



TONY DUHIG



JON FIELD

All tracks composed by Tony Duhig and Jon Field except "Monkey Chant" (traditional, arr. Tony Duhig and Jon Field) and "Quba" (Martha Mdenge)

Jon Field: Gaelic Harp, Gong, Glockenspiel, Vibes, Alto / Concert and Japanese Flutes, Conga drums, Bell Tree, African Talking Drum, Cello, Piano, Organ and Acoustic Guitar

Tony Duhig: Electric and Acoustic Guitars, Electric Bass, Piano, Glockenspiel, Organ and Vibes

With

The Orpington Junior Girls Choir on "Clouds"
Coldridge Goode:

String Bass on "Mountain of Fruit and Flowers"

Chris Carran:

Drums on "Clouds" and "Mountain of Fruit and Flowers"

Graham Deacon: Drums on "Red Lotus"

David Duhig: Electric Guitar on "Monkey Chant"

Skalia Kanga: Harp on "Memories of a Distant Sea"

Martha Mdenge: Spoken words on "Quba"
(appears courtesy of Golden City Music Ltd.)

Recorded at

Nova Sound, London. Engineered by Walter Samuels.

Tape operator Aldo Boca

Island Studios, Hammersmith, London.

Engineered by Tony Platt. Tape operator Dick Cuthell

Produced by Tony Duhig and Jon Field

Original sleeve design by Eckford / Stimpson





IN THE WELL-STOCKED pantheon of inexplicably overlooked musical pioneers, Jade Warrior deserve their own statue. Or even their own wing. While it would perhaps be inaccurate to call them prophets without honour – no less a brace of icons than Brian Eno and Steve Winwood have championed their cause, while their small but fervent fanbase is largely unmatched in its unceasing loyalty – one could feasibly apply the term ‘prophets with *insufficient* honour’ without contravening the Trades Descriptions Act.

They were, if you’ll excuse the presumption, ‘instrumental’ in setting a precedent which arguably enabled and legitimised the stealthy rise of ambient music, while their osmotic influence also helped to hasten the spread and encourage the acceptance of world music, for want of a less facile term. Their

recorded output, however, stubbornly resists easy compartmentalisation, and generates a depth of feeling among listeners which renders such labelling effectively meaningless.

Jade Warrior coalesced in 1970 from the combined talents of percussionist/flautist Jon Field, guitarist Tony Duhig and bassist/vocalist Glyn Havard. Field and Duhig’s musical career together prior to this had described a characteristically ’60s trajectory: an apprenticeship in the British R&B boom with The Second Thoughts in 1965, localised beat group infamy in Spain with Tom Newman’s band The Tomcats, and rampant psychedelia *à la mode* when The Tomcats returned home in 1966 and morphed into July, releasing one mighty ’68 album and a pair of singles during their brief lifespan.

By 1970, Duhig had completed a tour of duty with erstwhile ‘Concrete And Clay’ hitmakers Unit Four Plus Two, in the course of which he had become a bandmate and friend of Havard. Concurrently, long-time percussionist Field had been taking flute lessons and had been commissioned by a friend to compose and record the music to accompany two dance dramas. In due course, Duhig and then Havard commenced a fruitful collaboration with Field on these pieces: and thusly, with the intermittent involvement of occasional personnel including Tony Duhig’s brother David, a band was born. (Jade Warrior’s backstory – and latter-day evolution – is covered in more detail in the sleeve notes for Esoteric’s reissues of *Kites* and *Way Of The Sun*.)

Freshly contracted to the Vertigo label, the band issued three albums on the celebrated swirly imprint (1971’s *Jade Warrior* and *Released*, and ’72’s *Last Autumn’s Dream*) before the relationship became – in the label’s eyes, at least – untenable. A tentative but promising indication of interest in the American marketplace, accompanied by a profile-boosting US tour supporting Dave Mason, nevertheless failed to galvanise Vertigo’s marketing department or convince the label’s bean counters, and Jade Warrior were consequently dropped in 1973. (Two further albums recorded during the Vertigo era, *Eclipse* and *Fifth Element*, finally saw the light of day in 1998.)



While the Vertigo albums are fascinating and valid releases which attract an earnest following to this day, they are audibly the work of a band en route to acquiring and nailing down a definitive sound of their own. The aural touchstones which came to be emblematic of their approach are all there – a fascination with starkly contrasting textures, an informed grasp of dynamics, an open-hearted, exploratory hunger for ethnic rhythms and instrumentation – but full immersion in their desired soundscape would not be achieved until Jade Warrior recorded four remarkable albums for the Island label between 1974 and 1978; of which *Floating World* is the first.

Steve Winwood was, in effect, a facilitator for the band's contract with Island Records: his luminous testimonial piqued the interest of label MD Chris Blackwell, who threw the band a lifeline with a prototypical Simon Cowell-style dilemma attached. In short, Blackwell loved what he heard but foresaw no place for Glyn Havard in his vision of Jade Warrior as an instrumental duo. (One of the more satisfying developments in the band's labyrinthine story saw Havard rejoining in 2005.) This harsh sundering evidently spurred Jon Field and Tony Duhig into pursuing their craft with renewed vigour and heightened focus: *Floating World* is a work of monumental ambition, unimpeachably self-assured in its execution and mesmerizing in its cohesion. Like all of the Island albums, its gestation was allegedly characterised by fractious differences of opinion and budget-conscious, time-constrained studio

sessions: but you'd never suspect this in a million years to listen to it. Tranquil, serene yet unknowably significant, it has much the same effect on the psyche as trailing one's fingers in a river over the side of a slow boat in late summer.

From the very outset, with the aerated sigh from the Orpington Junior Girls' Choir which heralds 'Clouds', *Floating World* severs all ties with workaday woes, careworn preoccupations and corporeal concerns, and gently but insistently pulls the listener into an uncannily detailed realm of imagination. The scenery is so vividly evoked as to be almost tangible – 'Mountain Of Fruit And Flowers', with the fresh fecundity of Field's harmonised flutes, Duhig's jazzy octave runs on acoustic guitar and Coldridge Goode's coolly stoical double bass, 'Waterfall' with its twinkling glockenspiel, lucid guitar figure and scampering percussion – but

it's the heart-tugging effect upon one's interior landscape which constitutes Jade Warrior's real achievement. 'Rainflower', for example, is a translucent, oddly moving interlude of existential bliss, while the insular, slowly circling harp and guitar arpeggios of 'Memories Of A Distant Sea' perpetrate a profound sense of longing. 'Quba' – featuring the elegant spoken-word input of African vocalist Martha Mdenge, a member of Jade Warrior's Vertigo-era label-mates Assagai – forms a suitably halcyon coda to the album.

Of course, it wouldn't be Jade Warrior without sudden textural manipulations and purposeful leaps in volume. Somehow, these dramatic dispositional shifts don't alter the mood so much as enhance it, suggesting a natural and invigorating change in the weather as opposed to an indulgently choleric bout



of ill temper. When the powerfully saturated riff of 'Red Lotus' punches its way into the nodding reverie of 'Waterfall', the effect is as bracing as if one has dived straight in to the waterfall in question. Duhig – who always played with his guitar open-tuned to the chord of C major – scorches a startling, Hendrix-style swathe across Jade Warrior's interpretation of the traditional Balinese 'Monkey Chant', flooring his whammy bar with apocalyptic abandon and revealing that he was one of the very few guitarists other than the Voodoo Chile to use a wah-wah pedal as a subtle sound-shaping filter as opposed to a mere rhythmic device. The chant itself is freighted with heady magic and skin-prickling mystery, sounding for all the world like an authentic bush recording as opposed to an ingeniously devised sound sculpture diligently assembled in Nova Sound and Island Studios.

Heavy with sub-tropical humidity yet as light as dancing dust motes in a shaft of sunlight, *Floating World* is a cinematic tour de force in and of itself, adroitly creating pictures without pictures. Without recourse to lyrics, it is nevertheless stunningly eloquent in presenting to the listener a dream destination, overpowering in its beauty yet maintained by symbiotic ecosystems so fragile and tenuous that the clear inference is that they may disappear altogether if care isn't taken here and now.

This notion of Jade Warrior as ecological guardians by dint of their painterly depiction of the precious, interdependent beauty of nature would reach an apotheosis of sorts on *Floating World*'s successor, 1975's *Waves*, dedicated to 'the last whale'.

Marco Rossi
Dorset, June 2010

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This album is available digitally from www.losttunes.com

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