

“One chord, if it’s beautiful, will last us all day.”

There, in the words of Jon Field, is an eloquently simple manifesto and statement of intent for Jade Warrior: curiously and criminally unsung pioneers whose enigmatic pictures in sound prefigured the rise of ambient and world music, anticipated the ethnological and existential experimentalism of German peers such as Popol Vuh, Cluster and Harmonia, and minted a brand of ravishingly emotive, filmic Esperanto unrivalled until the advent of Sigur Rós. It is in fact this extraordinary emotional resonance which transcends genre and sets Jade Warrior apart from any number of mood manipulators who have followed in their stead. Their fanbase may be of comparatively slender proportions; but the deathless, evangelical zeal of their followers speaks volumes.

The initial spur was the decidedly fateful meeting of two forklift truck drivers, Jon Field and Tony Duhig, at the turn of the 1960s. Field and Duhig rapidly established that their common ground extended considerably further than an ability to hoist palettes, and a musical rapport was forged from an unusually broad base of mutual influences and aspirations. An early indicator

of their ambitious, inquisitive outlook was the acquisition of a quarter track tape machine apiece, upon which the pair bounced a lattice of overdubs back and forth. Field played an old set of conga drums, while Duhig tuned his guitar to the open chord of C major – evidently because no one had told him anything to the contrary – but which nevertheless provided his playing with a distinctive lifelong signature.

Inspired by frequent visits to The Ealing Club on Ealing Broadway – London’s first regular R&B venue – to watch Alexis Korner’s seminal floating collective Blues Incorporated, Field and Duhig fetched up in an R&B band of their own in 1965 called The Second Thoughts, a pool of fledgling West London talent which included future record producer Chris Thomas, Thunderclap Newman founder John ‘Speedy’ Keen and Nirvana’s Patrick Campbell-Lyons among its number. Also active on the same Ealing-based scene at the time were The Tomcats, led by vocalist Tom Newman. When both bands fragmented – more or less simultaneously – Field and Duhig were drafted into a revised version of The Tomcats. This line-up, featuring Field, Duhig,

Newman, Alan James on bass and Chris Jackson on drums, enjoyed a significant measure of success in Spain (as Los Tomcats) and released four EPs before returning to Britain in 1966.

Noting the paisley-patterned swirls of psychedelia in the air, The Tomcats changed their name to the considerably more à la mode July, secured a management contract with Spencer Davis and recorded an eponymously-titled 1968 album for Major Minor – home to the ruddy-cheeked folk fare of The Dubliners – which nevertheless turned out to be a stone classic of untrammelled, undisciplined UK psych. July may have been touted as “the Eastern Hollies”, but their inscrutably subversive music occupied a different galaxy altogether. Evidence of Jade Warrior’s future idiosyncrasies can already be discerned in the heady ethnicity and muezzin wail of ‘The Way’ – whose swaying cyclical rhythm casually invents Can – while ‘Dandelion Seeds’, B-side of July’s debut single, ‘My Clown’, boasts a becalmed Zen interlude in the midst of hallucinatory tumult. Jade Warrior, of course, went on to perfect this concept of dramatic contrasts.

When July in turn ran their course in the latter half of 1968, Duhig spent a brief spell with Unit Four Plus Two – four long years down the road from their hit single ‘Concrete And Clay’ – where he encountered bassist/vocalist Glyn Havard. Field, meanwhile, had taken up the flute, and had begun to compose and record the music for two dance dramas at the behest of a friend. Following a musical sojourn in Iran, Duhig returned to the UK and resumed collaboration with Field. This bore fruit instantly, springing from the fertile soil of Field’s groundwork on the aforementioned dance dramas. Havard applied lyrics and vocals to parts of Field and Duhig’s recordings: and thus was born Jade Warrior.

It is widely if not universally accepted that the name Jade Warrior stems from the title applied to the second of Field’s two dance dramas. Havard has spoken of a deliberate attempt to conjure a name which reflected the inherent opposition in the band’s music, with its poles of enraptured stillness and percussive turbulence. Whatever its provenance, the name undeniably boasts an imperious, mystical allure which suits their intuitively balanced strength and ethereality down to the ground – or up to the sky.

Jade Warrior were signed to Vertigo on the strength of their striking demos, although a theory persists that management company Mother Mistro brokered a deal whereby they convinced the label to take on Jade Warrior in addition to Dudu Pukwana's Afro-rock quintet Assagai (who in fact ended up covering Jade Warrior's 'Telephone Girl'). *Jade Warrior*, released in 1971, was the first of five albums the group recorded under the label's tenure, although only three were released before they were summarily dropped in 1973. (The two 'lost' albums, *Eclipse* and *Fifth Element*, eventually achieved release in 1998.) The self-titled debut, its 1971 follow-up *Released* and '72's *Last Autumn's Dream* combine some relatively orthodox song structures – jazzy, bluesy rock outings in a Jethro Tull/If vein, such as 'Psychiatric Sergeant' and 'A Prenormal Day In Brighton' – with formative runs at the kind of imagistic instrumentals upon which Jade Warrior's reputation now resides ('Slow Ride', 'Barazinbar', 'Borne On The Solar Wind'). Added heft is intermittently provided by Tony Duhig's brother David on guitar, Dave Conners on saxophone and Allan Price on drums (like Havard and Duhig, an alumnus of Unit Four Plus Two).

Some Stateside interest and a well-received (if internally fractious) US tour supporting Dave Mason evidently couldn't persuade Vertigo to invest any faith or effort into promoting the band, and the label let them go. Salvation appeared in the avuncular shape of Chris Blackwell of Island Records, who had been alerted to Jade Warrior's abilities by Steve Winwood. Blackwell was suitably impressed, and offered the band a contract on the proviso that Field and Duhig would sign up as an instrumental duo: which necessitated a parting of the ways with Havard.

The four 1974–1978 Island albums form the core of Jade Warrior's legend. From the harmonious Oriental understatement of their Eckford/Stimpson-designed sleeves to the organic beauty of the compositions within, they exude a masterful, unhurried sense of elemental wonder: ironic in view of the impassioned arguments and studio clock-watching which allegedly accompanied their creation.

Floating World, from 1974, reveals a new-found maturity. Described by Vivien Goldman as "a feat of elegant audio ecotourism," it is humid and weightless by turns: a wholly absorbing travelogue conjuring

forth the solemn majesty of the natural world ('Mountain Of Fruit And Flowers', 'Memories Of A Distant Sea') and the transported ecstasy of Balinese tribes ('Monkey Chant', anchored in a thick swamp of 'Voodoo Chile' wah-wah guitar). *Waves*, from 1975, further refines Jade Warrior's approach, consisting of two appropriately oceanic and shifting extended pieces dedicated to 'the last whale'. Steve Winwood provides guest piano and Moog, and the album reunites Field and Duhig with their July colleague, Tom Newman, in an engineering role. (Newman was fresh from fulfilling the same duties on Mike Oldfield's stupendously successful *Tubular Bells*.)

Kites, released in 1976, represents something of a high water mark with its dream-catching Paul Klee-inspired languor on side one and the magisterial presence of side two's 'Teh Ch'eng'. Yet *Way Of The Sun* (1978), the band's Island Records swansong, is arguably the most accessible recording in their canon, radiating an irresistible sense of joyous release right across the board, from Field's emphatic, contagious Central American rhythm patterns to Duhig's vigorous, note-spraying solos. The scampering flutes of 'Sun Ra' create an exultant fanfare before John Dentith's jazzy, dexterous drums open out

the picture to Cinemascope dimensions with a volley of tumbling flams. The dappled, stream-like forward motion of 'Sun Child' gives way to the tense arpeggios of 'Moontears', which in turn underpin an inimitably uncanny acoustic solo from Duhig. The guitarist positively excels on this album, whether it be on the tightly harmonised lines of 'River Song' and 'Dance Of The Sun' – an approach since associated with Brian May – or the elliptical, safety net-shunning lead runs on 'Death Of Ra'. For electric guitar, Duhig often favoured a heavily saturated fuzz tone not unlike that employed by Robert Fripp, and even Michael Karoli of Can. It is capable of being a singularly unforgiving and uncontrollable medium: and it's a measure of Duhig's mastery – and the thoughtfulness of his note choices – that he can mould it into such a euphoniously atmospheric tool.

And then, of course, there's the chattering vivacity of 'Carnival', a Santana-shaming Technicolor explosion of stinging guitar set to a simmering samba groove: surely a potential hit single had Island seen fit to set it free among the daytime radio schedules. Less prone to textural extremes than the albums of yore, *Way Of The Sun* exhibits a beatific, fittingly sun-kissed temperament

WAY OF THE SUN

JADE WARRIOR

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that exudes celebratory optimism. Cruelly, Jade Warrior's fortunes were contrastingly set for a dismaying downturn.

Following the cessation of their Island contract, and barring the release of the Vertigo-era compilation *Reflections* in 1979, the duo completely fell off of the radar for a variety of draining personal and financial reasons until the release of *Horizen* in 1984 and *At Peace* in 1989, generally regarded (not least by Field himself) to be unrepresentative works. The tragically premature death of Tony Duhig in 1990 from a heart attack robbed him of the chance to contribute to a rejuvenated Jade Warrior, a project instigated when Field met bassist Dave Sturt and guitarist Colin Henson, establishing an instantaneous musical bond. The new line-up soldiered on despite the irreplaceable loss of Duhig, and released *Breathing The Storm* in 1992 and *Distant Echoes* the following year – both warmly received by Jade Warrior aficionados.

An unexpected but decidedly welcome left turn in the ongoing tale of Jade Warrior found Glyn Havard rejoining in 2005, keen to mine the untapped potential of the original line-up. Following the departure of Colin Henson, the trio of Havard, Field and Sturt – bolstered by a distinguished array of guest musicians including Field's daughter, Charlotte – recorded and released *Now* in 2008 and performed at London's Astoria2 in October the same year, which was the first stage appearance by Jade Warrior in 35 years. *Haiku*, a new instrumental album, is gestating as we speak: and it would appear, hearteningly, that there are quite a few chapters left to write in this particular story.

Marco Rossi

Dorset, April 2010

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The Jade Warrior website: www.jadewarrior.com

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All titles composed by Tony Duhig and Jon Field

All instruments played by Tony Duhig and Jon Field except

John Denith: Drums on "Sun Ra" and "Carnival"

Graham Morgan: Drums on "Dance of the Sun"

Bill Smith: Bass on "Carnival"

Skalia Kanga: Harp on "Sun Child"

Godfrey, Kuma, Alan: Drums, Bass, Congas on "Way of the Sun"

Gowan Turnbull: Saxophone on "Carnival"

Dick Cuthell: Flugelhorn on "Sun Ra"

Recorded at Island Studios, Hammersmith, London

Engineers Dick Cuthell, George Chkiantz and Terry Barham

DJM Studios, London. Engineer Walter Samuels. Assistant Engineers Paul and Harvey

Produced by Tony Duhig and Jon Field

Original sleeve design by Eckford / Stimpson

More than any other band I know, Jade Warrior have the ability to make images in the mind. Not always pictures. Sometimes just muted colours and subtle shifts in perspective. Fleeting glimpses. Distant echoes. Fragments that resolve and dissolve. At other times they paint with broader strokes from a bolder palette, feeding the senses with vivid visions, more richly contrasting textures. It's not a skill that comes quickly. Jon and Tony have been working together for 15 years. This is their fourth album for Island. Each has left a distinct and indelible impression yet none has been superseded or outdated by its successor. Listen to their earlier albums and you will hear foreshadowed hints of what was to come. Listen to this record and you will hear the resonance of what has gone before. Above all, Jade Warrior make tunes. Melodies that cry out to be danced. Songs that don't have words because they don't need them. This album is about life. A splendid and vigorous evocation of the joy of it and a powerful and eloquent reflection of the mystery of it. There is an unfolding story, but not a rigid and fixed one. The impressions you are left with are as valid and meaningful as the ideas Jon and Tony started with. The notes that follow are an indication of the band's intentions. The rest is up to you.

Dick Godfrey.

SUN RA THE GREAT FACE OF THE SUN CLIMBS UP TO TAKE THE SKY. MAJESTICALLY THE SUN GOD RA RIDES HIS CHARIOT, BANISHING NIGHT, CALLING THE LAND TO LIFE. **TD.** The opening depicts the power of Ra, the great towering strength and vitality of the Sun. **JE.** Although the music is basically about South America we used the name Ra because we liked the idea that it was all taken over there by the Egyptians in the first place. **TD.** This was the first piece recorded. Generally we like to complete pieces in the order in which they will finally appear on the album. You never quite know the texture of what will follow until you know what the studio has already allowed you to do, until you actually hear what you've got down on tape so far. **SUN CHILD** AS THE LAND ACCUSTOMS ITSELF TO THE NEW BRILLIANCE LIFE WARMS. RA SMILES AT A DANCING CHILD. **TD.** It could be a child of the Sun or it could represent the Indians carrying on with their everyday lives, but always close to the Sun. **JE.** I was thinking of a Mercury or a Puck like figure who could encircle the earth. But at the same time it's called Sun Child because it's so child-like and innocent that there's definitely God business going on there. **MOONTEARS.** IN THE HEART OF THE JUNGLE THE INDIANS SEARCH FOR SILVER, TO THEM THE TEARS OF THE MOON. THEN COME THE SPANIARDS WHO MIGHT THEMSELVES BE THE PALE GODS FROM THE EAST. **JE.** You're right down in the jungle now. Out of the sky into the depths of that place where you can't see one yard in front of you. **TD.** I had feelings of the Spaniards who went over to that strange, distant and to them frightening land, meeting the natives for the first time. **JE.** The flutes here are meant to be startling, threatening if you like. It's all agitation and uncertainty. **TD.** It's the meeting of two cultures, neither of them knowing what's dangerous in the other and what isn't. **JE.** Then as soon as you get that chord change the Indian flute turns Spanish and you get a sort of Samba. It's the story of the Conquistadors tremendously compressed. **TD.** And the Sun is always there, watching what's going on. As the Sun conquered the Moon, so the Spanish conquer the Indians. **HEAVEN STONE.** IN THE DISTANCE IS SEEN THE GREAT PYRAMID OF THE TEMPLE TO THE SUN. **TD.** I've got this very strong picture of the Temple away in the distance lifting above the jungle with people milling around it. **JE.** Yes I see that, but I've got this very strong image of a child playing in the jungle with a jaguar watching it. The child is unaware of the nearness of the jaguar and the jaguar is totally disinterested in the child

even though he could kill it with one blow. When I'm playing the flute here I'm very definitely the jaguar and the boy and it's also the temple. **WAY OF THE SUN.** AN EXTRAVAGANT PROCESSION TO THE TEMPLE. THE SUN FLASHES OFF THE PRIEST'S GOLD. **TD.** For me this really ties in with the previous track. It's a bit like Carnival, which comes later on, but I see this as very much connected with the Indians. **JE.** And it's full of those hot red chords from the Sun. **TD.** It's a sort of welding together of the God imagery and the earthiness of the native drums. Quite celebratory. **JE.** And the Sun comes back at the end. **TD.** Yes. The umbrella under which it all takes place. There isn't a piece on the album which isn't enacted under the Sun.

RIVER SONG. THE RIVER, TOO, IS A GOD CARRYING LIFE ACROSS THE LAND. **TD.** It starts like a panoramic shot of the river winding through the jungle and then it zooms down to the people on the banks. **JE.** For me it begins on a real calm and then the river gets narrower, more bubbly, and it's really rushing you nearer and nearer towards the Carnival. **TD.** A lot of the rivers were Gods to the natives and I think throughout the album we've sort of blended from Gods into human activity. This is the river and this is how it fits in with the people around it. **JE.** And the flutes start to intone the name of the river. That's what's amazing about music. You say "What is the River God called?" and it's called this tune. That which you cannot articulate is what music can do. **CARNIVAL.** WITH THE SUN NOW AT ITS PEAK NOW, THE CELEBRATIONS BEGIN. **TD.** This is another celebration of the Sun, bright and joyful. **JE.** These are people of the Sun and they can't help reacting to it. It loosens them up, gives them life. **TD.** I think we're very modern here, but still with echoes of the past. **JE.** You can find that in South America. You can have the most amazing modern cities with primitive people living just a few miles away. **DANCE OF THE SUN.** THE SUN REVELS IN ITS STRENGTH. BOASTS OF ITS FORCE AND DOMINANCE. **TD.** I can see solar flares here as the Sun dances. Or the flashes of jagged light you'd get walking in the jungle. But again we blend from the Gods to the people, because they are still celebrating. It's the Sun showing you something and the people reacting to it. And it's got these rather distant chords it, C and D on top, a little bit cool, shivery. **JE.** Mountain chords we call them. It's as if the whole of the music has been thrown at the mountains and caught again. **DEATH OF RA.** COLDLY DARKNESS DRIFTS OVER THE LAND. THE WANING SUN RECALLS IT GLORY. THE DANCERS BECOME GHOSTS. BUT THE SUN NEVER REALLY DIES. THE ARRIVAL OF OUR DARKNESS IS THE BEGINNING OF SOMEONE ELSE'S DAWN. **TD.** The Indians are feeling the end of the day, the going away of the Sun. **JE.** There's some Eastern influences here again. We're back in Africa where it all began. **TD.** The image of the Sun here is a bit like the warrior after the battle. Victorious but tired. Elated and saddened at the same time. **JE.** Yes. We see the Sun God very much as a warrior. It goes back to some of the things we did on earlier albums. **TD.** The guitar is playing a sort of elegant decline. **JE.** And there's a sympathy for the flutes. They are the shadows of the setting Sun. At the end O see the huge cold light of the Moon taking over from Ra but then as the Sun drops below the horizon there's one final burst of light on a passing cloud. **TD.** Right at the end it's not mournful at all because we are reminded that the Sun will rise again and the cycle of Ra's ride will carry on.

In conversation with **Dick Godfrey** at BBC Newcastle in June 1978.
(Taken from the back of the original LP sleeve)

