

deep sky divers



*"deep sky divers is the collaborative effort of Jon Short and David Jones, two Brits who, if taken by appearance alone would seem unlikely candidates for composing music of such depth, complexity, and feeling."
Music for a New Age*

Biography - "Music to Escape By..."

The name deep sky divers came to be in march 2000. Jon uploaded some music he had composed with David in the early 1990s to an internet site called mp3.com. And a suitable name was needed. Between 1990-94, Jon and David had worked together on a remarkable body of music initially intended to be demos for film and TV soundtrack opportunities that ultimately never came along. These music sessions were a form of therapy - an escape from hectic workloads and family lives. And in these precious moments of escapism, they conceived music to escape by...

1980s

Jon and David met in 1979. Both played a part in the vibrant music hothouse that was early 80s Sheffield, England. Jon played fretless bass and cello - David, guitar and keyboards. Jon played with an early incarnation of Pulp and with Tom Bailey - later of Thompson Twins. David formed an early alliance with Martin Ware - soon to be a founder member of Human League and Heaven 17. After several failed attempts to get something going together, Jon and David formed the "accomplished funky pop" outfit March The Third in 1982 with Pete Morton (guitar) and Nigel Pease (drums). They gigged around the north of England for 2 years, came close to landing a deal with Carrere Records, but then Pete left the band which split shortly after. In 1984 they teamed up with ex-Typhoon Saturday guitarist Nick Robinson and 18 year old singer/songwriter Harriet Roberts - this shone brightly for a while fizzled out a year later and Harriet went on to write songs for Quincy Jones and Tina Turner...!

David then took some time out from music developing a successful career in the travel industry. Meanwhile, Jon became a pro bassist in bands like Neecha (with the phenomenal Paul Miro - later AP&S) and Floy Joy (with Sheffield based songwriters Mike Ward and Cary Baylis). He was also a founder member of the glam-cabaret-spoof act The Gutterband. Having grown up with bands like Slade, Sweet and The Glitter Band, the opportunity to play this music, make money and have fun all at the same time was too much to miss.

How many bands in the history of rock & roll have included a fire-eater who learned his craft from a cassette-tape called "How to Eat Fire"...?

The act featured innovative on-stage hydraulic equipment such as the Spinning Man, a unique and ungainly contraption (conceptualized by Jon) that allowed the

guitarist to spin laterally through 360 degrees whilst soloing to "Life on Mars" - an awesome feat famously lampooned by UK comedian Peter Kay in series 1 of Phoenix Nights. The Gutterband performed live throughout Europe, performed live on UK TV, set fire to clubs and to people everywhere they went and had a complete ball until a serious car crash (in which Jon was fortunate not to be involved) hospitalised most of the band and brought the fun to a premature end.

1990s

1990 saw David keen to get back involved with music. He bought some new keyboards (initially a Korg M1 and a Korg Wavestation), called Jon and the partnership began to produce music again. By 1991 they were writing tracks such as natural power, stride for stride and raging calm, all of which were to become popular tracks when released on CD over 10 years later.

Liberated from commercial constrictions and genre boundaries, their music was allowed to evolve in its own time and space, away from the pressures of the marketplace - they were writing the music of their dreams.

They were also struggling to get up-to-speed with new technologies. They invested in an 8-track studio and Jon worked hard to become an accomplished Cubase programmer and producer.

1992-94 produced a fair share of obstacles. First, Jon moved house which meant up-rooting their studio and a massive renovation job was required at the new house before music production could once more commence. Spring-summer 1992 became their most productive period to-date with most of the music that ultimately featured on NATURAL POWER being recorded during this time. Then, work circumstances meant David had to relocate to Peterborough (100 miles away). Then it was time for them both to get married and start families - Frankie Short arrived in may 1993 followed by Harry Jones in february 1994. Another distraction was a song-wrting project they embarked on with singer Rosaline Frew - producing a 5 song demo under the name of Golden Mile.

The duo finally managed to put a demo of their film/tv music out in summer 1994. But the response was disappointing. Faced with an uphill battle to get their music heard and increasing work/family commitments, the music stopped for a while. Once more, Jon focussed on his bass playing career with Jon Strong, Patsy Matheson, The Italians, Blue the Fuse, Doofer etc... And David had another career move - this time to Scotland - over 300 miles away...!

Momentum

That, it appeared, was that. Until march 2000 when Jon doodled the words deep sky divers on a notepad and uploaded some music to mp3.com. The new age track raging calm and the strident power-electronica of eternia instantly became very popular. Within a month, the NATURAL POWER CD was available featuring ambient/electronic/new age music for films that never happened - music written between 1991-94.

For a while in summer 2000, NATURAL POWER was the best selling CD by a UK artist on mp3.com.

All of which was a bit of a revelation. By June 2000, Jon and David were writing together again for the first time in 6 years. Momentum and Deep Sky Meditation were products of this period - the latter became the duo's biggest "hit" on mp3.com earning them even greater and hitherto undreamed-of exposure. It also propelled them into the top revenue earnings bracket on mp3.com's Payback4Playback scheme.

Life and geographical challenges meant that music writing opportunities were at a premium. New music did not come along as quick as they would have liked. So when the time came to release their first "proper" CD, they chose to combine new music with material from NATURAL POWER and other unreleased 1990s music. MOMENTUM (arh0003) was released in 2001 to a mixed bag of reviews - in fairness it was a mixed bag of music which in hindsight tried to cover too many genres. Still, it started to gain the duo recognition in terms of press exposure and radio play.

Dig deep - dive sky high...!

The demise of mp3.com in September 2001 was a bitter pill and left the pair bereft of ideas as to what to do next. Oddly enough, another altogether more significant event happened on the 11th of the same month triggering a massive knee-jerk reaction in the travel industry that ultimately left David with a hefty redundancy pay-off and time on his hands. How weird was that...

In late 2000, in one inspired afternoon, the duo had composed Lake of Menteith after a visit to this beautiful and intoxicating place. David had the idea of doing a whole CD project based on music inspired by the Scottish highland landscapes in which the pair were increasingly spending more and more time living and working. HIGHLANDS & SKYLANDS (arh0006) was the result. Released in May 2002, the CD combined new tunes like Beyond the Hills and When Heaven Freezes Over with a few older but highlands/landscape inspired tracks like Raging Calm and Timeloch.

HIGHLANDS & SKYLANDS attracted rave reviews, particularly in the USA.

Bill Binkelman of Wind & Wire described the HIGHLANDS & SKYLANDS as "about as near perfect as an album can be" and described the track LAKE OF MENTEITH as "simply the best new age track I've heard in years".

The CD attracted radio play (significantly from Echoes), made the New Age Voice top 20 in August 2002, and was selected as #1 Instrumental Music release of 2002 by California based Backroads Music. But - it became apparent to both Jon and David that neither of them would make a living solely out of Deep Sky Diving. Jon had his other music projects to fall back on and began to take a more pragmatic approach to his involvement with Deep Sky Divers. David, though, had to look elsewhere. He formed another business which began to absorb all his time. Before long, Jon was on his own again.

North Country Space Music

HIGHLANDS & SKYLANDS stimulated significant interest in the UK's new age and holistic circles. Demand for a pure relaxation CD sowed the seed for May 2003 release THE NEW FAST LANE (arh0011). Though this was the first release Jon

had put out without David, most of the tracks were joint-compositions - including a 20-minute version of raging calm cunningly re-titled at the heart of the cyclone. Jon spent summer 2003 appearing and performing at various holistic festivals throughout the UK.

Again, the new CD was featured regularly by US radio show ECHOES. And, in october 2003, ECHOES host John Diliberto offered Jon the opportunity to record a prestigious ECHOES "Living Room Concert" in London. Jon hastily put a band together (featuring David on keyboards and Pete Morton on guitar) and arranged to borrow his uncle's London home for the weekend. The LRC was probably not the best (not enough preparation time and too many nerves...!) but it was more great exposure for deep sky divers music. The North Country Space Music feature, which ECHOES produced from interview footage with the band and broadcast in january and march 2004, introduced their music to an even wider audience.

Jon also completed soundtracks for two Yorkshire TV programmes in 2003. GIRLSNATCHER (part of the ITV "Real Crimes" series was completed first followed by THE MANDY ALLWOOD STORY. The latter was broadcast ITV network-wide in december 2003 - the former in april 2004 and again in december.

2004 continued to see Jon and David extremely busy with other projects - David to the complete exclusion of deep sky divers. The somewhat low-key release of INCANDESCENT (arh0012) in june 2004 did CD sales no favours. However, the CD made the ECHOES top 25 in september 2004 - playlisting, reviews and fan-feedback suggesting that this is the best deep sky divers release yet...!

INCANDESCENT was selected as the #2 Electronic/Contemporary Instrumental release of 2004 by Backroads Music - deep sky divers are the only artists to have made the Backroads top 3 for 3 consecutive years (2002-04).

Once again, Jon spent the summer performing deep sky divers music at festivals around the UK and played keyboards with Tim Wheater at the Summer Solstice festival, Glastonbury - a wonderful event...!

2005 promises much. New music is on the way slowly but surely - including a collaboration between Jon and San Francisco based Michael Allison (aka Darshan Ambient). Plus an imminent CD release by Orange Music in the Far East...

And the rest is mystery.....

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