

John Paul Jones

“Road Report,” March 2002

The player: Since the 1980 dissolution of Led Zeppelin, bass legend John Paul Jones has done studio sessions, scored movies, and produced artists such as singer/pianist Diamanda Galás and classic rock band Heart. He released *Zooma* in 1998; his newest solo effort, *The Thunderthief*, is also on Discipline Global Mobile.

The show: On one stop during a brief tour last fall, Jones, drummer Terl Bryant, and Chapman Stick player Nick Beggs hit the stage to enthusiastic applause and dived right into the thunderous title track from *Zooma*. Throughout the hour-long concert, Jones grinned, cracked jokes, and worked up a sweat playing everything from 10-string bass to a tiny mandolin. The band’s galloping riffs, Celtic flavor, and now-classic heavy blues template was convincing, if familiar. Beggs, former bassist and vocalist for ’80s pop band Kajagoogoo, took full advantage of his Stick’s capabilities, giving Jones the freedom to put down his bass on several songs, including “When the Levee Breaks.” By show’s end, the band had played three more tracks from *Zooma* (“Smile of Your Shadow,” “B. Fingers,” and “Tidal”) and three new tracks from *The Thunderthief*. Jones also accompanied himself on mandolin for a rendition of Zeppelin’s poignant “That’s the Way” and closed the show on lap steel with a blazing version of “Black Dog.”

The gear: Hugh Manson handles all John Paul Jones’s tech needs, but he’s more than just a sidekick—he and his brother Andy have built most of Jones’s tour arsenal: an 8-string; a 10-string that’s strung *E* to *C* and doubled; a 12-string that goes from a low *B* to

a high C; and an electric mandolin tuned *GDAE*. The Mansons are also responsible for Jones's doubleneck, half-guitar/half-bass lap-steel monster that ranges .135 for the *E* string to a guitar-ready .010 *A*. (View some of their creations at **www.mansons.co.uk**.) One side of the stereo 10-string goes to two Marshall guitar 4x12 cabs and a Marshall head; the other goes to an SWR SM-900 head and two SWR Goliath II 4x10 cabinets.

Jones's sophisticated Capybara 320/Kyma sound effects program, which he controls with an onstage Macintosh Powerbook and Rocktron All Access pedalboards, occasionally analyzed and re-synthesized his mandolin and bass riffs into spontaneous harmonies and controlled feedback.

The album: "I didn't want to remake *Zooma*, so I started where that album left off. The first idea was to do riffy songs with melodies, which was a different thing from *Zooma*, where the melody was the riff. So I wrote one of those, then I wrote one where the riff was the melody, then I wrote one in a much bluesier style. It's quite varied. And then I changed my mind completely and sang on four tracks. That's a complete departure for me," he laughs. Special guests include King Crimson guitarist (and Discipline Global Mobile head) Robert Fripp.

The future: Jones is scheduled to open for King Crimson this spring in support of *The Thunderthief*. Check **www.john-paul-jones.com** for updates. Jones, 55, fondly remembers his two-album collaboration and tour with Galás; he'd do it again if their schedules permit. Concerning the ever-present rumors of a Zeppelin reunion and tour, he is smiling and succinct. "There aren't enough of us. Period."

—*E.E. Bradman*

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