

Allison Merkey  
Class of 2006

# ***Jethro Tull: Origins***

The History and Musical Influences of Jethro Tull



Bachelor of the Arts, Music

November 2006

Pledged: A. Merkey

Jean Wald, Faculty Advisor

Jean West, Associate Dean, Music

## **Jethro Tull: Origins**

When historians hear the name Jethro Tull they often think of the famous agricultural innovator who, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, invented the seed drill. That is not the case here. This Jethro Tull is a progressive rock band that formed in 1968. They have gone through many changes over the years, including band members, instruments, and even their sound, but they still have a large following of die-hard fans. They first started out as a blues rock band, but have gone on to form their own type of rock and roll. After a successful career spanning almost thirty years with an album released nearly every year, they show no signs of slowing down. Even though the band has had more than twenty different members through the years, one member has remained a constant, Ian Anderson.

### **The Beginning.**

Ian Anderson was born August 10, 1947, in Dunfermline, Fifeshire, Scotland, a small town in the Scottish lowlands. He and his parents later moved to Edinburgh when Ian was only four years old. As a small boy, Ian expressed interest in music. His first exposure to music was through the big band music that his parents listened to. With the British breakthrough of Elvis Presley in 1956, a Presley “knockoff” ukulele became Ian’s first instrument as a nine year old. (Russo 5) This toy proved to be useless, but at the age of eleven, Ian convinced his father to buy him a Spanish guitar from a music shop in Edinburgh. His father supported his playing, but Ian, at the time, never reached the playing level that his father expected. In 1958, the family made another move to Blackpool, England, a seaside town in Northern England. After the move, Ian

began taking courses at the Blackpool Grammar School for Boys. At the age of 15, he was able to play more than the three guitar chords that he had learned up to this point.

In 1963 Ian approached fellow student Jeffrey Hammond and told him that he looked like a musician. Jeffrey and Ian then decided to start a band and Jeffrey chose to play the bass guitar because it looked like the easiest band instrument to play. They found a drummer in fellow student John Evans, who had been trained on piano since the age of four. John jumped on the chance to be in a band. He had picked up valuable technical skills from his mother, who was a piano instructor, but found that he learned more on his own when he played popular music. This passion for popular music gave John the inspiration to take a few lessons on drums. While in school, John helped Ian expand his knowledge on pop music by playing The Beatles first album *Please Please Me*. The three of them would often pool their money to buy rare American rhythm and blues albums and, whenever they had the chance, practiced the blues with an older friend of Ian named Harry Hartley, a harmonica player.

With the hope of officially forming a band, Ian, Jeffrey, and John started going out to the local clubs in the Blackpool area. They found that the “hottest” band in the area, The Atlantics, were often in the presence of female fans. As strapping young men seeing the possible female benefits of their work, Ian Anderson and his group were motivated to form a band similar to that of The Atlantics, who played mostly popular music. John Evans lived just right around the corner from the church-run youth club at which The Atlantics played every week. John offered his house for rehearsal space on the condition that they find a new drummer so he could move back to playing the piano. His hands were suffering from banging on the drums and he believed that he would be more useful on the piano. Ian Anderson would later comment on this early period of their music careers: “When I first learned to play, the main reason was to earn money

and meet girls. It was only by going back and re-examining the origins of the music around and developing them in a slightly different direction, that music became satisfying.” (Russo 6)

John Evans continued to play drums until a new drummer could be found. In the fall of 1963, Ian Anderson, Jeffrey Hammond, and John Evans formed The Blades, named after the London club where “007” played a bridge game in Ian Fleming’s 1955 James Bond novel Moonraker. Since no one in the band saw himself as a singer, Ian quickly took the lead. As a new three-piece band, with Harry Hartley on harmonica on occasion, The Blades played their first gig at the church-run youth club that The Atlantics frequented. The Blades soon found out that, although the audience was mostly female, they were not “old enough” for the band’s attention. After the first few performances, Ian felt that his guitar skills were not adequate for the band but by a stroke of luck, the bass player from The Atlantics decided to join The Blades and switch to guitar. By the end of 1963 they were still unable to find a new drummer to relieve John Evans and they no longer had Harry Hartley to play harmonica for them. It was down to just Ian Anderson, John Evans, Jeffrey Hammond and their new guitarist Michael Stephens.

In early 1964, The Blades advertised for a drummer in the local newspaper. Two people answered the ad, but one of them was more interested in how much money he would make, rather than in the music. The other person who responded to the ad was Barrie Barlow. Barrie had played drums in school and was inspired to play drums because of The Beatles, much like John Evans. With their new drummer, the band quickly started to build up their reputation in the area by playing a larger selection of music and by selecting a diverse repertoire of music. Up until now, their influences were current popular bands, such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, but they started to experiment more with American Blues melodies, often performing covers of popular blues songs. Musicians that had an influence on The Blades at this time

included Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, T-Bone Walker, John Lee Hooker, and Mathis James "Jimmy" Reed. The huge impact that The Beatles and The Rolling Stones made on the British music scene made The Blades realize that they needed to develop their sound in a hurry.

### **The Evolution.**

The year 1965 brought in a magnitude of organ-dominated artists that combined jazz and pop together: Groups such as Georgie Fame, Brian Auger and The Trinity, and The Graham Bond Organisation. The Graham Bond Organisation record *The Sound of '65* had a great influence on The Blades. They learned the entire album and at least three-quarters of the record was added to their set. To keep up with the current lineups of jazz influenced bands and to add to their sound, Jim Doolin and Martin "Marvo" Skyrme joined the band. Jim played the trumpet and baritone sax and Martin played the tenor sax. Unfortunately, guitar player Michael Stephens couldn't make the transition to this musical style, so he left the band. The Blades soon found another guitarist, Chris Riley, who, like Michael Stephens, was also from The Atlantics. With the addition of three new members of the band, they decided to change their name to The John Evan Blues Band. Jeffrey Hammond suggested dropping the "s" from John's name because he felt it had a better sound. Their earliest confirmed performance date as The John Evan Blues Band was on December 20, 1965. (Russo 7)

The conception of this new band also brought around a new train of thought. At this point in time, it was important that the band now become their livelihood. Only two members of the band, Barrie Barlow and Chris Riley, had jobs outside of the band. With their new manager, Johnny Taylor, a local electrician, the group set out to find more gigs. The only stumbling block that they ran into was that the group's promotional photo had already been taken before Chris

Riley had joined the band! Since nobody was interested in taking another one, Chris Riley's photo had to be pasted into the photo. With the help of their new manager and the band's persistence, local jobs started coming in.

The first gig under their new management was a two-day competition at the Elizabethan Club in Kirkam, near Blackpool, on March 5-6, 1966. They won the competition, but they didn't work again for another ten days. They did, however, get another two night stay at the Elizabethan Club within two weeks of the competition. After this, there were some weeks where the band was completely booked. With this new opportunity, the band started to try and work more songs into their repertoire. Other than "Knock on Wood" by Eddie Floyd, the band tried to work in more esoteric groups like Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, John Lee Hooker, Mose Allison, Graham Bond, Georgie Fame, and James Brown songs that they enjoyed playing. Unfortunately their audiences did not share the same enthusiasm for these songs that the band had hoped.

Music was changing rapidly in 1966, and it seemed that The John Evan Blues Band was in a constant state of change as well. Jim Doolin, trumpet/baritone sax, was replaced by Tony Wilkinson, baritone sax, in April and their manager was replaced by Don Read. Unfortunately, this new management ended up absconding most of the band's revenue. They only got paid two pounds a week each, about the equivalent of four to five U.S. dollars at the time. The band was also being billed under different names such as The John Evan(s) Band, The John Evans Blues Band, or even The John Evans Big Soul Band. Their name was constantly changing and so was their lineup. Jeffrey Hammond, bass, decided to leave and go to art school. Chris Riley, guitar, wanted to leave, but waited until a replacement was found. Barrie Barlow, drummer, wanted to leave as well and so did Martin Skyrme, tenor sax, which meant that the band had a lot of

recruiting to do. They soon found Derek “Bo” Ward for the bass, Neil Smith, guitar, Neil Valentine, tenor sax, and Ritchie Dharma, drums. The band had just done some demo recordings before these new members had come in, including a cover of Thelonius Monk’s “Straight No Chaser” and the first composition that Ian Anderson presented to the band, “How Can You Work With Mama.” Ian was now getting comfortable with composing for the band. On top of the lineup’s constant state of renewal, towards the end of the year, their manager decided that it would be better for them to change their name to The John Evan Smash. However, he changed the name without even consulting the band first, which annoyed everyone.

The next year would contain a few more changes as well. Barrie Barlow, the band’s former drummer, saw them at a gig in Blackpool and was shocked to see that the band had a completely different lineup and an impressive sound. After the gig, he was asked to join the band again to replace Dharma, which he gladly accepted. Shortly after Barrie joined, the band bassist did not show up for a gig, which meant that he had to be replaced as well. Barrie recommended the former bassist from the group The Hobos and soon Glenn Cornick joined the band. Fortunately for the band, Glenn was a seasoned player, which made the transition between bassists easier. The band now consisted of Ian Anderson (vocals), John Evans (keyboard), Neil Smith (guitar), Tony Wilkinson (baritone sax), Neil Valentine (tenor sax), Barrie Barlow (drums), and Glenn Cornick (bass). The John Evan Smash firmly established themselves in northern England clubs and stretched their performance boundaries in all directions. (Russo 13) With their full and settled lineup, The John Evan Smash moved from crossover jazz and blues to soul music, which people in northern England loved.

The band was still plagued with management problems. When they did a cover of The Impressions’ “It’s Alright”, their current manager, Don Read, was outraged. He told the band

that they were forbidden to play that song again because he hated the song intensely. Another problem with their management happened on April 7, 1967 when their first manager, Johnny Taylor, told them about a gig the day before the performance. The band couldn't turn it down simply because they needed the money, and it was paying them 100 pounds. The only stipulation was that the club owner was looking for an Irish show band, which meant that The John Evan Smash would have to put on their best Irish presentation. After a 28-hour drive to get there, however, the band was in no mood to impersonate any nationality and the club owner decided not to let them perform. The next day they had to drive all the way back for a performance near Blackpool.

Ian's writing abilities were really starting to take off and the band wanted to try to incorporate more original material into their performances. In March, 1967, Ian presented another new work to the band entitled "Take The Easy Way." On April 5, The John Evan Smash entered the Regent Sound Studio, located in London, to record three of Ian Anderson's songs that they now had in their repertoire: "How Can You Work With Mama?," "Take The Easy Way," and "You Got Me." Their manager, Don Read, shortly after told the band that they were going to appear in a talent competition on television called *Firsttimers*. The arrival of their new songs was perfectly timed. They passed their audition and were told that they would be on the show. This program was a three-month talent competition and The John Evan Smash was the second band to audition on the show during the first week. They were filmed on May 3, 1967 and their performance of "Take The Easy Way" was aired on television on May 24. The band actually caught the transmission while they were in a store! The same day that they recorded the broadcast, they played in a Moulin Rouge show in Southport where they were paired with Pink Floyd. This was their first exposure to psychedelic music.

The John Evan Smash didn't find out until late August that they didn't win the competition, but in the meantime Don Read was able to drum up interest in the band thanks to the *Firstimers* performance. They had gigs from southern England coming in fast and soon the ultimate gig appeared. The John Evan Smash was asked to perform at the Marquee Club in London. They were asked to open for The Herd (with Peter Frampton) on June 19. This was followed by a show in Swanage supporting Simon Dupree And The Big Sound on July 20. With gigs in London coming in, they needed to change their current management and soon found Chris Wright, a Manchester-based concert booker and social secretary of Manchester University Union. Wright was looking for new talent and soon met up with the band at Didsbury College in Manchester on June 13, 1967. Wright encouraged the band to make the big move south to London and to get a guitarist who would give them an extra edge in the thriving blues environment common in the London club scene. Chris Wright and his partner Terry Ellis were doing well managing the group Ten Years After, so the band decided to join the newly formed Ellis/Wright agency. On August 4, The John Evan Smash planned to make a tentative move south. Unfortunately, their van broke down on the way down and they never made it.

Despite all of these performances and the hope of future performances, the band's money was starting to disappear. According to Russo, Ian had just turned 20 and he was owed some money by someone he knew near his home. It was time for Ian and Glenn Cornick to call in the debt, but the problem was that the person did not have the money - he just had a flute. Ian did accept the Selmer Gold Seal flute for repayment and he even brought it with him to a gig that night. (Russo 15) However, in an interview of Ian Anderson on Jethro Tull's official website, Ian claims that he got the flute when he traded in a guitar that he owned at a local pawn shop:

The choice of a new Shure Bros. professional microphone was easy: what was more difficult was to find another instrument to at least make up the difference in the part-exchange, since the shop owner wasn't too keen on giving me cash. The notion that violin or cello might prove possible was quickly swept away when I confirmed that, having no frets on the fingerboard, both might be a tad tricky to play in tune. The saxophone looked dauntingly big and complicated and anyway, we already had two sax players in the band at the time. Then, my Jackdaw eyes caught sight of a shiny silver flute hanging on the wall. This proved too much to resist. It seemed at once to combine the portability and compactness of the mouth harp but with the greater potential for playing in different keys and all scales. (I think chromatic is the musical term.)

And so I became the proud owner of a Selmer Gold Seal concert flute in C and joined the other guys in the van to head off to some awful pub gig in the north of England. Sadly, while everybody else, or so it seemed, was able to get a note or two out of the wretched thing, I could not, for the life of me, produce so much as a twitter and put the new acquisition away for the next few weeks in acute embarrassment.

A little while after that, Jeffrey Hammond visited Ian, while on break from school, to play Ian some new jazz records that he had purchased. He played the Ornette Coleman Trio's live recordings from the Golden Circle Club in Stockholm and Roland Kirk's *I Talk With Spirits*, in which Roland Kirk played the flute. Ian was impressed with Kirk's album simply because the songs were shorter and more direct and the improvisation was simple and more melodic. While walking home, Ian could not get "Serenade To A Cuckoo" by Roland Kirk out of his head. It

was this song that inspired him to develop his flute skills. After practicing for only a few minutes the next day, he was able to work out the first few measures of this song. He hoped to incorporate Roland Kirk's tone into his own playing style, including the way Roland could play and sing into the flute at the same time. The flute soon became Ian's primary instrument since his guitar playing did not progress past a rudimentary level.

The band got a big break in September when record producer Derek Lawrence arranged a recording session for the band, so they went down to London's CBS studios. Derek suggested that the band change their name to Candy Coloured Rain, and they did. Their goal was to record a single and some album tracks. The only confirmed tracks that they recorded were "Letting You Go" and "Aeroplane," both original compositions by Ian Anderson. The rest of the recordings have since been destroyed. At the time of these recordings, Ian had been playing the flute for a little over a month. The song "Letting You Go" was the first song that Ian recorded that had flute in it. He was still too nervous to play the flute live at this time, but he gained confidence as time went on.

While in London, the band arranged a gig in Luton, Bedfordshire (which is near London) at the Beachcomber Discotheque on October 21, 1967. The Beachcomber was a discotheque housed upstairs in a bowling alley. The band that was already playing there was the McGregor's Engine. Their band consisted of Mick Abrahams (guitar and vocals), Andy Pyle (bass), and Clive Bunker (drums). The McGregor's Engine had actually played in a room next to The John Evan Smash at a previous venue and Mick had been impressed with the band's performance and Ian's antics on stage. Mick tells how he finally met The John Evan Smash:

One night in October (the 21<sup>st</sup>), I walked into the Beachcomber, as I often did, and had a look at the band, who happened to be The John Evan Smash. They were

pretty good, and had this intriguing singer who peppered the set with bursts of flute playing...and afterwards, we got into a long conversation which culminated in Ian asking me if I wanted to join the band. They'd heard about me, apparently, and reckoned I was the bloke they needed to help them break out of the circuit they'd become rutted into. (Russo 18-19)

The band's manager, Chris Wright, had told them about Mick Abrahams.

Mick Abrahams did show interest in joining the band, but he did not want to make the move up to Blackpool. He did suggest that The John Evan Smash make the move south to the London area. It would be easier for the band to travel and get London based gigs. This could be a good move for The John Evan Smash. The band was starting to lose morale and because of this, they weren't rehearsing as much. They were also indebted to their families and friends; they had borrowed a lot of money for their equipment. McGregor's Engine was starting to lose steam as well. Andy Pyle wanted to quit the band, but they had three months of concert commitments and he didn't want to leave them in a lurch. Instead of playing those gigs, however, Mick Abrahams gave them the three months off. During this time, The John Evan Smash decided to move down to Luton. It was not a unanimous decision, in fact guitarist Neil Smith decided not to go. It ended up being a blues-based decision to move down to the area. London was the center of the electrified blues movement and they couldn't pass up the opportunity of being so close to it. It was fortunate, in a way, that Neil decided not to move because it paved the way for Mick Abrahams to join the band. They loaded up their gear after a gig at Manchester University on November 10, 1967 and moved to southern England. The John Evan Smash contacted their agent, Chris Wright, and informed him that they were planning on moving south and that they were hooking up with a great guitarist. Chris told the

band that he would try and get them some work as soon as they got down there. The move was hard on everyone except Glenn Cornick, whose family had moved down to Luton and offered him a place to live. Unfortunately within a week of moving to London everyone was flat broke and the gigs they had performing as a seven-piece band with Mick Abrahams just weren't paying enough. Before the band had moved south, Anderson's father gave him an old overcoat, saying, "You better take this. It's going to be a cold winter." Penniless, he adopted the oversized, somewhat ragged, dark coat as the main feature of his stage costume. (Nollen 28)

Within a week, almost everyone decided to pack it in and move back to Blackpool. The only people who remained were Ian Anderson and Glenn Cornick. Ian rarely talks about this period in great detail, but he did make things clear in one interview:

I think we had about four or five dates set, about one week for the next four weeks or something, but I mean clearly we couldn't live, clearly we weren't going to be able to pay for things. So everybody packed up and went back after a few days because we couldn't even eat. We found some potatoes in a cellar of this rented basement that we managed to get and roasted them over a coke fire...nearly all died of carbon monoxide poisoning. We actually had gone down to work with the guitarist, Mick Abrahams, because he was going to join the group. And when the others went back, Mick and I decided that if I could manage to stay down there and exist on nothing as it were, he knew a drummer and I knew a bass player, and we could put together a little group that would be cheaper to run. So I took a job vacuum cleaning a cinema for which I got paid \$15 a week which was just enough to pay the rent, and managed to exist for a couple of months while we got

some work. That's how it began. It really wasn't really that anybody started the group; it was just the remnants of other groups. (Russo 19)

The first gig with this new lineup, Ian Anderson (vocals and flute), Mick Abrahams (guitar), Glenn Cornick (bass), and Clive Bunker (drums), occurred on December 1, 1967 at Loughborough University. The next day, they played at Barking Tech. These performances occurred just three weeks after the group moved down to Luton. Ian Anderson describes these performances in more detail:

That was the beginning of the group. We played a few gigs that The John Evan Band (Smash) left in the date sheet but Chris (Wright) never came to see us again. It was a very wise thing to do because the group Chris thought he was booking out wasn't the same group at all. We were being booked out as a seven-piece group and we used to tell the promoters that the other three guys were on their way, traveling in a separate car! Or course, when it came time to go on they hadn't shown up, (so) we said how worried we were about them and we would feign a telephone call. We'd tell the promoter that they'd had a car accident in order to gain his sympathy. When we found ourselves weeks later going back to the same club still without these guys, we'd explain that they were still in the hospital! (Russo 20)

The Ellis/Wright agency kept hearing from the club owners that "the band was very good, it's a shame that their brass section didn't show up!" (Russo 20)

By the middle of December, the band had to finally admit to their managers that they were a four-piece band instead of a seven-piece band. The band still had some gigs to fill under The John Evan Smash, although their old manager, Don Read, discouraged them from using that

name. He still thought that he had control over the band, even though it was now a completely different group. Soon the band was playing under different names like Ian Henderson's Bag 'O Nails which led to Ian Henderson's Bag 'O Blues. Then it was Navy Blue and even The John Evan Smash again, even after Don Read had told them not to use that name. The clubs that they played liked the band, but they just did not think that they were impressive enough for a second show. This is the reason that they changed their names so frequently. By using a different name, the club owners would think that they were hiring a different band! Sometimes the band did not even know what their new name was until they went to the club. They would look at the poster with the names of the band on it and whichever name they didn't recognize was their name for the night!

Their repertoire at this point consisted of mostly blues covers (their interpretations of blues music). They enjoyed playing songs by Muddy Waters, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, and Iverson "Louisiana Red" Minter. Ian had also become comfortable enough with his flute playing to suggest playing Roland Kirk's "Serenade To A Cuckoo." He soon made an arrangement of it for the band to perform. By the end of January, 1968, a manager from the Ellis/Wright agency, Dave Robson, suggested to the band that they call themselves Jethro Tull. That night the manager of the Marquee Club, John C. Gee, heard the band and he was highly impressed. They soon got asked to play at the Marquee Club. Jethro Tull just happened to be the name that they were using the night that they were given a steady gig. The manager of the Marquee Club wanted to transform his club from a jazz venue to a club with cutting edge acts. He loved Ian Anderson's performance on flute, harmonica and vocals and his antics on stage. They were offered a Friday night residency at the club and often headlined every other week.

## **Jethro Tull is Born.**

Now that the band had finally stabilized for the moment, they went back to the MGM recording studios and finished the album that they started in September. The company finally set the release date for the single “Aeroplane” for February 16, 1968. The B side of the album contained a composition by Mick Abrahams called “Sunshine Day” This was exactly two weeks after they had become Jethro Tull. Unfortunately their producer, Derek Lawrence, didn’t pronounce the name correctly to the MGM staff on the phone and when the record came out, their name was misprinted as Jethro Toe! There was speculation among the band members that Derek just didn’t think that the name Jethro Tull was cool enough and Derek has admitted that changing their name was a deliberate act. Glenn Cornick stated his feelings about the mess of their first single: “That was that silly producer Derek Lawrence. He didn’t like the name Jethro Tull; he knew what it was supposed to be, but he didn’t think it was cool enough. It wasn’t a misprint...Yet “Jethro Toe” sounds even less cool. I can remember fighting with him about the name.” (Nollen 29-30) With the weekly shows at the Marquee Club and with their release of their first single, Jethro Tull finally had a large enough following to start playing in larger venues. They were invited to play in Hyde Park on June 29 as the opening band for Pink Floyd.

Ian’s flute playing was really starting to take off. Concert reviewers started to mention Ian’s one-legged flute playing in their reviews. In all actuality, he never played the flute on one leg, but rather played the harmonica standing on one leg. He never even realized that he was doing it until the media started mentioning it in their reviews of the band. Eventually, he started doing it while playing the flute because the audiences started to expect it. This stage antic brought in more attention from the public. He started building up his “mad, flute-playing Fagin” character, which was how the press described him.

His biggest influence as a flute player, ironically, was Eric Clapton. Ian once said: “When I took up flute, the logical thing to do was to refer, musically speaking, to somebody whom I revered for his rhythmic and melodic approach to music. So my flute playing was based on my interpretation of guitar lines, both in terms of riffs and improvisation around the blues scale.” With this approach, Ian was able to successfully blend the instrument into rock and roll. In 1968, they performed at the Sunbury Jazz and Blues festival in London’s Kempton Park on August 11. They played to an audience of 80,000 people and they finally made their mark on the British public.

The band soon started work on their first real album in October. All of the bands in London at the time had good relationships with each other. When a group named Spooky Tooth heard Jethro Tull play, they immediately went back to their recording studio and told them that they needed to hear this group. Island Records immediately jumped on the chance to record Jethro Tull. They began work on a jazz/blues inspired album entitled *This Was*. The title was symbolic of the music that they started out playing and the music that they wanted to continue to play throughout their careers. The music on the album had an improvisational edge to it that other albums at the time lacked. It was highly regarded in England, topping the charts at number ten after its release.

Shortly after the release of their album, Jethro Tull started their first tour. Unfortunately, the band started having some problems. Everyone in the band wanted the opportunity to tour overseas, but Mick Abrahams did not. Mick left the band and they soon called up a recent acquaintance of theirs, Tony Iommi (later of Black Sabbath), and asked if he would be willing to join the band. Tony gladly said yes, but his tenure in the band would not last long. He did not feel comfortable with the band or the music that he was playing. He also felt bad about leaving

his other band, Earth. He agreed to stay on until their performance on *The Rolling Stones' Rock 'n' Roll Circus* televised special. The band again had to hold auditions for a guitarist. After one guitarist turned them down, they wanted to seek out another player that had answered the advertisement, but became too nervous to actually audition. They had seen him play before and were truly impressed with his ability. When they found him, he became so nervous that his technique was lacking. The band was disappointed because it was not the clear concise playing that they had heard from him before. He was so disappointed in his own playing, that he called the band back and asked for another chance. Even though Ian had already made his decision, he asked him back for a private jam session. Unfortunately, this time he forgot his amplifier and it was impossible for Ian to hear his playing over his heavy breathing. The band admired his persistence, though, and gave him one more chance. They asked him to audition at a local pub in North London, and this time he won the audition. This man, Martin Barre, would become the longest running member, in Jethro Tull, other than Ian.

After winning the audition, Martin had two days to prepare for their next gig. He learned all of Abrahams' old numbers as well as new material. When he was released to the audience at the Penzance Wintergardens on December 30, Martin proved to be the right choice. He was able to play the material well, especially for having such a short period of time to learn it. The band then continued on to play five more gigs in England and then traveled to the United States to play their first overseas gigs on January 24, 1969. They played at New York's Fillmore East and played with bands such as Blood, Sweat, and Tears, Led Zeppelin, and Vanilla Fudge. They continued playing at smaller clubs all throughout the U.S., eventually making their way to San Francisco. They returned to the east coast and eventually back to England during the second week of April. After playing more gigs in England, the band returned back to the States in the

middle of the year, where they played for large festivals for two months solid. The experience was very hard on the group. Sometimes the festivals would be running as much as eight hours behind! On one evening in particular, they arrived just in time to go on, only to find out that they did not have to perform until the middle of the night. They would often go back to their hotel rooms and get some sleep before they had to come back and play. At one point, they were asked to perform at Woodstock, but they already had other gigs scheduled. They considered cancelling the other performances until they called friends who were performing at the festival. They were informed that it had been raining the whole time and that it was very cold, so they decided not to go. It was a decision that they would soon regret, but it was a decision that they had to make.

After touring in the United States, Jethro Tull went back to England and began working on their second album entitled *Stand Up*, which was released in September of 1969. It was a huge success, reaching number one on the charts in the U.K. and number twenty in the U.S. This album contained the elements of the blues that they had been playing all these years, but now Ian started branching out by using ethnic folk music in his playing. He started experimenting with different instruments, such as mandolins, balalaikas (a Russian instrument with a long neck, triangular body and three strings), whistles, saxophone, and “all kinds of things” as Ian puts it. (Nollen 44) They even branched out into classical music, by playing a jazzy rendition of the fifth movement of *J.S. Bach’s Suite in E minor* for Lute entitled “Bourée.” Ian Anderson was credited as the composer of the piece. At first he went along with this rumor because in 1969, Ian claimed that no blues-rock band could get away with playing classical music. (Nollen 47) They went on tour on September 25, 1969, to promote their new album.

## **The Prime Time**

Following a break for the holiday season, Jethro Tull began a brief tour through Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Germany. Soon they were on their way to Los Angeles, California to appear on the television show *The Switched-On Symphony*. They performed “Bourée” with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and fellow guests Nice and Santana. Soon they would begin work on their third album *Benefit*. Ian began practicing the guitar again so acoustic melodies could be added to the new album. The band continued to develop their sound, but found that they could not get the full sound that they desired. They called upon past band member John Evans to help with the new album. With the addition of the piano and the Hammond organ, the band was able to add color to the electric sound that the band created. *Benefit* was a success, hitting number three on the charts in the U.K. and number eleven in the U.S. After a successful tour, however, Glenn Cornick was asked to leave the band. His heavy bass riffs were wandering away from the sound that the band was trying to achieve.

One player short, the band needed to find a bass player, quickly. Ian decided to call his friend Jeffrey Hammond and see if he was up for the challenge. As luck would have it, Jeffrey had just finished art school and was finding it very difficult to make a living as an artist. After agreeing to join the band, Ian asked Jeffrey if he would be willing to use the name Jeffrey Hammond-Hammond just for kicks. As it turns out, his mother’s maiden name was Hammond (no relation) so he really was Hammond-Hammond. The entire month of December in 1970 had been put aside to record all of Ian’s new compositions. After a brief crash course on bass, Jeffrey was thrown right into the recording. He had a lot of difficulties playing some of Ian’s more elaborate bass lines, but his dexterity soon returned.

The new album that they began recording drifted farther away from the blues base that they had started with. The band started gravitating toward a melting pot of ideas, blending

folk, blues, psychedelia, theater, classical and even medieval music. Ian has claimed that “Really what I am is a folksinger and that’s the honest truth, more than anything else, inasmuch as what I’m singing about is the folk music of today.” This new album, *Aqualung*, was released in April 1971. It soon topped the charts at number four in the U.K. and number seven in the U.S. Often considered to be the best album by Jethro Tull, it soon shot the band into the spotlight. This album, however, has often been misinterpreted as a concept album, which is an album with one long continuous track or theme. Ian has said that *Aqualung* was not a concept album. This was the turning point in their careers. They were now well known in the United States, England and now the world.

The *Aqualung* tour started in Scandinavia and then Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy in January 1971. This was followed by a month touring Britain and then two months touring in the United States. At the end of May, Clive Bunker decided that he wanted to quit the band. He was more interested in the feel of the music, rather than the technique. He became frustrated with the complexity of the music. The band soon turned to former John Evan Band drummer Barrie Barlow and asked if he wanted to join the band. Barrie had just about given up hope of becoming a professional musician when they band came to him for help. He went out and bought the Jethro Tull albums that he did not already own and began to learn the music. With Barrie in the band, it was almost a reincarnation of the John Evan Band (except for Martin Barre). A new U.S. tour started on June 9 with Barrie Barlow, or Barriemore as Ian liked to call him, at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City. Then a second U.S. tour opened in St. Petersburg, Florida, on October 15 where the band continued to play all over the east. At this point in time, the band began earning \$15,000-30,000 per gig! They traveled in an old turbo-prop plane and in Cadillac limousines driven by chauffeurs. This was quite a step for a bunch of blokes who, just a

few years earlier, were a ragged blues group in a van. (Nollen 75) At the November 18 closing of the tour, the band played at Madison Square Garden. During a sound check, New York Knicks star and future senator Bill Bradley walked into the arena and asked, “Do you think they’d mind if I watched? I really like their music.” (Nollen 75) Jethro Tull had made it.

They continued to produce albums, almost one a year, and continue to do so today. One such album was *Thick as a Brick*, the first real concept album that they recorded. Hitting the charts at number five in the U.K. and topping it at number one in the U.S. in 1972, *Thick as a Brick* was a huge success as well. Although the media had thought *Aqualung* was a concept album, the band decided to make fun of the press by actually making a concept album. The song was supposedly written by an eight year old poet named Gerald (Little Milton) Bostock although it was actually written by Ian. This album discarded any boundaries that the band had established. The album is lighthearted and comical in some areas and then moves to hard driving rock music. It also contains elements of folk and psychedelic music and a large element of improvisation, showcasing each of the band members’ playing ability.

Their next album, *A Passion Play*, has often been called the sequel to *Thick as a Brick*. Sticking to the concept album form, the band each took on a role as an actor in a play. While this was not one long continuous track, it was based around a central theme, namely an observation that Ian had made. He noticed that animal life mirrored the cutthroat lives of humans. (Russo 73) This theme is best seen in the tracks “Bungle in The Jungle” and “Skating Away On The Thin Ice Of The New Day.” The album was actually packaged with a theatre program containing all of the lyrics. Near the end of the album, the group recorded a “wholly British, off-the-wall yarn for children” (Russo 76) entitled “The Hare Who Lost His Spectacles.” The music was written by John Evans and narrated by Jeffrey Hammond (Hammond) in his best

Monty Python mock interviewer voice. They even went on to record a video performance of “The Hare Who Lost His Spectacles.”

Jethro Tull continued to record music with all of the elements that they had played in their albums before, often contrasting light acoustic folk melodies with hard driving rock lines. This was seen in their album *Minstrel in the Gallery*, released in 1975. Their next album, *Too Old to Rock ‘n’ Roll: Too Young to Die* released in 1976, went in a completely different direction than any of the other Jethro Tull albums. Each album has had a different sound, unique to that album, but this album took on a completely different mood. The album contained mostly pop-rock type melodies and rhythms. While previous albums had driving rock rhythms in them, this was a complete change. The lyrics were sharp and yet the music remained light. The lyrics were aimed at the media and critics who had stung Ian in their last reviews. They were oblivious to this ruse and asked Ian if this was an autobiographical album. Ian denied that this was an autobiographical reference.

### **Another Beginning.**

Jethro Tull continues to record music to this day. With more than thirty albums and compilations, Jethro Tull remains an influential group in the music business. Their sound continues to change with the times, and they manage to keep a sound that is unique. Whether it is strictly folk based material, such as *Songs From the Woods*; or their synthesizer driven album *A*; or even their hard-rock influenced album *Crest of a Knave* (for which they won the 1989 Grammy for Best Hard Rock/Metal Performance), Jethro Tull truly is a progressive rock band. They are able to reject the limitations of popular music and develop a new sound for the world to

hear. At this present stage in their careers, the band has been incorporating world music into their already broad spectrum of influences.

Jethro Tull has outlived all forms of recurring fashions, cultural tastes and varying values and has stayed true to their own musical style. The band has never “retired” from touring or from recording and has no plans to do so. While some musical styles have since faded into obscurity, the immaculate musicianship, powerful rhythms, and uplifting melodies of Jethro Tull have survived. Ian had this to say about his desire for the band:

My most driving enthusiasm is to continue doing what I can only describe as progressive rock music. Because, for me, it is a progressive area in which to work. It doesn't mean you have to get more complicated - it doesn't have to get more highly structured or academic or cerebral. It actually has more to do with coming up with little ideas and themes and nuances within the music that either I haven't done before – or have done, but am gonna do a little better. (Nollen 309)

When asked about the future of the group, Martin Barre has stated that, “As far as Ian and I are concerned, we'd like Jethro Tull to be around forever.”

## Bibliography

- Anderson, Ian. "Aqualung." Jethro Tull. Chrysalis Records, 1971.
- Anderson, Ian. "Jethro Tull: The Very Best Of." Jethro Tull. Chrysalis Records, 2001
- Anderson, Ian. "Thick as a Brick." Jethro Tull. Chrysalis Records, 1972.
- Covach, John. "Jethro Tull." Grove Music Online. Ed. L. Macy. 12, Nov. 2006.  
<<http://www.grovemusic.com>>
- Jackson, Andrew. Jethro Tull Press. 17 Nov. 2006. <<http://www.tullpress.com>>
- Jethro Tull: A New Day Yesterday. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collection. Dir. Trevor Dann.  
DVD. Chrysalis, 2003.
- Jethro Tull: Living With the Past. Ex. Producer David Owen. DVD. Chrysalis, 2002.
- Kiszko, Martin. "Balalaika." Grove Music Online. Ed. L. Macy. 17, Nov. 2006.  
<<http://www.grovemusic.com>>
- Nollen, Scott Allen. Jethro Tull: A History of the Band, 1968-2001. North Carolina:  
McFarland and Co., 2002
- Russo, Greg. Flying Colours: The Jethro Tull Reference Manual. New York: Crossfire  
Pub, 2000.
- Tull, Jethro. The Official Jethro Tull Website. 10 Nov. 2006 <http://www.j-tull.com>