

WORLD MUSIC

SCOTLAND

Introduction to Songs

There are two gruesome ballads inspired by the odious Sawney Bean cannibal family. Many readers are probably relieved to find that these contemporary neofolk ballads are listed here separately from the traditional Scottish music.

In addition to these two neofolk ballads there were two death metal rock songs composed: "Sawney Bean" by Death Raven Choir in 2002 and "Inbreeding the Anthropophagi" by Deeds of Flesh in 2001 (see under Rock Music).

Macabre as this story is, it can be pointed out that in 1951 the French film director Claude Autant-Lara did a comedy, *L'Auberge rouge*, based on a story by Jean Aurenche, which in turn was very loosely based on the novel of the same title by the celebrated author Honoré de Balzac. The movie tells of a mountain inn where the owner's family and the servant put their guests into a deep sleep and then murder them. The human remains are buried out back or fed to their pigs.

Ref: Autant-Lara, Claude (Director) 1951, *L'Auberge rouge*, Internet Movie Database, [imdb](http://www.imdb.com) & [imdb](http://www.imdb.com)
Balzac, Honoré 1831, *L'Auberge rouge*, Résumé (in French), [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org)

SAWNEY BEAN

SONG BACKGROUND:

The Snakefinger ballad, based on one in the public domain, tells the horror story in a fairly traditional manner. The cannibal family of Sawney Bean was said to have lived in a cave on the Galloway coast of Scotland, during the reign of James I (1406-37) or (according to a different version) that of James VI (1567-1625), where they robbed and devoured travelers.

Oldham records it as Sawney Beane's Cave in Galloway but mentions that another cave, according to Carrick tradition, Bennan Head Cave, 3.5 miles north of Ballantrae, was the dwelling place of the ogre. This second cave is the one favored by Gracie in his article.

"The story first appeared in a broadsheet of about 1700, and further broadsheets on the same lurid subject appeared soon after." (Gracie 1994)

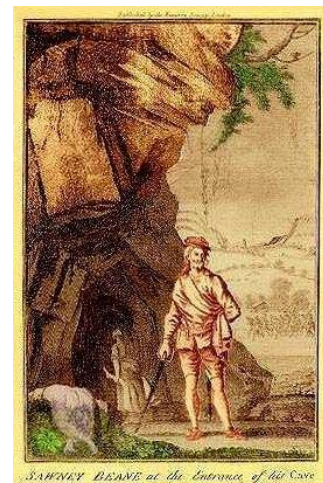
Ref: Gracie, James, The Gruesome Tale of Sawney Bean, *The Scots Magazine*, v. 141, n. 3, Sept. 1994, Dundee, Scotland, p. 268-272

Legend of Sawney Bean Cave, [mysteriousbritain](http://mysteriousbritain.com)

Oldham, Tony 1975, *The Caves of Scotland*, p. 15, 17, 132

Sawney Bean, Legend, [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org)

Tour of Sawney Bean's Cave (6:11), Ayrshire/ Galloway coast, [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com) (◀VIDEO)



SAWNEY BEANE at the Entrance of his Cave

WD-SCOT-SB1 United States 1987

SAWNEY BEAN *

SAWNEY'S DEATH DANCE

WD – Folk – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: SNAKEFINGER [aka. Philip Lithman] (LY-WD32)

Perf: SNAKEFINGER'S VESTAL VIRGINS

Snakefinger [aka. Philip Lithman] (vocal & violin)

Eric Drew Feldman (synthetics)

Miguel Bertel (guitar)

Ben Guy (bass)

John Ryan (drums)

Prod: Snakefinger, Howard Johnson, & Eric Drew Feldman

Prod. Co: Red Rhino/Cartel

Time: (Sawney Bean) 2:50

(Sawney's Death Dance) 1:42

(No. B) 4:29

A. American Releases:

1. **LP:** NIGHT OF DESIRABLE OBJECTS (1987)
Ralph Record RR 8703
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 4 & 5)
2. Reissue on **CD:** NIGHT OF DESIRABLE OBJECTS (1993)
T.E.C. Tones 93532 (Tk 11)
3. Compilation **LP:** POTATOES (1987)
Ralph Records RR 8717
12" 33rpm (Sd 1 – Bd 6)

B. British Releases:

1. **LP:** NIGHT OF DESIRABLE OBJECTS
Red Rhino RED LP 78
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 4 & 5)
2. **CD:** NIGHT OF DESIRABLE OBJECTS
Red Rhino RED CD 78 (Tk 10a & b)

C. Australian Releases:

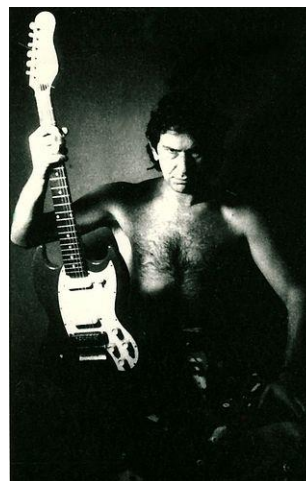
1. **LP:** NIGHT OF DESIRABLE OBJECTS (1987)
AIM AIM 1011
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 5)
2. **CD:** NIGHT OF DESIRABLE OBJECTS (1992)
AIM AIM 1011 (Tk 11)

Notes: Snakefinger performs the ballad in a somber manner with just the sound of a harsh wind in the background. At the end a violin plays a few bars of the tune and the sound of the wind carries over directly into the dance variation of the melody. This is a slow, sinister dance performed by the violin with a purposeful bass drum pounding out the beat.

Ref: Potatoes (A Collection of Folk Songs from Ralph Records – Vol. 1), [Discogs](#)

Snakefinger, Biography, [Wikipedia](#)

Snakefinger's Vestal Virgins, Night of Desirable Objects LP, [Discogs](#)



SNAKEFINGER

WD-SCOT-SB2 United States 1997

SAWNEY BEAN *

WD – Folk Rock – Traditional – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: SNAKEFINGER [aka. Philip Lithman] (LY-WD32)

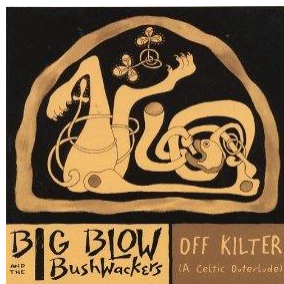
Perf: BIG BLOW & THE BUSHWHACKERS

Tim Wittemore (didjeridoo)

Don Plehn



Ted Porter
Mick Haensler (percussions)



Prod. Co: Wedgie Records

Time: 3:38

CD: OFF KILTER (A CELTIC OUTERLUDE)

Wedgie Records WRCD 007 (Tk 4)

Notes: A cover of the Snakefinger ballad by this Maryland-based folk group. The Amazon audio sample has the last 3 verses of Stanza 2 and all of Stanza 3.

Ref: Big Blow & The Bushwhackers, Off Kilter, [CDBaby](#)

Big Blow & The Bushwhackers, Off Kilter, [Discogs](#)

Big Blow & The Bushwhackers, Sawney Bean, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

SAWNEY BEAN

SONG BACKGROUND:

Another ballad about the horrendous Sawney Bean family, as if one was not enough. The five- stanzas tell the bleak and gory story in a rather off-hand manner without taking any strong moral position.

“The band's imagery and lyrical content, in its early days, was influenced by traditionalism and antipathy towards the modern world and materialism... The band also had considerable interest in heathen and Mithraist [Roman pagan cult] themes, often reflecting an explicit antipathy to Christianity.” (Anon. n.d.)

Stanza 4, verse 2 shows an ambivalent, amoral stance –

They lived by the sword, were felled by the axe
And I say "nothing wrong with that"
But in their hellish caves worse than any dream
Cursed with the stench of—the Sawney Bean

The illustration (by a *Scots Magazine* staff artist) shows the troops of King James raiding the cave and finding human skulls.

Ref: Anon. n.d., Sol Invictus (Band), [Wikipedia](#)



WD-SCOT-SB3 United Kingdom 1990

SAWNEY BEAN *

WD – Dark Folk – Neofolk – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Tony WAKEFORD ([LY-WD33](#))

Perf: **SOL INVICTUS**

Tony Wakeford (vocal & electric guitar)

Sarah Bradshaw (cello)

Ian Read

James Mannox

Joolie Wood

Karl Blake (bass)

Prod. Co: Tursa Records

Rec. Co: ICR Studios

Time: 4:13

CD: TREES IN WINTER

Tursa TURSA 002 CD (Tk 2)



Notes: The lyrics are spoken backed with cello and percussion creating a highly ominous dark folk atmosphere. This is not traditional folk music; call it contemporary neofolk music.

Stanza 4 has an ambivalent amoral verse 2 –

They lived by the sword, were felled by the axe
And I say "nothing wrong with that"
But in their hellish caves worse than any dream
Cursed with the stench of—the Sawney Bean

The audio sample has Stanza 2, verses 2, 3, & 4 and Stanza 3, verses 1 & 2.

Ref: Sol Invictus (Band), [Wikipedia](#)

Sol Invictus, Sawney Bean, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Sol Invictus, Sawney Bean, Lyrics, [lyricsvip](#)

WD-SCOT-SB4 United Kingdom 1991

THE MAN NEXT DOOR IS VERY STRANGE *

THE WILD HUNT – SOMETHING GRIM THIS WAY COMES

WD – Dark Folk – Neofolk – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Tony WAKEFORD (LY-WD33)

Perf: **SOL INVICTUS**

Tony Wakeford (vocal & electric guitar)

Sarah Bradshaw (cello)

Karl Blake (bass)

Prod. Co: Tursa Records

Rec. Co: ICR Studios

Time: (Tk 6) 4:23 & (Tk 8) 4:24

CD: THE KILLING TIDE

Tursa TURSA 003 CD (Tks 6 & 8)

Notes: A bit of overkill here. This is simply a retitling and reworking (remixed by Colin Potter) of the ballad, "Sawney Bean," from the previous album *Trees in Winter* (see above). The second track here is entirely instrumental.

Ref: Sol Invictus, The Killing Tide, [Discogs](#)

Sol Invictus, The Man Next Door Is Very Strange, Lyrics, [lyrics85](#)

Sol Invictus, The Man Next Door Is Very Strange (4:24) [YouTube](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)



WD-SCOT-SB5 Italy 1994

SAWNEY BEAN * (LIVE)

WD – Dark Folk – Neofolk – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Tony WAKEFORD (LY-WD33)

Perf: **SOL INVICTUS**

Tony Wakeford (vocal & electric guitar)

Karl Blake (bass)

Prod. Co: Back Door Records

Rec. Loc: Zwischenfall; Bochum, Germany

Rec. Date: June 5, 1992

Time: 2:57

Bootleg CD: BLACK EUROPE

Back Door Records BR 50029302 (Tk 12)

Notes: First released on a bootleg cassette entitled, "Live in Bochum, Zwischenfall Germany 05.06.92."

The lineup on this live version could not be obtained.

The audio sample had spoken lyrics, barely audible, backed with loud pounding percussion. YouTube has an audio-video sample (3:22) of a live performance of this ballad at the Dom Cultural Centre, [Moscow](#) on Oct. 22, 2011.

Ref: Sol Invictus, Black Europe CD, Sawney Bean, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Sol Invictus, Black Europe, [Discogs](#)



Sol Invictus, Live in Bochum, Zwischenfall Germany, [Discogs](#)

WD-SCOT-SB6 France 2002

SAWNEY BEAN *

WD – Dark Folk – Neofolk – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Tony WAKEFORD ([LY-WD33](#))

Perf: **ANIMA IN FIAMME**

Pasquale Scotti (vocal & acoustic guitar)

Ferruccio Milanesi (acoustic bass & keyboards)

SCOTTI MILANESI

Giacomo Vitale (acoustic guitar)

Giuliano Colace (cello)

Francesco Mandolese (timpani drum)

Prod. Co: Cynfeirdd Records

Time: 5:32

Compilation **CD:** SOL LUCET OMNIBUS – A TRIBUTE TO SOL INVICTUS (Gatefold cover)

Cynfeirdd CYN 111 CD (2XCDs) (Disc 1 – Tk 10)

Notes: A cover version of the Tony Wakeford ballad first released on an album tribute to Sol Invictus.

Anima In Fiamme (Soul on Fire), a group from Naples, first formed in 1998. Scotti mentions – “Our music is difficult to explain, because you can say we play classical music, especially chamber music, but at the same time we are considered a dark, esoteric or industrial group.” (Scotti 2009)

In an interview Scotti mentions this track as a “una rivisitazione del pezzo” (a reinterpretation of the piece “Sawney Bean”). (Scotti n.d.)

This version has been seen but not heard.

Ref: Scotti, Pasquale n.d., Anima in Fiamme + Etoile Noire, Interview (in Italian), [erbadellastrega.it](#)

Milanesi, Ferruccio & Scotti, Pasquale 2009, Interview, Naples, Oct. 19, 1999, [lastsigh](#)

Sol Lucet Omnibus – A Tribute to Sol Invictus, [Discogs](#)



caveinspiredmusic.com