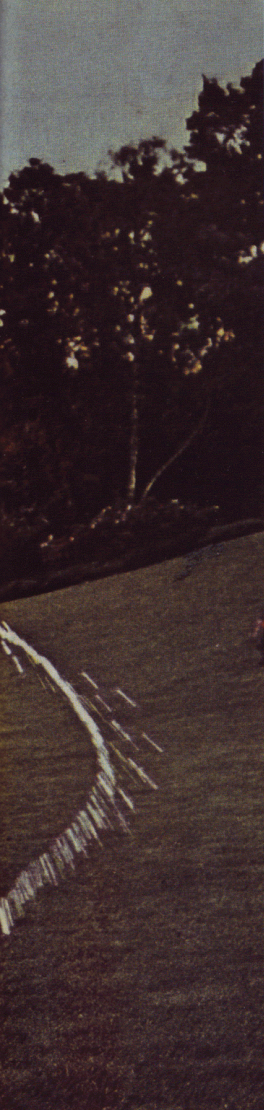


# STRANGE FOLK

Acid folk, psych folk, folk folk. The vinyl originals of the 24 albums here will set you back over £6,000...if you can find them. RICHARD MORTON JACK celebrates a cornucopia of lost classics and collectable curios.





**A**t the start of the 1960s British folk music was proudly governed by tradition. "It was very much outside the mainstream," says legendary producer Peter Eden. "I can remember when even taking a guitar into a folk club seemed very modern, but people slowly realised that folk could mean a lot more than endlessly playing the same old material."

As early as 1965 performers such as Bert Jansch and Davy Graham, initially perceived as traditional, had begun to display new influences. And the following year Donovan, arguably Britain's only successful protest singer, was incorporating exotic instrumentation and philosophy into his songs.

"It was the start of what we now call world music," continues Eden, his producer. "People take it for granted today, but at the time it was revolutionary."

Indeed, over the next few years folk underwent an extraordinary transformation as - while it continued to flourish in its traditional form - many writers and singers twisted it into new shapes under the all-pervasive influence of psychedelia. For a short time the popular taste coincided with genuinely groundbreaking and unconventional music. Lyrics encompassed far wider and less conventional themes than ever before and instrumental accompaniment simultaneously broke with convention to express what Martin Welham of Forest describes as "the emotional and sensual depth of the psychedelic experience".

At the same time songwriters were joyfully liberated from predictable rhythm and verse/chorus structures. Melodies could meander with indifference to structural formalities whilst remaining musical and, amazingly, commercial. Fully conveying this mood of change, the Incredible String Band's 1966 debut made a colossal impression on young folk singers.

"Nothing could eclipse their impact," states Ralph McTell, one of the UK's leading singer-songwriters of the period. "The Incredibles took music to a new place and their influence spilt over into all sorts of other areas." In their wake emerged a plethora of acts who were theoretically still within the folk sphere but really catering to underground rock audiences. Only a short time earlier they'd have been condemned as sacrilegious, but in the experimental mood of the time the assimilation of foreign influences into folk was just one more taboo successfully broken. Alongside the ISB chart groups such as the Pentangle and Fairport Convention added elements of jazz, blues and rock to the centuries-old folk template and before long many others were tinkering with it too.

"The success of the Incredible String Band shook up record companies' perceptions of what was or wasn't commercial," Welham continues. "It gave them the confidence to invest in this new genre, in the hope of finding the next big thing."

Some acts followed the Fairport template by incorporating full electric backing (Jade, Trees), while others remained purely acoustic (Forest, COB). Some developed their pop instincts within a superficially folksy framework (Vashti Bunyan, Spirogyra), while others incorporated jazz (Synanthesis), Indian raga (Meic Stevens) and even hard rock (Fresh Maggots) into folk settings. All

benefited from the extraordinary breaking of boundaries that characterised the psychedelic movement.

"The barriers were down, everyone was interested in each other's music and it became acceptable to mix styles. I think that was the key," reflects Mike Heron of the Incredible String Band. Of course very few strange folk acts had anything like the commercial success of the ISB, Fairport or the Pentangle. Instead most relied instead on the thriving college circuit for an infrastructure within which they could sustain themselves. Barry Murray, producer of strange folk legends Comus and Trader Horne and head of Red Bus management, says that "new underground artists had to work prolifically to build a following and the university circuit supported them all. I remember Leeds University had an annual entertainment budget of £50,000 - a huge amount back then."

Almost without exception the performers featured in this article were constantly criss-crossing the country to fulfil punishing live engagements. "When I look back, I can't believe how many gigs we all did," says McTell. Judy Dyble, of Fairport Convention and Trader Horne, agrees. "The travelling was very hard. It was unremitting and I'm surprised we survived in one piece."

Despite their travails, the atmosphere of cross-pollination that had always underlain the folk scene persisted and several of the musicians featured in this article contributed to each other's records. Members of Pentangle appear on albums by COB, the Sallyangie, and Bread, Love & Dreams. Dr. Strangely Strange's Ivan Pawle guested on an ISB album, Trader Horne's Judy Dyble had been a member of Fairport Convention, other members of which supported Spirogyra and Vashti Bunyan, who was also backed by Robin Williamson of the ISB, and so on.

Sadly, however, this atmosphere was to prove short-lived. Despite their hard work, very few made commercial headway and as the 1970s advanced record companies largely lost interest in acts that lacked obvious commercial potential.

"For a while folk seemed a genuinely commercial prospect," concludes Peter Eden. "But when labels realised they weren't getting hits out of it, they stopped investing." Culture and music were changing rapidly, a national economic crisis was looming and many small venues were forced to close, smothering the live circuit. The short but glorious strange folk bubble had burst, leaving a legacy of albums celebrated over the following pages.

This article focuses on major label artists, but it should be acknowledged that many highly-regarded strange folk private pressings also appeared in this era by acts such as The Moths, Folkal Point, Gallery, Midwinter, Green Man, Stone Angel and Dawnwind.



# STRANGE FOLK 12 OF THE BEST



## INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter (Elektra EUK 258, March 1968) £40 (+ insert)

It seems only right to kick off with arguably the most influential strange folk album ever recorded. Mike Heron, Robin Williamson and Clive Palmer had joined forces on the Edinburgh folk scene in 1966, made an unconventional album under Joe Boyd's direction and parted. Heron stayed in Scotland but the others travelled East for a few months, though not together.

On their return Palmer decided not to rejoin, but the other two recorded *The 5000 Spirits Or The Layers Of The Onion*, one of the defining albums of its time. A radical deviation from their essentially traditional debut, it combined unheard-of instruments such as the oud, gimbri and tamboura with whimsical, quasi-philosophical lyrics and catchy melodies, and allegedly became Paul McCartney's favourite of 1967. The following year's *Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* retained its

predecessor's sense of adventure, with aspects of gospel, soul and burlesque, and still stands as the defining blend of folk and psychedelia.

Opening with the hypnotic Kococoadi There and moving through the sprightly Gilbert & Sullivan pastiche *The Minotaur's Song* towards the hypnotic *Waltz Of The New Moon* and sitar-kissed closer *Nightfal*, it's constantly inventive and varied, but its high point is perhaps *A Very Cellular Song*, the extraordinary and aptly-titled medley that occupies the closing twelve minutes of the first side.

Much-praised on its release, *The Hangman's* achieved the remarkable feat of cracking the top five, not a boast any of its companions in this article can come close to making, and has exerted a tremendous influence ever since. It remains their masterpiece.

THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND  
The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter



Robin Williamson (left) and Mike Heron.  
They are pictured opposite (Heron centre  
and Williamson right) in a more recent  
incarnation of the ISB



## Mike Heron Q&A

### How did the ISB come together?

We came out of the little folk clubs in Edinburgh. Robin and Clive were running one and they'd share the door money. It became very popular and lots of the most interesting people in the field played there - Bert Jansch, Davy Graham and others. I was in rock bands but used to go along. Folk was evolving and in the 60s it was very easy to be heard if you had musical ambitions. Joe Boyd got us signed to Elektra on the strength of a song of Robin's called October Song, and the first album came from there.

### What happened after your debut?

We split up, basically. Robin and Clive went off travelling and I did a solo tour of Scottish clubs, playing mainly early Dylan material. Eventually they came back, but Clive was still very interested in traditional music. Robin had brought lots of strange instruments with him, we played each other what we'd written in the interim and out of that emerged *The 5000 Spirits*.

### Why did Clive Palmer leave?

The head of Elektra, Jac Holzman, was a great lover of song and poor Clive, who wasn't writing at the time, was left out in that respect. His direction was more traditional in those days so we took the lead because we were songwriters. He went on to do wonderful things with COB, though, and of course he's hugely open to other influences now.

### How important were folk clubs to the evolution of your music?

Very. In most nightclubs before *Sgt. Pepper* people either danced to music or they didn't - that was the only requirement. But in folk clubs people would listen. I always saw myself as a songwriter within the rock bands I had, and the folk clubs provided a perfect environment for developing my abilities.

### Why did folk suddenly become so hip in the late 60s?

I don't think it was folk in particular, more that when the psychedelic thing happened people became more willing to listen to different things. A lot of the credit for that should go to Joe Boyd, who was running UFO. That was really the hub of the underground. All sorts of bands would play and exchange influences, and it so happened that we came right into the middle of it all.

### How did your music come together?

Robin and I were both very prolific, but our songs were very different. I'd write one or he'd write one, then we'd make suggestions to each other about

instrumentation and so on. In fact, I especially took up the sitar to illustrate or colour his songs - when we parted in 1974 I sold it at once and haven't played one since! They're useful for writing on, anyway.

### Why do you think the ISB is still so popular?

We weren't trying to be fashionable, so perhaps that helps the songs stand up today. Also, we never perceived ourselves as just being folk. If we'd had to use a word I suppose it would have been 'psychedelic'. Our songs are dated in some senses, but they do revamp easily and certainly don't seem tired when we perform them nowadays.

### Were you aware of the impact you were having on other musicians?

We just felt like part of a large bunch of people trying to entertain, impress and inspire each other. It's hard for me to comprehend it when people say how influential we are nowadays, even other musicians like Robert Plant and Steve Winwood. We never felt as if we had one particular style, so copyists never seemed to be copying us as each of our songs seemed different to the last. I suppose we get bracketed with Fairport because we had the same producer and engineer, but we were doing quite different things really.

### Why do you think the psychedelic folk bubble burst?

These things never last, they go in cycles. I remember going to San Francisco in 1968 and it seemed like a different world, all beads and bongos and psychedelic shops. But when we returned the following year it had become a ghetto. The development of stadium rock didn't help matters, either - it destroyed the intimate atmosphere we thrived in. The last tour we did was with Three Dog Night, with huge risers and a huge division between us and the audience, who were just small dots way out in the distance.

In the mid-70s, when I was working out my next move, there was a club in Edinburgh that put on different music every night - thrash metal one night, folk the next and so on - and I remember not being able to find a single night I fitted in on, whereas in the past everything was on all at once. So perhaps music started to be categorised more.

### What do you make of the current folk scene?

I think things are swinging back in the right direction. We've just spent six weeks touring the States, where there are some great acts like Joanna Newsom, Devendra Banhart, Espers, Whysp and Jack Rose coming through. I think another era is on its way - I certainly hope so, anyway.

[www.incrediblestringband.com](http://www.incrediblestringband.com)

## DR..STRANGELY STRANGE

### Kip Of The Serenes

(Island - ILPS 9106, November 1969) £120

Heavily touted as 'the Irish Incredible String Band' in their day, this unusual group applied an improvisational approach to folk, along with engaging harmonies and diverse instrumentation, but never managed to translate the formula into sales, making their debut one of the very hardest Island LPs to track down. Having graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1966, folk enthusiasts Ivan Pawle, Tim Booth and Tim Goulding went their separate ways but reunited to perform at a freshers' reception in late 1967 and decided to make a go of things.

Having honed their material in a Dublin commune nicknamed 'the Orphanage', they hit the road in an aged Renault, playing pubs, colleges, rowing clubs, marqueses and anywhere else that would have them, dragging an old harmonium and PA behind them in a trailer. A proposed deal with US avant-garde label ESP (home to US strange folk legends Pearls Before Swine, Ed Asker, Mij and others) fell through when Island expressed interest, and early in 1968 they decamped to London, crashing on Joe Boyd's floor in Fulham.

Recorded swiftly that summer, *Kip Of The Serenes* was melodic and inventive and benefited from a typically sympathetic Boyd production - but sales were minimal. Following a tour supporting Sandy Denny's *Fotheringay*, they moved to Vertigo for 1970's *Heavy Petting*, which had a more electric sound and featured Gary Moore and Fairport's Dave Mattacks, amongst others. Issued with a typically elaborate sleeve design, it was another commercial disappointment and prompted the band to go their separate ways, though they've reunited several times since and released a third album, *Alternative Medicine*, in 1998.



## Ivan Pawle Q&A

### Where did the group's name come from?

It was a combination of a Marvel Comic superhero called Dr. Stephen Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts, and the phrase 'that's strangely strange but oddly normal', which was constantly invoked by a friend called Jim Duncan and often seemed apposite.

### How did your deal with Island come about?

Robin Williamson and Mike Heron persuaded Joe Boyd to give us a chance, so he came to a gig in Carlow. I don't think he was totally blown away by our ensemble but he saw some potential there. Skid Row were on the same bill and I suspect he was more impressed by them. Other friends like Anthea Josephs put in a good word for us too.



# FOREST

(Harvest SHVL 760, October 1969 £120)

Brothers Martin & (H)Adrian Welham had started playing folk music with their friend Dez Allenby while still schoolboys in Grimsby. Moving to the tiny village of Walesby in the mid-60's, they named themselves The Foresters of Walesby and became regulars on the local club circuit, playing folk songs with their own distinctive brand of vocal harmonies. Dez and Martin went to Birmingham University in the autumn of 1967, but continued to play live and communicate with Adrian via tapes. They moved away from traditional material and began to devise their own idiosyncratic style, involving diverse instrumentation and more complex arrangements.

Moving to London under the patronage of John Peel, after a triumphant gig in Notting Hill's All Saints Hall they were offered a management deal

with Blackhill Enterprises (home to Pink Floyd and Roy Harper amongst others) and soon afterwards got signed to EMI's nascent Harvest label. This debut was made early in 1969 under the supervision of its head, Malcolm Jones, and though titles like *A Glade Somewhere*, *Mirror Of Life* and *Do You Want Some Smoke* hint at their lyrical concerns, strong songwriting, deft playing and energetic performances save it from being a mere period piece. A rare single featuring the non-album *Searching For Shadows* didn't help sales, but they played various BBC sessions and became regulars on the college circuit and festival scene, touring in what Peel's sleeve notes call 'a succession of the most absurd vans in living memory.'

Despite warm reviews their 1970 follow-up, *Full Circle*, also failed to sell, prompting Allenby's departure. The brothers struggled on till 1973, but progressive rock was overshadowing the folk scene and when it became clear that EMI didn't intend to authorise a third album, they called it a day.

**Currently available:** Radioactive CD

## What are your memories of making *Kip Of The Serenes*?

It was recorded in a couple of sessions at Sound Techniques in Chelsea - our first time in a proper studio and quite an awesome experience. There was a very stimulating vibe there. At the same time Joe was working with Dudu Pukwana, Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath and Nick Drake, so we got slotted in at odd hours. Joe was a very positive influence and if he'd known our material better I think he might have suggested some judicious editing, such as our habit of repeating choruses ad infinitum. He was very patient and encouraging, knew how to get a true sound with the engineers but left the musical arrangements to us. Overall we were thrilled with the album, and even had a free hand with the artwork.

## What happened next?

Island wasn't desperately eager to take up our next essay and, as Vertigo had just started up, we moved there. We toured quite a lot, but after *Heavy Petting* Tim Goulding got married and was keen to come off the road and concentrate on painting. Tim Booth and I then teamed up with Gay and Terry Woods, who'd just left Steeleye Span. We were going in the same general direction for a while, but disbanded in Waterloo, Belgium, of all places.

## What are your live memories?

Apart from the many miles clocked up all over England, we played abroad quite a lot in places like France, Holland, Belgium and Denmark. I remember playing the *Paradiso* in Amsterdam dead straight when most of the audience was well 'out of it', and being shocked to see a highly pornographic film being projected on to the wall beside us as I blithely sang the (somewhat) fey closing chorus of *Strangely Strange But Oddly Normal*. At the Lyceum in London we shared a revolving stage with Santana and Elton John, before the days of radio mics, and all our wires got crossed. Many other stories are too acutely embarrassing to relate, I'm afraid.

## What's the band done since?

Our first serious bid to reunite was in the early 80's, to do the music for Tim Booth's animated film *The Prisoner*. Gary Moore again added some fabulous guitar to the whole thing, and we then did regular annual bursts of gigging in Ireland. Our most memorable recent sorties abroad were to Leeds in 1996 for the Incredible String Band convention and a tour of Scotland to promote *Alternative Medicine* in 1998. We haven't played live in the past four or five years but Tim Goulding released a CD called *Midnight Fry* in 2000, with contributions from various members of the band.



## Martin Welham Q&A

### Who were Forest's influences?

As schoolboys, the dynamics and harmonics of The Young Tradition made a huge impact on us. We supported them in 1966 and they encouraged us to continue. We became their protégés, they introduced us in London and championed us. We were also influenced by the better pop songwriters of the day like the Beatles and Ray Davies. Also inspirational were The Incredible String Band, who were pioneers and as influential as the Beatles to many musicians at the time - something that's not properly acknowledged today.

### What are your memories of John Peel?

When we moved to London we crashed in his mews cottage for a couple of months. It was right next to

Regent's Park so we'd play football there every Saturday morning. He drove us to gigs in his old safari Land Rover, and took us to *Top Gear* sessions and various shows he compered. At home we'd listen to the tapes and records he'd been sent and he'd tick off the songs he might play on the radio. He was instrumental in Forest being heard by people and was a great friend to us, bless him. In fact he wanted us to be on *Dandelion*, but it was taking so long to set up that when EMI made an offer he advised us to accept it.

### Were you happy with Harvest?

While Malcolm Jones was in charge, yes - but it changed when he left. He liked and understood us, and was committed. But later it got more commercial and people like us were marginalised. The great thing about recording for EMI, though, was that we got released all over the world - even today I hear from enthusiasts in the most unlikely places.

**What do you remember about making *Forest*?**  
 It was pretty quick – about four or five 3 or 4 hour sessions. There were lots of wonderful instruments just lying around, so we'd use them to augment our arrangements. The Beatles were mixing *Abbey Road* in one studio, Pink Floyd were making *Ummagumma* in another and we were in the third. We'd turn up in our old estate car with all our gear in the back and park alongside John Lennon's psychedelic Rolls Royce. It was quite funny, really. We saw John and Paul in passing, but didn't fraternise much. We did once borrow a tambourine from them, though.

**Were you happy with the album?**  
 It's hard to be objective about your own music but, as we were given total creative freedom in the studio, I have no regrets. We wanted to express a sense of mystery and imagery that listeners had to figure out for themselves. Whether the music's any good or not is for others to judge!

**Did you play live a lot?**  
 Nothing like as much as we wanted. We did a number of open air concerts and club dates, but work was sporadic as we were hard to place - sometimes we'd find ourselves sandwiched between a soul singer and

an R&B band, for instance. We travelled to Germany and Holland and did well there, but in England it was always fitful.

**Do you all still play music?**  
 Yes. I'm in a band called The Story with my son Tom, who happens to have the same musical ideas as me – it must be in the genes. We have a split-release album coming out in the US in the new year with an American band called Whysp. Dez's current band is called Southernwood, who are working on their second album, and Adrian is also writing songs to this day.

## TRADER HORNE

Morning Way (Dawn DNLS 3004, 1970) £100 (some with insert, £120)

The crystal-toned original vocalist from Fairport Convention and keyboardist from Them, perhaps Britain's toughest-ever R&B group, certainly made for an unconventional pairing - but the album Judy Dyble and Jackie McAuley made together stands as one of the most charming and enjoyable products ever to emerge from the English folk underground. Having left Fairport and passed a short spell in pre-King Crimson outfit Giles, Giles & Fripp, Dyble met McAuley and they started to play and write together. McAuley had struggled to escape Them's shadow, releasing a self-titled album with the Belfast Gypsies in 1967 before turning his interests towards folk and writing a number of whimsical, unusual songs.

Naming themselves Trader Horne after both an obscure sea captain and John Peel's nanny, their LP combines naive nursery-rhyme-flavoured ditties (Morning Way, The Mutant) and upbeat pop (The Mixed-Up Kind, Better Than Today) to

considerable effect. Though the whole record is beautifully arranged, played and sung, perhaps its most atmospheric feature is the disembodied, echo-laden piano that drifts in and out between tracks, lending the proceedings a disconcertingly dreamy effect. Many instruments are featured - guitar, flute, harpsichord, celeste, congas, clarinet and more - but the atmosphere remains restrained and placid.

Following the album's release on Dawn, Pye's underground subsidiary, the duo toured relentlessly but neither it nor their two singles caught on and eventually Dyble departed. She was replaced by Saffron Summerfield, though that lineup didn't release anything. The following year McAuley released a jazzy solo LP, also on Dawn, but it too failed to find a wide audience. Today he's still writing and playing, as well as teaching music. Dyble drifted out of music for decades but recently returned to the studio, and her first album in 34 years, *Enchanted Garden*, is out now.

[www.judydyble.com](http://www.judydyble.com)

## Judy Dyble Q&A

### How did Trader Horne get together?

Pete Sears was the catalyst. He was in Sam Gopal's Dream and also played with Steamhammer, which contained Martin Quittenron, who later worked with Rod Stewart alongside Pete. I shared a flat with Martin and his wife-to-be, whom I'd known since we were teenagers working at our first Saturday job in Boots. Pete met Jackie, somehow I got rehired in and the three of us rehearsed and wrote some music. Then Pete disappeared to the States to work with Leigh Stevens, John Cipollina, Hot Tuna and Jefferson Starship. Jackie and I then did some gigs together, Barry Murray signed us and off we trotted.



Judy Dyble (then, with Jackie McAuley) and now

### Were you happy with the album?

Yes, in that it was very much of its time and full of pretty tunes and innocence. Well, Jackie's songs were. I think they were based around children's songs. My contributions were whatever was going on in my head at the time. Jackie says the album was quite fine and thought Nobody Knows You, with Ray Elliott playing flute, particularly fine - only to be redone by Clapton 35 years later!

### How did you promote it?

We did a lot of gigs and early evening TV all over the country. The itinerary was a bit hairy - one day Salford, the next day Aberdeen, the next day Belfast, etc. We got a bit worn out by that. Our agency, Red Bus, booked us out anywhere and everywhere so we did an enormous amount of driving, which on top of playing and rehearsing and recording meant we were pretty exhausted.

### Any specific memories?

Jackie's old car broke down in the snow outside Hendon Airbase after a gig once. We had to hitch a ride back to our various flats and when he went to collect it the next day, not only was it where he'd left it but all our gear was still in it. I also have a nice memory of meeting Cat Stevens on a Grampian TV show up near Aberdeen. The airport was fogbound so while waiting for our return flight we listened to and joined in with most of *Tea For The Tillerman*, which he was working on. We watched him write almost the whole album on that journey.

I also remember playing the Royal Albert Hall in a dress with a long train which got caught in the swing doors between the green room and the stage. It ripped majordomo, then got tangled in the electric auto-harp lead, but I don't think anyone noticed!

## Trader Horne



# TREES

## On The Shore

(CBS S 64168, Autumn 1970) £200

Few bands have won the posthumous acclaim of Trees, yet they existed for barely two years, in which time the record-buying public roundly neglected them. The band - all friends of friends, none of whom had been in other groups - came together in London at the tail end of the 60s.


"We were signed in the summer of 1969 after a couple of months and a couple of gigs", says guitarist David Costa today. "Of course it was tremendously exciting, but perhaps didn't give us the time we needed to develop before making our first album." The LP in question, *The Garden of Jane Delawney*, appeared in the spring of 1970 and showcased their loose, improvisational style as well as a gift for cryptic, melodic songwriting. Sales were poor but it was championed by the *Melody Maker*, especially for its version of *She Moved*

Through *The Fair*, and after a few months of hard gigging the band returned to the studio.

"By the time of *On The Shore* we'd grown more sophisticated. It was more representative of our live act and has a feel and an integrity to it. It was where we should have started, perhaps."

The album is indeed a splendid fusion of austere English folk and the fluid guitar lines of America's West Coast, and as good as anything produced by their contemporaries in the field. Starting with the short, sharp *Soldiers Three*, the album includes traditional material (Polly On The Shore, *Streets Of Derry*) alongside the enigmatic originals that were their trademark (Murdoch, Fool) - but many believe the highlight of their entire oeuvre to be the epic, ethereal rendition of Cyril Tawney's *Sally Free And Easy* that closes side one.

Sadly, when it also failed to sell the group fell apart. They would regroup in various configurations over the next few years, but never again bore fruit as rich and satisfying as *On The Shore*.



### ON THE SHORE/TREES

## David Costa Q & A

### What inspired you to form Trees?

As a student at Norwich University I was fascinated by the idea of combining acoustic and electric instruments, and was especially mesmerised and galvanised by Bluebird on the second Buffalo Springfield album. Eventually I dropped out and moved to London, hoping to form a band and explore those possibilities.

### How did you all meet?

I knew Celia Humphris because I'd worked with her sister Sue at Philips Records. I met Barry Clarke through a mutual girlfriend - he was working in an ad agency and I had to collect some books from him. In those days I never went anywhere without my guitar, we had lunch by St. Paul's and he never returned to work. His housemate in Barnes was Bias Boshell, who'd been at school with Unwin Brown, the drummer, a lovely, very reserved guy. We clicked immediately and started to rehearse, playing folk covers and Bias's originals, of which there were a lot. Our tastes were similar in some respects, but very different in others, so we all brought very different styles of playing into the fold.

### How did you get signed?

Our management agency, Clearwater, arranged for someone from CBS to come to a rehearsal in All Saints Hall in Notting Hill, they pretty well took us on the spot and from that moment on we never stopped travelling the country playing gigs.

### How did you meet your producer, Tony Cox?

CBS assigned us to him. He was a good guy but very influenced by Joe Boyd. I felt he only did half a job - he didn't tackle our problems head on and exploit our strengths properly. This was partially because the band had design faults in the first place. We didn't have an ideal rhythm section, for instance - Unwin's drumming style was very able and complex but too gentle, and Bias was playing bass when he really wanted to be on keyboards. Additionally, we always had huge problems live and in the studio as combining acoustic and electric instruments was very difficult in those days.

### Were you disappointed by the albums' reception?

Not really. Karl Dallas at the *Melody Maker* really got behind us and that put us on the map critically. And we were too busy live to take much notice of sales.

### Was there any material left over?

Yes. We were in and out of the studio quite a bit - CBS weren't bad in that respect. I remember doing various other songs of Bias's, the theme for a TV pilot called 13a Adam & Eve Mews, a terrific part-reggae, cross-rhythmic version of Gipsy Davey and, from memory, another version of The Great Silkie that was more in keeping with how we played it live. Where any of it is now is another question.

### Did you enjoy life on the road?

It was wonderful, except for the fact that every time our roadie hit the brakes we'd be fending off amps, speakers and guitar cases. That Citroen always made us dreadfully sick - three or four hours down to the west country in that was equal to the same on the high seas, especially if you drew the short straw to sit



Trees (from left): Bias Boshell, Celia Humphris, Barry Clarke, Unwin Brown, David Costa

crossways in the back. We'd get out and have to sit quietly with our heads on our knees till the world stopped spinning around again, then go on stage before the same again all the way back to London.

#### Why did you split?

We had big management problems and CBS never seemed interested in promoting us. When they finally did it was too little, too late. The last straw came when a coast-to-coast US tour supporting the Byrds fell through. We were all getting married, things were moving too slowly and it just came apart.

#### How do you assess the albums now?

To me *Jane Delaney* sounds like five individuals trying to find common ground. *On The Shore* was a better indication of what we were capable of, and I still listen to it for pleasure. Sadly the original multi-track masters seem to be lost - if only they could be found I think it could still be improved a good deal.

## CELIA HUMPHRIES Q&A

#### Were the Trees albums promoted much?

We had radio support - John Peel was the first to play and actively promote *Jane Delaney*, and had us play live on his show. We also appeared on Pete Drummond and Bob Harris's shows, so in spite of the albums not selling well, interest was excited.

#### What are your memories of touring with Trees?

It was an incredible time to be playing - we gigged regularly with the likes of Pink Floyd, Genesis, Hawkwind, Yes, Fleetwood Mac, The Faces and David Bowie (in his shy hippy phase), and it was a wonderful way to see the UK.

#### Why do you think you weren't more successful?

In fairness, we were severely limited by my singing ability. I have a very quiet voice that the PA systems of those days couldn't amplify adequately, and that was even more of a problem than acoustic / electric

combinations. I could have contributed so much more but my background was in drama and dance and I couldn't see a way forward.

#### Why did things come to an end?

We were very young and took everything for granted. It all just fell into our laps but sadly we weren't mature enough to build on the sound we had, and kept striving for something different instead. I should have fiercely contested the break up of the original band - it was that sound that we should have developed, with each of us, including Unwin the drummer, playing lead!

In the end we simply couldn't afford to keep going, so to hear that our albums are fetching huge sums is rather sad. If I had the chance I'd gladly do it all over again (well, perhaps not sleeping on amplifiers in the back of the van) and do it much better. If only I had the stamina!

## VASHTI BUNYAN Just Another Diamond Day

(Philips 6308 019, January 1971) £750

Now universally embraced as a classic, this jewel of an album went unheralded for the better part of three decades until, in a sequence of events that still bewilders its creator, it was rapturously resurrected by an army of enthusiasts who weren't even born when it was released. Having abandoned art school in Oxford in favour of dreams of pop stardom, Vashti attracted the attention of Andrew Loog Oldham and released two unsuccessful singles before spurning the fame game and embarking on a horse-drawn odyssey from London to the Hebrides in the late 60s.

The songs written en route form a spellbinding chronicle of her experiences, powerfully evoking the successive stages of her journey and her changing moods as the seasons come and go. From the simple beauty of *Rainbow River* and the album's manifesto *Diamond Day* to the closely-observed *Rose Hip* November and *Swallow Song*, the jaunty *Jog Along* Bess and solemn *Iris's Song* For Us, a wonderfully

warm and intimate atmosphere is evoked, as if the listener is reading pages from the diary of someone deeply attuned to nature and the truly important things in life.

Despite being produced by Joe Boyd, arranged by Robert Kirby and played by members of Fairport Convention and the Incredible String Band, it went unreleased for over a year before limping out well after any chance of success had passed.

Stung by the experience, Vashti forgot all about it and music, bringing up a family and embarking on further journeys instead. Only when she first went online did she discover that both she and it had become the stuff of legend - and bootleggers. An official reissue has sold steadily as word of its quiet joys spreads, and it surprised few other than Vashti herself when the Observer recently voted *Just Another Diamond Day* one of the best British albums of all time.

## Vashti Bunyan Q&A

#### What was your musical background?

My father's collection of 78rpm records - mostly classical, Kathleen Ferrier and the choirboy who sang *O For The Wings Of A Dove*. And it was full volume Bach and Handel organ music whenever my father was home.

#### What were your songwriting influences?

The Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Ricky Nelson, then Tim Hardin and Brian Wilson. By the time of *Diamond Day* it must surely have been Donovan, though. While the wagon was being prepared for the horse journey I sat for hours listening to him play at his house in Essex, and his was the last music I heard as I headed off into a life without electricity, radio or record player.

#### Would you describe yourself as a folk singer?

N O O O O O. I was not a folk singer EVER. I avoided folk-clubs and was not aligned with any musical movement at all. I just wanted to bring quiet acoustic music into mainstream pop. I wrote some folk-tinged songs, but never ever thought of myself a folk singer. I was a writer and singer of pop songs, and was later influenced by the beauty and simplicity of folksongs. I'm called a folk singer now, maybe because of the musicians Joe Boyd always to accompany me on *Diamond Day*. They've been the well-known ones and I've been the unknown, so the album was only of interest to their followers and therefore got listed as 'folk'. Some of the instrumentation is folksy, I admit, but the songs themselves aren't traditional - just narrative.

#### How do you account for *Just Another Diamond Day's* ongoing popularity?

I can't. I'm surprised every day. But I hear it differently now. I could never listen to it during its wilderness time; it saddened me that I'd been such an innocent, or so naive as to think anyone would ever have wanted to listen to those songs. Now it's far enough away, I can forgive it - for being of its time and completely without artifice. When the songs were written I had no plan to record them. It isn't mannered in any way, so maybe that's part of its appeal now.

#### Musically, what are you doing these days?

Slowly writing again, and recording on my own in





a small room in my house in the city. A different feel altogether to the days surrounding *Diamond Day*. I don't live a pastoral life anymore, so it would be wrong to try to write pastoral songs. Hoping to make an album again some time soon. I've recorded with Piano Magic, Devendra Banhart and Animal Collective over the last while. Made me remember how much I'd loved recording. Also putting together a CD for Spinney of all the old singles and demos from before *Diamond Day*, and hoping to do some more live performances next year maybe.

**Currently available: Spinney CD**  
[www.anotherday.co.uk](http://www.anotherday.co.uk)



Vashti Bunyan, then and now

## Joe Boyd on Vashti Bunyan

### Do you have any specific memories of making *Just Another Diamond Day*?

It was slightly hurried due to Vashti's need to get back north and my other work pressures, but lots of fun, as I recall. She found common ground with Robin Williamson and Dave Swarbrick almost by accident, perhaps because of the rural feeling to her record. The actual session details are a bit of a blur.

### Why did it appear on Philips?

I'd already come to an arrangement with Chris Blackwell that records not deemed appropriate for Island could be licensed elsewhere by Witchseason. I took the finished item to Phillips, where I had already placed the *Brotherhood Of Breath*. They were keen to work with me, so released it.

### Why do you think it didn't sell?

Vashti wasn't really gigging, so there wasn't a lot for Philips to work with. Also, by the time it was released I was in the US and not around to prod the promo department into doing more.

### Why do you think there's such a large audience for the album nowadays?

I think that Vashti, like Nick Drake, represented something other than a straight folk sensibility. They were more influenced by genteel parlour song tradition than by the folk scene. I think Vashti, like Nick, was pretty uninfluenced by 'folk', certainly not by English traditional folk. She'd actually heard very little of it before the sessions, so the fact that Swarb and Robin fit right in on her record is not as logical as it may sound. But the rustic subject matter may have helped the 'fusion' between her art-song style and their trad style. The fact that she and Nick were outside the genres of the period is another part of the reason they are accepted today.

# COMUS

## First Utterance

(Dawn DNLS 3019, February 1971) £200 (+ insert)

Few albums arouse such poles of opinion as *First Utterance* - some swear by it and others won't be it in the house. Taking their name from Milton's masque concerning the efforts of a pagan god to persuade travellers to drink a potion that changes their faces to those of wild beasts, its creators coalesced at the Beckenham Arts Lab, curated by David Bowie, and even supported him at the Royal Festival Hall in November 1969. When they came to the attention of Barry Murray, head of Dawn Records, he promptly signed them.

"Normally I encouraged bands to develop live before putting them in a studio, but with them we went straight in," he says. "They had no mission statement, but I thought they were totally original and had evolved some extraordinary material."

Their original press release perfectly encapsulated their sound as 'shifting in mood from the aggressive and erotic to the gentle and lyrical, creating an atmosphere which switches from one of tension to one of tranquility.'

*First Utterance* is largely sinister in tone, its lyrics touching on such cheery topics as witchcraft, rape, insanity and execution, so it comes as something of a surprise (and, frankly, disappointment) to learn that both they and their sessions were relatively straight-laced. "There were joints and brandy, but no goats being sacrificed, I'm afraid," explains Murray. "They were nice people, if a little volatile at times. Making

the LP was a tortuous process, but I think the individual parts were magical."

Indeed, though their subject matter was frequently morbid and violent, their playing is delicate and precise, with especially notable violin parts amidst the flailing guitars and pounding bongos. And nestling amongst the doom and gloom of songs like *Drip Drip*, *The Bite* and *The Prisoner* lurks one of the most beautiful songs of the whole period, *The Herald*, which features a glorious instrumental break lasting for minutes on end.

Predictably, *First Utterance* failed to sell, though it has been muttered that a postal strike sabotaged its distribution. Despite this, Murray remained optimistic.

"I was still convinced they could be huge and thought we could break them via the college circuit, but it didn't work," he says. "And when Pye lost interest in the underground they got sidelined."

They made a lesser follow-up, *To Keep From Crying*, on Virgin in 1974, but thereafter the scent is lost. Their leader, Roger Wootton (whose highly unusual singing style contributes greatly to the LP's unsettling atmosphere) is known to have changed his surname to Raven and moved to Sweden in the late 70s, but the current whereabouts of him or any of his bandmates are unknown. Perhaps they drank that potion... or then again, perhaps they're chartered accountants.



Sole representation for COMUS,  
THE RED BUS COMPANY

# FRESH MAGGOTS

(RCA - SF 8205, October 1971) £350

Mick Burgoyne and Leigh Dolphin's sole album was made when they were just nineteen, having met on Nuneaton's small folk circuit six months earlier. At the time Dolphin told *Skyline* magazine "we don't go for the star image. It probably works well for a teenybopper group, but we need just the opposite."

Sadly, that's just what they got. In September 1970 Mike Berry, a music publishing hotshot who'd handled the Beatles' catalogue at Apple, had spotted them playing in a local Church Hall and signed them to a management contract. At the time Burgoyne described the extent of their ambitions as "just to walk on stage with our gear, say hello and try to make as many people as possible a little more cheerful," so the swiftness with which they found themselves in the studio was a little overwhelming.

The album, originally to have been called 'Hatched', was recorded at Radio Luxembourg's studio at the end of the year. Some songs are intense and serious (Frustration, Who's To Die?), while

others deal with subjects close to British youth - conflict (Everybody's Gone To War), unemployment (Dole Song) and romance (Rosemary Hill). Its most remarkable feature, however, is the fiery fuzz guitar that peppers several tracks, lending a most unusual edge to what is ostensibly a folk record. Its release was much delayed, and though it won extravagant praise in the music press ('an extraordinary duo, their range is incredible and their sound is incredibly full', said *Disc*) it sold poorly. The launch party was cancelled due to lack of response and, despite being very possibly the only underground act ever to be mentioned in *Troust & Salmon* magazine, when the non-album Car Song / What Would You Do? 45 came and went in December 1971 the duo parted.

*Collectors should note that two original pressings exist. One has a sharper cover image and purple rear sleeve, while the other has a paler cover and blue rear sleeve. Most copies have blistered vinyl, but that doesn't stop them selling for small fortunes.*

# Mick Burgoyne Q&A

## Why were you called Fresh Maggots?

I saw an advert on the front page of the *Nuneaton Tribune* for 'Riley's sports shop - fresh maggots always available' and it just stuck. We never thought we'd get anywhere, so it didn't matter what we were called. Then we were spotted and signed up and things started to happen very quickly. Maybe 'Always Available' would have been a better title for the album...

## How did you end up on RCA?

Mike Berry recorded a live demo of us in a studio in London and hawked it around. We did a gig in his office in Oxford Street so the different companies could see us. RCA then came to a gig in Coventry, where there was a powercut. We just carried on and they were so impressed they signed us. Originally we were meant to be on their Neon label, but for some reason that idea was dropped.

## Why was there such a delay between recording the album and releasing it?

We were from the Midlands and everything was being done in London. As we both had day jobs it all had to be recorded at weekends and, after the initial excitement, things moved pretty slowly. There were delays with string arrangements and even the cover - RCA rejected the original artwork, which featured an old water mill.

## What happened after its release?

RCA got a stop on, basically. I'm not sure why, but they didn't really want the single out and didn't support us. We were out playing the university circuit and it all just faded away. Mike Berry was the sort of bloke who changed with the wind, and he switched his attention onto the next big thing. We were the young innocents in the big bad music business and became disillusioned.

## How do you rate the album today?

Some of it makes me proud, some of it makes me cringe. I'm very fond of Rosemary Hill and Frustration, but I tend to hear all the bits we should have done better. Some of the words are a bit naïve, but a lot of people tell me they like it how it is. Overall it's an experience I'm glad to be able to say I had.

## Is there any unreleased material in the vaults?

Everything we recorded for the album was released but I have a copy of a live BBC session we did and reel-to-reel tapes of material Leigh and I were working on.

## What do you make of the album's status today?

I'm amazed. I can't believe people pay so much for it - I can remember seeing it in bargain bins in Woolworth's!

[www.broadgategnome.co.uk](http://www.broadgategnome.co.uk)

RCA  
SF 8205  
VICTOR

## Fresh Maggots



# Fresh Maggots could be 'very big'

What's in a name? Quite a lot when it comes to making records. It is obviously important for a group to record under a name that people will remember.

Well, two Nuneaton lads, Mick Burgoyne and Leigh Dolphin, will certainly find themselves being talked about because they call themselves Fresh Maggots!

But Mick and Leigh, whose first RCA Victor album is entitled simply "Fresh Maggots", will not be relying solely on a gimmick name for success. They also have lots of talent.

The top music paper has predicted that they "are



Fresh Maggots: Leigh Dolphin (left) and Mick Burgoyne

## David McNiven Q&A

### How did the group get together?

We met at the Edinburgh Festival - I was solo and the girls were a duo. Their manager offered to manage me and we got together to make demos to sell to other people. Eventually we became a group and named ourselves after the Italian film. Ray Horricks used to come to Edinburgh each summer to record things for Decca (jazz, the military tattoo and so on), saw us and the next thing we knew we were signed.

### What do you remember about making the albums?

The first one was a mixture of old and new songs. Decca tried to drop us after it, but Ray persuaded them to extend our contract with the proviso that three LPs would be the limit. Carolyn left after the first one, though she appears on one track on *Captain Shannon*. That and *Amaryllis* were recorded together, and when it came to dividing up the songs we decided to put the more mystical ones on *Amaryllis*. The guitars, vocals and percussion on all three were recorded live, probably to save time. The only overdub on *Amaryllis* was the Fender Strat at the start.

We were never allowed to attend mixing sessions, and were told that groups never did. Instead Ray would send me an acetate, then I'd send him a 30-page critique, and things would go back and forth till eventually they were mutually satisfactory.

### How did *Amaryllis* evolve?

We'd started working with the Traverse Theatre Group in Edinburgh, whose director, Max Stafford-Clark, allowed us in to do gigs after plays. Audiences would have a drink and come back to hear us. I'd written a song cycle called *Mother Earth*, but the earth being destroyed and something positive emerging from the calamity, and Max loved it so he asked us to dramatise it for the company. Because there was confusion over an American band called Mother Earth we renamed it after one of their actresses, *Amaryllis Garnett*. There's no hidden meaning. It was just a nice name.

### Did you play live much?

A huge amount. Often we'd do four sets a day, and at one point in Germany it went up to eight. We had wonderful Turkish roadies, ex-wrestlers, who'd hulk the gear around. In particular we toured *Amaryllis* everywhere - Scandinavia, Holland, France, Spain and so on. We were very popular in Europe but Decca simply refused to release our albums outside Britain.

### What was your opinion of Decca?

We were grateful for the chance to record, but they did nothing to promote or support us. We used to go to their warehouse, take a load of LPs and sell the whole lot at the next gig. Eventually we discovered they were shipping huge numbers of our albums to Sri Lanka, where no one even had electricity! Meanwhile in Europe people were clamouring for them. It was obviously some sort of tax avoidance scheme, and very frustrating. I remember going all the way to London to collect our publishing advance for all three albums, not knowing how much it would be - and it turned out to be £10, which gives some idea of how much of a priority we were for them.

### Who were the Human Beast?

Three young guys from Edinburgh who shared our rehearsal space and became friends. They were very good live and Ray also produced their album, *Volume One*. They asked me to come down to London to help with the lyrics while they were recording it, and I remember writing them in the pub over the road. I recently got a £1 royalty cheque for use of their music in German supermarkets!

### What have you done since *Amaryllis*?

When it barely sold we became slightly bitter and gave up for a while. Angie and I got married and I spent over 20 years doing music for Granada and the BBC, collaborating with people like Tracey Ullman, Robbie Coltrane and Emma Thompson. Angie continued to work in theatre, writing music, acting and directing and forming her own company, which ran for nine years. Now we work together, making music with special needs children.

## BREAD, LOVE & DREAMS

*Amaryllis* (Decca - SKL 5081, July 1971) £400

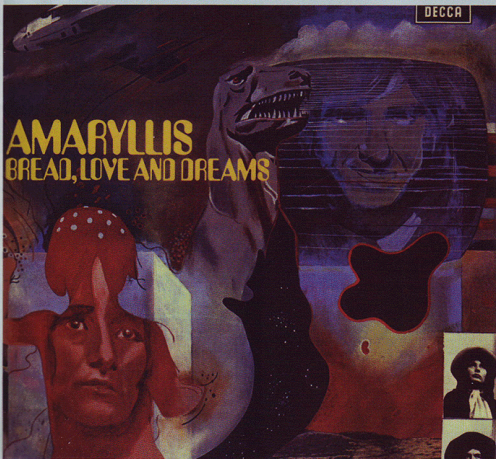
All three albums by this Edinburgh act are now hard to find, but *Amaryllis* - their third and best - is especially elusive. Decca staff producer Ray Horricks, best known for his work with Davy Graham, first saw David McNiven, Angie Rew and Carolyn Davis at the Edinburgh Festival in 1969. "I thought their demo was sensational and they became my favourite group," he says today. "David was a very good songwriter and they deserved far better." When their self-titled debut failed to sell, David departed, leaving McNiven and Rew to record both *Captain Shannon* and the *Strange Tale Of The Hunchback From Gigha* and *Amaryllis* in one four day session in the summer of 1970.

Originally intended to be released as a double, the albums were separated when Decca balked and when *Captain Shannon* failed to sell they barely bothered to release its successor. Played by musicians including Danny Thompson and Terry Cox, *Amaryllis* consists of a side-long song cycle and a small number of enchanting stand-alone tracks. Most were McNiven's, but the unforgettable Brother John was contributed by Rew.

"My father was a diplomat and I spent part of my

childhood in Mexico," she explains. "On one expedition we came across the beautiful but desolate remains of a hermit's shelter, with a tiny chapel, orange trees and a neglected gravestone. It moved me to think of the work this forgotten man must have done for the community." Other songs include *Circle Of The Night*, written for their labelmates the Human Beast (whose sole Decca LP is one of the rarest records of the progressive era), *Time's The Thief*, concerning McNiven's attempt to win a place at RADA as a teenager, and the upbeat but oddly unsettling *My Stair-Cupboard At 3am*, whose lyrics were supplied by a poet friend of theirs, Lindsay Levy. "It interested me to set words about isolation, even paranoia, to a jolly, ragtime tune," McNiven reflects. The album's focus, however, is its lengthy, complex, yet consistently melodic title track, which he describes as "a stream of consciousness, unlike the rest of our material."

Sadly, despite being performed both at Edinburgh and London's Royal Court Theatre, when *Amaryllis* sold even fewer copies than its predecessors it proved to be their swan song.



Angie Rew and David McNiven

# MIGHTY BABY

## A Jug Of Love

(Blue Horizon 2931 001, October 1971) £250 (+ insert)

When top London mod band The Action took a more psychedelic direction in 1968, they promptly recruited sometime Savoy Brown guitar wizard Martin Stone. "I thought they were going to be huge, the next Beatles," he says, "and as I didn't want to be a blues guitarist forever, I was thrilled to be asked to join."

Renaming themselves Mighty Baby, they recorded a blistering debut in 1969, featuring the immortal Egyptian Tomb. Underground stalwarts, they gigged tirelessly over the next two years whilst also developing a strong commitment to Islam. When they finally returned to the studio in 1971 their music had undergone a radical change. Gone were the blazing guitar leads and driving rhythms of yesteryear, supplanted by an aura of calm and reflection. "We lost the psychedelia and became more rosy," Stone explains. "Drink and drugs were out of the window, hence the sombre cover."

A largely contemplative collection reflecting their religious convictions, *A Jug Of Love* opens with the wistful title track and proceeds at a tranquil pace that allows the band to showcase their fluent, expressive musicianship and exquisite harmonies. Of particular note is The Happiest Man In The Carnival, a joyous entreaty to 'pick up on your good friends while you still have a moment' which one fan recently

told Stone had single-handedly prevented him from committing suicide, something he calls "the nicest compliment I've ever been paid." Other tracks like Virgin Spring and Slipstreams continue the mellow mood, though there's one somewhat incongruous excursion into rock, Keep On Juggling.

As a whole the album is atmospheric and oddly moving, but it foundered on release and, excepting a bootleg, has never been available since. One subsequent 45 appeared (*Devil's Whisper/Virgin Spring*, pictured opposite) but, as Stone puts it, "there was a conflict between being practising Muslims and playing amidst a sea of dope smoke and beer," and they disbanded soon afterwards. Having abandoned Islam, Stone went on to play and record with a variety of other acts before becoming one of the world's foremost authorities on rare books.

The other members released an album on Island as Habibiya (1973's *If Man But Knew*) and have recently reformed the Action for occasional gigs, enjoying the enthusiastic support of Paul Weller, Noel Gallagher, Phil Collins and others. To the initiated, however, *A Jug Of Love* will always be the required tipple.

Currently available: Evangeline CD  
[www.actionmightybaby.co.uk](http://www.actionmightybaby.co.uk)

## Martin Stone Q&A

### How did *A Jug Of Love* evolve?

Soon after the first album all of us except Bam King joined the Derwish order, so it was very much a Sufi album. It wasn't as if we were doing 40-date tours, so we had time to sit around playing and piecing songs together. Several of them emerged from lyrics, and we were listening to a lot of bluegrass and country – Dillard & Clark, The Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers as well as more traditional stuff – so I think that had its effect.

### What do you recall of the sessions?

They were quick, only about a week, and I'd like to have spent more time on it. We'd gigged all the songs, so none were written in the studio. I'd have liked to have prettified it but that would have taken time and money we didn't have.

### How do you rate it today?

*A Jug Of Love's* a lost album; I've met people who say it's their favourite of all time and I've read a review saying it's the worst. The truth's probably somewhere in between. My contributions make me cringe, though I admit I've never liked myself on record. I hate Keep On Juggling, but it always went down well live. We were never going to become Yes, but perhaps should have made a different sort of record, poppier.

### Was it true to your live sound?

Not really. We always played electric and never had acoustic guitars onstage, though I occasionally played the mandolin. The acoustic stuff was just for that album. The 45 version of Virgin Spring was closer to what we were doing onstage.

### Why do you think it failed to sell?

Mike Vernon's a great producer who I knew from way back, but our style was a big change for him. The first album was very well-mixed by Guy Stevens, but *A Jug Of Love* was more haphazard and live-sounding, at a time when bands stood or fell according to production values. That might be why it sank.

### Mighty Baby appeared on a lot of other people's albums too.

Yes, we all did a fair few sessions. In particular our rhythm section was so fabulous that a everyone wanted their services. They had almost supernatural intuition - still do. As for me, amongst others I was on a Gary Farr single called The Vicar And The Pope, *Stimulus* by Keith Christmas, *Woman From The Warm Grass* by Robin Scott, Reg King's solo LP and a Walter 'Shakey' Horton album called *Southern Comfort*. That one was quite funny because he got so drunk in the lunch break that he had to improvise a whole side's worth of material while he slept it off.

### Which of your guitar-playing contemporaries did you rate most highly?

My favourite of the time was Richard Thompson, no question, but I also admired Jeff Beck, Amos Garrett, Peter Green, Albert Lee and Richard Teece from Help Yourself. In the psychedelic days I always thought Steve Howe was brilliant in Tomorrow, before he got all flashy.

## MIGHTY BABY A JUG OF LOVE



## COB

### Moyshe McStiff & The Tartan Lancers of the Sacred Heart

(Polydor 2383 161, October 1972) £300

"COB was about three guys living in the middle of nowhere who somehow came up with this magical music," summarises producer Ralph McTell of this most enigmatic of groups. Having left the Incredible String Band after their 1966 debut, Clive Palmer travelled through India, Afghanistan and Morocco before settling in Cornwall and making an album with the Famous Jug Band, 1969's *Sunshine Possibilities*. When that didn't work out he fell in with fellow local folk scene regulars Mick Bennett and John Bidwell to form Clive Original's Band, or COB. A democracy, though their name suggests otherwise, the trio moved into a pair of deserted caravans in the woods and played around the clock.

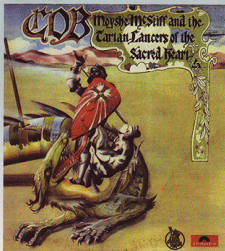
Their debut, 1971's *Spirit Of Love*, was a bewitching mixture of originals and standards, but the following year's *Moyshe McStiff* was all theirs. An oblique masterpiece bound together by a wistful, melancholy air, its lyrics and music drew on Haile Selassie and The Old Testament as well as Middle Eastern and English folk traditions. It's characterised by prominent use of the harmonium, clarinet and dulcitar (an instrument invented by Bidwell), as well as extraordinarily powerful and emotive singing.

From the overwhelmingly intense *Lion Of Judah* and *Heart Dancer* to the starkly beautiful *O Bright Eyed One* and *Let It Be You*, *Moyshe* truly has no weak link, but by general consensus its centrepiece is Bennett's dazzling *Martha And Mary*. Though they gigged hard to promote *Moyshe*, undertaking a

national tour supporting the Pentangle, it failed to sell and after one last attempt to break through, the odd, reggae-tinged *Blue Morning / Bones 45*, they were forced to break up. Much rumour and legend has sprung up around them since, but McTell's take is simple: "In my opinion COB stand head and shoulders above most of what passed for music at the time, and I am very, very proud of what we achieved together."

Available: Radioactive CD

[www.lysergia.com/LamaReviews/lamaMain.htm](http://www.lysergia.com/LamaReviews/lamaMain.htm)



## Mick Bennett Q&A

**How did you get started in music?**

My dad encouraged me to sing. Unusually for a working class Londoner he was into light opera and had a lovely tenor voice. Some of my earliest memories are of singing on tables and then having a hot sixpence in my sweaty hand! As a teenager I loved Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters and the blues, but when I went to Cornwall to escape my roots and the inevitability of factory work, I was lucky enough to meet Ralph McTell, Wizz Jones and others and the folk influence took over.



**Were you always a songwriter?**

No. I always wrote poetry, but only really moved onto songs with COB. As a poet I performed at Arts Labs etc, but the scene down in Cornwall was so lively and creative that I was encouraged to develop into writing melodies.

**What do you make of COB now?**

Funnily enough, my memories of that period are in black and white. I look back on it as an innocent time before the world went crazy and too commercialised. I recently listened to the COB albums for the first time in many years and was pleasantly surprised. Before then I might have been a little disparaging but, not wanting to sound boastful, I was struck by how timeless they sound. I'm proud of *Moyshe* and hope it gets reissued properly.

**Do you have a favourite COB song?**

I like most of them, but in particular there's a lovely one of Clive's called *Evening Air* off the first album that keeps popping into my head at odd times.

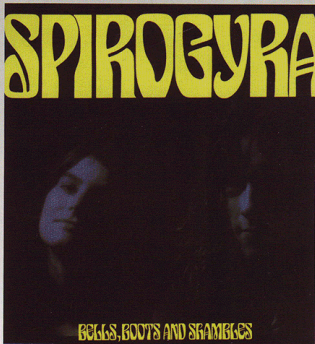
## SPIROGYRA Bells, Boots and Shambles

(Polydor 2310 246, 1973) £300

Spirogyra's roots lay in Bolton, where precocious songwriter Martin Cockerham had formed a folksy duo with his schoolfriend Mark Francis in the late 1960s, influenced by the Incredible String Band. They parted when he went to university in Kent, and he soon fell in with fellow student musicians Julian Cusack, Steve Borrill and Barbara Gaskin. Living communally in a house next to Canterbury Cathedral, the quartet abandoned their studies in favour of the band and quickly won a recording contract. The inconsistent but often brilliant *St. Radigund's* (1970) and *Old Boot Wine* (1971) established Cockerham as a distinctive, unconventional songwriter and Barbara Gaskin as one of the most haunting singers in rock, but their best work came when Cusack and Borrill returned to academia, leaving Cockerham to develop the marvellous *Bells, Boots and Shambles* alone.

In place of the often incongruous mixture of time signatures and styles on its predecessors was a unified, flawlessly-played and frequently moving suite of songs featuring glorious trumpet and cello parts. Especially notable are the opening track, *The Furthest Point*,

and the eerie *An Everyday Consumption Song*, but for many its masterpiece is the lengthy, intricate *Western World*, which closes proceedings. As with all classic albums, a certain mood emerges over its course – a gripping atmosphere of wistful resignation – which leaves one wondering what they might have gone on to achieve had anyone bought it. Sadly, however, it was barely distributed and they were forced to split.



## Martin Cockerham Q&A

**How did the band get its name?**

Mark Francis and I originally intended to call ourselves Amoeba, but then I thought that as that was a single-celled organism we should be Spirogyra, because that's when two join together.

**How did you meet the other members?**

We were all musicians in the same place, basically. Julian was a brilliant violinist and mathematician, very gifted. I had no musical training so he worked out all the strange chords I was writing. Barbara and Steve were also students and we all started living together in St. Radigund's Street, next to the Cathedral. It was a fantastic environment and other musicians would sometimes drop in – Soft Machine, Caravan, Ian Dury, Steve Hillage and others.

**How did you get signed and meet Robert Kirby?**

Max Hole, the Student Union entertainment secretary, offered to manage us and got us a deal on B&C through Sandy Robertson. We were doing a BBC session before the first album and met Robert there. We all liked his work arranging Nick Drake and others, and asked him to produce *St. Radigund's*. It was perhaps a mistake as he didn't know us well enough or have a clear enough idea of what he wanted from us. Max produced the next two with help from the rest of us.

**What do you remember of making the albums?**

The songs had a habit of evolving in the studio. For example, *Dangerous Dave* on *Old Boot Wine* was folksy when I wrote it but as soon as Dave Mattacks started playing around with it the rhythm totally changed and it became this driving rock song. Our rhythm tracks were always recorded pretty much live in the studio. Only the strings and vocals were added later. On *Bells, Boots and Shambles* I knew exactly what I wanted and there was a great atmosphere.

## What was the background to it?

Julian and Steve left after *Old Boot Wine* as things were moving too slowly. I moved to Battersea, though Barbara kept a room in the house in Canterbury. We'd got together romantically by then and the album was made in that situation. By the time we made it I'd learnt a lot and was more in control of the band. The others came back to play on the record, but only as guests. I loved the arrangements and think it's the best album we made. I've even read people saying it's the best album ever recorded.

## How were you received at the time?

The albums barely sold – we were on a tax loss deal so the record company felt no incentive to push us. As a result there was no promotion at all. We were never played on the radio, even by John Peel, so had to tour endlessly. That did mean we were on the same bill as huge names like Traffic, the Who, Rod Stewart & The Faces etc, but it was the best we could do, which was frustrating at times. All the albums have sold better on CD in recent years than they ever did then.

## What have you done since?

After *Spirogyra I* travelled around Ireland by horse and cart, then went on to India, Thailand, Bali and Hawaii, spending a long time living in each place. Now I'm back in England and have nearly finished a new *Spirogyra* album with Mark, my original partner in the band. I'm also in a new band called *Farcy King*, which will release an album when the other one's finished. We play psychedelic folk and are available for gigs - you can contact us by emailing [farcyking@yahoo.com](mailto:farcyking@yahoo.com).

# freakemporium

**Searching for a genre?**  
**We've got it!**  
**"Acid & Progressive Folk Rock"**

|  |           |  |                           |
|--|-----------|--|---------------------------|
| Anacard Blend - <i>Eve'song</i> Artasia Lindell      | CD £12.00 | Jan Davies & Gary - <i>Mice &amp; Rats In The L.P.</i> | LP £12.00, CD £13.00      |
| Anacard Blend - <i>Going Where The Music...</i>      | CD £12.00 | John Renbourn - <i>John Renbourn</i>                   | CD £9.95, Another Monday  |
| Andy Oldfield - <i>Homes One/Two &amp; The Dream</i> | CD £11.50 | CD £9.95, Black Blood                                  | CD £11.50, New Medians    |
| Baby Blue - <i>The Overhill Clinic</i>               | CD £13.00 | John Kelly - <i>Field Control</i>                      | CD £11.99, LP £25.00      |
| Billy Bragg - <i>The Old-Time Religion</i>           | LP £12.00 | July Collins - <i>Who Knows Where The Times Goes</i>   | CD £11.50                 |
| Billy Bragg - <i>There's A Hole In My Soul</i>       | CD £12.50 | July Collins - <i>Enchanted Garden</i>                 | CD £11.50                 |
| Billy Bragg - <i>There's A Hole In My Soul</i>       | CD £12.50 | Julie Farnham - <i>Prison Walls</i>                    | CD £11.50                 |
| Billy Bragg - <i>There's A Hole In My Soul</i>       | CD £12.50 | Julie Farnham - <i>Prison Walls</i>                    | CD £11.50                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Kathy Carr - <i>Caravan's Joy</i>                      | CD £12.00, Streaming Leds |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Lucinda Wheeler - <i>Maiden Of Somers</i>              | CD £9.99                  |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Lucinda Wheeler - <i>Maiden Of Somers</i>              | CD £9.99                  |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Magna Carta - <i>Songs From Winton Old Hall</i>        | CD £12.00, LP £11.00      |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |
| Bob Dylan - <i>John Mellencamp</i>                   | CD £11.50 | Manly Mates And Stragins - <i>Magi's Life</i>          | CD £11.00                 |

# BUBBLING UNDER

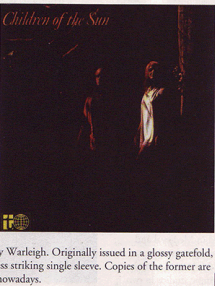


## THE SALLYANIE

### Children of the Sun

(Transatlantic TRA 176, November 1968) £60

Years before Mike Oldfield found fame and fortune with *Tubular Bells* he collaborated with his older sister Sally on this fragile collection of hippie folk songs. Discovered by John Renbourn, the duo were fifteen and twenty when the album was made. Though their youthfulness is occasionally betrayed by the warbling vocals and childlike lyrics, the music is adroit and imaginative, ably played by the siblings along with Pentangle drummer Terry Cox and top session flautist Ray Warleigh. Originally issued in a glossy gatefold, it reappeared in 1970 in a far less striking single sleeve. Copies of the former are surprisingly hard to pin down nowadays.



This is only one of the 90+ genres of collectable music to be found at [www.freakemporium.com](http://www.freakemporium.com) - The best music collectors web site on the net...

Features advanced search, customisable mailing lists, secure on line ordering, wish lists and everything to make that online experience easy, fun & informative!

Web Site Updated Daily!

**"I found it at the  
Freak Emporium"**

Please call us for our free catalogue  
**01753 893008**

Please note: prices are subject to change and do not include postage and packing. Please call / email or see our web site for details. £5.00

[www.freakemporium.com](http://www.freakemporium.com)

PO Box 1288, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, HP9 9YB, UK

## THE FIFE REIVERS

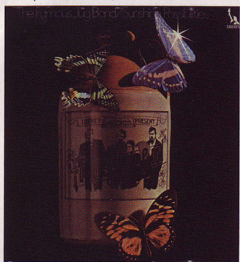
(Columbia SCX 6371, 1969) £30



A family that played together, The Fife Reivers hailed from Scotland. Leader Jim Laing was a schoolmaster and his wife Maureen a midwife, but the real focus was their precociously gifted 12-year old son Russell, whose lead guitar, banjo and mandolin distinguish the whole album, which remains unknown to all but the keenest strange folk enthusiasts. It contains a handful of trad numbers but the majority is self-penned, with a full, warm sound, glorious harmonies and Jim's lovely, rich voice. Songs such as Spring, Dragonfly and Russell's Eastern-influenced Caravan are highly enjoyable but, though they were regulars in folk clubs all over Britain, and toured with Bowie (!) in '69, one LP was all that got to make. As for the young virtuoso, producer Don Paul states on the back cover: 'I would like to predict a big future for him'. Does anyone know what size it actually turned out to be?

## THE FAMOUS JUG BAND

Sunshine Possibilities  
(Liberty LBS 3263, 1969) £50



After the Incredible String Band and before COB, Clive Palmer joined this Cornish-based group for just long enough to make an album. As house band at the Folk Cottage club outside Falmouth, the group honed the LP live, and it's a winning mixture of standards and originals that stands as an interesting bridge between Palmer's traditional and exploratory impulses. Notable are the brooding title track and ghostly Black Is The Colour, but the highlight is unquestionably

Palmer's heart-stoppingly beautiful A Leaf Must Fall, one of the great love songs of the period.

Ever transitory, he soon moved on to form the legendary Stockroom Five and Temple Creatures, neither of which released anything, before doing great things with COB. His Famous Jug Bandmates released a further LP, *Chameleon*, the following year before breaking up, though their main songwriter Pete Berryman made a number of subsequent solo LPs.

## SYNANTHESIA

(RCA SF 8058, November 1969) £200



'Between them this Scottish trio play an amazing number of instruments with great efficiency, and the album makes very pleasant listening' opined *Disc* in November 1969. But whatever became of Dennis Homes, Jimmy Fraser and Leslie Cook? Their sole album was a typically classy product of Sandy Robertson's September Productions roster, alongside Shelagh McDonald, Spirogyra, Keith Christmas and others, and features an unusual lyrical preoccupation with classical mythology.

Memorable songs such as Minerva, Morpheus, Vesta, Mnemosyne and Aurora are set to vibes, oboe and saxophone, which lend an uniquely jazzy flavour to proceedings - but after contributing one further excellent track to RCA's ultra-rare 49 *Greek Street* folk compilation, Synanthesia disappeared. And, incidentally, their name has no meaning. Perhaps it's a corruption of 'synaesthesia' - the confusing of the senses. Can any band members clarify?

## SUNFOREST

Sound Of...  
(Deram Nova, January 1970) £120



An American all-girl trio steeped in Medieval and Renaissance sounds as well as pop, Sunforest epitomised their generation's gleeful experimentalism. Recorded in London's Olympic studios in two

weeks, their album encompasses acid-tinged folk, riotous country, faux 1930s balladry and austere medievalism with strong melodies, striking vocal harmonies and immaculate arrangements.

One fan was Stanley Kubrick, busily compiling the famous *Clockwork Orange* soundtrack when it appeared. He got in touch and, to their delight, included two of their songs on it. Apart from that unexpected honour Sunforest endured the usual lot of jobbing bands after the album's release, playing small gigs, making occasional radio appearances and living out of suitcases until they gave up and went home.

## MARY-ANNE

Me (Joy JOYS 162, 1970) £200



In her only album's perfunctory sleeve notes Mary-Anne Paterson is described as 'a multi-talented young woman' - painter, teacher, actress and Scottish folk club regular. Other than that nothing is known of her. Joy was President's budget subsidiary, typically reissuing black American albums, so quite why *Me* appeared on it is a mystery.

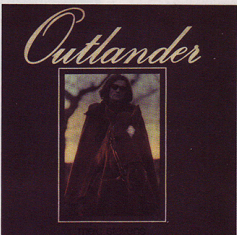
Overseen by in-house producer Mike Cooper, its contents vary from haunting treatments of traditional material (Black Girl, The Water Is Wide) to Paterson's own compositions (Love Has Gone, Reverie For Roslyn), all sung in high, pure tones with basic acoustic backing occasionally enlivened by understated electric guitar and pounding bongos. A true rarity, *Me* would seem a prime candidate for reissue.

## MEIC STEVENS

Outlander (Warner Bros WS3005, 1970)

£300 (+insert)

Preceded by a 1965 Decca 45 and a number of rare Welsh-language EPs, the legendary 'Welsh Dylan'



left it until the new decade to release a debut album. *Outlander* combines harmonica-driven Paul Simon and Bob Dylan-influenced songs (Love Owl, Lying To Myself) with more electric, acidic tunes (Rowena, Ghost Town) and Eastern-tinged workouts arranged by John Mayer (Yoric, The Lady And Madonna). When it failed to make headway Stevens allegedly spurned a five-album deal with WB in order to concentrate on singing in his native tongue. A string of ultra-rare private pressings ensued, making this about the easiest of his works to acquire. Collectors should note that the original pressing is of poor quality.

## JADE

Fly On Strangewings (DJM - DJLPs 407, 1970) £200 (gatefold sleeve)



A London threesome comprising leader Marian Segal, Dave Waite and Rod Edwards, Jade have recently acquired a cult reputation after thirty years of neglect. Aply supported by a stellar crew of players including Pete Sears, Terry Cox, Clem Cattini and John Wetton, their only album spans reflective ballads (Alan's Song, Fly Me To The North) and full-on folk-rock (Mrs. Adams, Away From The Family), but bombed on release. Nothing daunted, the group embarked on a tour of the US, where the LP was released in a single sleeve as by Silver Jade. Sadly no breakthrough occurred there either, and the group petered out on their return at the end of 1971.

## THE MCLYNNs

Old Market Street

(CBS S 63836, 1970) £100

Another family affair, this Irish trio comprised a brother and two sisters, Donal, Paula and Barbara McLynn, and their rare album is a real charmer.



Spanning settings of Shakespeare (Sigh No More Ladies) and Yeats (The Song of Wandering Angus) alongside traditional tunes (The Orange Maid Of Sligo, Gaire Na Mon) and rufel originals (Age Mood, Sam's Return To Sam), it benefits from crystal-clear playing and elegant vocal harmonies. Produced by David Howells and named for the location of the family pub, the album's disjointed sleeve notes reveal little and nothing is known of it other than that it barely ever comes up for sale.

## AMAZING BLONDEL

And A Few Faces

(Bell SB11 131, 1970) £120

Having released a frequently excellent US-only acid rock album on Elektra with Methuselah in 1969, Dave Gladwin broke up the band for being 'too loud' and turned his attention to early English music. Amazing Blondel was formed with fellow Methuselah alumnus Terry Wincott and new recruit Eddie Baird in order to explore medieval and Elizabethan themes within a folk-rock context. The exhilarating opening track, Saxon Lady, ushers in a varied set of songs arranged for an assortment of unusual instruments by legendary session guitarist 'Big' Jim Sullivan. From the penive Shepherd Song to the jaunty Bastard Lover, it's an ambitious and enjoyable record, but tanked on release. Unfussed, the group moved to Island for a string of well-regarded albums and are still playing today.



## MARK FRY

Dreaming With Alice

(IT ZSLT 70006, 1972) £750

Celebratedly hard to find, this Italian-only LP was never issued properly, with just a handful of copies making it to radio stations before it was pulled. Recorded in London and Florence and released by an Englishman on an RCA subsidiary devoted to Italian singer-songwriters, quite how *Dreaming With Alice* ever came to be is something of an enigma.

An otherworldly collection of songs incorporating sitar, mandolin, flute, acoustic and electric guitars and backwards tape effects, the album is held together by Fry's appealingly soft voice and the title track, which is divided into eight segments and interspersed throughout. Its high points are The Witch, a compelling Eastern-tinged epic, and the haunting Roses For Columbus, but a high standard is maintained throughout. *Dreaming With Alice* appears to have been the only recording by Fry, who is now a figurative / abstract painter living in Normandy.



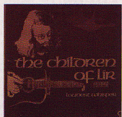
## LOUDEST WHISPER

Children of Lir

(Irish Polydor, 1973)

£400 (+ insert)

Described on its elusive insert as 'a folk-rock musical', this Irish album recounting the myth of King Lir and his children, who are condemned to live as swans, has long been something of a holy grail for strange folk collectors. Led by Brian O'Reilly, the Cork-based band had been together almost a decade when this debut was made.



Employing acoustic and electric instrumentation as well as prominent string arrangements, it's mellow and fragile one moment, jagged and rocking the next, but melodic throughout.

Regrettably the UK branch of Polydor rejected it, though, making the Irish pressing - said to be just 500 copies - all there is for collectors to fight over. They went on to record various singles and at least two further Irish-only albums, but this remains their best and most sought-after. The band, still going strong, can be found at [www.loudestwhisper.com](http://www.loudestwhisper.com).

## JOE BOYD Q&A

As founder of the UFO club and producer of *The Incredible String Band*, *Vashti Bunyan*, *Dr. Strangely Strange*, *Nick Drake* and many others, *Joe Boyd* is uniquely placed to comment on the UK folk underground of the psychedelic era.

**How did the UK folk scene strike you when you first arrived?**

It was very vibrant in 1964-5, full of unaccompanied trad singers like Anne Briggs, Louis Killen and the Watsons as sex symbols! There was also a good interchange between young revivalists and older rural singers.

**When did the influence of psychedelia begin to affect UK folk singers?**

When Robin Williamson and Bert Jansch started taking drugs - probably about 1962 or something!

**What impact did the ISB have on the folk/pop scene?**

I think they were pretty influential. Both the Stones and Paul McCartney have gone on the record as having listened very closely to them, and their influence is obvious in *Their Satanic Majesties Request* and also in the Beatles' music. After them, it was disseminated second hand.

**Overall, do you think psychedelia had a beneficial effect on folk?**

I think folk suffered the same way that jazz and blues did with drugs sweeping through the young audiences - everyone bought into the rock era concept, and the kind of non-conformist kids who would have become folk or jazz or blues fans were caught up in the psychedelic and adventurous pop scene of the mid-to-late sixties. The mainstream back then was so eccentric and creative that no one needed to seek out non-conformist niches.

## Finding out more / Thanks

*Eight Miles High* - Folk Rock's Flight From *Haight-Ashbury To Woodstock* by Richie Unterberger (Backbeat Books / [www.richieunterberger.com](http://www.richieunterberger.com)) is an authoritative analysis of the late 60s folk-rock scene on both sides of the Atlantic, as is its companion volume *Turn Turn Turn*, dealing with the earlier years of the decade.

[www.theunbrokencircle.co.uk](http://www.theunbrokencircle.co.uk) offers an excellent critical overview of many leading Strange Folk acts.

Several albums featured in this article are scheduled for release on Radioactive - [www.radioactive-records.com](http://www.radioactive-records.com)

If any readers know what became of *Comus*, *The Fife Rivers*, *Mary-Anne*, the *McLynns* or *Synanthesis*, please let us know.

Thanks to Cally Callouan, Peter Eden, Andrew Lauder, Phil McMullen, Ralph McTell, Barry Murray, Chris Noble, Sandy Robertson, David Wells and Nick at Market Hall Records (01905 611934).