

ROCK FRONTMAN IAN IS TULL OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

One man stand

YOU LITTLE FLUTEY: Ian breaks out in his trademark stance

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW



IAN ANDERSON JETHRO TULL LEGEND

I'VE got two questions I'm particularly keen to ask veteran Jethro Tull frontman Ian Anderson.

One is about how he helps to save the planet. The other is why he stands on one leg when he's playing the flute.

So obviously I've asked him the important one first.

"The one-legged flute-playing is just something that felt fun to do," he tells me, looking back 50-plus years to when he first found himself striking the pose that would become his trademark.

"It wasn't calculated, or born of watching other performers. Chuck Berry didn't play the flute. Nor does Eric Clapton. It just happened.

"The only accusation of plagiarism came from a journalist in Mumbai, who asked why I'd made a living copying their god Krishna..."

But while Ian's playing style may not have been calculated, his original decision to swap his guitar for such an unlikely instrument undoubtedly was.

"During 1967 I'd come to the conclusion there was little point in trying to match guitarists like Jimmy Page and Ritchie Blackmore," he explains. "So it seemed logical to look for something else to identify with."

And it certainly proved a canny in-



vestment.

The band's line-up may have changed over the decades, but 72-year-old Ian's Jethro Tull continue to play to packed houses the world over.

And home fans have a particular treat later this year, with Tull's Prog Years Tour, focusing on classic albums such as Aqualung and Thick As A Brick, starting in September.

For his part, Ian is more than happy to air those old tracks again. Some, he feels, were way ahead of their time, particularly those tackling environ-

mental themes. "I've been angry about the environment since the early 70s," he points out. "I've never been a heart-on-sleeve songwriter.

"I'm a putting-things-under-a-microscope guy."

Ian insists the future of the human race depends on us facing "the truth" about our lifestyles.

He rejects some of the extreme tactics deployed by the likes of Extinction Rebellion ("I don't like the idea of people glueing themselves to vehicles or whatever. Sensationalists get positive movements a bad name...")

But he insists we should all think more about our carbon footprint. "If you're going to jump on a long-

haul flight, you have to accept the absurdity of then putting your recycling bin outside your house."

But what about his own trips across the Atlantic?

"Unfortunately, to tour America I have to fly.

"But I go there almost exclusively on business, to earn money, to pay my taxes.

"That doesn't make it OK, it's just the reason why I've travelled extensively."

And he does try to compensate,

it seems. Starting in the grounds of his own Wiltshire manor house. "To some extent this is sweeping the dirt under the carpet, I know, but 15 years ago we planted 25,000 trees here.

"And later this year we plan to plant 10,000 more. So in terms of a carbon footprint balance, I'm probably a lifetime and a half in credit."

● **Jethro Tull: The Prog Years Tour 2020 starts in September.** Go to gigantic.com/jethro-tull-tickets. Ian is also visiting a number of smaller venues for an evening of chat and archive footage. Details at jethrotull.com.



NOTED: Ian plays flute in 1970. above. Below, with group in heyday and bottom, modern line-up

