stranger* - elect gr.; *No Turning Back* - ac. gr.

At this point I mean to break the strict chronological sequence by looking at Robin's solo album *Myrrh*. Released in April '72, it makes such a suggestive contrast, visually as well as aurally, to *Smiling Men* that it deserves study here. In many ways it's an antithesis to Mike's album. Where *Smiling*

Men is stuffed with session men, *Myrrh* is almost entirely the work of Robin himself. Where Island indulgently dished out a gatefold to Mike in the happy expectation that he was going mainstream, the company stingily confined Robin to a single sleeve (even though the cover concept cried out for a gatefold) and even dumped him on their cut-price 'minority interest' label HELP. And where *Smiling Men* testifies to an artist still unsure of the direction he wants to take, *Myrrh* shows a confident Robin going his own merry way. The covers of the two albums, too, are like day and night, chalk and cheese, the one happily hippy, fearlessly fey, the other



blissedout pantomime Arabs. From the head of one drifts a thought balloon bearing the album title; from the mouth of another emerges an exclamatory word balloon containing the words "Mike Heron!" Next to Mike stands a bright red pasteboard palm tree decorated with flowers. What exactly were we to make of this abject farrago of visual non-sequiturs?

The first thing to point out is that this is essentially an anti-cover. It willfully subverts all the imagery associated with ISB covers but leaves nothing coherent in its place. All that is presented is that act of subversion itself. So, is it a joke, a thumbing of the Heron aquiline snout - or what?

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one the unhappy cry of a man gripped by an identity crisis. And - not to put too fine a point on it - *Myrrh* is rather beautiful, while *Smiling Men* is frankly a pain in the eye ball.

Although it's not immediately obvious, the cover concept of *Myrrh* is a joke, too. Robin stands fronded in autumnal bracken on a Glen Row hillside, one arm across his breast, the other gesturing out of the frame, smiling inscrutably. A cavalcade of fantastically garbed communards, attended by a couple of dogs, approach him with palms raised in a sort of gesture of supplication. At first glance it seems simply a piss-take of *Smiling Men* tableau; in fact, both Robin and his entourage are effecting the postures characteristic of ancient Egyptian tomb-art - a conceit that ties in elegantly with the hieroglyphics decorating the inner sleeve and the accompanying quotation from the Egyptian Book Of The Dead. The wide, chilly expanse of the sky recalls the classic Earth/Air symmetry of the *Hangman's* cover. The cool, heiratic purple of the title lettering is echoed in the colour scheme of the inner sleeve and chimes aptly with the solemn beauty of the songs, the curly typeface providing a visual analogue for Robin's discursive lyric and melodic flamboyance. Every element of the design is cunningly interlinked and counterpointed. A collective effort, apparently: Mitch Walker is credited with the photo and overall design, Janet with the interior artwork; and Mike Bloor and Jack Miller are thanked for "artistic advice". It's certainly the most satisfying and successful ISB-related sleeve since *Wee Tam And The Big Huge*. At one and the same time it embodies Robin's unique musical vision, the Glen Row lifestyle, the late autumn of hippiedom, all flavoured with an exquisitely delicate self-deprecating humour. As noted earlier, its impact is weakened by the single sleeve format, but record company philistinism and naggardliness is no new phenomenon.

And so, backtracking some six months, to *Liquid Acrobat As Regards The Air*. This album is poised on the cusp of the 'old' ISB ethos and the 'new' where the tinkling chimes of the hippy dream gave way to the jackboot thud of bass 'n' drums. But if '70s

values were forcing their way into the music, the album sleeve dispensed the familiar mixture of the bucolic, the elfin and the timeless. This was Janet's last design work for the band (*Myrrh* of course being a tangential solo flight). The muted colour scheme - monochrome photography on a beige field - marked something of a departure: relics apart, all previous ISB sleeves had been full colour affairs. Despite the delicate knotwork and the tendrilled borders, and the snaky, leaf-festooned lettering, the overall effect is - as Jim Spiggot pointed out in issue 1 of *Be Glad* - sombre. The front and inner-gatefold photos show the band wandering in a collective reverie across thistly fells under a threatening (because under-exposed) sky. One can almost hear them musing: So, - where do we go to from here?" It's a sleeve that can be enjoyed purely for its pleasing visual qualities, but it seems to be significant of something more, a premonitory sign perhaps of a band that was about to lose the courage of its earlier convictions.

The song lyrics are printed on the inner gatefold over the photographic backdrop. One of the lines from *Darling Belle* is omitted - "Sits like a sign in the chintz chair" - and two from *Here Till Here Is There* - "Why do we talk of go and stay/We will all be here till here is there." The omission of that last line has a distinct poignancy in retrospect. The inner photo, filling the whole of the gatefold and rendered in sepia, is dominated by a huge, leaning oak in full leaf, overshadowing the single standing wall of an ancient ruin: the eternal polarities of growth and decay, fecundity and sterility, so central to the band's world view, here stand in ironic propinquity.

The back cover photo, oval and sepia-toned, is reminiscent, as the perceptive Spiggot suggests, of a faded photograph you might find in a an old person's house, a memorial to an age past. It's actually a composite shot. Robin's head and shoulders are grafted on from a separate photo, and the deep shading on Malcolm's face hints that the same process has been used in his case also. The track list and performing credit are arranged on either side of the photo. One curious development is that, while the other

three are identified by their first names - standard ISB practice - Mike has elected to be known as 'Heron'. (Malcolm, incidentally, followed suit on *Earthspan*.) Does anyone know why? I think we should be told.

The *Acrobat* cover definitely has a nostalgic, fin-de-siecle atmosphere. It may, of course, be fanciful to see in it the ISB waving a 'sad goodbye' to the age that spawned them, before squaring up to the challenges of post-hippiedom. And if tensions were pulling at the fabric of the band, they were being philosophical about them - in public at least. Consider the following remarks drawn from an interview published in March '72.

Mike: "We all have completely different likes and aims, really...No-one is hung up about getting his own ideas across exclusively."

Robin: "You have to bear in mind that none of us, except perhaps Mike - and there's one of the clashes - is trying to play modern music. We're not trying to be contemporary."

Mike: "My idea of the band is that it can be moulded in any direction and eventually be able to do anything...At times it's been frustrating when I have been trying to do something I could do myself, but I've come to realise we've got a valuable thing going."

Robin: "The most exciting record is the one we haven't made yet...After all, the future is more interesting than the past."

CREDITS WHERE THEY'RE DUE

Relics (UK): Artwork by Nigel Waymouth. Photos by Iain Skinner.

Relics (USA/EUR): Art direction and design by Robert L. Heimall. Artwork by Jacqueline Chwabb. Photo by Iain Skinner.

Be Glad...: Artwork by Nigel Waymouth.

Smiling Men...: Sleeve design by Nigel Waymouth. Photo by Iain Skinner.

Liquid Acrobat: Cover design and artwork by Janet Shankman-Williamson. Cover photography by Mitch Walker with help from Mike Bloor.

Myrrh: Design, layout and cover photograph by Mitch Walker. Inside artwork by Janet Williamson. Artistic advice from Mike Bloor and Jack Miller.

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**Robin Williamson
Conway Hall
27th January '95**

Caught by the Coincidence Kids

Well, it was worth it; we had to wait until the very end of the concert, ignore the comper's attempts to close the evening down and drag back the Bard for an encore - but we finally got a new song out of him! Called *The Scappers*, it was an impressive latter-day epic ballad about bare-knuckle fighting in Wales.

Robin had agreed to play two benefits for 'The Serious Road Trip', which delivers food, medicine, clothing and live entertainers to innocent victims of the war in Bosnia. The January concert at London's Conway Hall included a mixed (and patchy) selection of performers. Any hopes of seeing Bert Jansch and Robin getting together were thwarted by an 'administrative cock-up' which meant Bert would only manage a

hurried, unassuming set at the beginning of the evening before dashing off.

The event ended with a totally fresh and revitalised Robin. He didn't have any new jokes, but he did a lovely job of the old ones! Songs, stories and tall tales were well received by an enthusiastic crowd (mostly new to Williamsonia, we guessed) although his set didn't seem the same without the ritual tale of car-bonnets, cheap

wonderful *Briar Thorn Tree* (a song about Bina prefaced by a time-and-motion study of the Santa Fe freight train).

Interestingly, he didn't perform a single ISB song. There was a nice (and moving) section about fathers too; here follows the Williamson analysis of the three stages of human life.

1. My Dad's better than your Dad!
2. Fuck off Dad, you don't know what you're talking about!
3. As my old Dad used to say.....

Robin's restored vitality bodes well for the new CD of original songs we are promised shortly - more please Robin!

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Living Theatre presents a concert for
Innocent Victims Of War
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The Incredible String Band's
ROBIN WILLIAMSON
Special Guest Pentangle's legendary
Bert Jansch
cellist VEDRAN SMAILOVIC
REV HAMMER Guests
Food and Bar from 6.45pm
Tickets £8.50/£5.50 Students 071 734 8932
£7.50/£5.50 on door

plastic raincoats and beautiful wife Bina

Though Robin alluded to a troubled past year (earthquakes, plagues and incessant touring), he seemed optimistic about the coming one, and this was reflected in his set. New or recent material predominated, like the

FOLK: Williamson Delivers a Lot for the Money

By **Charlie McCollum** '77
Washington Star Staff Writer

There are lots of forgotten groups in the world of rock. Acts hit the big time for a brief moment and then slide into oblivion. Groups put out one great album and then disappear. Bands are appreciated only after they have broken up. And there are groups that never reach a public beyond other musicians and a small cult following.

The Incredible String Band was a classic example of the latter. During the late 1960s, the group put down some of the finest music of the period. Spotted throughout albums by Judy Collins and others are versions of the String Band's best pieces and it is from these renditions — not from the group's vastly neglected albums — that most listeners know of the late, lamented act.

The heart of the String Band was singer-songwriter Robin Williamson, whose tunes were the best the group had to offer. Williamson is now back

on the road after a considerable absence, beginning a four-day run at the Cellar Door last night. It is happy to report that his talents have not been dulled by the years.

Williamson is hardly your typical dynamic act. His group consists of himself on acoustic guitar and fiddle, a second fiddler, a harpist and a musician who works out on accordion, harp, flute and pipes. There is no bass, no drums, no plug-in electronic instruments of any kind. It is an ensemble designed for gentle music and gentle music is Williamson's forte.

LAST NIGHT, Williamson avoided those String Band oldies-but-goodies entirely. Every piece was a new one, which — a bit surprisingly — did not seem to bother those on hand. (Certainly, the quality of the new tunes made the absence of his past work irrelevant.) The uptempo numbers were fine, but Williamson and his group were at their best on the ballads. Whether the lyrics were con-

temporary or not, all the slower pieces had a magical, older quality to them that bridged the gap between modern music and the music of early England and Scotland. In this regard, a new song called "Mythic Times" was particularly striking.

Williamson also showed a superb ability to keep things rolling — not an easy thing to do when one is dealing with folk music. Few performers could get away with using two instrumentals as their final, pre-encore numbers. But Williamson managed it and absolutely triumphed on "The Voices of the Barbary Coast." He also stuck in a French-language Creole footstomper (with a harp yet) and a finale that mixed a can-can with "The William Tell Overture."

The evening was hardly the sort to send people raving into the streets. Robin Williamson simply isn't like that. What he is, however, is a fine, professional musician and entertainer who gives an audience a pleasant, musically invigorating night for its money.

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

The Hangman's Beautiful Convention

The Leeds Convention - Some Afterthoughts by Deena Omar

It was a long journey to Leeds. It began in 1986 when a small package of value came into my hands - a tape of assorted Incredible String Band songs. I had remembered a schoolfriend's uncle playing You Get Brighter to me back in the mid-seventies, and this tape set me on a path I had failed to take then. There is a time and a place for everything. A year later I got my hands on The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter and didn't listen to anything else all summer - I was completely enchanted. It took another seven years to discover all the other albums, and the fact that I was not the only person in the universe still listening to them.

The Convention began for me on the Friday. I was greeted on my arrival in Leeds by a rainbow in the sky and a frantic Andy Roberts in the Griffin. I had agreed to help out at the event, not realising how heavy boxes of programmes could be, nor how early I was capable of rising on a Saturday morning. There was a flurry of activity and nerves quivering in all directions, before people from far flung places started to arrive. Being a 'greet', check in and info person meant I got to say hello to everyone whose surnames began with A through L. I experienced the same feeling I'd had at the Rio and at Hebden - I just had no idea you were all out there!

Robin's would-be (but didn't turn out to be) workshop and question and answer session gave me a chance to relax and settle into the music, before a small degree of panic at the late arrival of Malcolm Le Maistre. He had apparently got the hotel name wrong and had been striding cat-lithe the streets of Leeds looking for a non-existent 'Boar Hotel'. Something about the uncertainty and absurdity of this rather pleased me, but I still breathed a

sight of relief when he finally strode, becloaked and behatted, into the Griffin.

The Quiz is getting to be something of a tradition at these events and I never fail to be amazed at the knowledge, both trivial and fascinating, that abounds. Someone should go on Mastermind. It was a haphazard, slightly anarchic affair, and a good chance for people to socialise.

What made the Convention so memorable? As hard to answer as what makes the Incredibles so special. I was too young to 'be there' the first time around, and although I know there's no going back, this weekend was surely the next best thing. Meeting people who were there, hearing their stories and seeing their reactions to the performances was almost as important as the music itself. I hadn't even realised Dr Strangely Strange still existed till fairly recently, so actually seeing them live, not to mention joining in with their jamming sessions in the bar, was almost more than I could take!

There wasn't a set that I didn't enjoy - but Dave Haswell's grace, timing and delicious bells, gongs and tablas will remain in my mind for a long time to come, particularly 1968's final ping - exquisite! Assorted memories and images come to mind - the juggler wandering around the foyer, the look on the faces of the assembled hotel staff when everyone sang *Log Cabin Home In The Sky* to them, the Strange Lee Strange tea dance, running into someone I hadn't seen for six years, Andy's unceasing pleas for *Ballad Of The Wasps* in the bar (the Strangelies eventually delivering the goods), a bemused and tripping young man asking me what it was all really about...all this made the weekend special for me, and a lot more besides. The fact that everyone seemed to have something intangible in common, a sense of the unique-ness of the occasion, and a feeling that I had arrived somewhere on my personal journey, having made some good friends on the way.

When we left Leeds there was

Flashes from the alcoves of the convention

The weekend of October 29th and 30th 1994 saw the Be Glad convention in Leeds, the result of ten months of hectic planning and organisation. What was it like? Well if you were there you will have your own opinions but for me at least it was one of the best weekends I've had for quite a few years. Sleep? Who needs it? The whole weekend was a constant whirl of meeting and talking to people and watching the bands play and being amazed by the general goings on. I could write a report on the event myself but Adrian and Deena have done it from their points of view so I'll leave that to them, but highlights and memories for me include Robin performing his new songs - and in particular 'Blackthorn Tree' which will be on his new album and I think is one of the best songs he has ever done - Malcolm's whole set and his waistcoat - the endless jam sessions in the bars until 3 and 4 in the morning - the Half Remarkable Questionnaires being just as remarkable as the String Band ever were (their *Spirit Beautiful* was er 'cosmic man'), thanks Raymond, Kate and friends - Dr Strangely Strange, wonderful people, fantastic music and so on. If you were there, thanks a million times I hope it was you wanted it to be. If you weren't, well shed a tear for what you missed and try to come to next years if it happens. We had people from all over the British Isles along with fans from Germany, Spain, Holland, Norway, Sweden, the USA and even Argentina! Wow! It's just fading electricity in our synapses and emulsion on film now but it was special. Thankyou - to both performers and fans alike - very much.

Andy

another rainbow in the sky. A mandolin player found his way into the car and serenaded us for most of the trip home - a little bit of the 'Leeds Weekend' stayed with me as far as Highbury Corner.

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Finally on the Convention front our very own

ADRIAN WHITTAKER

manfully tackles the why's and wherefores of the effects a convention can have on a chap.

It's rare for me to be seen crying at a gig - but I was blinking back the tears as Dr Strangely Strange launched into a tremulous version of *Strangely Strange But Oddly Normal*. I'd thought I had missed my chance of seeing them 25 years ago. I bumped into quite a few people in the course of the weekend who were wondering why they were there, a couple rather bitter about it. I was there to revisit some very old, very close friends who'd been a beacon of inspiration and source of joy in my angst-ridden teenage years. The String Band *et al* led me down fascinating new pathways - world religion, Robert Graves, Christian mystics, world music... - and even now take me down new roads where I've met new friends. It's just as interesting to see what we all are doing now - what do we have in common, I wondered, except perhaps a sense of open-mindedness, spirituality maybe - as it is to see what Malcolm, Robin and Mike are up to these days. So it's not nostalgia - maybe it's touching a power, a beauty that can move people - reducing even a hardened old media pro like Steve Blacknell to tears too!

Some favourite moments - hearing Robin sing *October Song*, Dave Haswell - poetry in motion round his percussion kit, the massed chorus on "where the gazes are so rare", dancing (who'd have believed it) to Dr Strangely Strange, and the late night jamming in the bars. Jamming isn't a spectator sport - bang on the tables, sing out of tune, but *join in!*

I'll leave you with a little vignette from Sunday night:

Norman Lamont (for it is he) to assembled Strangelies: "Which one of you wrote *Ship Of Fools*?"

Tim Goulding: (rather embarrassed), "Er...me actually."

Norman: "What was it about?"

Tim G: "Er...I haven't got a clue...I dunno where my head was at in the sixties."

The In-Between Bits

Between song banter from shows we all should have forgotten about years ago!

Malcolm Le Maistre introduces *The Sailor & The Dancer* at Bolton Town Hall 23/2/73.....

I've recently had letters from people asking me about a certain song I wrote on the last L.P. It actually means...well, it doesn't mean anything. It's about a couple of people, or a lot of people who, like, come from another planet and discover this one. It's, like, a very approximate idea of what's going on.....

Mike & Malcolm intro *Where Are You Living Now Man?*.....

MM: *This is a very amazing hall. I'm very impressed. It's really great. It's a really nice ceiling. You have to go to Leeds most of the time for....I believe Leeds is in Yorkshire.*

MH: *Malcolm exercises his knowledge of geography at most of the gigs we play. He makes up these statements about things and waits to see if the audience approves. If he's completely wrong they tell him.....*

INCREDIBLY

... STILL NO ENDING!

For the second year running, the indefatigable **Andy Roberts** served up a feast at the **Incredible String Band** convention, held in Leeds in October, writes the potentially pseudonymous *Zelda Bangers*.

Malcolm Le Maistre performed a fine set of self-penned material on the Saturday, while master magician **Robin Williamson** obviously took star billing during the evening. His wonderful harp and guitar-playing delighted the crowd, and that characteristic rough-edged voice was in fine form.

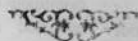
The following day saw **Half Remembered Questionnaires** performing ISB covers, before the semi-legendary **Dr. Strangely Strange** - now a six-piece - turned in a set so powerful that the audience (accustomed to a nice seat!) was on its feet by the end.

Ex-Magic Carpet chanteuse **Alisha Sufit** followed with a typically lyrical acoustic set, before **Mike Heron's Incredible Acoustic Band** closed the event in fine style.

For more information on all matters ISB, contact **Andy Roberts** on 0484 721993.

December '94 issue of Record Collector review of the Convention. Thanks Zelda!

BE GLAD FOR THE SONG HAS NO ENDING



THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND CONVENTION

OCTOBER 29th & 30th 1994

THE GRIFFIN HOTEL, DORSET LANE, LEEDS

(DOORS OPEN 11 TO 10.30 ON SATURDAY)



TICKET NO:



Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

STRANGELY STRANGE.....BUT ODDLY NORMAL!

THE GOOD DOCTOR LIVE AT LEEDS

BY
ANDY ROBERTS

Staggered and honoured as I have been at being able to play a part in furthering the reputation of the former members of the String Band nothing yet has given me as much pleasure as having Dr Strangely Strange playing live at the Leeds Convention - I was overwhelmed to the point of having to step out of the concert hall during *Ballad of the Wasps* to shed a tear! I never thought that in my lifetime etc etc (cont. page 23 of Sad Fan Weekly & Gazette). Now configured as a six piece the good Doctor's line up features Ivan Pawle (gtr, vcl) Tim Booth (gtr, vcl), Tim Goulding (kybds, whistle, vcls), TJM Tutty (bs, vcls), Punka Khosa (drums), Joe Thoma (mandolin and fiddle). Despite being on during the 'quiet' time of mid Sunday afternoon (Ivan insisted they were billed as a 'Tea Dance!') they were given a rousing reception and by the middle of the set had a good number of people out of their seats and, er, strutting their stuff - including Sir Malcolm of Le Maistre. Their set was a delightful mixture of reworked 'oldies' and stuff we'd never heard before but would dearly love to hear again. They played like good 'uns even though they'd travelled - probably at a loss - from various parts of Ireland. But even more startling was their stamina and on both the Saturday and Sunday nights the band were to be found jamming with people in the bars - until 4am on the Monday morning in fact. It was hoped we could get them in the studio to

record something but the finances and timing weren't right. However, I cherish the hope that some day they might get their current line-up on CD. The band are still playing in Ireland quite a bit and only a week after the Leeds gig played a set at a venue called Connoley's Leap somewhere I've forgotten in southern Ireland. They are also planning a tour sometime this year. I don't know what they are all up to besides music but Tim Booth has recently been working on the soundtrack to an animated version of Joyce's *Ulysses* and Tim Goulding is still doing artwork which has surfaced in the form of at least one folk album sleeve. Their spiffing set at Leeds consisted of the following: *Drive 'em Down/Ballad Of The Wasps/Strangely Strange But Oddly Normal/Strings In The Earth And Air/Kitty Come Home/Lament/Too Much Of A Good Thing/Mississippi/Strange World/Darksome Burn/Donnybrook Fair/Whatever Happened To The Blues/I Can't Take You Back/James Gang/Sign On My Mind/This Is Your*

Life/Heavenly Classes.

Musically they were wonderful, with the old songs being skillfully interpreted and the newer ones being unmistakably from the Doctors musical surgery - *Drive 'em Down* especially so, being particularly Strangely Strangeish with all the sonic trademarks we have come to expect. Tim Goulding's keyboards deserve a special mention for just being wonderful and the 'new boys' all fitted in nicely, the end result being a hot and rocking set of West Coast (of Ireland!) classics. The whole experience was, you guessed it, strangely strange, but oddly normal.

FRIENDS MEET YOU ON
THE WAY AND SAY,
'THERE Y'GO'
YOU MAY WONDER
WHERE IT IS THAT YOU
ARE SUPPOSED TO BE
GOING



Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

Pictures At A Convention

If you were there this will bring it all back to you. If you weren't - come next year!



After-gig jam sessions in the bars were well attended. Here, Be Glad contributors and musos (l to r) Adrian Whittaker, Norman Lamont and Tim Moon rock out on something or other



Concentration! Two fifths of the Half-Remarkable Questionnaires pick those silvery strings



Ivan Pawle, of the Strangelies, made a great many people very happy indeed

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Mike's Incredible Acoustic Band during 1968 (the song, not the year you fools!)



Malcolm & Pete entertain



Robin in new-song mode

Robert Johnson. Sold his soul to play like that. Dealing at the crossroads. Killed by a jealous husband. Stabbed? Poisoned? Died on his hands and knees howling like a dog. Hellhound on his trail.

So what drew a callow Edinburgh youth to Johnson's music?

Mike: "It comes from my pre-rock skiffle days, late fifties, and increases when I met Bert Jansch and Robin and Clive and the other slightly beatnik musicians round the folk clubs in the early sixties. He was of great interest to me and those people because of the richness of the musical ideas he developed for one acoustic guitarist and his voice. The introspective nature of his lyrics were also very attractive to us. I was never very moved by the electric blues band/Muddy waters approach, though I like it a bit more now. The blues can be very male oriented; 'I'm a man, spelt M.A.N.' but Johnson, who from most accounts was strikingly handsome and charming, sang specifically to the women in his audience (which got him into a lot of trouble incidentally) and he talks compassionately of women, miles from the usual macho approach. He has a song about a woman who got into unspecified trouble - 'Looking for your good friend/None can be found/You'd better come on in my kitchen/It's going to be raining outdoors' (From 'Come on in my kitchen'). Note: Not come on in my bedroom. This kind of sensitivity was the appeal for me."

Mind you, Johnson could boast about his sexual abilities as well as any. It wasn't Robert Plant who first invited ladies to squeeze his lemon 'til the juice ran down his leg. Listen to *Travelling Riverside Blues*.

Somehow though, Johnson's sexual metaphors had a bit more class than most. Take the eroticism of the lyric to *Terraplane Blues*, a cheap car of the 30s. *I'm going to hoist you hood mama/I'm bound to check your oil and, I'm going to get deep down in your connections/Keep on tangling with your wires/And when I mash down on your starter! Then your spark plug will give me fire.* (Eds note: the astute reader will notice the similarities with Mike's *Robot Blues* from *U* in which the protagonist is, ahem, Robot Johnson.)

For all that, he had periods of self

doubt. He sang about impotence in *Dead Shrimp Blues* and in *Phonograph Blues*; *We played it on the sofa/We played it 'side the wall/My needles' done got rusty/They will not play at all.*

Johnson had his misogynistic side too; in *32-30 Blues* he calls his baby, and if she won't come, boasts his gun will *cut her half in two* (or am I missing a sexual metaphor here?). Most sinister of all, in *Me And The Devil Blues* (from which the *believe it's time to go* in Mike's song comes from), he sings; *Me and the Devil was walking side by side/I'm going to beat my woman/Until I get satisfied.* Sadism or just acknowledgment of the potential power of his dark side?

There was one very unusual aspect about a listeners perceived image of Johnson; no-one knew what he looked like. It is only in the last few years that two unauthenticated photographs of him have been found. One was taken in a photographic studio in 1935, and the other in a dime store booth a few years earlier. I don't expect I was the only person who was surprised on seeing the formal photo for the first time; Robert is sitting, smiling and dressed in a smart striped suit, tie and hat, playing a Gibson acoustic guitar, certainly not the mental image I had of him. The earlier, informal, photo, shows him in shirt and braces, holding his guitar, and with a cigarette dangling from his lips, looking rather serious.

Another problem with Johnson is that, though he recorded under his own name he often performed under other names. The final catalyst in making Mike write the song was provided by a programme on Radio 3, which included the information that Johnson had been playing in bars under the name 'Little Robert Dusty', travelling north to Detroit and south to Memphis.

Johnson's mother was Julia Majors who married Charlie Dodds in 1889. Dodds was caught up in a feud with a local businessman and was forced to flee to Memphis in 1907, where he lived under the name of Spencer. While Charlie was gone, Julia had an

Feeling In The Fingertips

Mike Heron's Song For Robert Johnson

by

Grahame Hood

affair with a farmworker called Noah Johnson, as a result of which Robert was born on 8th May 1911, in Hazelhurst, Mississippi.

Three years later young Robert was sent to stay with the Spencer family in Memphis and took Spencer as his surname. In 1916 Julia married again, to a farmer called Willie 'Dusty' Willis and Robert left the Spencer family to live with his mother in 1918. He seems to have performed under all the surnames he had to chose from; Dodds, Spencer, Johnson, and 'Dusty'.

By his early teens Robert was playing jews harp and later graduated to harmonica. A few years later he got a guitar, and made himself a holder from wire, so he could play harmonica and guitar at the same time.

In February 1929, at the age of 17, he married Virginia Travis, and lived with her in Robinsonville. Though he could play by then, and was said to spend a great deal of time doing so, he still considered himself a farmer. A few months after the marriage, Virginia fell pregnant, but Robert's hopes were dashed when both mother and baby died in childbirth during April 1930.

Robert hung around Robinsonville for a while and in the summer met the great bluesman Son House. Son House is probably the most important figure in the legend of Robert Johnson, as he is attributed with telling the tale that Robert must have sold his soul to the devil to have learned to play so well, so quickly. Unfortunately, whether or not Son House meant this to be taken literally, and being a preacher he may well have done, it has become the most enduring part of the Johnson myth.

There are several versions of the story, the gist of which was that Robert was always hanging around, asking for a chance to play, but Son House didn't think he was good enough and told him "he couldn't play nothing". Robert wanders off and turns up later (between 3 and 18 months according to versions). No-one knows where he has been but he can play guitar

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

brilliantly.

Several writers have taken this literally. One has Johnson joining a voodoo cult, another suggests he may have been stuck in prison with nothing else to do but play. Even Charles Shaar Murray feels "we must enter a metaphysical realm where facts simply do not apply, because if Son House's testimony is reliable (and there is no reason to believe otherwise), the transformation of Johnson and his music was simply too extraordinary to be attributed to a period of woodshedding".

I refer the curious to the interview printed in Stefan Grossman's book *Delta Blues*, in which Son House claims to have met Johnson again after he had disappeared and been knocked out by him performing *Terraplane Blue*. He warns him about hanging around women and *about three weeks after that he got killed*". Considering Robert left Robinsonville to disappear in 1930 and was killed in 1938...a mild distortion of time and a dose of being wise after the event one thinks! Still, despite my cynicism, if anyone thinks, "well, there might be something in it", feel free.

When the CBS definitive collection of Johnson's work came out a few years back the sleeve notes at last provided the story of where Johnson had been after he left town in the summer of 1930. He decided to go back to Hazelhurst, with the intention of finding his real father, though it is not known whether he succeeded in doing so. What he did find was an audience for his music, and gaining a mentor in local bluesman Ike Zinnerman, he began to play in the jook joints and bars frequented by the road workers and lumbermen.

He learned a lot from Zinnerman, who was about ten years his senior, and it seems that Ike told his wife that he learned to play guitar sitting in a graveyard at midnight! Good acoustics, presumably! In 1931 Robert married again, a lady in her thirties called Callie Craft, who had three small children. Oddly enough they kept their marriage a secret, though Callie would often accompany Robert on bookings, and loved to dance to his music. During the next year or so Robert gradually drifted into becoming a professional performer. With his family he moved

away, but Callie suffered ill health and Robert eventually left her. Robert probably returned to Robinsonville around 1933/34 and by this time was able to show Son House and all what he could do.

Robert then spent his time travelling around the Mississippi Delta, meeting many of his contemporaries in the music field, Elmore James, Howling Wolf, Johnny Shines...at one time he lived with the mother of bluesman Robert Lockwood Junior, and was a great influence on him.

Robert was never short of female company, and seems to have had the knack of finding ladies to look after him, if only for a while before he moved on. I asked Mike who the woman was in the second verse of his song:

"She is whoever he was living with at the time of his death. When I wrote the song it just seemed likely there was one. Later I saw a programme on TV which was *The Search For Robert Johnson*, I think with John Hammond, involving a lot of looking at his grave etc. But there were some great bits. They unearthed some relatives and interviewed the woman who probably was the one he was living with at the time of his death. I didn't catch her name."

In November 1936, in San Antonio, Texas, Robert was recorded, his first session producing *Terraplane Blues*, which did well, released on Vocalion Records. Seven months later he returned to Texas to record again. All of these recordings are currently available in a set released by CBS in 1990.

I asked Mike if he was tempted to write a tribute to Johnson in the blues format; "I couldn't even do a pale imitation of his playing and singing, so the idea was to capture the tenderness of his work more than anything, in contrast to the 'Boys Own' approach in *'Crossroads'* (the film). 'Bird that whistles and a bird that sings' is a lyric of his I use and I do it in my style - his was pure blues. To a large extent the song is about how discovering his music affected me, so I chose a style that seemed right for that task".

Johnson's lifestyle and fondness for the ladies eventually caught up with him in August 1938. One Saturday night Robert was playing with Sonny

Boy Williamson II in a place called Three Forks. Robert was flirting with a lady who was the wife of the jook joint proprietor and was warned by Sonny boy about accepting a drink from a bottle of whisky with a broken seal. It had been poisoned with strychnine.

Accounts which lay the blame on Robert's death with the Devil calling in his account, point out that he died, "on his hands and knees, barking like a dog", which sounds very like a poisoned man trying desperately to get the stuff out of his system before it killed him. In fact the whisky did not kill him, but in a severely weakened state he contracted pneumonia. He died on Tuesday the 16th August. At the end of the year John Hammond, producer and talent scout, tried to track down Johnson for a tide-turning concert he planned to put on at the Carnegie Hall called *Spirituals To Swing*. He asked Don Law to track Johnson down, as Law had recorded Johnson in Texas the year before. Law eventually had to report back that Johnson was dead. One can only speculate what the New York exposure would have done for Johnson's career. Before he died he was reported to be working with a small group, playing electric guitar, though we can only imagine what they sounded like.

If you have never heard the music of Robert Johnson, you should! There really is something about it. Try listening to *Come On In My Kitchen* in a dark room if you don't believe me...

Much of Johnson's image is due to the fact that so little film information about him was available until very recently, even the Guinness book *Who's Who In The Blues* chides past writers for taking Robert's lyrics too literally (Griel Marcus is probably the worst offender here). Still, there's nothing like a dead artist is there? Mike has come very close to touching what there is that is special about Johnson's music. The rest is up to you.



Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

Harmonics of Love: Sonja Kristina & Cloud 10: HTD CD 34. Distributed by Pinnacle. Order from record shops or direct from Rhino Management, 60 Babbacombe Rd. Bromley, Kent BR13LW at £11.99 inc. p&p

I was always a huge fan of Curved Air in the 70s and I never thought they received the recognition they deserved. Frequent line-up changes, and I suspect other problems probably didn't help but on record they were always innovative, challenging and melodic. Live they were bloody fantastic - and I speak as a veteran of about ten gigs. In the press blurb for Sonja Kristina's new album they are described as "avant garde psychedelic rock band", which I think sums them up perfectly although they always did have a bit of the folkier side to them, especially on their albums.

Over the intervening years Sonja has returned to her original acting career (she was in *Hair in the 60s remember*), and released an album - *Songs From The Acid Folk* - in 1990.

Here new album is a step on from that outing, more like Curved Air perhaps but far subtler - more reminiscent of, say, *Phantasmagoria* than other Curved Air albums. If you liked Curved Air at all you will think this offering is tremendous and you'll be sucked in to Cloud Ten's dreamscapes in no time at all.

Most of the songs were new to me with the exception of *Elfin Boy* and *Blindman*, which I'm sure were on later Curved Air albums. On all the tracks Cloud 10 create an atmospheric backdrop of sound on which Sonja's vocals float, drift and soar. Her voice, by the way, has matured with age and is now quite fantastic, dreamy even. In fact the whole album has a distinctly ethereal and soothing resonance about it. The instrumentation is intricate and played with feeling - Paul Sax on violin deserves special mention here and keyboardist Robert Norton is no slouch either - and the overall production is warm but clear as a bell. Each track is linked by a variety of short sonic interludes such as chants, sea sounds, marimba, sunrise and Glastonbury Festival and others. If I have any criticisms at all its that the tracks should be longer to give the band time to explore their unique sound a bit more, and that just occasionally the

lyrics err towards the soppy.

Sonja and the band have been touring on and off this year - I caught them in Ashton-Under-Lyne at the Witchwood and was quite knocked out. Yes, she still does *Back Street Love* - and I think they really ought to consider doing a cover of It's A Beautiful Day's *White Bird* - they could really carry it off well, but it's the new songs that stand out.

A final quote from their press release to emphasise what I'm trying to say - and for once a press release that actually gets it right - "Cloud 10 explores different atmospheric altitudes from slow and haunting variations to furious discordant harmonies filled with ambient soul-filled folk melodies and songs".

I'd advise catching them at at least one date on the tour, and if you're at York or Spilsby I'll maybe see you there

All in all one of my favourite albums of the year so far, quite different to most things you will come across.

Sonja Kristina: June Tour Dates

Sun. 4th	York - Fibbers
Fri. 9th	London -
Borderline	
Sat. 10th	Croydon - Fairfield Halls (guest band at Man's Welsh Convention)
	Spilsby - Theatre
Fri. 16th	Farnham - The Pit
Sat. 17th	Glastonbury Fest.
Sat. 24th	

Fit and Limo: Folly Is An Endless Maze: Indigo 1207-2 (German release only - Order from Unique Gravity - see advertisement on inside rear cover for address and price).

You may remember Fit & Limo, the German psychedelic folk band from a few issues ago when we were selling their 'This Moment - Fit & Limo Play The ISB' vinyl single.

Folly Is An Endless Maze is their latest opus, a double CD consisting of Angel Gopher and Autre Monde. Angel Gopher also contains the aforementioned Fit & Limo ISB stuff so if you haven't got them you can do

so now, and if you have you can now hear it in limpid CD sound, plus the other goodies which attend it.

Firstly, a selection of the instruments they play - organ, autoharp, sitar, dulcimer, tabla, clarinet, mandolin, kazoo, violin, recorder, guitars, tin whistle, thumb piano, harmonium and so on should give you a vague idea of where they're at, if not sound very familiar indeed. Yep, we're talking major ISB influence here and it's very clear that late 60s psychedelic folk music in general is the driving force behind Fit & Limo's art. But there's no pastiche or slavish copying going on here, rather they continue and expand on a musical genre that most people can only now experience retrospectively. It's as if the 66-70 period ISB had not taken Scientology into their collective breast, had cranked up the lysergic breakfasts and tried to further explain the complexity of things via their chosen musical form. Throw in some Dr Strangely Strange circa Kip Of The Serenes, mix well and go for it.

The String Band covers (*This Moment, Come With Me, Three Is A Green Crown, Chinese White*) are done in such a way that parallels rather than mirrors the originals and as an added bonus on Autre Monde you also get a spiffing version of *I Know You*.

Instrumentally Fit & Limo can't be faulted, they *know* how to play their litany of instruments, how to evoke atmospheres and ambience through intricate playing and timing and the whole effect, to use a time-worn phrase is as if the 60s were 90s, if you see what I mean. Criticisms? It's the lyrics - Germans writing psychedelic lyrics in English just doesn't work as well as perhaps they imagine. But that's a small caveat to hoist against the grandeur spread across these two CDs. An essential purchase for even the most timid of String Band explorers.

C D R E V I E W S

Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending - Summer '95

By PETER BEREN

The Incredible String Band, four people, one gestalt, one living breathing organism, walking in light. They start off their concerts with Maya, a hymnal celebration of the penetration of the veil of illusion that binds all to the wheel of life. "Maya, Maya, all the world is but a play, be thou the joyful player." They played the Fillmore gigantic pop emporium East and reduced it to a sylvan glade while they expanded the vibration included in that glade to encompass the entire universe. They held infinity in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour. When they played the Boston Tea Party, you felt every heartbeat in the reverent, sitting crowd.

Their music is exceedingly complex, without pretension. For example, they manage to blend Eastern ragas, country riffs and Elizabethan lute songs within the rosy alehouse warmth of the English Music Hall. When they play, it's good time music, the footstomping of Nashville or the best of the old Lovin' Spoonful. Licorice smiles and laughs, Rose flashes mini-waves at sections of the audience and Robin gets off into impromptu melodramas, spinning fables that fly into his head and never appear on any recording. No two concerts are the same.

As they play, they keep shifting instruments and milieux, from washboard to sitar, constantly in motion, constantly entertaining. Robin Williamson says that it isn't enough to observe the patterns that point up the single tone uniting all creation, one has to do

more, one has to make things happen. At any concert their energy flows out into the hands of the audience and back into the group, to magnify tenfold.

Behind their music lies an entire trip, a cohesive whole reminiscent of Renaissance totality. Their lyrics echo Blake, Yeats and the English Romantic-lyric tradition. Poetry, originally, was not the province of book-ridden literati and dusty academies. It was dance, song and religious celebration. Our age's postliterate, electronic culture approaches the ancient wholeness through its unassuming, sacred vessels, groups like the Incredible String Band.

Poet, in its Greek root, means "maker," not just the maker of arcane works to be read by a small educated elite, but the feegood live performances of the String Band, their records, album drawings and above all, the persistent vibration that permeates their work. "Stranger than that, we're alive," runs a refrain. "Sleepers awake, open your eyes," constantly pointing up the value of seizing each moment and grasping the naked beauty of existence. Zen Buddhism, primitive Christianity, Scientology, and all the other means mankind has availed itself of glimpsing the gothead. Mike Heron served as a perfect

compliment to Robin. He seemed less intricate and more upfront, more ready to smile without comment, or intense discourse. He has a private self reflected in the depths of his lyrics, perhaps this is why Robin is the nominal leader of the group, at least in public. Rose and Licorice were more silent still, willing to be the quiet underpinning of their men. The most important facet of The Incredible String Band, unlike many other groups, is the fact that they blend easily into one being, both off-stage and on. Even the road manager, Walter Gandy, (who plays harmonica on their new album) seemed to be a made-to-order, genetically determined part of their organism, with his energy-charged attention to logistical detail.

Their new Elektra album, *Changing Horses*, is a conceptual embodiment of their whole gestalt. On the inside jacket, Robin's pen and ink representation of their music faces a sample of Mike Heron's verse, done in his own hand. The finest work is *Creation*. It is at once both an apocalyptic vision and an innocent fable in the best Tolkien tradition. The arrangement exhibits the String Band's enormous range, coursing from hymnal celebration to 1920's oboe de o doc. When

the vision turns to the ocean. "And for each eye that shed one tear, we made of that tear an ocean." the vocal tracks, through eerie harmonies, capture the cold, inhuman power of the raging sea. *White Bird and Sleepers Awake* provoke the same intense involvement as *Creation*. This intensity is balanced by *Dust Be Diamonds* and *Big Ted*, lighter, more country-oriented pieces. "Dust be diamonds, water be wine, happy, happy, happy all the time, time, time." *Big Ted* is a eulogy for a neighbor's pig (the group has a farm in Wales): "Maybe Ted will be a moo cow next time around." The only weak piece is *Mr. & Mrs.* which suffers from a droning heaviness that the String Band occasionally lapses into.

The album, as a whole, shows the most carefully considered, restrained use of sophisticated studio equipment that I have ever heard. This is possibly due to the fact that the group's manager, Joe Boyd, is also their producer, which keeps everything in the family. The only criticism that could be leveled at The Incredible String Band is that their music never lets itself be used as background. It demands complete attention. But this is exactly as it should be.

The String Band: Incredible

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A perceptive piece of writing from Peter Beren - part of which we used in the last issues Changing Horses article but the whole thing is worth seeing - here it is....

Roughnecks - one wedding and a funeral!

I accosted Keiran Prenderville, the writer (you may remember him from *That's Life*) in between canapes. He was clear that, though he'd seen the ISB many times at festivals and at the Roundhouse, he was now an ex-fan; he felt their music hadn't aged too well. He'd written the ISB element into Ian's part but felt, in view of the big audience for the series, it needed to have a humorous edge to it (well, "take the piss a bit" was what he actually said). Funnily enough, Sandy Johnson, the director was also a big ISB fan (rather less ex than Keiran - he even requested a copy of *Be Glad*). An ex Glasgow School Of Art lad, he had fond memories of sitting round campfires in Arran singing *Everything's Fine Right Now* and *Big Ted*. The incidental ISB music was his choice.

For the benefit of *Be Glad*'s large international readership (and those without TVs) here's a brief rundown of

So how *did* the Mike Heron Band come to be on primetime national TV (*Roughnecks*, screened in summer 1994), thinly disguised as a Highland Wedding Combo? *Be Glad* despatched its London correspondent, Adrian Whittaker, to luvvy it up at the BBC press launch.....

the relevant bits.

Roughnecks was a six-part drama serial "based round a group of male and female oil rig workers, intertwining and contrasting their working and personal lives both on the rig and offshore".

Ian the rig's ageing hippy from Rochdale is the ISB fan, and so his parts in episodes featured brief extracts of *Big Ted*, *Air*, and *Log Cabin* as incidental music (blink and you missed

them). It wasn't 'til episode five that the ISB got a name check, "sounds like a cat with its arse on fire", but in the final episode (following Ian's death in a helicopter accident) the story took on a noticeably ISBish perspective. Ian's belongings are handed over to his mates and an ISB cassette is unearthed, leading to the playing of *Log Cabin* and *Koeooadi There* at a drunken wake ("more like purgatory" according to one of the characters). Then, at the wedding party which closes the episode, the Mike Heron Band play *Everything's Fine Right Now* and *Log Cabin*, in person. (They'd also recorded *Air* which might well be used in a longer version tailored to European audiences. Mike remains suitably affable throughout, even when temporarily ousted from the limelight by Cinders, the banjo-playing chef. Next stop Brookside?

Be Glad - Charity Tape

We had hoped to have it available for this issue but various things have conspired against us. Basically - for newbies or those who have forgotten - we are gathering cover versions of String Band songs done by *Be Glad* readers, with a view to putting them all on one cassette and flogging it via the fanzine. All monies to a suitable charity - you'll all buy one won't you? We can take contributions on cassette/DAT or whatever - and they don't have to be note-perfect. Spirited and interesting renditions are what intrigue us most. To date we have versions of the following: *Dear Old Battlefield*, *Tree*, *Everything's Fine Right Now*, *First Girl I Loved*, *Turquoise Blue*, *Pictures In A Mirror*, *Empty Pocket Blues*, and I've forgotten the rest just now, with promises of *This Moment*, *Painted Chariot* and *You Get Brighter* to come. So, come on musicians out there, get something recorded and send it in to the editorial address or contact me if you've any queries about the project.

Crossword Answers

Across: 1. Thomas 5. Top Hat 8. Brighter 9. Pets 10. Dead 11. Happy 13. Scared 15. Nigger 17. Kill Time 19. Lum 21. Deck 22. Thinking 24. Desire 25. One Eye.

Down: 2. Horse 3. Mogador 4. Sit 6. Puppy 7. Antoine 11. Had 12. Pence 14. Chinese 16. Gal 18. Likki 20. Money 22. Toe 23. Nun.

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The Hangmans Beautiful Flipside



As I was saying, it was a hot autumn's morning in 1979

when I first spun the magic spiral of *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* on my turntable.

In fact it was one of the warmest days of the year. Outside in the back garden of Eden, Scotland, two wasps danced in the air above the fretboard of my guitar, inches from my fumbling fingers. Spiders hung silently from the dark branches of the apple trees. But there was no fear, only the coursing of electric life energy, thrilling through mind and cell, unleashed by a generous breakfast of liberty caps.

I tasted the sweet, sweet fragrance of grass smoke, crackling in the still, hot air, let my fingers pick the same simple tunes over and over. We were all a family together - sun, wasps, spiders, trees, flowers, invisible minstrel brethren and me.

*Vibrating light
forever one the sun*

This was the joyous afternoon of the trip. That morning I had had my initiation into *Hangman's*, playing the whole of it through at least twice, under the best possible listening conditions.

In the last article I tried to describe my memories of side A. This time I'm going to do the same for side B. So without further ado, here's back to the enchanted morning.... (cue mystical cascades of harp notes and blurry writing)

Upstairs, I had somehow managed to contact the part of my mind that knew about record players, and succeeded in letting the needle down onto the edge of side B. Hearing the reassuring "sssssss" I lay back in anticipation of the continuing adventure.

A rapid dulcimer cascade dropped me straight into what has become one of my favourite tracks - *Have Mercy I Cry City*. It was fresh, awake. There

Cast your mind back to issue four in which Gil Murray wrote about his psychedelic encounter with the entity that is The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter. Gil's back with his memories of side two. And remember children.....please don't try this at home!

was a playful spirit of defiance. The city had been sussed:



You cover up your emptiness with brick and noise and rush Oh I can see and touch you but you don't owe reality much.

I looked through the hollow empty streets to the quiet pastures beyond and had to agree. Mike's guitar picking was tantalisingly individual, different, while Robin was a one man orchestra on harmonica, whistle, rattles, (kazoo?) and backing vocals. That whistle! Tumbling, pealing cascades of wild and willful notes, just as sublime as the playing on *Witches Hat*. It haunted me throughout the album. Something about the next track just immediately hauled me up and out into the cool and the dark of space.

*I hear that--a-a--at
the-e-e emp'ror of chi-i-ina
used to wear i-ron
shoes with eeeeeeease ooooooooooooo*

Things had become seriously magical again. It was like night moving in - cool, majestic and mystic. Angels with newly cleaned windows looked down upon the tilted Earth. A mysterious quest unraveled below:

*ask the snail beneath the stone
ask the stone beneath the wall*

Around this time I'd become a bit more active, and had overcome my misgivings about the wardrobe mirror, deciding to have a look. It could have gone either way I suppose, but this time it turned out well. I watched resolutely as familiar faces and expressions paraded past. Suddenly all the old fixed face habits washed away and I was left making acquaintance with my native self again. I turned to look through the window, over the gardens and streets of suburbia that nestled below.

The cosmic, stately and enchanted strings of *Waltz of the New Moon* gave way to the sound of silvery waters, flute organ and wooden whistle. Water swirled and gurgled to left and right, and silver coins rang in a perpetual jangling rain. A wizardly shepherd stepped forward and reverently sought the lesson of flowing.

My own personal flow was going quite well. There were the expected one or two difficult moments, but a reminder to "go with the flow" always did the trick. Speaking of flowing, I remember taking myself downstairs for a watery call of nature, and being happily astonished at the stream of multi-coloured flowers that I aimed into the (canyon sized) toilet!

There was another intensity change

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in the music, as a soft and earnest chorus of "aaahs" ushered in the subterranean trance of *Three is a Green Crown* with its sensual opening lines:

*Not with the lips of skiiiiiiiiin
Nor ye-et with the li-i-ips o-of dark
sno-o-o-ow*

This turned swiftly into a driving, hypnotic tribute to the Goddess - presumably the Three who is also a Green Crown. [I have always wondered about this. Three makes sense to me as representing the Celtic Triple Goddess, but was the title originally meant to be THERE is a Green Crown, and someone made a typo which was kept from then on? (On the LP labels and covers, in the Songbooks, in articles, on the CDs)....] Hand drums propelled the trance along, dropping out periodically behind yawning gimbri, chirruping, zinging sitar, and masterfully attentive light rhythmic guitar.

*Let the cracked crystal raindro-op
be-e me-erged in the sea
silent, shi-i-i-i-ning,
thou-ought le-ess, free*

Swift As the Wind came next. Although in some ways this eventually became my least favourite track, on that High morning as on many others it had a fresh magic all of its own. It was sincere and emotional and burrowed right down into the childhood world.

*You must stop imagining all this
You must stop imagining all this
for your own good*

Slackening kettle-drums showed the way "downstairs" at the end of this piece, and heaven knows we've all done our time below. I thought that was the end, but amazingly, the best was still to come in the form of the wondrous *Nightfall*.

Hangman's is a long album (fifty minutes) and just packed with inspiration, but *Nightfall* is somehow set apart. Personally it conjures up the finest of the feelings of that era for me. There's so much magic and beauty bound up in it that words can't really do justice. How many true dreamers slowly sailed to the Land of Nod

across this milky night lake? How many weary but wakeful visionaries tugged at the skirts of Sleep, soft stars in the pools of their eyes:

*o Sleeeeeeee-eeep
o-o-o-o-o come to me-e-e-e
you who are Night's daughter*

I'd lie for hours, body at rest while I explored the gentle cathedrals of heaven, or just exist in a state of deep thankfulness for the simple, vast beauty of life. *Nightfall* was more a companion than a song.

*oooooooo-oooooh
oooooooo-oooooh*

I can't leave it without mentioning the little mandolin butterfly (well it was a butterfly to me!) that pops up out of nowhere, all innocence and trust, after the second verse. That always got me. And finally there was the guitarist's stock octave ending, to bring a formal close to it all.

Thus ended *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, and with it this article. Fifteen years after that day in 1979 - twenty-six years after it was recorded in 1968 - and I still get those spiritual shivers when I look back.

Thank goodness.

*May the long time sun shine upon you
All love surround you
And the pure light within you
Guide you all the way on*



Bill Drummond - of the KLF, The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu, one time manager of Echo & the Bunnymen - on the merits of the ISB.

"A lot of British bands in the late 60s would sort of pretend to be American, and a lot of American groups wanted a Red Indian vibe or a Western vibe. But the String Band weren't like that. They were very British and that was very attractive.

They were one of the first groups that started mining that whole British-stroke-Celtic pre-Christian, whatever sort of gubbins-vibe, all that Tolkien-esque stuff. They were taking those things from the woolly jumperd folkly thing and giving it another edge.

The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter hit my fifth form common room in '69. I liked the title first, then the sleeve, then the fact that the music was difficult, uncompromising, the songs were obviously odd, the singing was completely unlistenable and the girls didn't like it 'cos you couldn't dance to it like you could to Tamla Motown, and they were Scottish - and hip which was a bonus - and obviously not part of some London scene and they were on this very hip American label....When you're 15 or 16 these things are important.

And the String Band, like the Beatles/Apple thing, seemed to be independent - not just the music, but the film stuff, having control over a whole set-up. They seemed to be this complete thing that existed on its own terms outside of the mainstream, or any stream.

Jimmy (Cauty) and I would never have sat down and said, Let's do this 'cos the Incredible String Band did this, but these things stay with you, they mould you. The KLF wanted to do things on their own terms too. And I was very aware that we had roots in the whole British thing as well.

They influenced me in the way I thought of Echo & The Bunnymen, even down to the first Bunnymen album sleeve having the trees in the background like *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*. I wanted that same kind of Northern - not as in flat cap but as in Nordic-stroke-Celtic-feeling, the feeling that you're reaching back in time as well as reaching forward."

Things You Didn't Know You Didn't Know About The Incredible String Band

Michael Ranauro rates your mind

Sadie Hawkins Day - November 17th

I don't suppose there are many people out there who would say that 'Bad Sadie Lee' (from the *U* album) is their favorite ISB song. And no, I'm not about to say that it's mine. Still, I was always puzzled by the reference which our erstwhile heroine makes in the song to:

*I don't have to wait to Sadie Hawkins day
All I have to holler is the word OK
They know I'll shoot them if they run away
But there's one true love I've had*

I'd always wondered who this Sadie Hawkins was. Last summer, however, I was casually flipping through *The Best of Li'l Abner*, when the answer hit me (like one of Sadie Lee's bullets) square between the eyes. Li'l Abner was a comic strip, created by Al Capp, that ran in US newspapers for an incredible forty-four years, from 1933 to 1977. Throughout this time, it was a mainstay and shining light of American pop culture. It chronicled the adventures of the residents of Dogpatch, a mythical hamlet renowned for its abject poverty, and inhabited by people, of whom the heroic, if somewhat simple-minded, Li'l Abner was but one of many, that one would have to describe as 'hillbillies'. One of the many strange institutions observed in Dogpatch was that of 'Sadie Hawkins Day', November 17th. On this day, an annual race was held, in which all of the young (that is, under the age of 100) unmarried women of Dogpatch were given the opportunity to chase after all of the eligible, and singularly non-committal, young men, being then entitled to marry any which they were lucky enough to catch.



As related in a strip from the late 40s, Sadie Hawkins herself was "the daughter of early Dogpatch settler, Hekzebiah Hawkins. She was the homeliest gal in the hills." At the age of thirty-five, Sadie had still not been married, and faced with the prospect of having his daughter on his hands "fo' th' rest o' his natcheral life" ("The shore would be awful," responds Hekzebiah), the father comes up with a plan. "Bachelors!! Since none o' yo' bin man enuff t'marry mah dotter, Sadie - ah gotta take firm measures!! Ah declares this 'Sadie Hawkins Day'!! When ah fires - yo' start runnin'!! When ah fires agin, Sadie starts!! Th' one she ketches'll be her husbin' - Le's go!!" As the tale concludes, "Well, Sadie did catch one. The other Dogpatch spinsters allowed it were such a good idea - Sadie Hawkins Day was made an annual affair!!" By the way, Capp retired his strip on Sadie Hawkins Day, 1977.

Yo-de-le-hee!!!

Raga Puti

Of all the ISB bootlegs which I have heard, one of my favorites has always been *Raga Puti*, which appeared in two slightly different forms on BBC radio broadcasts recorded in 1970. Recently, I posted an inquiry about this

song to the Indian Classical music newsgroup on the Internet, and received the following replies, including lyrics (albeit no translations).

From: Ranganathan Srikanth
It goes as follows

Raghupati Raghava Rajaram
pathitha pavana sitaram
eswar allah tero nam
sab ko shanmati deh bagavan

.....(I don't know the rest)
Its one of Gandhi ji's favorites

From: Pankaj Joshi

Could it be 'raghupatii raaghav raajaa raam, patita paavana siitaa raam'?

That is a very famous devotional song in India. If you are looking for a recording of this song you may find it with a local Indian grocery store in your area.

So now you know! If you have any queries or puzzlements about String band lyrics, references etc. send 'em to us and if we don't know the answer we probably know someone who does.



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Joe Boyd

by
Adrian Whittaker

Last issue we left Joe Boyd in 1968, having finished recording *Wee Tam*. I've always admired the running order of that record, which according to Mr Boyd was a three-way process - though it was on those sessions that he evolved the patented Boyd system of juggling track sequences using columns of paper cut in proportional length to the track timing! On now to the *Be Glad* film.....

Clear out the cupboard.....

The *Be Glad* soundtrack dates from 68/69 - the instrumental music was recorded in 1968 and the other bits possibly early 1969. The album's release was delayed to coincide with the film premiere, by which time Joe, who'd been getting disillusioned with Elektra, had set up the Island deal. "It was a kind of clear out the cupboard thing," says Joe, and as the running order was put together when he was about to relocate to the states, it's a blur in his memory. He makes his only recorded appearance on side 2, playing harmonium, by the way. As for the film itself - "a little special" - he hadn't got round to watching the video release yet but, like Peter Neal, had vague memories of some of the 1968 Festival Hall footage being shown on TV at the time. As for the inclusion of *All Writ Down* instead of *Cellular Song* (see *Be Glad* no. 3): "That's a very Scientology song - engrams about cellular memories."

The final Julie Felix show TV appearance was around this point (Feb. 1969), and I asked him about his views on the virtual TV 'ban' some writers have perceived - nothing of the kind in his view. The link with Julie originated

via Jo Lustig, her manager at the time. Still on management, the Stones episode recounted by Robin in the last issue was more about signing to Mother records than any management proposals. Joe remembers them sending round a limousine to pick up the band for the meeting, but of course proposals were thwarted at an early stage by the existing Elektra contract.

Less drugs, for a start...

The sessions for *Changing Horses* seemed to represent the whole changeover of the conversion to scientology, and born of that was this desire to consciously communicate very directly and clearly. It also seemed to influence the song content and their structures, the arrangements became less esoteric.... Joe Boyd: "Well, less drugs for a start, so that obviously had a role. There were obviously a lot of changes, and initially some of the effects of Scientology were positive in a superficial way, but it always alarmed and depressed me. I think there's an inevitable...it's very hard to sustain an unselfconscious originality, but certainly Scientology is full of 'self awareness'"

Joe feels that, whilst Scientology helped them to communicate more openly and honestly with each other and with the outside world, it didn't benefit their music. Interestingly, he tried out Scientology himself after moving to the States (60 hours of Auditing in L.A.) but, though acknowledging its insights into the human mind, he didn't like the feel of the organisation. On now to *I Looked Up*, recorded in early 1970.

They were very conscious not to invalidate anything....

AW: *I Looked Up* seemed to me to fall very flat as a record - two extremely rambling Williamson songs and four short Heron songs of uneven quality - it didn't have much unity.

JB: "As it progressed it became more and more difficult in a way. In retrospect, that's one of the upshots of

the bonding between Mike and Robin (which Scientology had facilitated) - whereas earlier they would have been critical of each other's contributions and very adamant about shortening *this* or leaving *that* out, now they were very conscious not to *invalidate* anything. So if someone wanted to write a song that didn't really fit the record no-one would say - 'that doesn't work! I still like *This Moment* though!

AW: Did you try to intervene?

JB: "I did, to no real success - it was the nadir with, of course, *U*. It was during a whole period of erosion of my ability to influence them. In the past they had been much more prepared to listen to what I was saying - they'd play me songs, ask my opinion, and were very responsive to that kind of thing. It was a process I went through with all the artists I've worked with in a way...With the first record the process was mysterious, I was the producer and they looked to me to guide them through it. But as the process became less mysterious they were less prepared to ask me what I thought - the whole thing was no longer such an inspiration or challenge."

AW: So by the time you left to work for Warners in the states you'd slowly become less a part of that creative partnership?

JB: "I think that was part of the reason I accepted the job in America - with every artist I was involved with I was less satisfied - and to a certain degree with the ISB I'd kind of thrown up my hands at a certain point - certainly by *U*. The other thing, as a manager, was the Woodstock business. It's something I don't blame them for at all really, it was symptomatic of the same thing, but I think if I'd been more alert I could have done something about it." (Ed. See *Woodstock* feature last issue)

I haven't dared to listen to it since.....

AW: So the culmination of this for you was *U* (recorded April 1970). I gather you weren't too keen on the mixed media....

JB: "I thought Robin and Mike were great musicians - but one way or another there were a lot more people added to the band. They'd had those two dancers in the past, Mimi and

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Mouse, but to me that was a dilution of what the fundamental thing was. *U* was a disaster in the states - I told them it'd be a disaster. No-one would guarantee it and they had to do it on a percentage. I just had no confidence in it whatsoever and I told them that - I was prepared to help them, but against my better judgment."

AW: The L.P. feels like it was done really quickly?

JB: "They'd realised the *U* show was a financial disaster and we needed to cut down on recording costs. They were talking about going back to London to record, but I said let's do it right at the end of the tour, whilst it's still fresh. There were time constraints - we had three or four days between tours - and I got a weekend deal in a San Mateo (San Francisco) studio. It was recorded in 48 hours - we all checked into the Gaylord Hotel, piled into two station wagons each morning and off to the studio. I think it was mixed back in London. I have to say that I hate it - I haven't dared listen to the record since."

AW: (Protests vaguely about *Queen of Love*)

JB: "But at the same time I was doing Mike's solo - which I really enjoyed!"

Eds note - couldn't help butting in here as I type. Joe might have those opinions of the U album but as far as I and many String heads are concerned it was the apogee of the ISB. Like so many totally classic albums - Astral Weeks being a case in point - U may have been made swiftly and with no real idea of its eventual impact, but that's just the nature of brilliance as far as I'm concerned. And as for the Americans not taking to it - big fucking deal! I think if the String Band had got to the point when they were making music to please the American market then it was time to pack up the gimbri and walk!

Joe clearly hadn't lost faith totally, though. Around this time he was holding forth to Frank Kermode for a Radio Three programme, broadcast in October 1970, called *Pop Audience, Pop Elite*. Here's a snippet:

"The most interesting thing about the ISB and their music is their incredible eclecticism, Just after I first met them I

had a very humbling experience in discussing oriental philosophy which they were very interested in and concerned with at that time, and I discovered that not only had they read the entire works of Krishnamurti but also *The Lotus and the Robot*, and this is their approach. They will immerse themselves in the primitive music of a certain area for its melody and directness, and also in the techniques and the intellectual approaches of a Cage or a Stockhausen and listen as avidly to both and in certain ways use both influences in their music."

Pete Townshend would go right back to the beginning and start again....

Smiling Men was Joe's last ISB-ish production (recorded summer and December 1970). The sessions were great fun, apparently, with Mike and Joe wheeling in virtually every musician they knew between them. He was particularly impressed with Pete Townshend's approach to rehearsals:

"He sat there in a corner and learned *Warm Heart Pastry* with Mike - perfectly - and then took the group through it. Every time someone made a mistake they'd go back to the beginning and start again. It was so different from the ISB approach, which was not to worry about odd mistakes and choose the take with the best feel!"

Smiling Men was a great critical success, and Joe agreed it might have paved the way for Mike's later rhythm

WITCH/SEASON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY FRANKIE L. IN 2001. DICKSON, KY. BOYS. BULLDOG & LINDA.

13th March 1980.

Dear Adrian,
Thank you for your letter enquiring about publicity hand-outs for the Incredible String Band. Sorry Adrian, but I am afraid we do not have any hand-outs or pictures et that we could et you have. The best I can do is to let you have this old programme

I hope you will be able to make the String Band Performance which is running for 10r days in April at the Roundhouse from the 8th till the 18th. Tickets can be obtained from the Roundhouse, Chalk Farm.
All the best,
Ginny Purkis

Early attempts at archivism sadly thwarted. I was pleased to get a personal invite to U, though!

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section' approach to ISB recordings. *Lady Wonder*, released only as a single B-side, was left off "cos it wasn't good enough."

Joe has no recollection of involvement with *Relics*, the Elektra compilation released in early 1971. By this time he was feeling that all the Witchseason artists had outgrown the need for his creative input and it was time for someone else to take over and maybe move things in a new direction - "I'm always more interested in getting things started." As part of the changeover before selling Witchseason, he'd brought in Susie Watson-Taylor (an ex-girlfriend apparently) to look after ISB affairs.

Having sold the company to Island, he moved back to the states in early 1971 for a job at Warner Brothers, co-ordinating film soundtracks (and, incidentally, producing the Hendrix film biography). It wasn't quite the end though:

"Susie Watson-Taylor called and said they were putting together a compilation LP (*Seasons They Change*, 1976) and did I have any suggestions - so I said let's put out *Queen Juanita* at last! I'd always liked it, and it's one of those things we'd never actually got on a record (it was recorded at the time of *I Looked Up*) - and so we got hold of

the tapes and mixed them. In retrospect I can see that it was a bit unfair to do it without consulting Robin." (Who reportedly dislikes the song greatly!)

Odds and Ends

Joe kept up a loose contact with Mike and Robin over the years. In 1987 *Musin' Music* asked them both to assess his producer role.

Mike: "I think if the songs had been more commercial in production and they had been the same songs, no-one would have bought them at all - the whole point was that they were just something different."

Robin: "Joe Boyd did an excellent job on some of those productions; John Wood and he had a lot to do with the sound of those central few [60's] records."

Currently, Joe has been involved with the ISB re-releases; the early CD masters had in some cases been taken from second or third generation copies, and so he supervised remastering direct from the original two-track master tapes. It's unlikely that he'll be involved with *U* though.

The much mooted ISB 'tribute' CD is still on the back-burner - a question of finding the time, apparently. Robin

Hitchcock's contribution is the only one recorded so far and still has to be mixed. He's been playing with the idea of a boxed-set, "a sample of the artist's career, a bit like Dylan's *Biograph*", which would include unreleased live stuff, but there are no current plans for this owing to comparatively low sales of the recent re-releases (*Ed - that's because they weren't advertised - obviously*). I asked about studio out-takes, but he confirmed there's little or nothing left in the vaults. The practice was only to overdub and complete tracks which were going on an LP. At best there might be some basic tracks consisting of guitar and vocal.

Oh - *Be Glad* was able to tell Joe something. Thanks to Andy's Heron article in no. 4, he's finally discovered what the title of *Smiling Men* is all about!

Credits: Many thanks to Joe Boyd for the interview. I've also drawn on stuff in *Hockey Pokey*, *Record Collector* and the Neil Parry interview.



Mike, Robin, Ivan Pawle, Janet Shankman and sundry Stone Monkey people outside the Glenrow Cottages. Nothing to do with the Joe Boyd article at all in fact - we used our only photograph of him last issue!

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STRINGS - AND THINGS



HARMONICA:- Both Mike and Robin puffed a harmonica intermittently through the ISB's career. (*Blues For The Muse* (FTS), *Mercy I Cry City* (HBD), *Make No Mistake* (SMWBR), *Greatest Friend*, *Ducks On A Pond* (WTATBH): there's also an uncredited harmonica on *Log Cabin Home In The Sky*). Mike's playing is the more blues-inflected. Malcolm is featured on *Darling Belle* (LAARTA), playing *Keep The Home Fires Burning*. And of course there's the mysterious Walter Gundy on *Big Ted* (CH) (see last issue for the unvarnished truth concerning this enigma. Someone plays harmonica on *I Know That Man* (IC), but it's difficult to work out who it is.

HARMONIUM:- Like the Harmonica, Concertina and Accordion (see individual entries), a member of the free reed family of instruments, in which the sound is produced by air vibrating arrangements of fixed metal reeds. Resembling a small organ and fitted with a foot-operated bellows to produce the air supply, it was patented by Debain of Paris in 1848. In contrast to the organ, it has a mellow, wheezy sound. Smaller portable models with hand-operated bellows were popularised in India by Christian missionaries. It crops up in the ISB's middle period (side two medley (BGFTSHNE), *Worlds They Rise And Fall*, *Red Hair* (LAARTA), *Sailor And The Dancer* (E and OA). Played by Mike, Malcolm, Joe Boyd (on *Be Glad* his only instrumental credit) and John Cale (*Audrey*, *Beautiful Stranger* - SMWBR).

HARP:- In the 80s the harp became Robin's main solo instrument. "I bought a harp in the 60s, went to Dublin on the boat from Wales... a little one, and tooted around with it for a while, but I didn't really take it up seriously 'til '79." Used for 'harp effects' on *The Circle Is Unbroken* and *The*

Part two of Raymond Greenoaken's comprehensive study of exactly what instruments the ISB used on what track on what album. Confused as to the difference between a syrx and a sitar? Rest easy tonight because you'll soon know. Album titles are given in initials - you can work 'em out I'm sure.

Iron Stone (WTATBH), in the latter instance by Licorice. Classical harpist David Snell plays an orchestral harp (scored by Dolly Collins) on *Waltz Of The New Moon* (HBD). An anonymous harpist plays on *Queen Of Love* (U). Robin contributed some confident sounding harp to Vashti Bunyan's 1970 album, *Just Another Diamond Day*.

HARP, JEW'S. see **JEW'S HARP**

HARP, WATER:- A small African harp, its soundbox filled with water, plucked by Robin on *Water Song* (HBD). This produces a muffled 'rubber-band' sort of sound.

HARPSICHORD:- A plucked-string keyboard instrument. Depressing a key causes a quill to pluck an adjacent string. This produces a brighter, crisper sound than a piano, in which the strings are struck by hammers. The first successful examples were made in Italy in the 16th century. The harpsichord is arguably one of the defining sounds of HBD - played by Mike on *Witches Hat*, *A Very Cellular Song* and *Waltz Of The New Moon*. Only occasionally used thereafter - *You Get Brighter* (WTATBH), played by Robin, *The Letter* (ILU), by Mike, *Queen Of Love* (U), by Janet - though frankly I can't hear it - and *Talking Of The End* (LAARTA), by Malcolm.

HI-HAT:- Two cymbals on a stand, clashed together by means of a foot pedal. A feature of the Western drumkit. Used by Stan Lee on *Black Jack Davy* (E and OA), while simultaneously play bass.



JEW'S HARP:- Or Jaw's Harp. Consists of a flexible tongue cut out of, or attached to, a small frame usually of bamboo or metal. An extremely ancient instrument, found worldwide - and not especially associated with Jews. The tongue projects at one end and is plucked by a finger (or occasionally a cord) while the frame is held against the teeth. The basic pitch (or fundamental) can be modified by altering the shape of the mouth, though the fundamental continues to sound, giving a droning effect. Used by Robin on *A Very Cellular Song* and *Koeoaddi There* (HBD), and the *Dancing Of The Lord Of Weir* (M), and by P.J. Money on *Spirit Beautiful* (SMWBR), where it is given its South Indian name - **MOORSING**.



KAZOO:- A novelty instrument consisting of a simple (usually plastic) tube and a thin membrane positioned over a lateral hole. The membrane is vibrated by any vocal sound made by the player, giving a characteristic buzzing effect - an effect that has been described by our editor as "Sooty on methedrine buzz saw". Children's kazoo marching bands are a popular and alarming phenomenon in N.E. England. The kazoo was used by American jug bands in the 20s and 30s; the ISB have often acknowledged their jug band influences. Used by Robin on *A Very Cellular Song* (HBD), *Ducks On A Pond* (WTATBH) and *Evolution Rag*, and by Malcolm on *Evolution Rag*. Also used on the *Be Glad* medley (BGFTSHNE), where it is uncredited, and on *I Know That Man* (IC), either Robin or Malcolm, I'd say in the latter instance, and Licorice in the former.

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MANDOLIN:- Celebrated - and occasionally derided - for its delicate tinkling tones, the mandolin has been popular in European folk and popular music from the 18th century onwards. In 20th century America it spawned mandolin bands, featuring larger versions of itself - mandola, mandocello and mandobass. It appears on most ISB albums, usually played by Robin, occasionally by Mike, *Creation* (CH), *Fairies Hornpipe* (U), *Witches Hat* (OA), and Malcolm, *Painted Chariot* and dance tune medley (LAARTA), *Black Jack David* (E and OA), *Willow Pattern* (IC), and once by Licorice, *Waiting For You* (BGFTSHNE). Rose had a shot too, in concert and on radio sessions - *Won't You Come See Me*. An anonymously played mandolin features in Tom Constanten's arrangement for *Queen Of Love* (U).

MARIMBA:- A Central American xylophone (see **XYLOPHONE**). There is an orchestral marimba, essentially a deeper-voiced version of the orchestral xylophone. Its solitary appearance on an ISB album is on 1968 (OA), played by John Gilston.

MOORSING:- see **JEW'S HARP**
MOUTH ORGAN:- see **HARMONICA**

MRRIDANGM:- South Indian double-headed cylindrical drum, the equivalent of the North Indian tabla (see **TABLA**). Played on *Spirit Beautiful* (SMWBR), by Indian sessioneer P.J. Money.

OBOE:- A generic term for the family of double-reed instruments - as distinct from the single-reed Clarinets (see **CLARINET**). Folk oboes or shawms are usually loud and shrill, and thus better suited for outdoor use, though quieter versions evolved during the Renaissance, cf. crumhorn, rauschpfeife. The orchestral oboe was developed in the 17th century,



Rakis, of Stone Monkey - who danced with the ISB for the U performances at the Roundhouse and Filmore East - shakes, rattles and indeed probably rolls a percussive device or two outside the Glenrow cottages.



probably by the Hotteterre family in France. Robin used assorted folk oboes with the ISB, notably the shenai and Chinese shawm or soma (see individual entries); eventually he introduced the orchestral version, as on *Worlds They Rose And Fall*, *Painted Chariot* and *Darling Belle* (LAARTA), *Sunday Song* (E) and *Explorer* (NRF), and on much of Myrrh. There's a tasty oboe solo tagged on to the end of a Radio One recording of *Sailor And The Dancer*, sadly unreleased. Lower-pitched relations of the orchestral oboe - the Cor Anglais and the bassoon - are a feature of Tom Constanten's score for *Queen Of Love* (U).

ORGAN, CHURCH:- Most church organs are on the large side, and must therefore be recorded in situ rather than brought to the studio. Were the church organs on *Darling Belle* (LAARTA) and *Antione* (E), recorded on location? Doubtless Malcolm or Mike, who played them, could enlighten us...

ORGAN, ELECTRIC:- Omnipresent both on record and in concert, almost everybody had a stab at it at one time or another. (Rose's demure one-fingered technique is preserved for public gaze on a German TV recording of *Everything's Fine Right Now*.)

ORGAN, PIPE:- A scaled-down version of the church organ; the air is blown through the pipes by an electric motor. Also known as the flute organ. Played by Licorice on *Red Hair* (LAARTA), and by Dolly Collins - who pioneered the instrument - on *Water Song* (HBD), and on *God Dog* on the recently discovered (FTS) out-takes.

LOUD:- A short-necked Middle Eastern lute, the prototype of the European Renaissance lute. The word lute is derived from the Arabic al'ud. Robin

studied oud playing while in North Africa in 1966/7, and brought one back to Britain. As discussed in the **GUITAR** entry, his plectrum guitar style is plainly influenced by oud styles. Heard on *You Know What You Could Be* (FTS), *Swift As The Wind* (HBD), *Talking Of The End* (LAARTA), and *Ithkos* (HRAST). The photo accompanying part one of this article shows it to good effect.



PANPIPES:- Also known as the Syrinx. An arrangement of graduated pipes joined together in a raft or bunch shape. The sound is produced by blowing obliquely across the tops of the pipes - most readers will have tried this with a milk bottle. As the name implies, the instrument is associated specifically with the Greek demigod Pan. The nymph Syrinx, fleeing Pan's amorous advances, disguised herself in the shape of a reed - but to no avail: he made the reed into the first syrinx and played upon it, we're told, for consolation. In fact the instrument was developed independently in most part of the world. It makes a solitary appearance in *Witches Hat* (HBD), deftly and hauntingly played by Robin.

PENNY WHISTLE see **WHISTLE**

PERCUSSION:- The ISB employed a dauntingly vast and variegated array of percussion devices in the course of its career. Almost everyone, sooner or later, was called upon to shake, rattle, slap or bring objects into violent contact with each other. There are far too many, indeed, to allow each a separate entry here; instead, I shall simply list as many as I can confidently identify. (A few have entries of their own, either because of some particular significance they hold in the history of the band, or because of pure caprice on my part.) On album credits they are invariably referred to simply as 'percussion'.

Of all the ISB albums, only the first is entirely innocent of percussion - unless you agree with 19th century musicologists, who classified the banjo as a percussion instrument! Between FTS and IC the following were used,

roughly in order of their first appearance.

Finger cymbals, clay bongos (naqqara), gourd rattle or shaker, tambourine, thumb piano (sansa - see **SANSA**), small bells (jingles, pallet bells, clapper bells), sticks (claves), tympani (see **TYMPANI**), pail of water (see **WATER, PAIL OF**), washboard (see **WASHBOARD**), talking drum (see **TALKING DRUM**), Syrian drum (see **SYRIAN DRUM**), chimes, drumkits - conventional and customised (see **DRUMKIT**), tabla (see **TABLA**), bass drum, tall pottery drum, gongs, cymbals, wooden rattle, spoons (see **SPOONS**), mridangam (see **MRIDANGAM**), clashers (quaquaal), bodhran (see **BODHRAN**), glockenspiel (see **GLOCKENSPIEL**), hi-hat (see **HI-HAT**), snare drum, mouth percussion, vibraphone (see **VIBRAPHONE**), congas, tubular bells (see **TUBULAR BELLS**), marimba (see **MARIMBA**)...and perhaps xylophone (see **XYLOPHONE**).

Evidence trawled from radio sessions, concert recordings and memories, and the BE Glad video, suggests that this list could be extended to include wooden bongos, temple bells, assorted hand drums, rommelpot (see **ROMMELPOT**), domestic utensils, feet...and let's not omit handclaps: their use on *Bid You Goodnight* (from *A Very Cellular Song* - HBD) to simulate the rapid pattering of drums is particularly novel and effective. Mike and Robin provided an accompaniment consisting solely of handclaps for *Seven Yellow Gypsies* on Shirley Collins' 1967 album, *The Power Of The True Love Knot*.

In addition to the above, there will certainly be other percussion instruments that I've failed to identify. Illumination from any source is welcome.

PIPE ORGAN see **ORGAN, PIPE**

PIANO:- In the 60s the piano was not seen as a 'folky' instrument, and this may in part explain why neither Mike nor Robin resorted to it on the first two albums. John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, of course, contributed a bluesy piano part

to *The Mad Hatter's Song* (FTS). Keyboards were much in evidence on HBD, though Mike stuck to organ and harpsichord until *Changing Horses* (*Big Ted*). There is debate as to whether it was Robin or Dolly Collins tinkling the ivories on *The Minotaur's Songs* and *A Very Cellular Song*. My own guess is that Robin played on the former and Dolly the latter, but I'm open to correction on either or both. Elsewhere in the discography the credits are clearer. From *I Looked Up* onwards Mike assumed the bulk of keyboard duties. Gerard Dott played piano on *Circus Girl* (NRF), and often essayed a ragtime piece in concert. Licorice played piano on her own *Secret Temple* in concert; the song was never recorded. Janet played piano on *Will We Open The Heavens* (M). Other guest pianists include Ivan Pawle - *Creation* (CH) - Dudu Pukwana - *Call Me Diamond* (SMWBR) - John Cale - *Feast Of Stephen* and - notoriously - *Beautiful Stranger* (SMWBR) - Elton John - *Make No Mistake* (SMWBR, CD reissue). There's uncredited piano on *Queen Of Love and Invocation* (U), possibly the same session musician.?

PIANO, ELECTRIC:- Often used in concert, rarely on record. Mike plays it on *Adam And Eve* (LAARTA), *Audrey* (SMWBR), and *My Father Was A Lighthouse Keeper* and *Restless Night* (E), Robin on *The Actor* (E), and Gerard Dott (at a guess) on *Little Girl* (OA).

PIANO, TACK:- Tacks or drawing pins were often pressed into the hammers of upright pianos to achieve a tinny, 'bar-room' timbre - the classic Wild West saloon sound. Used by Mike on *Bad Sadie Lee* (U).

PIANO, THUMB:- Or sansa. An African plucked instrument consisting of a number of metal or split cane tongues arranged across a wood board or box resonator. The tongues are plucked by the thumbs, hence the name. It may be a sansa that Robin plays on *Koeoaddi There* (HBD) - or it may be a sort of xylophone (see **XYLOPHONE**); he plays sansa on *Chart Song* on Melanie's 1974 album *As I See It Now*.

PSALTERY, BOWED:- The psaltery is a medieval board zither (see **ZITHER**), descended from the Middle Eastern qanun. Historically it is played with the fingertips or a plectrum; however, in the 60s the folk musician Barry Dransfield took a bow to it and produced a keening, ethereal sound that has delighted listeners ever since (and offended not a few, it has to be said). Used by Licorice in the concert arrangement of *Painted Chariot* (1971) and on another song of Mike's performed on the same tour but never recorded.

Appendix One

As this guide was put together in three parts I've had the leisure since the publication of Part One to identify several omissions from that part. With due contrition, therefore, I record them here.

In the **BANJO** entry I neglected to record that Peter Grant played 5-string banjo on *Bad Sadie Lee* (U). (He turned up again in the same role on Robin's American Stonehenge album in 1978.)

In the entry for **STEEL GUITAR** I omitted any reference to the late Gordon Huntley, who played pedal

steel on *Make No Mistake* - (SMWBR, CD reissue); he was playing with Matthews' Southern Comfort at that time.

And regarding **BASS** and **ELECTRIC GUITAR**, some nod of acknowledgment to Dave Pegg, John Cale, Pat Donaldson and Ronnie Lane, and to Simon Nicol, Richard Thompson, Pete Townshend and Jimmy Page on SMWBR would have been in order. Hey, sorry guys!

Appendix Two

The ISB were usually scrupulous in their instrumental credits on albums, but for the second side of BGFTSHNE only the information "featuring all four on their characteristic instruments" is offered. Were you satisfied with that? Of course not. Here follows some educated guesswork concerning the instruments used and who played 'em. The titles of the individual sections are my own, concocted for ease of reference, apart from *Beyond The See* and *Theta*.

Part One: *Pirate's Theme*

Mike - guitar, voice; Robin - mandolin, voice; Rose - bass, voice;

Licorice - shaker, voice.

Part Two: *In The Woods*

Mike - glockenspiel, chimes; Robin - whistle; Licorice - kazoo; Joe Boyd - harmonium.

Part Three: *Summoning Of Herne*

Mike - sitar; Robin - sarangi; Rose - tabla; Licorice - organ.

Part Four: *Theft Of The Crystal*

Mike - guitar; Robin - piano, fiddle, whistle, mandolin, shaker.

Part Five: *Tent Of The Gods*

Robin - Chinese shawms; Others - gongs, drums, snarls and grunts.

Part Six: *Fiddler's Waltz*

Mike - organ, bass. Robin - fiddle, mandolin.

Part Seven: *Beyond The See*

Mike - organ, harpsichord; Robin - gimbri, bass, whistle.

Part Eight: *The Weary Wheel*

Robin - gimbri, voice; Others - voices, drum.

Part Nine: *Theta*

Robin - finger cymbals, clashers, claves, bouzouki(?), talking drum; Mike - sitar; Rose & Licorice - voices.



Malcolm and members of Stone Monkey thrum, bang and dance at Glenrow during rehearsals for the U shows

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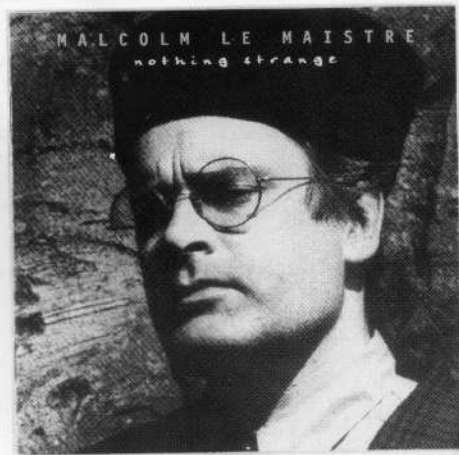
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Mythic Times

everything I've ever been
everything I've ever seen
everything I've ever loved
is here today, no need to daydream

these are the mythic times when gods and heroes live
the thirsty earth can suck up blood as fast as we can give
with equal power for every hour to flight what fate debars
with eyes that echo all night long the pale light of the stars

these are the mythic times where sages get their way
who sing like firebirds from the ash, whose deeds are legendary
who make me see how it can be with every love that rhymes
this is the old age of gold, these are the mythic times

these are the mythic times when hope builds ladders and keys
and the world soul unfolds her wings in simple mystery
the air is filled with melodius forms, truth burns hot and cold
these are the mythic times, this is the age of gold

Mythic Times by Robin Williamson
From the album *Journey's Edge*