

An Incredible String Band Compendium: A Journey Through the Labyrinth of Scottish Folk Enchantment

Origins and Early Explorations (1965-1967)



Be Glad For the Song Has No Ending, revised and expanded edition: An Incredible String Band

Compendium by Alissa Deeter

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The seeds of The Incredible String Band were sown in the heart of Scotland's bustling folk scene in the mid-1960s. Robin Williamson, a poet and singer from the Isle of Skye, crossed paths with Clive Palmer, a guitarist with a penchant for traditional Scottish music. Together, they formed the core of the band, later joined by Mike Heron, a gifted musician who brought a touch of English folk and pop influences.

Their early performances at the Edinburgh Folk Club captivated audiences with a unique blend of Scottish folk melodies, psychedelic Eastern-influenced sounds, and cryptic yet enchanting lyrics. The band's reputation spread like wildfire, leading to a recording contract with Elektra Records in 1966.

The Electric Muse and Psychedelic Flourishes (1967-1969)



The release of their self-titled debut album in 1966 marked a turning point for The Incredible String Band. While still rooted in traditional folk, the album showcased their willingness to push boundaries and experiment with electric instruments and psychedelic arrangements. Songs like "October Song" and "Way Back in the Way Back" became early anthems for the burgeoning countercultural movement.

Their subsequent albums, "The 5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion" (1967) and "The Big Huge" (1968), further explored this musical alchemy, blending folk, rock, Eastern mysticism, and experimental soundscapes. The

band's performances became legendary, filled with mesmerizing visuals and an atmosphere of improvisation and spontaneity.

The Golden Age and Worldwide Recognition (1969-1971)



The years 1969 to 1971 marked the golden age of The Incredible String Band. Their album "Wee Tam and the Big Huge" (1969) became their commercial breakthrough, yielding the hit single "The Night They Drove Old

"Dixie Down." The song, with its haunting melody and poignant lyrics about the American Civil War, captured the hearts of listeners worldwide.

Their subsequent albums, including "I Looked Up" (1970) and "U" (1971), continued to showcase their musical virtuosity and eclecticism. They toured extensively, sharing stages with legendary artists such as Jimi Hendrix, The Grateful Dead, and Donovan. The band's influence extended beyond the folk realm, inspiring a generation of musicians, including Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and Fairport Convention.

Later Years and Enduring Legacy (1972-Present)



The departure of Clive Palmer in 1972 marked a transition for The Incredible String Band. Williamson and Heron continued to lead the group, releasing a series of albums that explored more introspective and folk-oriented sounds. While their commercial success waned, they maintained a devoted following and influenced countless aspiring musicians.

In 1990, the band reunited for a series of live performances that were met with critical acclaim. Subsequent years saw intermittent reunions and archival releases, keeping the spirit of The Incredible String Band alive for new generations of listeners.

Robin Williamson: The Enigmatic Visionary



At the heart of The Incredible String Band lay the enigmatic presence of Robin Williamson. A poet, singer, and multi-instrumentalist, Williamson was the driving force behind the band's unique sound and lyrical universe. His lyrics, often cryptic and surreal, explored themes of nature, mythology, spirituality, and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

Williamson's fascination with Eastern mysticism, particularly the teachings of Sufi and Zen Buddhism, deeply influenced his writing. He sought to create music that transcended genre and cultural boundaries, reflecting his belief in the interconnectedness of all things.

The Incredible String Band Legacy: Inspiration and Innovation



The Incredible String Band's legacy extends far beyond their own music. They were pioneers of folk-rock fusion, and their eclectic approach to

songwriting and instrumentation influenced countless artists, including Led Zeppelin, Fairport Convention, Pentangle, Donovan, and many more.

Their music remains a testament to the power of individuality, experimentation, and the pursuit of artistic truth. The Incredible String Band's songs continue to resonate with listeners today, offering a timeless message of love, nature, and the search for a deeper understanding of the world.

Discography

- The Incredible String Band (1966)
- The 5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion (1967)
- The Big Huge (1968)
- Wee Tam and the Big Huge (1969)
- I Looked Up (1970)
- U (1971)
- Liquid Acrobat as Regards the Air (1971)
- O50 (1971)
- Earthspan (1972)
- No Ruinous Feud (1973)
- Hard Rope & Silken Twine (1974)
- Seasons They Change (1976)
- Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending (1979)

The Incredible String Band stands as one of the most influential and enduring bands in the history of folk music. Their unique blend of traditional Scottish folk, psychedelic sounds, and experimental arrangements continues to inspire and captivate listeners worldwide. Through their groundbreaking albums, mesmerizing live performances, and the enigmatic vision of frontman Robin Williamson, The Incredible String Band left an enduring mark on the musical landscape, proving that true innovation and artistic expression can transcend time and boundaries.



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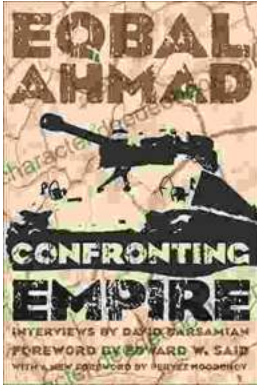
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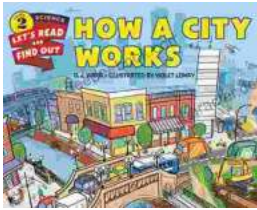
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