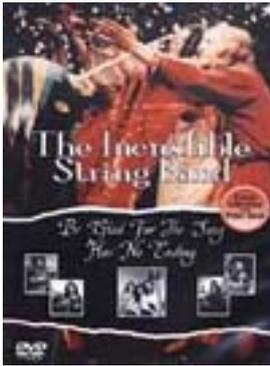


[Wienerworld](#)



I can remember a time only a few years ago when professing an interest in The Incredible String Band or any of their 1960's British psych-folk contemporaries would immediately get one branded a clueless hippie burnout. Now, following the band's recent reunion and some well-timed reissues of their back catalog, The Incredible String Band are once again being accepted back into the fold as the creators of an impressive musical zeitgeist, idiosyncratic and highly influential. Matmos have acknowledged the Incredibles as a big influence on their newest album, and Current 93 have virtually mimicked them (down to a replica of ISB's album cover) on *Earth Covers Earth*. On the eve of Mike Heron and Robin Williamson's reunion concert in London, playing alongside the likes of Acid Mothers Temple, Gong and Damo Suzuki of Can, Wienerworld Video unveils a lost artifact from their zenith creative period, the 50-minute film

Be Glad for the Song Has No Ending. This DVD contains the entire original film, which was produced for the BBC but never aired, deemed far too odd and abstract for a television audience. The DVD also contains a brief interview with director Peter Neil, who takes pains to give the Incredibles full credit for the shape and tone of the film.

Glad

is nothing like a typical rockumentary. There are very few interviews with Heron and Williamson, and when they do talk it's usually in philosophical aphorisms and poetic reverie. Robin Williamson's glassy-eyed, beatific revelations that "we are involved in the act of creation" really drives home the peculiar mix of pagan and Gnostic ideas that inform his lyrics.

Be Glad

tries to accomplish on film what the Incredibles do on record - a whimsical, psychedelic journey through their eclectic music, their communal lifestyle and their pastoral "Wicker Man" mysticism. The film contains concert footage, including Williamson's hushed recitation of his poem-manifesto "Head". There are terrific live-in-studio renditions of classics such as "The Iron Stone" and "All Writ Down". At one point, a road manager reads a list of all of the instruments used by the Incredibles in a typical performance, and the sheer number of stringed and percussive instruments needed to achieve their sublime ethno-folk sound is absurdly comical. The last twenty minutes of the film is taken up with a mystical passion play called "The Pirate and the Crystal Ball," an allegorical tale set to an original ISB soundtrack, every bit as surreal and outlandish as Kenneth Anger's

Magick Lantern Cycle

films. It's clear that a lot of thought went into this film, and the original music on the soundtrack is some of the Incredibles' finest and most adventurous.

Brainwashed - "THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND: BE GLAD FOR THE SONG HAS NO ENDING"

Written by Jonathan Dean

Saturday, 18 October 2003 19:00 - Last Updated Monday, 05 September 2005 14:30

Be Glad For the Song Has No Ending

is an indispensable document, capturing on film that strange spell that The Incredible String Band were capable of weaving at the height of their power.

-