

WHERE ARE  
THEY NOW?

BY Nancy Dunham

# Ian Anderson



**This is surely the year of reunion tours by bands born decades ago that quickly ran out of steam, sometimes after only a few albums. During this year's prog-rock/pop/metal renaissance, it's easy to miss one of the classic bands that have launched a new tour. Perhaps that's because Jethro Tull has been a constant since it broke out of the pack during the Sunbury Jazz and Blues Festival in August 1968.**

Now the band, which has taken to the road in support of its *Live at Montreux* DVD/CD and *The Acoustic Jethro Tull* disc are again pasting metaphoric "sold out" signs over many performance announcements.

To understand why, one need only look at the band's foundation. Although its music has moved from blues to prog-rock to folk and even hard rock/heavy metal (for which the band controversially won the 1989 Grammy Award), flautist/guitarist/singer Ian Anderson and his mates have never taken themselves overly seriously onstage.

At the Sunbury Festival, something akin to pandemonium broke out after a roadie set a paper bag containing Anderson's flute, a hot water bottle, cigarettes and feminine hygiene pads (really!) onstage. The Perfect Storm of Tull fans—those who had seen the band perform in small venues during numerous U.K. gigs—were on hand to cheer long and loud for the antics they knew were forthcoming.

"I played a gag with the audience where I'd toss one or two cigarettes from the stage and there would be a frantic scramble," says Anderson. "Then inevitably a youngish male would pounce on one and find, horror of horrors, a sanitary towel."

Although Anderson said he quickly outgrew the cigarette/sanitary napkin high jinx, more followed.

Elaborate shows consisting of the members' numerous onstage personas and such witty elements as extras dressed as rabbits running across the stage at one point during performances for *Thick as a Brick* made Tull a top concert draw.

"Alice Cooper and Jethro Tull were the forerunners of such shows," says Anderson. "But there are downsides. The sets have to be the same every night, all the cues have to be the same. That robbed us of a lot of elements of improvisation."

As anyone who has attended a recent Tull show can attest, the prancing, snorting, jumping, twirling Anderson is limber as a teenager as he performs, the band moving from one familiar song to another—"Living in the Past,"

"Cheap Day Return" and "Aqualung."

But the show isn't all about Anderson or even Tull. He often uses the performances to collaborate with and introduce little-known musicians. Last year, Juilliard-trained, violin prodigy Lucia Micarelli, 23, flirted, cavorted, and musically duelled with Anderson through many shows. Martin Barre, the band's lead guitarist, generally plays a song from one of his three solo albums during most shows.

"We try to entertain through personality and musicianship. We love to do things we've spontaneously arrived at," says Anderson. "We enjoy being performers onstage and have drifted back to a more relaxed way of playing and presenting our concerts." ★

