

Mp3 Wild Children (野孩子) - Incantation (咒语)



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Deeply rooted Chinese folk music demonstrated with western instruments including acoustic guitar, acoustic bass, accordion, harmonica together with Chinese hand drums. New adventure into Chinese music. 6 MP3 Songs WORLD: Asian, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: Singing from the Heart by Mu Qian --China Daily 04/24/2001) They do not follow fashion because they know sincere music will never be outdated. Though most of the instruments they use are from the West, one can tell immediately that their music is deeply rooted in northwestern Chinese folk songs. They are Wild Children, a band from Northwest China. Wild Children was founded in 1995 by Suo Wenjun and Zhang Quan, both from Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province. The word "wild" may refer to the vast land of northwestern China and the rough style of the area's folk songs. Northwestern China, encompassing Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Xinjiang, is a unique area mostly covered by plateaus and inhabited by few people compared to other areas. Often working or travelling alone, local people like to sing out aloud to get echoes or call out aloud when they spot each other from a distance. Scholars believe the wide range and high pitch of northwestern Chinese folk songs partly originate from the loud callings. These characteristics are displayed in "Incantation," one of the first songs written by Wild Children. In the song, Zhang's high-pitched melody on the fire-note scale creates a colour that can only be found in northwestern Chinese folk songs. "What I like most about northwestern folk songs is their simplicity," said Zhang. "They sound like people are singing for themselves, not performing." Born in a place with a rich folk music tradition, Suo and Zhang grew up with a basic love of singing. Suo used to listen to the songs of construction workers in Lanzhou, people who were mostly farmers. For them, singing was a way to support their hard lives. As a child, Zhang lived in the countryside Gansu and Qinghai, where he learned to sing with the farmers while working in the fields. The farmers sang about happiness and sadness with

natural voices, which deeply influenced Zhang's idea of music. When Suo and Zhang decided to make music together, various musical forms from northwestern China, such as xintianyou (a folk song genre which originated in North Shaanxi), hua'er (a folk song genre popular in Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia) and qinqiang (Shaanxi opera) were all part of their musical language. In the music of Wild Children one can occasionally find the use of "flat si," which is very common in qinqiang. "The influence of northwestern folk songs is in my bones," said Suo. "When I hum a tune, it is always from that area." In a song called "Ballad of the Yellow River," Suo and Zhang sing about their love for their land and the river. It goes: "The sun never stops. It walks past my home, past Lanzhou. When the moonlight is on the iron bridge, I sing to the Yellow River. Every time I wake up, I think of home, of Lanzhou. I think of the fragrance of the acacia flowers along the streets, and I think of my girl. The water of the Yellow River never stops. It runs through my home, through Lanzhou. The vagabond never stops singing, singing the ballad of the Yellow River." In 1995, Suo and Zhang walked along the Yellow River in Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces for a month. They stayed with villagers and listened to the songs of the farmers and shepherds. In July, they went to Lianhua Mountain, in Gansu, to attend the annual "hua'er hui," a folk festival at which people gather to sing hua'er. At the festival, people sang in different dialogues and used improvised words. Singing hua'er is a way for young men and women to talk about love. "We were there to learn how to sing," said Suo. Playing acoustic guitars, Suo and Zhang began to sing together their first works, such as "Nong Pin" and "Gone." In March 1996, Suo and Zhang went to Beijing. There they added a new member, drummer Gao Hui to add some rhythm to their band. When they found conga too exotic, they tried the yaogu, a drum that hangs at the waist of the performer and is played as the performer dances. They set up two yaogus and tried to place the instruments vertically. They also sawed off half of one to make its pitch higher. Wild Children began to perform in bars in Beijing and soon attracted a group of regular followers with their unique style. They wrote more and more songs, such as "Disappearance," "Do You Know" and "Murmurs from a Dream." Some of their motif developed into instrumental works, such as "Under the Bridge," which was first created under the Sanyuan fly-over in the capital; "Life Underground," which is about a basement where they first lived when they were in Beijing; and "Metro," which was inspired by the musicians who make a living by performing in metro stations. Besides writing their own songs, they also adapted traditional folk songs. Among the most popular are two Uygur folk songs, "Vagabond" and "Youth Dance." "Vagabond," originally called "Sikenashka," is a song known by every Uighur person. To a set

melody, singers improvise new words. Uighur people sometimes sing the song throughout the whole night without stopping. In "Vagabond," Wild Children blend traditional popular words with their own writing. "My girl, my girl, do not worry. I'll ask a painter to draw a picture of you. I'll ask him to draw you on my guitar. When I hold my guitar, I'll hold you," it goes. "People say streets are wide in Beijing. It takes you half an hour to walk to the other side. People say girls are good in Beijing, but I'm a bum without a penny." "Youth Dance" is one of the best-known Uighur folk songs, which was spread all over China by folk musician Wang Luobin (1913-1996). "The sun is gone, but will show up again tomorrow. The flowers are gone, but will blossom again next year. My youth is gone and can never be found. My youth is gone like the birds." In Wild Children's "Youth Dance" the melody is backed by a strong drum beat which signifies no regret for the passing away of youth, but celebrates life with music and wine. However, life is not always celebration. Sometimes the group do feel lost and wonder what their future will hold. "I want to know where life is. The sun has set. The moon has set...Beijing, Beijing, where am I going." This is a line from a song called "Beijing" written in 1998. Wild Children have written about 30 songs. The band has now also developed into a group of six. Besides Suo and Zhang, the line-up includes Zhang Wei (accordion, percussion, vocals), Li Zhengkai (bass), Chen Zhipeng (drums) and Guo Long (xuangu, percussion instrument used in ritual ceremonies in eastern Gansu). Though Wild Children have been invited by the Institute of Contemporary Arts to perform in London, they are far from famous. Besides a few tours to other cities, they perform regularly at the "River" bar and "Jam House" in Sanlitun, Beijing. "I'm still looking for and trying to know about life," said Zhang. "But I know I will live, write and sing."

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