



"Filming *The Life Of Rock* was fun, and made me laugh a lot!" **Peter Gabriel's** small screen takeover revealed!

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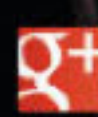
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*"Journey is a story
that carries you
along like a film -
and it allowed me to
throw my own
imagination in too!"*

Rick Wakeman

Ed's Letter



Contributor Of The Month



CHRIS MOORE

Chris is internationally well known as an illustrator of sci-fi having done book covers for almost every SF writer of the last century. What is less well known is the album covers he illustrated in the 70s and 80s, including Rick Wakeman, Pentangle, Lindisfarne, Nazareth, Status Quo and many others. He still finds time to play lead guitar in the soul band Rambunctus. This issue he reboots ELP for a 21st century helping of *Brain Salad Surgery*, page 91...

Welcome back to a new chapter for *Prog*. Tinged with sadness but looking to a bright future. Last issue we bade farewell to our longstanding Deputy/Progdution Ed (see what we did there?) Jo Kendall. This issue we say hello to our new member of the team Hannah May Kilroy, who joins us from the noisier climes of *Terrorizer* magazine. Much like our friends at *Metal Hammer*, Hannah couldn't face a world without a heavy metal Opeth (see page 12), so she donned her cape and flew into the arms of *Prog*. She takes over some trusty reins, but we know she takes a hold of them with a discerning and knowledgeable good look in her eye. We like her. So will you...

This issue we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of our good friend Rick Wakeman's *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* album. Rick's taking the entire thing back out on the road this month, for the first time since those live shows back in 1974 when the album was originally released. Some called it a folly back in the day. It went on to sell 15 million of the 50 odd million albums Rick has sold as a solo artist. Today it is a mainstay of the progressive genre. Some folly. And it all concludes the week before Rick celebrates his 65th birthday on May 18.

So we're particularly proud to join in the fun. Never forget, we prog on together, and always will...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



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GLENN HUGHES



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THE FINAL CUT

I have been a subscriber to your magazine from virtually the first issue. But I am surprised at the lack of material you publish on some groups who have been around for a long time but do not fit into the Yes, ELP, Genesis or Tull mould.

I was lucky to see Final Conflict at their recent gig in Maltby, but really disappointed at the lack of support for this long established group. The group celebrate 30 years next year and are hoping to release a new album to celebrate the fact. Their sixth, and current album, *Return Of The Artisan* is simply wonderful and their best to date. I recommend that readers check out fc-music.com and listen to three of the tracks from this album. I hope that *Prog* gives Final Conflict some well-deserved publicity on the release of their new album next year and on achieving three decades together.

How about an article on Galahad, who also celebrate 30 years together next year?

Kurt Gostling, Doncaster

We're always happy to hear suggestions on bands we need to include Kurt – and we hope you enjoy our three page feature on Galahad this issue, from p68 – Dep Ed Jo

NO OPPORTUNITY NECESSARY, NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED

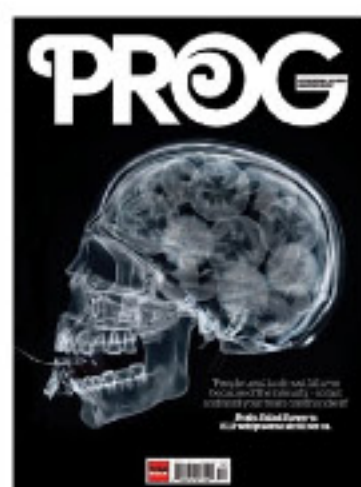
Bought this bottle of Lucozade (left) and wondered if Yes were doing a King Crimson with the latest wave of side-groups. I don't recognise the line-up though – obviously a case one 'Trigger's Broom' too many?

Benny the Bouncer, via space chute

FRENCH DISCONNECTION

I thought the review by Polly Glass of the excellent Tarja concert at the O2 Academy was, on the whole, spot on (*Prog* 44), but why didn't she mention the support, a French band called Elyose?

Prog is excellent at giving us the nod about new and upcoming bands, but this was a definite oversight on her part. Whatever the reason, I'm a bit disappointed, because the band were very good, even though it was their first time



Prog 44: thinking man's music from ELP's Salad days.



Yes: they've got a lot of bottle.

Happy as a sand boy: life's a beach for John Wesley...



BACKGROUND: ISTOCK

in the UK and they were understandably a bit nervous.

On the strength of their performance I bought their current album *Théogyne* which is excellent, as it catches some subtle nuances in the songs which weren't always apparent during the live show. The fact they sing mainly in French doesn't detract from the album at all. I think they would appeal to people who like bands like Within Temptation, Nightwish, Mostly Autumn, Touchstone, Magenta and of course Tarja herself.

So I really hope someone at *Prog* will check them out and give them some coverage. They deserve it!

Chris Edwards, via email

Polly replies: Hi Chris, frustratingly a work hold-up meant I only caught Elyose's last chorus. They sounded cool, but I'm sure you can appreciate not enough to be honestly commented on with any substance. Then Tarja came on and... well, she blew everyone out of the water, didn't she?!

RATE MY PROG.COM

As a long-time subscriber from Canada (since issue one) I really enjoy your mag and the free CD which has exposed me to all sorts of new music otherwise non-existent in the vast wasteland of

north American music scene.

As I read last issue 43 I remembered a while back a conversation regarding rating the music reviews. Any chance of that happening? You do list a Top 30 so why not rate record reviews?

Rick Tetreault, Cambridge, Ontario

Hi Rick! The Top 30 (Top Of The Progs) is based on sales at www.burningshed.com. As for ratings, we've stayed away from them as we want the reviews to be read, not just glanced at to see what gets 10/10 and what gets zero. The ultimate review does come from the person who buys it, after all. What does everyone else think? – Dep Ed Jo

SCILLY SEASON

Having listened to traditional prog (Yes, Floyd, ELP etc) since the 70s, I was on the lookout for something new but in the same vein. A friend leant me *Prog* and I spent many happy hours listening to snippets of music from bands I'd never heard of. Some awful, mostly good, then I saw an advert for a Swedish band, Introitus. Having listened to every track, I bought the CD and couldn't believe how good it sounded. I then bought their earlier disc, and was amazed, it is fantastic. I found their website and begged a T-shirt off them – they sent

TWEET TALK

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RICK WAKEMAN

@GrumpyOldRick
Drank four cups of tea this morning & have peed the equivalent of 7 cups. Isn't the human body marvellous. I might try eating £1 coins next.



ROBIN INCE

@robinince
There really aren't enough discos that just play horror soundtracks of the 70s and 80s. I am dancing to *Profondo Rosso* now.

NELLIE PITTS

@NellieBot
Flipping through @ProgMagazineUK, Thing 2 spots Kate Bush article and asks "Is that you and the dogs Mummy?" (He's my favourite!;-)

SID SMITH

@thesidsmith
I always like to wear a pair of trousers when I do an interview. Even for a phoner. That's how much of a professional I am.



IT WAS COOL TO SEE John Wesley in the latest issue of *Prog* 44; I had the pleasure of seeing his solo show at a beachfront dive in Clearwater Beach, Florida.

A good friend (or 'mate' as you Brits say) and I were spending a quiet December afternoon walking along the beach stopping periodically at beachfront bars for beers. The last place we visited had a small tiki hut with a stage upon which was a guy singing and playing classic rock tunes on an acoustic guitar. Pretty typical in those parts. We took an available table directly in front of the stage and ordered a couple more cold ones. My friend and I were talking music and I mentioned Porcupine Tree. He couldn't quite hear me and asked "what?". I replied loudly "Porcupine Tree!" just as the singer ended his song. Hearing my reply, he proceeded to tell us off mic that he was the touring guitarist for PT. I acted as if I didn't think he was pulling our respective legs. For the rest of his set, we chatted a bit between songs. Seemed like a nice guy and played well.

As soon as I got back to my friend's house I googled John Wesley and sure enough it was him! Strange, but very true.

Doug Bowers, via email

It's a small world on Planet Prog, eh? Send your tales at the usual address — Dep Ed Jo

This issue's star letter wins a goodie bag from The Merch Desk at www.themerchdesk.com.

two, for free! I also noticed they were doing two shows in Sweden, for which they would keep tickets for me if I wanted. I booked flights, car hire, hotel, and off me and my wife went! The shows were brilliant, and we met the band, who invited us back to their house for dinner! (The band comprises mum, dad, son, daughter and three other musicians). I'd asked if I could photograph the show, and I'm proud to see the pictures on their website. Now I'm eagerly awaiting their forthcoming album, *Anima*, which I hope you can preview on its release. So, thanks again for a fantastic mag to which I now subscribe. Keep up the good work.

Nigel Young (and Carol!), Isles of Scilly

This is what we call a satisfied customer.

Neil and Carol, we salute your dedication to the cause! — Dep Ed Jo

VISION OFF?

You said a while ago in your *Prog* TV feature that Genesis's more eccentric characters influenced *Little Britain*. Well, *The Battle Of Epping Forest* could have been a one-off single story episode with a separate string of characters on its own! However, I was tickled to see a prototype Florence and Emily in the flyer for Procol Harum's *Grand Hotel* album launch in the Chris Wright feature (*Prog* 42, top right)!

On a sadder note, I'm gutted that BBC3 could be closing — *Little Britain* began on Radio 4, but it first got known to me on the TV channel, as did *The Mighty Boosh*, *Nighty Night*, *Gavin & Stacey* and more recently *Uncle*. If there was such a thing as a TV equivalent of TeamRock to gather up these and newer original comedy and drama, I'd feel that I and many others



Florence, Emily and Procol Harum. They're ladies you know...



Signals: the album that saved Rush?

wouldn't be doomed to endure bonnet dramas and whogivesatosswhodunnits for evermore.

I'm also amazed that Matt Lucas and Chris Squire share the same birthdate (though not born in the same year)!

Barbara Kirk, via email

TeamRock may have plans for TV in the future, Barbara — we can certainly help with copious amounts of comedy and drama in the prog world... — Dep Ed Jo

NEW WORLD MAN

Loved the article about *Signals* (*Prog* 43) and specially the point of view of Alex Lifeson, who has always said it was a difficult time for him to fit in with the keyboards. I can understand what he's saying, as I listen to those 80s albums and actually hear a "struggle" in the guitars. He really sounds different on those albums. But I think that's a great thing - in the long run, it probably made him an even more creative guitarist than he already was. As for some fans not liking that era, I am NOT one of them. Actually, one of my all time favourite Rush songs is the keyboard-drenched *Afterimage* from *Grace Under Pressure*. A truly progressive band, indeed. And still moving forward after 40 years!

Aníbal Rosario, Puerto Rico

AND FINALLY...

Chris Squire, Geddy Lee, Greg Lake and Tony Levin walk into a bar.

The bartender sees them and gets visibly nervous.

He says, "I'll serve you, but I don't want any treble!"

John Langton, Sykesville, Maryland

ALAN REED

@3hobbits

Just spent the morning playing triangle. In 11/8. #newalbum

MATTHEW COHEN

@MattCohenBass

Feeling in a particularly proggy



mood. Now, if only I had Moog bass pedals and a Ricky 4003. Luckily for you, I don't.

GREGORY SPAWTON

@bigbigtrain

I have had a very difficult morning. A hole has appeared

in the elbow of my favourite denim shirt. I am wondering about a corduroy patch.

SIMON GODFREY

@simonsimple

Wellingtons; seductive evening wear or merely for office work?

PROG

2 BALCOMBE STREET, LONDON NW1 6NW

Tel 020 7042 4000 Fax 020 7042 4329

Email prog@weareteamrock.com Web progrockmag.com

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EDITORIAL

Editor Jerry Ewing

Art Editor Russell Fairbrother

Deputy/Production Editor Jo Kendall

Reviews Editor Grant Moon

Online Editor Martin Kiely

Designer Big John

Sub Editors Claudia Elliott, Jayne Nelson, Mark Wheatley

CONTRIBUTORS

Mike Barnes, Geoff Barton, Mark Blake, Lin Bensley, Luise Brown, Steve Davis, Malcolm Dome, Lee Dorrian, Dave Everley, Ian Fortnam, Pete Fowler, Polly Glass, Paul Henderson, Rob Hughes, Stephen Humphries, Emma Johnston, David Keevill, Tina Korhonen, Dom Lawson, Paul Lester, Dave Ling, Roger Lotring, Alex Lynham, Rachel Mann, Rhodri Marsden, Clay Marshall, Ben Myers, Greg Moffitt, Rob Monk, Kevin Nixon, Pierre Perrone, Tim Ponting, Colin Prime, Raziq Rauf, Chris Roberts, Xavier Russell, Natasha Scharf, Ester Segarra, Paul Sexton, Jonathan Selzer, Johnny Sharp, Amit Sharma, James Sharrock, Nick Shilton, Sid Smith, Karen Toftera, Sean Urquhart, Marco Vittur, Rick Wakeman, Ben Walker, Mick Wall, David West, Philip Wilding, Rich Wilson, Sarah Worsley, Holly Wright.

Wallet and cover images Kevin Nixon, Chris Stocker

ADVERTISING

Commercial Director Jimmy Docherty

jimmy.docherty@weareteamrock.com

Advertising Sales Director John Biscomb

John.Biscomb@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4255

Head Of Events And Partnerships Ian Williamson

Ian.Williamson@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4102

Head of Digital and Mobile Simon Binns

Simon.Binns@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4105

Head of Radio Sponsorship & Promotions Katy Adair

Katy.Adair@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4103

Sales Executive Richard Pita

Richard.Pita@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4141

Sales Executive Lucy Hellings

Lucy.Hellings@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4104

Sales Executive Laura Richardson

Laura.Richardson@weareteamrock.com 020 7042 4261

Advertising Operations Manager Fabio Zancani

fabio.zancani@weareteamrock.com 0207 042 4178

Lead Commercial Designer Piotr Swioklo

piotr.swioklo@weareteamrock.com 207 042 4175

MARKETING

Group Marketing Manager Alix Thompson

Marketing Manager Hannah Burch

Marketing Executive Lydia Higgins

Direct Marketing Product Manager Ashley Hickman

SENIOR EDITORIAL TEAM

Editorial Director Scott Rowley

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Printed in the UK by William Gibbons. Distributed by

Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue,

London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 020 7429 4000



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INTRO

IF IT'S OUT THERE, IT'S IN HERE



Will the fans be shocked? Is 'shock' a nice way of saying the fans are gonna hate it?

MAGNUM OPETH!

Sheep, jacuzzis and... country music? **Mikael Åkerfeldt** reports back on the making of *Pale Communion*...

Swedish prog titans Opeth have completed work on their eleventh studio album, the follow-up to 2011's somewhat controversial (but rather brilliant) *Heritage*. Recorded at the legendary Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire, Wales, earlier this year, *Pale Communion* was once again produced by frontman Mikael Åkerfeldt and mixed by Steven Wilson. Having hosted artists such as Queen, Rush, Van der Graaf Generator and Black Sabbath in the past, Rockfield proved to be the ideal location for a band that has long been steeped in the sounds and aesthetics of 70s prog rock and metal.

"I loved it there," says Åkerfeldt. "I picked the studio that we were in, Studio B, because it has an old Neve desk. The engineer we worked with was outstanding. But the setting was just perfect. It was in the middle of nowhere. Everyone had their own room and their own jacuzzi, so it was perfect! [laughs] Every time I opened up the curtains in the morning, I saw sheep! It was during that time of the floods, so it was raining constantly but it was beautiful. I'm a bit more anal about music than just saying 'Oh, Queen recorded here!' Some old obscure favourite bands, like Spring, recorded there. Fusion Orchestra and Budgie too, of course. It was really cool. The owner, Kingsley Ward, is still there and taking care of cows and shit. His daughters are running the business and they took great care of us. It was a cool experience and there was something in the air."

Given the elaborate nature of Opeth's music, previous recording experiences have often become marathon exercises in self-flagellation for the Swedish band, but on this occasion it sounds like the atmosphere at Rockfield was conducive to unprecedented levels of productivity and ease.

"We recorded everything in two weeks, which for us is unheard of!" Åkerfeldt laughs. "We hadn't even rehearsed as a band *once*, so that was crazy. I guess we've become somewhat professional recently! Axe [Martin Axenrot] and [Martin] Mendez recorded all the drums and bass in four days, so that's pretty fucking quick. We're doing well. We're a pretty good band today, I think! It was very easy this time round."

When Opeth released *Heritage* three years ago, it received one of the most mixed responses the band have experienced to date, largely due to a wholesale abandonment of the metal elements that had previously played such a central role in their sound. While the new album is unlikely to cause a similar stir, Åkerfeldt promises that it contains numerous surprises and evidence of further evolution in the Opeth camp.

"There are a couple of uplifting moments on there which I like to think is a new sound for us," he explains. "When I listen to some of the songs, I think 'Who sounds like this?' and I don't have an answer to that. The references aren't crystal clear. It sounds new, it sounds old, it sounds... somewhere in the middle. It's a bit heavier than *Heritage*, I guess, but not as heavy as *Watershed*. And it's more melodic. I spent a lot of time on vocal lines. But it's really difficult for me to say what it is! Will the fans be shocked? Is 'shock' a nice way of saying that the fans are gonna hate it? [laughs] There's a few of those things, yes."

Prog has heard the new album, which is tentatively scheduled for release in June via Roadrunner, and we can cheerfully confirm that it is another extraordinary piece of work, deeply entrenched in the progressive rock world but with a darker and heavier overall vibe than its predecessor. What is most striking about the new album is how diverse and adventurous it is.

"There's one song which I think will be called *River*," says Åkerfeldt. "When we talked about it during recording we referred to it as 'country'. It doesn't have pedal steel and it's not like we're wearing cowboy hats, but there's something in the multi-tracked vocal harmonies. Steven is very good at mixing those kinds of vocals together, and he also introduced me to the first David Crosby solo album, which I've been listening to a lot. So that song's gonna be hated, I think! Also I think there's a song called *Goblin* that will also be hated by some people, because it swings! Metal fans don't like it when it swings. I think one of my best songs is on this album, the last track. It's beautiful, I think. There's also one really long song that's all over the place. It's an interesting album. It's a bit schizo!"

Stay tuned to www.opeth.com for updates. **DL**



Harder and darker: Opeth's Fredrik Åkesson and Mikael Åkerfeldt turn things up to 11!

This month, Intro was compiled by

Olivier Bardin
Paul Brannigan
Steve Davis
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Pete Fowler
Jo Kendall
Dom Lawson
Andy Lewis
Paul Lester
Rhodri Marsden
Grant Moon
Natasha Scharf
Amit Sharma
Rick Wakeman
Holly Wright

KEEP ON THE GRASSE

French five-piece **Lazuli** celebrate new studio album release with a collaboration with Fish and a November tour.



Word players: Lazuli show some savoir faire on their fifth album.

► Fifth album *Tant Que L'Herbe Est Grasse* ('while the grass is fat') was recorded over three months last year in their home studio L'Abeille Rôde, named after a play on words as a tribute to the Beatles. Composed chiefly by guitarist/vocalist Dominique 'Domi' Leonetti, it features nine songs, including a guest appearance by Fish on *J'ai Trouvé Ta Faille - Part 2*.

"We're big fans of Marillion and asked if we could support Fish on his 2007 dates in France," says Leonetti. "After that we kept bumping into him, and eventually I got the courage to ask him to be on an album. Although we always write in French, we made an exception for Fish!"

Formed in 1998 in the south of France, Leonetti says that *Tant...* represents "where we're at in 2014, an unusual mix between prog, world music and mainstream rock that we can call our own." Their other distinction is their use of a Léode, a one-of-a-kind instrument akin to a stringless one-handed touch guitar specially built for Leonetti's brother Claude, a former guitarist who lost his ability to use his right arm after a severe road accident.

The band will tour the UK in November with Swedish Yes worshippers Moon Safari as a double-headliner with gigs scheduled for Southampton Talking Heads (26), Cardiff Globe (27), Manchester Sound Control (28), London Borderline (29) and Bilston Robin 2 (30). See www.lazuli-music.com for info. **OZB**

OCEANS A-LIVE!

Touchstone present live DVD and limited edition EP.

► UK crew Touchstone will celebrate their first ever live DVD on June 20 with a show at London Borderline, followed by headlining dates at CRS Chesterfield (21) and Bilston Robin (22). *Live Inside Outside* contains their full set from last year's *Oceans Of Time* show in Bilston and has been edited and mixed by Magenta's Rob Reed. The disc also includes unreleased footage from 2010's High Voltage festival, as well as a 'making of' documentary.

As a special treat, a very limited edition package will be available to Touchstone gig-goers in June. It contains an exclusive bonus EP, *The Oceans*, with as-yet unheard material from the *Oceans Of Time* recording sessions, including a brand new song *Suffer The Little Children*.

Touchstone will also be joining Arena, The Reasoning and Lost In Vegas at the Prog-sponsored Trinity charity all-dayer at The Assembly in Leamington Spa on May 18. Find out more at www.touchstonemusic.co.uk. **NRS**



Live through this: The 'Stone hit the small screen!

MA ARE DRESSED TO IMPRESS...

Mostly Autumn release first concept album, *Dressed In Voices* – and it's a killer!

Mostly Autumn release new album *Dressed In Voices* on June 2 – and it's their first-ever concept record.

"It all began when I wrote a song based on the idea of someone suddenly dying violently," explains guitarist and songwriter Bryan Josh. "They don't have time to say goodbye to anyone. This took over my entire thinking of how the album should be constructed."

The storyline then grew somewhat dark and disturbing.

"It's about a person who's an innocent victim when a maniac goes on the rampage in a town, indiscriminately killing people. The character at the centre of the tale dies in this frenzied attack. But before he finally expires, he has the chance to confront his killer, and take them on a journey through a life that's about to be ended for no reason."

"It's honest and real," Josh continues, "and I have to say that when I was writing it, some of the story really did freak me out. A lot of it is based on experiences from my own



Mostly's Bryan and Olivia: killer cuts.

TINA KORHONEN

life. The album is very dark, but there are also lighter moments, to alleviate the gloom."

Josh found it a challenge to get songs to fit into the overall concept.

"I'm used to writing songs as they come. But here I had to think about whether fitted into the overall storyline, which is another level of achievement."

The album was funded by fan donations, something they've been doing since 2000.

"People who helped us in this way will get a limited edition double album version of *Dressed In Voices*," says Josh. "There are only 2,000 copies available – and the second disc won't ever be released separately."

Now completed by the addition of new drummer Alex Cromerty, the band will play a special, secret album launch show in York on May 9 for the fans who helped fund the release. They've also confirmed the following shows for later in the month: Edinburgh Liquid Rooms May 30, Bury Met 31, Southampton Brook June 1, Bilston Robin 2 6, Holmfirth Picturedrome 7, Crewe Box July 7, Tavistock Wharf 25, Cardiff Globe 26, Bath Komedia 27. **MD**.

More tour and album information is at www.mostly-autumn.com.

"It's honest and real, and while I was writing it it did freak me out!"

INTRO extras

NEW ALBUM FOR COSMOGRAF

One-man band **Cosmograf** will release his "cinematic" new concept album, *Capacitor* at the beginning of June. Written and produced by multi-instrumentalist Robin Armstrong, it also includes guest performances from a host of names including Nick D'Virgilio, Andy Tillison and Matt Stevens. Armstrong will be previewing tracks at this year's Celebr8.3 Festival at Islington Assembly Halls on June 1.



Strange orbit: Anathema go in search of space.

SURPRISE SURPRISE!

Anathema's upcoming album "beginning of a new chapter" says Daniel Cavanagh.

Anathema release their much anticipated new album *Distant Satellites* through Kscope on June 9. And, says Daniel Cavanagh, the aim is to surprise everyone.

"It's got elements of everything we've ever done, plus some extra textures which aren't rock at all. If you want straightforward music, this isn't for you."

"John Douglas came up with the title song," Cavanagh explains. "It's about people we know who've gone off on strange orbits, away from their normal lives. Eventually, they return, but for a while they're really out there."

It's been suggested that *Distant Satellites* could mark the culmination of everything the band have worked towards. Is this the end of Anathema? "For me, it's not the end of anything," he says, "but the beginning of a new chapter."

Two songs – *You're Not Alone* and *Take Shelter* – have been mixed by Steven Wilson. "Our producer, Christer-Andre Cederberg got really ill but we were under huge pressure to finish the album," Cavanagh explains. "There was only one person we trusted to do those mixes. And Steven's also added his own brilliant touches."

Anathema have confirmed four UK acoustic shows, starting with the Celebr8.3 Festival at the Assembly Hall in London on May 31. They go on to Leamington Spa Assembly Rooms June 12, Download Festival 13, Gloucester Cathedral 15.

"We'll probably do three new songs in the acoustic set, but play the whole album on our electric tour, which begins in September."

Find out more at www.anathema.ws. **MD**

KNIFEWORLD UNRAVEL

InsideOut deal heralds the arrival of a grown-up concept album for the North London avant-proggers.

Knifeworld have signed a deal with InsideOut Records. The first fruits of the new deal will be forthcoming album *The Unravelling*, due out late summer.

"I'm 42 and finally have a record deal!" laughs mainman Kavus Torabi. "I hate to call the new album conceptual," he continues, "but there's a theme running through the songs, and that's the way a lot of people I know have had their lives unravel. I've seen friends diagnosed with cancer, end up in prison, go through divorces. Suddenly, I am seeing them having to confront grown up problems – and it's not been fun!"

Among the songs which will be on the album are *I Can Teach You How To Lose A Fight*, *The Orphanage*, *Send Him Seaworthy* and *The Skulls We Buried Have Regained Their Eyes*.

"The last track is a real epic," adds Torabi. "It will be titled *I'm Hiding Behind My Eyes*." Keep in the loop at www.knifeworld.co.uk. **MD**



JETHRO TULL's IAN ANDERSON

HOMO ERRATICUS



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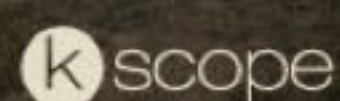
"Musically as well as historically,
Homo Erraticus charts an epic
path, with plenty of ingredients
familiar from Anderson's 46-
year recording catalogue in
Tull's name and his own."

*"Entertainingly
head-spinning stuff."*

PROG MAGAZINE

TOURING THE UK IN APRIL / MAY

Apr 28	Brighton Dome, BRIGHTON
Apr 29	O2 Guildhall Southampton, SOUTHAMPTON
May 01	City Hall, SALISBURY
May 02	Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, LIVERPOOL
May 03	Symphony Hall, BIRMINGHAM
May 04	New Theatre, OXFORD
May 06	Colston Hall, BRISTOL
May 07	Swan Theatre, HIGH WYCOMBE
May 08	G Live, GUILDFORD
May 09	Corn Exchange, CAMBRIDGE
May 10	Regent Theatre, IPSWICH
May 11	De Montfort Hall, LEICESTER
May 13	Assembly Rooms, DERBY
May 14	Palace Theatre, MANCHESTER
May 15	Grand Opera House, YORK
May 16	The Sage Gateshead, GATESHEAD
May 18	Festival Theatre, EDINBURGH
May 19	Concert Hall, PERTH
May 20	Music Hall, ABERDEEN
May 21	Eden Court, INVERNESS
May 24	O2 Shepherds Bush Empire, LONDON
May 25	O2 Shepherds Bush Empire, LONDON



www.kscopemusic.com www.iananderson.com www.jethrotull.com



k scope | post-progressive sounds



Gazpacho *Demon* (CD / LP)

Norway's Progressive art rockers return with a dark tale of mystery and manuscript. The Special Edition features bonus track 'The Cage' mixed by David Bottrill (Placebo / Muse)

*"Mind-blowing, magical and extraordinary...
this is a modern prog classic!"*

DOM LAWSON THE GUARDIAN / METAL HAMMER

"artful, elegant and stylistically complex"

MATTHIAS WECKMANN METAL HAMMER GERMANY

www.kscopemusic.com/gazpacho



Se Delan *The Fall* (CD / LP)

Debut album from Justin Greaves (Crippled Black Phoenix) and Belinda Kordic.

www.kscopemusic.com/sedelan

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PROG ME!

Five things that rock our prog stars' worlds...

THIS MONTH: DAVID BREWIS, FIELD MUSIC/ SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE



OK COMPUTER?

I've got a Mac laptop and the crappiest smartphone you can get. I also have some electronic luggage scales, which I consider a touring essential.

MASTERMIND?

It'd probably have to be the recording techniques of the Beatles. I'm such a nerd. I've probably read every book on the subject.

RELICS?

My '68 SG Special is probably quite collectable, despite being severely battered and not in its original condition. Our Yamaha CP70B electric grand piano would probably be collectable were it not for the guarantee that trying to lift the darned thing will completely bugger your back. That definitely puts off potential buyers.



SOUND AND VISION?

There are really too many and it changes all the time. The likes of *Sgt Pepper* and *Heroes* and *Bad* by Michael Jackson are mainstays but I wouldn't like to live without *Babylon* by Dr John at the moment. Call me a crazy leftie living in a dreamland but I loved *The West Wing*. And, while I'm not sure I'd say it was my favourite film, I thought Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood* was astonishing on many levels.



SUPPER'S READY!

I love a real Neapolitan style pizza and that would narrowly beat the love for Mexican food I've developed over our trips to Texas - spinach and potato tacos with pico de gallo and black beans... mmm. I like pretty much all booze except cider. I like American craft beers and good Italian red wine. Best of all might be the Black Russians I've had in Paris - no Coke, just good vodka and kahlua over ice. **JK**



NEW LABEL DEAL FOR AMPLIFIER

Amplifier have signed to Superball Music for their fifth album, which is due for release later in the year. Label boss Thomas Waber confirmed that the two parties have been in talks for some time and decided to snap them up after hearing demos for *Mystoria*. The Manchester four-piece are currently recording at the Rockfield Studios in Wales and will be taking a short break to perform at the Prog-sponsored Beyond The Redshift festival in London on May 10.

TRAVIS SHINN



Solar flare-up: Mastodon reach for the sky again.

MASTODON PREPARE FOR LIGHT FLIGHT!

Atlantan crew declare "We don't do simple" on forthcoming new album.

Mastodon have completed work upon their much-anticipated sixth album. Produced by Nick Raskulinecz (Rush, Alice In Chains) at Rock Falcon Studios in Franklin, Tennessee, *Once More 'Round The Sun* is themed around a "tumultuous" year in the Atlantan quartet's personal lives, and deals with love, loss, relationships and life's big questions. More direct and aggressive than the band's 2009 conceptual masterpiece *Crack The Skye*, the album retains Mastodon's trademark complexity, while showcasing their constant desire to evolve their sound.

"We don't know how to write songs that are simplified versions of ourselves," says guitarist/vocalist Brent Hinds. "I don't think I want to know that. Mastodon is a like a moving art installation, and we're always looking to pop off in new directions. Everything we've learned in our lives to date is in this album, and I think we get better at what we do the older we get."

The provisional tracklisting for *Once More 'Round The Sun* is: *Tread Lightly*, *The Motherload*, *High Road*, *Once More 'Round The Sun*, *Aunt Lisa*, *Halloween*, *Asleep In The Deep*, *Ember City*, *Tooth And Nail*, *Chimes At Midnight*, *North Side Star*, *Diamond In The Witchhouse*. The album is set for a June release through Reprise. Find out more at www.mastodonrocks.com. **PB**

The Misadventures of PROG BOY

21. Lucky Man. by Pete Fowler monsterism.net

Prog Boy and Skully are reading last month's issue.

HEY DUNCAN, THIS ELP COVER MATCHES MY T-SHIRT!



COR! IT'S KARN EVIL-TASTIC!

So *was* this the album that ripped the band apart?



ELP

"Brain Salad Surgery is ELP at the pinnacle of its powers!" How one album defined the band - and ultimately destroyed them!

WELL, IT WAS MORE WHEN EMERSON AND PALMER WENT INTO PARTNERSHIP...

THE WORKS



Gerroff, you Brummie bully!

THEIR BOOKS AND STATIONARY ENTERPRISE WAS DOOMED FROM THE START.

GREG'S 'c'est la pie'



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FAD GADGETS

Rhodri Marsden on three of the latest must-have gizmos currently putting the prog in progress...

THEREMIN SPECIAL!

MOOG THEREMINI

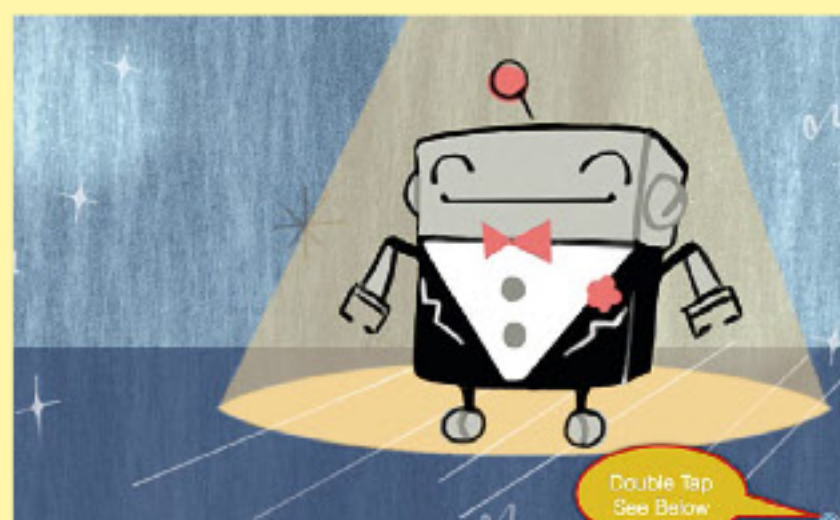
The Theremin is the only instrument I can think of that you play without physically touching it. Moog's scaled-down "reimagination" of the oldest electronic instrument in history allows you to emulate Jimmy Page in Led Zep's live performances of *Whole Lotta Love* or, if you're feeling more left-field, that bloke out of Pere Ubu. The Theremin is notoriously tricky to master, but Moog includes a handy feature that snaps the pitch to the nearest note, avoiding out-of-tune embarrassment.

bit.ly/theremini



BEBOT

Billed as "part synthesizer, part animated robot", Bebot is an app for iPhone and iPad which takes the Theremin as its inspiration and sticks it behind a glass screen; not only can you generate those weaving, wobbling, eerie sounds, you can beef it up with a touch of distortion, delay and chorus. And if you use more than one finger you can get chords out of it, albeit at the bleeding edge of sonic experimentation. normalware.com (Skint? Check out femurdesign.com/theremin).



AURA

The prize for advancement of the concept goes to US student Ray Li, who with Michael Ndubuisi and Bruce Land, created the Aura. It converts gestures into astonishing patchworks of sound, rich in texture and verging on frightening, the noise being generated by waving his arms about in a wizard-like fashion. Hey presto! bit.ly/aura-li



CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Rick's dread - hearing "So what's the next big thing in music then?"

Ah yes... a question much asked by those interviewers who can't be bothered to think of anything else.

I always try to answer them as sensibly as possible as, after all, they are likely to impart the wealth of information I am about to give them over dinner that evening or down the pub to their mates. So I smile sweetly, tell them what an interesting and intelligent question they have just asked... and begin.

"Over the years the media has found it necessary to give everything in the world of entertainment a label, and the music industry is no exception.

"We've had pop rock, pop, jazz rock, folk rock, progressive rock, orchestral rock, middle of the road, classical, classical rock, jazz fusion, rock fusion, folk fusion, classical fusion, punk rock, funk, jazz funk, skiffle, reggae and techno rock, to name but a few."

By now the questioner is already looking bewildered, but tries to act intelligently.

"There certainly has been an awful lot of different kinds of music. Do you like them all?"

"No."

"So what is the big thing at the moment?"

"Ah yes. Well, there's a whole new kind of

music these days that's very much been brought about by the reality shows we keep getting bombarded with on the television and that has given us a whole new type of music and performer. In essence, we're talking about someone who neither performs, sings or has any noticeable talent.

"As yet this kind of music has yet to be given a name by the media but I feel that any one of the following would fit the bill. Crap rock. Mime rock. Or C&M. (Crap and mime rock.)

I do this with my serious face on and that confuses the questioner who comments: "Is there a big following for C&M?"

"Ah yes. It's huge. This is because it makes everybody in the entire world believe they can be a C&M star within a few hours and without any practise at all."

The questioner now looks very interested indeed.

"So you're saying that I could become a C&M star then?"

"Of course. You have already proven yourself to be an ACT."

"What does ACT actually mean?"

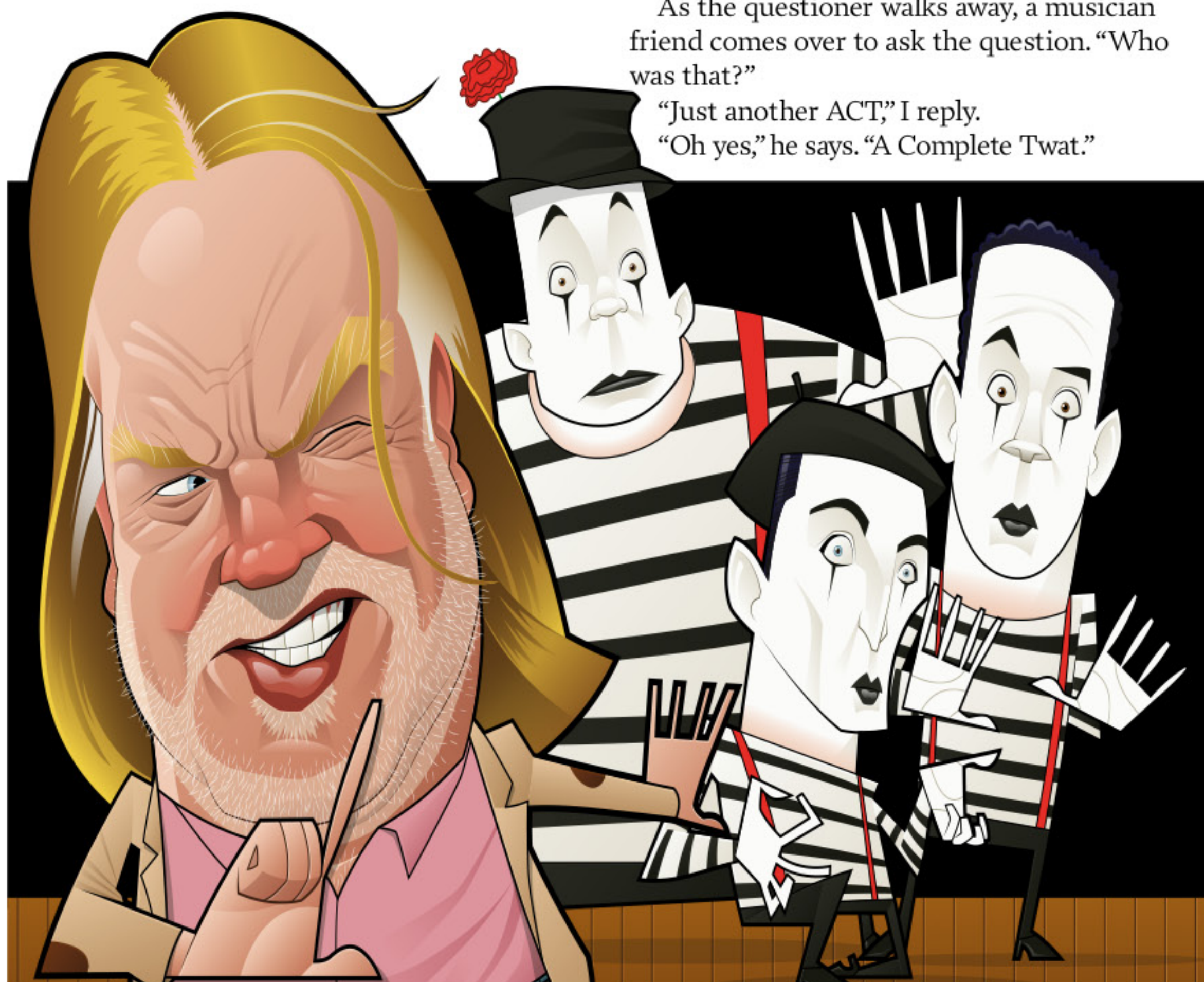
"Well, that's an acronym we in the trade use for people like you."

As the questioner walks away, a musician friend comes over to ask the question. "Who was that?"

"Just another ACT," I reply.

"Oh yes," he says. "A Complete Twat."

"We're talking about someone who neither performs, sings or has any noticeable talent."



KEVIN FEBRUARY

COSHISH

Songs in Hindi and a DIY concept album? Mumbai's Coshish are a puzzle worth solving.

THEY DO THINGS a little differently in India. How else can you explain a band who deliberately jumble up the songs on a concept album just to give their fans a challenge? But that's what Mumbai quartet Coshish have done on their debut, *Firdous*.

"The story is about a young man who moves from a village to the big city," explains drummer Hamza Kazi. "He gets caught up in the rat race, but realises this isn't what he wants, and finds true peace and fulfilment."

"We've done this as an audio movie, with sound effects between tracks. But just to engage the fans, we decided to mix up the song order. Now, people who buy the album can rearrange the songs in the order they feel works best for them, and how they think the story should develop."

It's just one aspect of what makes Coshish different and fascinating. Another is that the band sing in Hindi. "When Mangesh Gandhi [vocals/rhythm guitar] and Shrikant Sreenivasan [lead guitar] started the band in 2006, they could have written the songs in English or Hindi. Both come naturally. They just went in the latter direction, but that was never planned. Now we just do it, and we do have a lot of interest from other countries. Clearly having lyrics in Hindi doesn't bother prog fans."

Kazi and bassist Anish Nair joined the band in 2008, and had an immediate impact on the musical aspirations. "At first Coshish were more of an alternative band. But Anish and I brought

in our love of groups like Tool, Porcupine Tree, Opeth and Katatonia. So we became more progressive, and that's grown over the last few years."

These influences mean Coshish are very much in a minority on the local music scene. "There are loads of metal acts — one on every corner. And Hindi rock bands are usually alternative, which means we are regarded as being a little odd."

But the attention Coshish have been getting is slowly making its mark. "Right now, there are still very few progressive bands in the country. But we are getting loads of people now writing to us who are interested in what we're doing, so things could soon get better for prog [here]."

At the moment, there's no prospect of Coshish touring outside of the Indian subcontinent, as they intend to concentrate all of their efforts in that part of the world. "There are still so many places we haven't played here, so over the next couple of years we'll be fully occupied on touring India."

However, the band are already working on ideas for a second album and the opening song will be something of a surprise. "It's called *Revolving Sevens* and we perform it in a language we've made up! That's been done to stretch ourselves. But this will be the only song on the next album we'll do in that language. The rest will be in Hindi."

Yep, they definitely do things a little differently down India way! **MD**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP
Mangesh Gandhi (vocals/rhythm guitar), Shrikant Sreenivasan (lead guitar), Anish Nair (bass), Hamza Kazi (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE
Karnivool duelling with Tool in the native Indian tongue

CURRENT RELEASE
Firdous is out now via Universal Music India

WEBSITE
www.facebook.com/Coshish



"We've made an audio movie. People can rearrange songs and chose how the story develops..."



Coshish, from left to right: Shrikant Sreenivasan, Mangesh Gandhi, Anish Nair, Hamza Kazi.

STEVE DAVIS' INTERESTING ALTERNATIVE



FUTURE NOW

Steve's best of the rest of the year... this month!

Being 'Interesting' and 'Alternative', I thought I'd get in early this year with my best albums of 2014. No point in messing about this year, all other artists may as well just delay their releases until January 1, 2015.

I've never wanted this column to be elitist or make you think that I have a fantastic life and you have a shit one, but there are certain privileges bestowed upon people who can put a small ball into a slightly larger hole with a pointed stick. Namely, I get to host a radio show with a member of Gong every week, write about music that you probably know more about than I do and I get promo copies of the stuff and you don't. Deal with it!

First, the musical equivalent of Halley's comet, Stars In Battledress, have dusted off their reel to reel recorder and are set to dazzle you with a planned June release of their new album *In Droplet Form*. Hot on the heels of their future legendary 2003 debut album *Secrets And Signals* and beset with delays - like writing the tunes and thinking of the words and stuff - Richard and James Larcombe have made light work of the difficult second album with a collection of exquisite melodies, backed by quirky, intricate arrangements on this beautifully crafted record. It's intelligent music that gives the lyrical content of Canterbury bands more than just a good run for their money.

The track *Fluent English* has been reworked from the one donated to the various artists' *Central Element* CD, and many of their recent live pieces have been committed to ones and noughts to marvellous effect. Should you want a taster of this essential purchase then visit the *Interesting Alternative Show* page on

Mixcloud and search for the Stars In Battledress show re-cue, where they performed three live pieces along with some great choices from their own collections.

Second, in the world of music stealing that we live in (unless you consider file-sharing thievery a profitable loss leader for the artist) perhaps the Manchester band, Trojan Horse (pictured), have a distinct advantage. Even with an mp3 file extension, would you risk it?

Impossible to pin down to any genre, their second album *World Turned Upside Down* is due late summer and it's a monster! Where else could you find a single track that blends rock, psychedelia and reggae with a soupçon of the Beatles? The single

Paper Bells is already available on their Bandcamp page and gives clues to the onslaught to follow.

Trojan Horse and Stars In Battledress are glittering jewels of bands just waiting to be discovered... BY YOU!

Catch Steve's Interesting Alternative Radio Show every Monday 10pm-midnight at www.Phoenixfm.com



MY PROG HERO

...ing the wider music world...



INSET: TEAMROCK

Steven Wilson: now followed happily by Rob (above).

ROB TRUJILLO

The infectious groovy Metallica bass player has been floored by discovering our very own **Steven Wilson**.

"I'd been communicating with Nick Beggs about a film that we're making about [Weather Report bassist] Jaco Pastorius. He told me he was working with Steven Wilson. I'd heard of Steven but I wasn't familiar with his solo stuff. So he said they'd be in LA at the House Of Blues, and would I like to come? I came down absolutely not knowing what to expect and I came out of there a different person! It was really amazing and inspiring, and it touched a place in me creatively that was really powerful.

One of my friends is a drummer called Brooks Wackerman [from SoCal punks Bad Religion]. He's a fan of Porcupine Tree. The second time I went to see Steven Wilson with my wife, right up in the nosebleed seats at Club Nokia, there's this different drummer, not Marco. I'm like, 'Wow, that guy looks like a Wackerman!'

And it was Brooks's brother Chad! That show was on another level. I saw the video production, the animations... it was a huge moment for me. The collaboration with [animator] Jess Cope is really special. In a positive

way I'm almost jealous - I wish we had a collaborator like that for Metallica. It sounds crazy, but I love that stuff, and I'm a big fan of Pink Floyd and they use that visual side really well. When I saw *The Raven...* live, I had tears in my eyes, it was so powerful. Steven certainly opened that door for me again.

Now every time Steven comes through LA, I'll have to go. He's like a new artist for me to discover, and I'm excited for Nick because even for him this is new territory, and he has a lot of freedom. Each guy in the band has a strong stage presence, and you can see them blossoming with every gig.

I've waved the flag in Metallica for Steven Wilson. I think that when they see him live they'll be impressed. Metallica is certainly open to trying new things - Lou Reed, Lang Lang... go back to the *S&M* album with the symphony orchestra, that was a huge

step forward. There's a lot of possibilities for our future.

To me Steven ranks with Radiohead, Nine Inch Nails or the Beach Boys; he's capable of anything. I'm so happy that I found him!" JK



"I came out of his show a different person!"

PROG IN BRIEF

Asia Featuring John Payne (right) have released a new album of prog covers called *Recollections* via Cardo Tunes. The project includes re-worked versions of songs by King Crimson, Yes, Alan Parsons Project and Camel, among others.



Moon Gangs is the moniker of London-based producer Will Young (not that Will Young) who is about to release his debut EP, *Moon Gangs EP* on Sexbeat Records. The music is described as dark drone electronica in keeping with the likes of The Haxan Cloak.



WAKEMAN'S MUSIC EMPORIUM

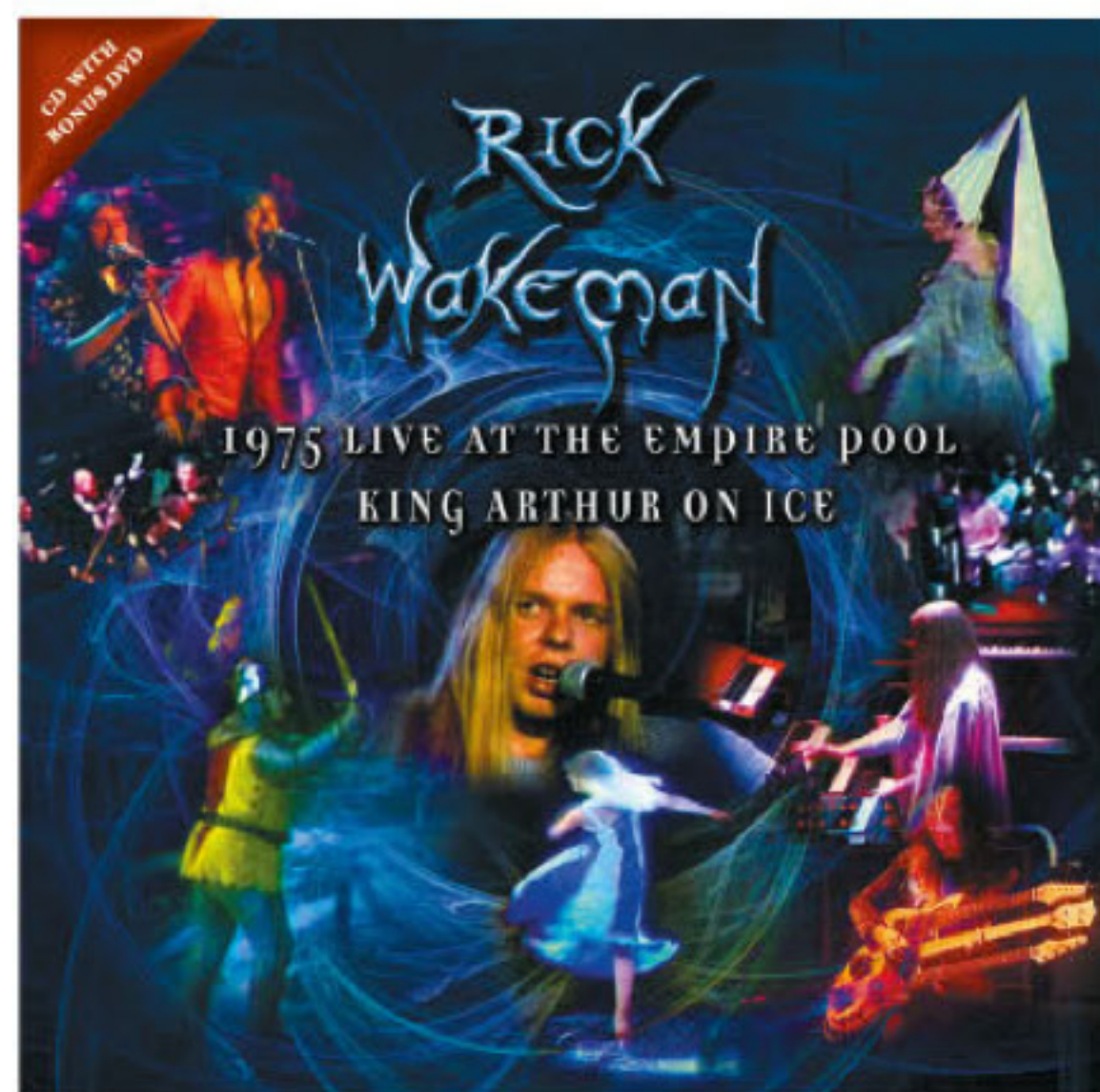
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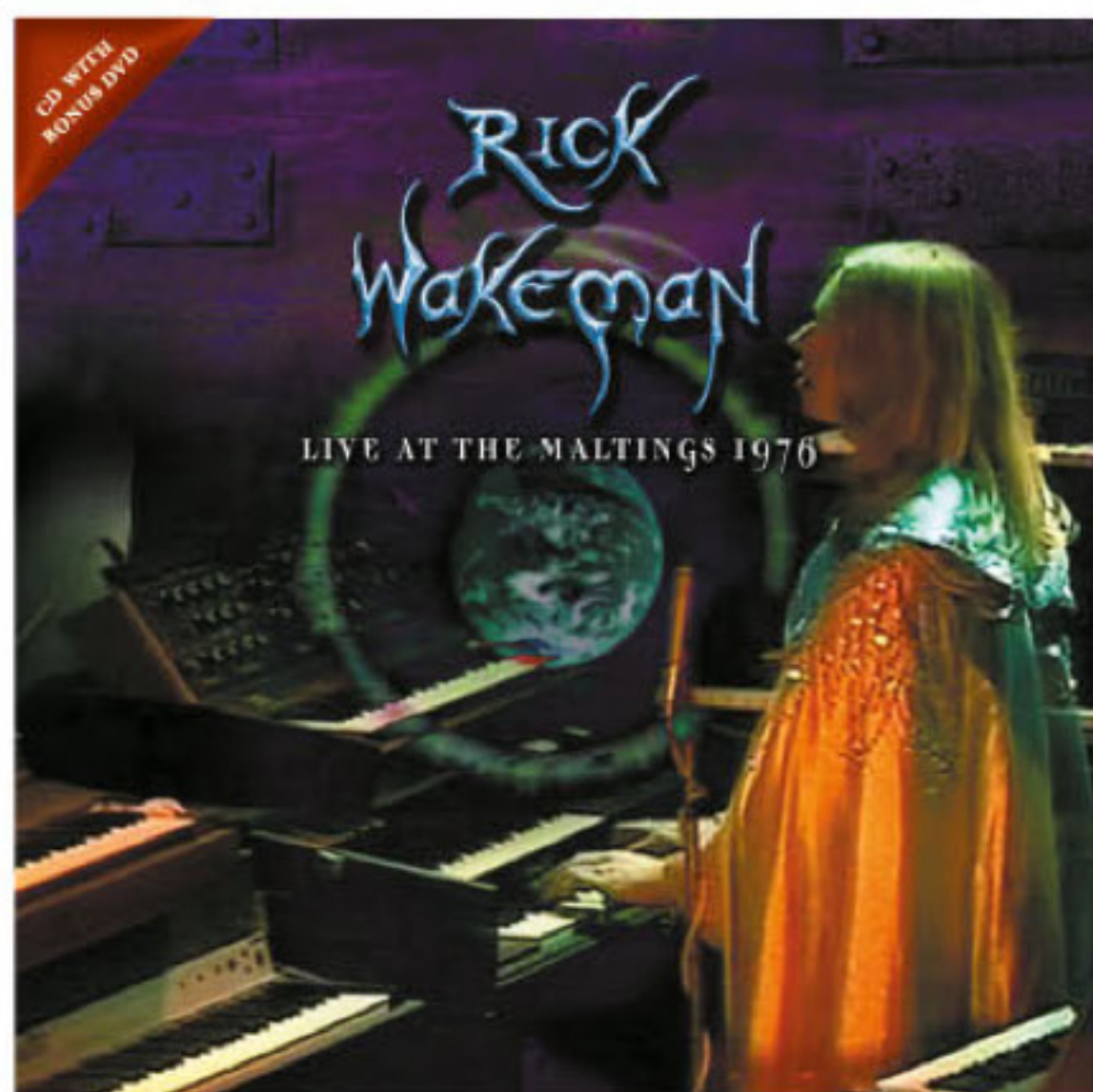


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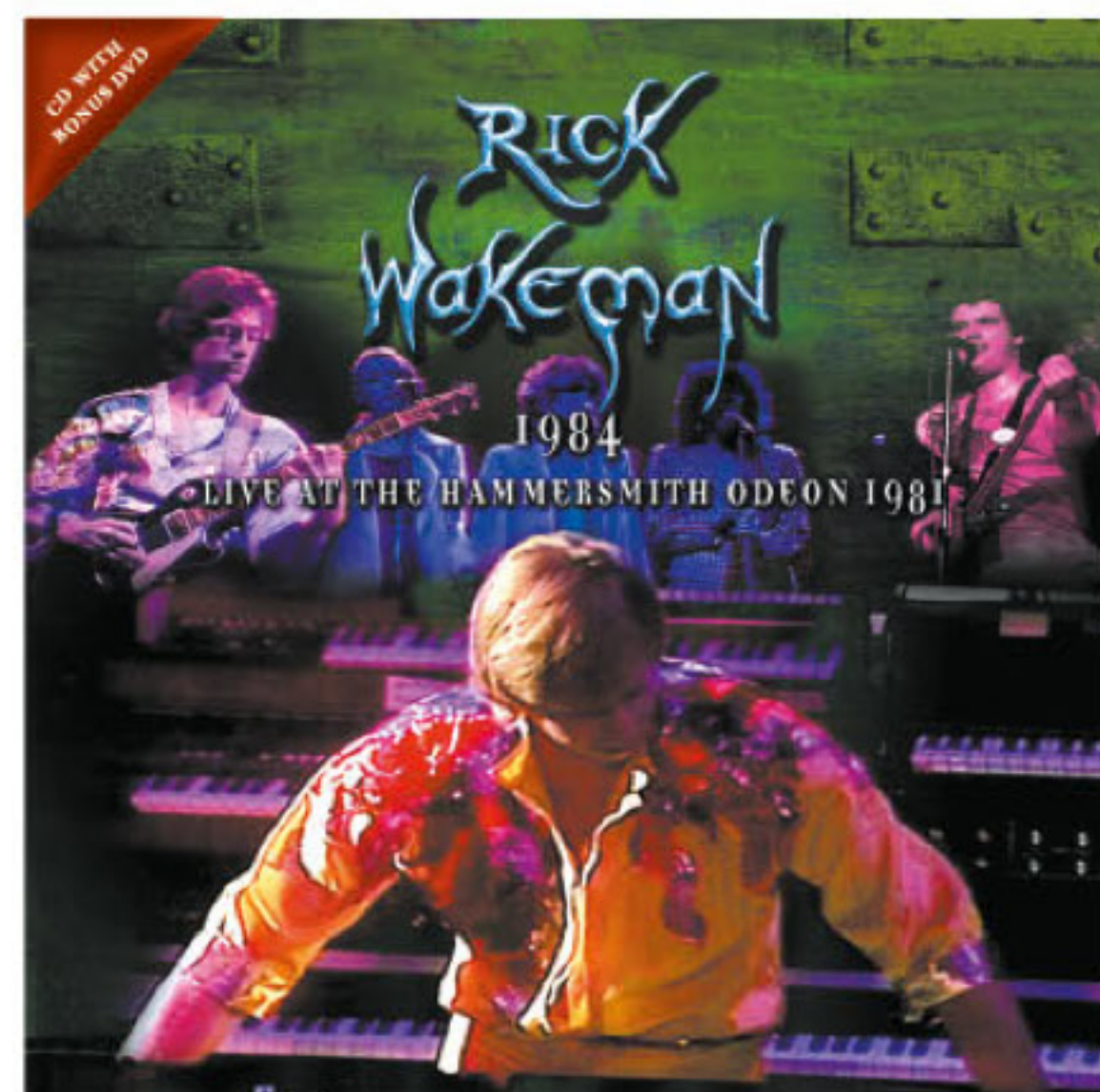
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LIVE AT THE MALTINGS 1976



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1984 LIVE AT HAMMERSMITH 1981





BENJAMIN BRITTEN THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA

(Decca, 1963)

► In the New Jerusalem of post-war Britain, Clement Attlee's government deemed high culture was to be the property of everyone and not just the privileged. To this end, in 1946 the Crown Film Unit commissioned director Muir Mathieson to make an easily-digestible introduction to the challenging sounds of classical music, a film called *Instruments Of The Orchestra*, to be shown in schools. Acclaimed composer Benjamin Britten was chosen to write the score, creating something rather special in *The Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra*.

Britten took a theme by the 17th-century English composer Henry Purcell and used this memorable melody to showcase the different sounds and tonal qualities of the various sections of the orchestra. The theme is introduced at the opening of the piece, and is then repeated by each section in turn. Variations of greater complexity deconstruct both the melody and the orchestra. As the orchestra splits into its separate sections, occasional snatches of the theme act like a cord securing you to your comfort zone as the boundaries of your musical appreciation are tried and tested. It's a challenge for the performers and conductor, too. A huge degree of individual virtuosity is needed to tackle the demanding score, but at no time at the expense of the collective endeavour. After several minutes of choreographed confusion, with textures and tempos transitioning seemingly at random, a wholly original fugue section brings the orchestra back to cohesion. Then with the crash of a gong, the brass section re-introduces Purcell's stirring original tune as a triumphant finale.

With source material from an earlier age, a dash of the dissonance of European modernism and the ever-present tension between the individual and the collective, *The Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra* is the essence of post-war Britain set to music, a Skylon in sound. For many years a staple of school music lessons, it introduced subsequent generations of listeners and musicians alike to what's possible when you take an established form and have some fun with it. Themes and variations, shifting tonality, challenging rhythms and structures all became part of rock music's sonic palette as the children of post-war Britain grew up. In the light of the musical ambitions of The Nice, and right up to Bryce Dessner and Johnny Greenwood, *The Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra* sounds like a template for progressive rock. It comes as no surprise to learn that Yes have used the fugue and finale as their live intro an impressive 262 times, and it's fitting that King Crimson, whose lyricist Peter Sinfield now resides in Aldeburgh, the town that Britten called home, were suitably influenced by its presentation to release a retrospective in 1978 entitled *A Young Person's Guide To King Crimson*.

ANDY LEWIS



ALL AROUND THE WORLD Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Java scripts: the boys from Clara craft a new chapter.

I KNOW YOU WELL MISS CLARA

Guitarist and songwriter **Reza Ryan** on the Indonesian music scene and learning John McLaughlin's guitar parts.

► You may be forgiven for thinking Indonesia doesn't have the most active prog or rock scene. Not so, says Reza Ryan, guitarist and composer for young Yogjakartan fusion band I Know You Well Miss Clara. "There are annual jazz festivals in the big cities, and there is a progressive music community, too," Ryan says. "In Yogyakarta it's more complex: there are jazz, classical/avant-garde composer forums, a Gamelan festival and a thriving metal scene."

Growing up in the city of Tegal, Central Java, Ryan was introduced to The Beatles and ABBA by his dad. His uncle played him Scorpions, Guns N' Roses and Metallica, and gave him his first guitar lessons. He went on to study classical guitar at the Indonesian Institute of Arts and drifted into jazz. But everything shifted when he bought a tape of Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds Of Fire*.

"My music orientation directly changed. I tried to play all John McLaughlin's guitar parts. My professor asked me to join his prog band. When that fizzled in 2010 I formed I Know You Well Miss Clara."

While Ryan's tastes spread from McLaughlin to the Canterbury sounds of Soft Machine, bassist

Enriko Gultom brings a Nirvana/Soundgarden palette to the band. Their superb keyboardist Andy Wijaya has also played with classical symphony orchestra, while drummer Alfiah Akbar loves punk rock. They all studied at the same university, but what connects them all is jazz, says Ryan. "That's the attitude we bring in IKYWMC."

The band are signed to New York label MoonJune Records and *Chapter One* is a formative but bold step at exploring this collective's wide-ranging sound. "I love being complicated," Ryan admits. "I love the wide range of velocity, intensity and sonority — three elements that people wouldn't ordinarily be aware of. Even a lot of jazz and prog rock doesn't have this sense of 'space'. I'm a technical guitar player but love being sloppy at the same time."

While they haven't played many shows yet, they plan to tour this year and record material for *Chapter Two*. "We've played some jazz festivals and prog music events," he says, "but it seems we are about to have some busy years ahead." **GRM**

Chapter One is out now on MoonJune Records. More at tinyurl.com/hvmvzkb.



"I love being complicated. I love the wide range of velocity, intensity and sonority."

PROG IN BRIEF

Grumbling Fur, Alexander Tucker's side-project with Mothlite and Aethenor musician Daniel O'Sullivan, have announced a string of UK festival dates. Catch them in Salford (May 4), Brighton (May 8), London (June 20 and 21) and Glasgow (August 23).



Forty years of one of Canada's biggest rock bands are being celebrated at **RUSHfest Scotland** on May 17. Attractions include a Q&A, drum clinic and live performance from tribute act Moving Pictures. All proceeds will be donated to MacMillan Cancer Support.

ANIMALS AS LEADERS

Reinventing technical instrumentals for the modern age - with the aid of Periphery!

IT'S BEEN FIVE years since Washington trio Animals As Leaders stunned the world with their self-titled instrumental debut, heading a new wave of younger, heavier progressive bands alongside fellow scene heroes Periphery and Tesseract. With their third album, *The Joy Of Motion*, bandleader Tosin Abasi wanted to rediscover the roots of the project and go back to the original sound he heard in his head.

"Animals As Leaders was actually born with Misha Mansoor [who plays guitar in Periphery] collaborating with us, so it felt right to bring him back on board," says the virtuoso eight-string guitarist. "He co-wrote a lot of the songs with me, about eight of them in the end. And some of the material pre-dates tracks on our first album - *Tooth And Claw*, for example, I came up with a long time ago."

As it turns out, Mansoor wasn't the only member of Periphery to get involved. "So Misha recommended their bass player Nolly [Getgood] to us for producing and mixing, who was perfect for the job. They're such an amazing band and old friends of ours, so it worked really well."

While instrumental music is perhaps more widely accepted by fans of the forward-thinking, progressive end of the sonic spectrum, it's certainly a movement that comes with its own pitfalls and limitations. An awareness of these challenges has helped Tosin and his bandmates refine their approach over the years.

"We wanted to start approaching our music completely differently," says Tosin. "I probably ended

up playing only a quarter of the notes I did on the other albums, which maybe focused more on the technical side of playing. Instrumental albums are often made by musicians for musicians, so we wanted to keep things tuneful and hold the listener's attention. We're hoping our new ideas will help more people absorb something from it."

The result is a perfectly crafted 52 minutes of breathtaking futuristic fusion, with keyboards and electronics gelling over the warmth of subterranean riffs and cool breeze of mesmerising guitar leads. *The Joy Of Motion* feels much more universally cohesive than anything Animals As Leaders have recorded to date - with a catchiness most unusual for music of its nature - and looks set to spur Tosin's profile as a guitar hero for the modern age and seal further endorsements as one of the world's greatest.

"It's strange, I've never thought of myself as one of the best," he laughs, with sincere charm and genuine modesty. "What is the best and how does one measure that? Is it the person who's able to write a beautiful song that moves people? Or someone able to retune their instrument to something completely new and invent their own scales? I think Guthrie Govan [The Aristocrats, Steven Wilson] could probably be the closest: his phrasing and skill is just incredible. On YouTube you can see all these amazing young musicians shredding away, so it's getting pretty hard to tell these days!" **AS**

PROG FILE



TAP for more

LINE-UP

Tosin Abasi (guitar)
Javier Reyes (guitar)
Matt Garstka (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

Allan Holdsworth, Steve Vai and Meshuggah forming a band based on their mutual love for Ozric Tentacles

CURRENT RELEASE

The Joy Of Motion, out now on Sumerian

WEBSITE

facebook.com/animalsasleaders



"We approached this album differently. I only played a quarter of the notes I played before!"

Animals As Leaders,
l-r: Matt Garstka, Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes.



GOING FOR THE ONE?



VIEW PICTURES/116/GETTY DE AGOSTINI/GETTY

GO FOR IT TWICE!

New shows, new time, double the prog!
*The **PROG** Magazine Radio Show* is now on air
on Saturdays *and* Sundays...

That's right, **from March 2014** *The Prog Magazine Radio Show* will be double the size. On Saturdays presenter Philip Wilding will bring you news, reviews and the cream of burgeoning young bands while *Prog* Sundays will host the usual mix of classic tracks, star interviews and reader requests that have made *TPMRS* the most listened-to specialist show on TeamRock radio to date.

TEAMROCK
RADIO

The Prog Magazine Show, Saturdays and Sundays from 8pm on DAB, radioplayer and TuneIn app and at www.teamrockradio.com. Tell us what you think at twitter.com/ProgMagazineUK and www.facebook.com/progrockmag.



RADIOWAVES

Prog is on the air every week on DAB, online and on radioplayer and TuneIn apps!

As well as the usual selection of fine progressive music, that spans the entire genre that you can hear every week on the *Prog Magazine Radio Show*, presenter **Philip Wilding** (right) has been joined in the studio most recently by **The Reasoning** and **Touchstone**, discussing the forthcoming Trinity charity show at Leamington Assembly Room on May 18, and by Asia's **John Wetton**, where the subject of Dave Ling's recent review of the new Asia album *Gravitas*, which John took to Twitter to complain about, might just be raised!



Future guests to keep your ears peeled for will also include **Gazpacho**, **Matt Stevens** and elusive Pineapple Thief **Bruce Soord** – but we'll always keep you updated on *Prog* magazine website, Facebook and Twitter.

If you've missed a recent show you can hear the last five via our On Demand service at www.teamrockradio.com/on-demand. And you can get involved with the show too by sending your requests to progshow@teamrockradio.com, or join us on Twitter while the show is on air for a lively dose of progastic banter.

The *Prog Magazine Radio Show* airs every Saturday and Sunday from 8pm-10pm on www.teamrockradio.com. Tune in, turn on and prog out! See you at the weekend... **JE**



HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene's supporting crew



Giacomo (right) with muse Bernocchi. A rare pair indeed.

RARENOISE RECORDS

Giacomo Bruzzo on moving from the City to curate a truly extraordinary label. (He's read Dante, you know.)

As a kid Giacomo Bruzzo's musical tastes spread from Mahavishnu to Paul Simon to Italy's PFM and Banco Del Mutuo Soccorso. Later came jazz, instrumental hip-hop, Japanese extreme music, and the many genres straddled by his all-time artist fétiche, Bill Laswell. By 2006 Bruzzo had worked in Asset Management in the City and studied for a PhD in maths at Imperial College, but then he "started asking myself some very fundamental questions about what I was doing and why," he says. "This led to my shelving my research and finding a path into the arts."

He contacted Italian avant-garde musician Eraldo Bernocchi and started financing projects such as Bernocchi's live performances with Nils Petter Molvaer in Genoa, and from there he launched his pioneering London-based label, RareNoise. From Lorenzo Feliciati, Brainkiller, InterStatic and Merzbow to recent signings Chat Noir, Plymouth and The New Standard, the roster oozes quality, and all take music on fascinating tangents.

With artistic input from Bernocchi, Bruzzo ran the label from his home at first, teaching himself the industry from scratch from books, surrounded by "over-optimistic" towers of early releases. "It was terrifying, but also incredibly empowering," says Bruzzo. "We felt we were building something from nothing, leaning against the wind of prevailing wisdom." Slowly the label established itself with notable releases – Bernocchi's *Winter Garden*, David Fiuczynski's *Planet MicroJam* and Naked Truth's *Ouroboros*.

Bruzzo and Bernocchi listen to a lot of prospective material, and discard most of it, but once in a while are surprised enough by something new to act. "Our music's aimed at listeners who are curious, maybe slightly obsessive-compulsive," says Bruzzo, "We want to provide an

intellectual knife to carve through layers and layers of information – like Virgil in Dante's quest across the three realms." Has your Asset Manager read *The Divine Comedy*? **GRM**

Find out more at www.rarenoiserecords.com.

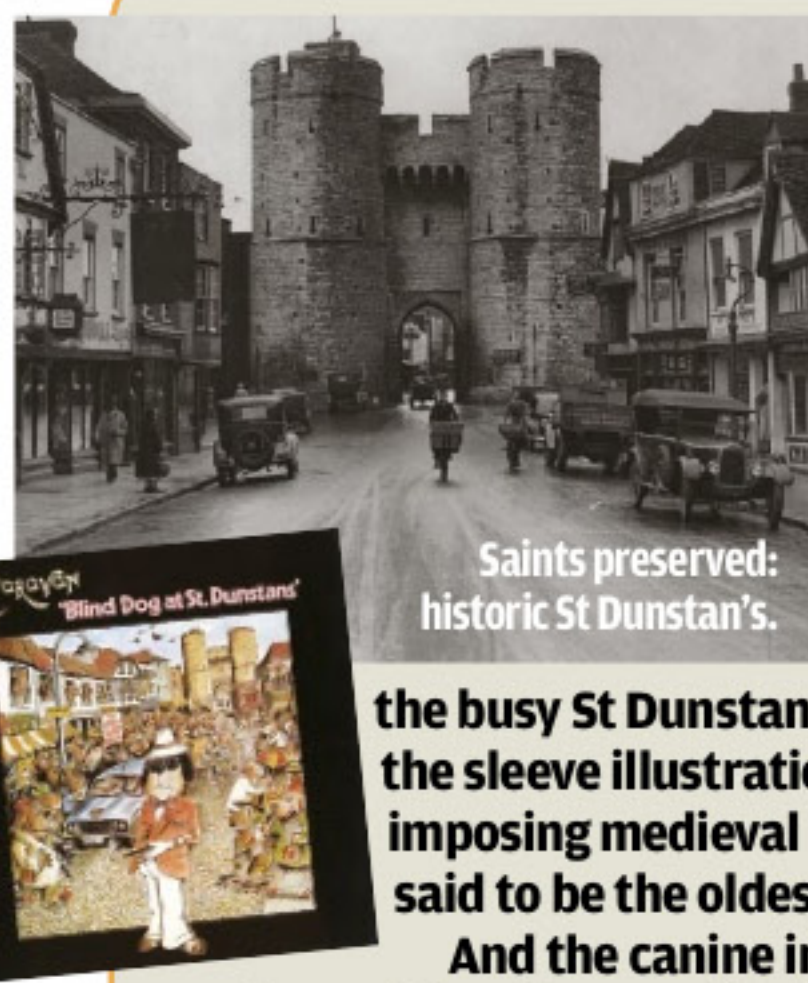


"We felt we were leaning against the wind of prevailing wisdom."



LOCUS FOCUS

Rock gazetteer **David Roberts** puts prog on the map.



Saints preserved: historic St Dunstan's.

NO.2 ST DUNSTAN'S STREET IN CANTERBURY

Caravan were one of several bands that spawned the Canterbury Scene in the 60s and they paid tribute to their locality on the cover of their 1976 hit album *Blind Dog At St Dunstan's*. The Kent proggers were frequent visitors to the city centre's pubs and

the busy St Dunstan's Street, which is captured on the sleeve illustration. In the background is the imposing medieval Westgate gatehouse, which is said to be the oldest in England.

And the canine in the title? His roots have more creative origins. The smartly-dressed pooch was indirectly inspired by Noël Coward. When a small child asked the eloquent playwright why a dog was mounting another, his witty reply was: "The doggie in front is blind and his friend behind is pushing him all the way to St Dunstan's." Saint Dunstan himself was Archbishop of Canterbury in the tenth century who shares his name with a blind serviceman's charity. So now you know.

To find where the blind dog stood, head for Westgate, located where the main A290 crosses the Great Stour River in Canterbury city centre.

St Dunstan's Street is location No.135 in *Rock Atlas UK*, published by Ovolo Books/Red Planet, price £19.95.



PROG IN BRIEF

Protest The Hero (right) have announced that bassist Arif Mirabdolbaghi is no longer playing with them on the *Volition* tour due to "other projects". They have not confirmed that he has left. Cam McLellan is standing in for him.



British psych-rock quartet **Syd Arthur** will release their new album *Sound Mirror* through Harvest Records on June 2. It comes just two years after their debut. Catch the band in person at Live In Leeds on May 3 and The Great Escape in Brighton on May 9.

United Progressive Fraternity will be performing at Summer's End this September. The band features former members of Unitopia and will release their album *Fall In Love With the World* in October, featuring Jon Anderson and Steve Hackett.

Prog-shoegazers **Dream The Electric Sleep** have released their second album *Heretics*. The band's diverse influences include Pink Floyd and King Crimson as well as Radiohead, Ride and Catherine Wheel. The self-produced full-length took two years to complete.

top of the progs

The Prog Top 30 Albums

May 2014

Powered by 

- 1 **IAN ANDERSON** Homo Erraticus (CALLIANDRA)
- 2 **XTC** Skylarking (APE)
- 3 **YES** The Yes Album (PANEGRIC)
- 4 **GAZPACHO** Demon (KSCOPE)
- 5 **JOHN WESLEY** Disconnect (INSIDEOUT)
- 6 **NICK MAGNUS** N'Monix (ESOTERIC ANTENNA)
- 7 **PORCUPINE TREE** Octane Twisted (KSCOPE)
- 8 **STEVEN WILSON** Cover Version (KSCOPE)
- 9 **YES** Close To The Edge (PANEGRIC)
- 10 **XTC** Nonsuch (APE)
- 11 **SE DELAN** The Fall (KSCOPE)
- 12 **MATT STEVENS** Lucid (ESOTERIC ANTENNA)
- 13 **KING CRIMSON** Live in Milan, June 20th 2003 (PANEGRIC)
- 14 **JETHRO TULL** Live In Switzerland 2003 (LET THEM EAT VINYL)
- 15 **PORCUPINE TREE** Fear Of A Blank Planet (ROADRUNNER)
- 16 **KING CRIMSON** Live in Philadelphia, PA, August 26th 1996 (PANEGRIC)
- 17 **RUSH** Rush (Rediscovered) (UNIVERSAL)
- 18 **THE CRIMSON PROJEKT** Live In Tokyo (INSIDEOUT)
- 19 **HATFIELD AND THE NORTH** Hatwise Choice (HATCO)
- 20 **FRIPP & ENO** No Pussyfooting (PANEGRIC)
- 21 **HALO EFFECT** Halo Effect (BURNING SHED)
- 22 **ANATHEMA** Universal (KSCOPE)
- 23 **STEVEN WILSON** The Raven That Refused To Sing (KSCOPE)
- 24 **STEVE HOGARTH AND RICHARD BARBIERI** Arc Light (RACKET)
- 25 **MAGMA** Trilogy (CHARLY)
- 26 **COLIN EDWIN/LORENZO FELICIATI** Twinscapes (RARE NOISE)
- 27 **MIKE KENEALLY** Wing Beat Fantastic: Songs Written By Mike Keneally & Andy Partridge (EXOWAX)
- 28 **TRANSATLANTIC** Kaleidoscope (INSIDEOUT)
- 29 **YES** Essentially Yes (RHINO)
- 30 **LED ZEPPELIN** Led Zeppelin I (WARNERS)

Find out more at www.burningshed.com

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- b) Giuseppe Garibaldi
- c) Alberto Ginastera

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Find out more at www.emersonlakeandpalmer.com.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from April 23 to May 27 2014. Postal entries can be sent to: Prog, Team Rock, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. By entering online you agree to our competition rules and you confirm you are happy to receive details of future offers and promotions from Team Rock and carefully selected third parties. The winner will be drawn at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of TeamRock or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity which has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition.

US, THEM & YOU

What's got us grooving this month...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing



ANATHEMA

Distant Satellites
KSCOPE

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



ANIMALS AS LEADERS

The Joy Of Motion
PROSTHETIC

The Lone Office Lady
Jo Kendall



PLANK!

Hivemind
AKOUSTIK ANARKHY

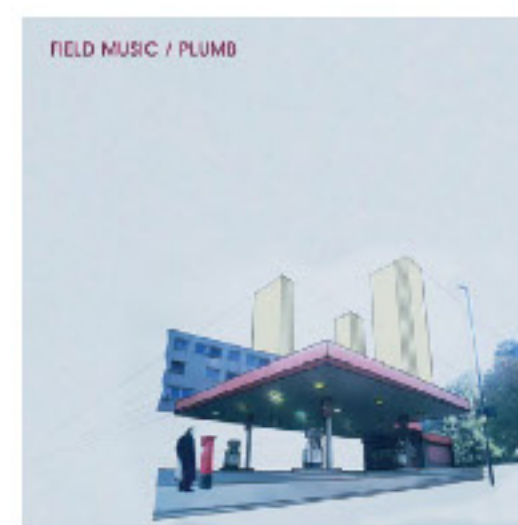
The Contributor
Polly Glass



DJAM KARET

Regenerator 3017
HC PRODUCTIONS

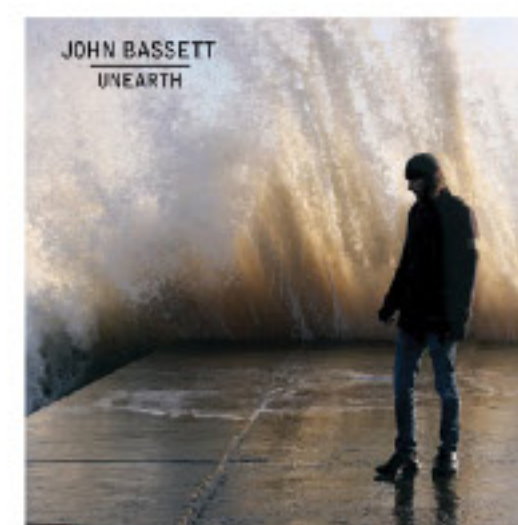
The Musician
Richard Barbieri



FIELD MUSIC

Plumb
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

The Reader
Jim Radford



JOHN BASSETT

Unearth
STEREOHEAD

INTERVALS

Canadians get vocal about breaking the tech-metal rules.

INTERVALS LIVE 'JUST down the street' from Protest The Hero, Canada's mathcore masters who took their hardcore punk roots in a progressive direction and never looked back. "I grew up on those guys," says Intervals' fast-talking guitarist Aaron Marshall, "so it's great to come on tour with them. This is their tenth time in Europe."

Veterans PTH may be, but it's Intervals' first time in the UK and, with Tesseract and The Safety Fire in tow, it's kind of a big deal. "Oslo is probably my favourite place so far — it reminds me of Canada," says Marshall. "But the whole thing's been amazing. It's a fantastic tour."

Intervals are the latest crew to join the legion of artists playing with technical progressive sounds following the popularity of Chimp Spanner, Periphery, Scale The Summit and Textures, but while those bands veer towards what we commonly know as 'djent' — characterised by crunchy power chords — Intervals are doing something a little sweeter and, dare we say it, radio friendly.

"A lot of the influences that I cite are tech-metal related but we took a lot of chances with song structure on our album. I'd say it's closer to pop rock or radio rock in the way it's conveyed. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel every couple of measures — it's more about memorable hooks and giant choruses."

A Voice Within is Intervals' debut album and their first record with a singer, in this case Mike Semesky,

formerly of UK prog metallers The Haarp Machine.

"We expected a bit of a backlash considering that the band have been touring and operating as an instrumental band, but we never really ruled out having a vocalist in the first place — we just couldn't find the right guy. There are too many perceived rules. People seem to think that once you put out a release as an instrumental band that you can't have a singer, but who's to say that? It's up to us, is it not?"

Besides Marshall and his bass-playing singer Semesky, Intervals are galvanised by Lukas Guyader on second guitar, plus the percussive talent of Anup Sastry, pinched from Skyharbor, and whom Marshall met through his friend Matt Halpern of Periphery.

In 2013 the band went into the studio to record *A Voice Within* with Jordan Valeriote, a producer better known for his work with pop-rock bands. "I think he helped us to put a really good spin on our approach and in the end we got a unique product and a clean-sounding record."

Brimming with chunky riffs, it's undoubtedly both 'tech' and 'metal', but the ebb and flow of jazz-fusion melodies, electronic motifs and Semesky's smooth, appealing vocals transplant the band.

"The sky's the limit with prog," Marshall enthuses. "We're a progressive metal band and we do what we want. We're still going to present it in a clean fashion — it's our art to shape." **HW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Aaron Marshall (guitar), **Mike Semesky** (vocals), **Lukas Guyader** (guitar), **Anup Sastry** (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

If US pop punk got hooked on Meshuggah and took it on an ambi-jazz journey

CURRENT RELEASE

A Voice Within is self-released through districtlines.com/Intervals-US

WEBSITE

facebook.com/intervalsmusic



"We're a progressive metal band and we do what we want."

Intervals, l-r: Lukas Guyader, Aaron Marshall, Mike Semesky and Anup Sastry.



NINETAILS

Sun-drenched, West Coast avant-pop harmonies, straight outta, erm, Liverpool.

NINETAILS ARE A Liverpool band, but scallies they are not. They're about as far from the lad-rock of Cast and The La's as it's possible to get. Then again, they're not originally from Merseyside. In fact, mainman Jordan Balaber, who also writes the music and lyrics, is from Virginia in the United States. He and the other Ninetails met at Sir Paul McCartney's Liverpool Institute For Performing Arts in 2010, and now share a house in the Georgian quarter (who knew Liverpool had a Georgian quarter?), spending every waking hour inflicting their intricate, complex prog-pop on their neighbours.

"We don't play our music very loud," insists Balaber, who actually prefers the term 'avant-pop'. "We live next door to a jazz bar and that's significantly louder than us, so we usually complain to them about the noise."

Ninetails have achieved what Midlake – and Genesis – have done before them: lost their frontman, only to go on to bigger (and arguably better) things.

Ed Black used to be Balaber's writing partner before he left to pursue other things. Indeed, Ninetails' bassist Philip Morris described the pair as "the Lennon and McCartney of the band". Now that the Lennon of the piece has gone, the group's McCartney has been left to his own devices. Or at least, it's a McCartney – with a similar melodic sense to the Beatle – eager to overtake his rival Brian Wilson, just as Macca was for a brief period in the mid-60s.

"I'm obsessed with the Beach Boys' version of *Smile*," admits Balaber of Wilson's far-out masterpiece from 1966–67, which saw him and lyrical partner Van Dyke Parks fly too close to the sun

on a project that didn't see the light of day until the 21st century. In the process, it became rock's most mythologised album that never was. "That's where all the vocal harmonies in Ninetails come from. I was buying bootlegs of *Smile* long before its release [as 2004's *Brian Wilson Presents Smile* and 2011's *The Smile Sessions*]. I was always on blogs downloading different versions of the album."

Balaber, who grew up a fan of US sunshine and baroque pop, as well as early Yes, can see elements of *Smile*'s mystical and religious atmosphere in Ninetails' latest EP, *Quiet*

Confidence. He notes that Wilson used to refer to *Smile* as "a teenage symphony to God" and says: "There are definitely elements of that in *Quiet Confidence*, in its aesthetic: it's grandiose music, very poetic and colourful, intricate and complex."

It's music of abrupt, ecstatic shifts and bursts, to denote sudden, epiphanic moments. "It's supposed to be celebratory, hence it's pretty relentlessly euphoric and epic," Balaber explains, adding that the overarching theme is devotion.

"It's about how devotion causes us to behave and how, when we fall in love, the ecstasy of making love causes you to shape your life around pursuing that ecstasy and how that can diminish over time, so you have your first big hit and it's amazing, and then..."

It sounds very highfalutin. But is this really just about Balaber? "Yeah," he admits, "but it's pretty personal, so I don't really want to divulge."

Fair enough. Luckily the music, which is shape-shifting, radiant, artful and itchy – does all the talking for him. **PL**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Jordan Balaber (vocals, instruments, field recordings), **Jacob King** (percussion, production), **Philip Morris** (bass)

SOUNDS LIKE

Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden* with Beach Boys harmonies circa *Smile*

CURRENT RELEASE

Quiet Confidence is out now via Pond Life

WEBSITE

www.ninetailsband.co.uk

"I'm obsessed with the Beach Boys version of *Smile* - that's where our vocal harmonies come from."



Smile for the camera... or maybe not. Ninetails l-r: Jacob 'Ling' King, Jordan Balaber and Philip Morris.



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BARRY HOGAN

Ditching Lighthouse Family live bookings to create conceptual events curated by Mogwai, Portishead and *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, now the ATP festival founder has a naughtily named Top 40 artist, too.

Words: Jo Kendall **Portrait:** Kevin Nixon

“I

have my brothers to thank for the initial spark. Whenever they went out I'd be playing their records – particularly the *Rocky* soundtrack, which I loved!

Through them I first heard Echo And The Bunnymen, then discovered all their influences – Leonard Cohen, The Doors, Velvet Underground – opening a door to weirder stuff. As a schoolkid in Muswell Hill in north London, I'd meet likeminded souls who'd have bands scrawled on their pencil cases and bags.

We'd swap records, then I got obsessed with The Smiths and that made me interested in the Rough Trade label and record shops.

I found **The Sugarcubes**, along with Pixies and Breeders, looking at the College Rock Chart in the back of *Rolling Stone*, when I was about 15. In *NME* Guy Chadwick from The House Of Love said **Bjork's** voice had blown his mind. When I first played them I thought, 'What is this fucking shit?' and found [co-vocalist] Einar really annoying. Then I got it – it was a weird, B-52s type thing. Even now I listen to it all the time, Bjork's vocal on *Birthday*, from *Life's Too Good* is out of control. That's a band I'd like to reunite.

What I like about Bjork is that she's really hungry for music and into Lightning Bolt, Death Grips and good hip-hop. When she lived in New York with her partner Matthew Barney, they'd have black metal shows in their place, free to get in. Who else does that?

Funkadelic are another band recommended to me at school, and *Hardcore Jollies* is my favourite album. Eddie Hazel is one of the most underrated guitar players. It's the prog side of funk and it shows them as a great psychedelic rock band, one that could sadly end up forgotten.

One night I was at a Pop Will Eat Itself gig and someone said to me, want to come and see **Sonic Youth**? So I went to the Kilburn National on the *Daydream Nation* tour. I didn't get it at first, it was too abrasive, but I fancied their bassist, Kim Gordon. But once I bought the record, I found an avant-rock masterpiece. People don't make records like that anymore. A real highlight for me was getting them to play it as part of our Don't Look Back shows [ATP's conceptual event where artists play their defining album in its entirety, track by track]. I'd met their friend and producer

Don Fleming at our Teenage Fanclub *Bandwagonesque* show. He inspired me to take the plunge. I came home super-drunk and fired off an email to their frontman Thurston Moore, saying 'I saw your good friend Don tonight, we both think you should do *Daydream Nation* as a Don't Look Back show.' I'd meant to write 'You could make about a million', but I was so drunk I wrote 'millions'. Next thing, I get a call saying 'Yeah, we'll do this!' We ended up taking them to Primavera in Barcelona and started my relationship with that festival. We got them good fees on lots of shows and they probably *did* make millions.

When I was starting out I worked at the venue Dingwalls in Camden. I was the person who answered the phone and held the date for bookings. I dealt with groups such as The Lighthouse Family, which was soul-destroying. I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great to start a promotions company where you only put on bands that were in your record collection?' So I set up a company called Foundation and the first band I promoted was **Tortoise**. I wrote to them and said I was this big promoter and listed all these bands I'd put on. It was lies! But they went for it and I put them on at The Electric Ballroom in Camden, with Bristol experimentalists **Flying Saucer Attack**, totally not knowing what I was doing. Afterwards they said, 'We really liked the minimal lighting', but I'd actually forgotten we needed lights, we just used two spots that were there. I did a note-to-self: must get lights.

Once I'd discovered Tortoise I found that all the members had interesting projects and that led me to the pioneers of post-rock, **Slint**. Their second album *Spiderland* was just 'wow'. I think it was [Fugazi frontman] Ian McKaye who that Slint are our generation's Velvet Underground, they influenced bands that went on to be much bigger such as **Mogwai** and **Godspeed You! Black Emperor**.

Another band from my early promotions was **Red Snapper** – an electronic jazz trio and totally brilliant. They were signed to Warp so I met Steve Beckett from that label and he loaded us up with records. Warp's early catalogue is incredible, so ahead of its time. I already liked **Squarepusher**, **Aphex Twin** and **Autechre**, then I discovered **Black Dog**, and **Boards Of Canada**, who really stood out in that ambient electronic style. Now they have **Flying Lotus** [the great-nephew of Alice and John Coltrane] and electronica is coming back. Warp exposed me to a lot of great music, and **Autechre** were one of our best curators with the darkest, heaviest line-ups. They chose to put on drone lords **SunnO)))** – who had a punch-up on stage because one of them missed a note! Their record with **Boris**, *Altar*, we did that as a show in New York and people were saying, 'This music, what is it?' It was so powerful, slow and heavy. But people still said, 'How can you end a festival with this?' 'Cos it's fucking great, and they just keep getting better and better!

Portishead are another band that just get better as they go along, and *Third* was incredible. What they did, no-one had done before. They all bring in different influences. Geoff Barrow loves the heavy and weird stuff that we do. Adrian Utley likes minimal music, then Beth Gibbons loves folk. They make music for themselves and don't do what people expect them to do. They curated a weekend for us in 2008. Now we swap tunes. They're pretty inspiring.

In 2000 Mogwai curated our first All Tomorrow's Parties holiday camp weekend. We'd try to be like the labels we used to collect – Sub Pop, Domino, Dischord – and present things that people may not be that familiar with but they'll try it because they trust us. The events had a feel of being a mixtape for the stage.

This led to us doing our own label, ATP Recordings. In 2001 Tortoise were curating the second ATP festival and I thought if we did a compilation of bands playing at the festival it would be additional promo. Then **Bardo Pond** and **Threnody Ensemble** asked to be signed. The feel was very experimental to start with and now we have **Fuck Buttons**, who sell 40,000 records. Me and [Hogan's wife and business partner] Deborah saw them when they were just playing gigs on the floor of clubs and venues. There was the argument that they'd never get commercial success with the name. Now we've had a Top 40 album!"

ATP's Jabberwocky event, featuring Neutral Milk Hotel, Darkside, Caribou and more, takes place on August 15-16 at Excel London. Don't Look Back may return this autumn. See www.atpfestival.com for info.

"I came home super-drunk and fired off an email to Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore saying he could make millions."





PETER GABRIEL

The prog legend tells us about mocking himself on TV, the perils of embracing new technology and stepping back in time 25 years to revisit the classic *So* on stage...

Words: Paul Sexton

Both for those who bathed in the glorious sounds and visions of Peter Gabriel's 02 Arena shows of last autumn, and for those who missed them, the new *Back To Front* film is a treat to behold. Directed by BAFTA-winning Hamish Hamilton, it has the 25th (ish) anniversary recreation of the *So* album at its core, served as part of a self-styled "three-course meal" that's a real feast for Gabriel fans. We quizzed the Progfather on the release – and a certain recent comedy TV guest appearance.

Before we do anything, we must talk about you on a Segway in a park, in your brilliant cameo in the recent *The Life Of Rock With Brian Pern* mockumentary. That looked like fun.

The series made me laugh a lot, and it didn't really feel malicious, even though there are a lot of laughs at my expense. My family, for the most part, thought it was very funny. There were some lovely cameos – I particularly liked Reeves and Mortimer, and Paul Whitehouse. It's possibly in danger of doing [for me] what *Ab Fab* did for Lynne Franks. I think they're talking about another one now, and I imagine there would be more old musos involved.

With the *Back To Front* DVD, were there any moments from the huge scale of the live show that you were nervous wouldn't convert particularly well for home viewing?

I think you try and work within the rules of the medium you're in. I enjoyed working with Hamish Hamilton a lot before and he's good at grabbing the moment, in all its different aspects. There were only a couple of things where we were struggling. One was *Sledgehammer*, and then he had the idea of trying to integrate some 'Sledgehammer through the years', which I enjoyed a lot.

That was a reminder of what you did with the *So* DNA disc in the 25th-anniversary box set, showing how its songs evolved from early demos to their ultimate realisation.

I like that. With my favourite artists, I've always wanted to hear their process as much as the end product. I would still like that today with some people I enjoy a lot. How and why people make decisions is part of what makes them interesting.

Are you happy with how the show comes across on DVD?

Yeah, and I never mind faking it a bit. I had a filthy cold on the night we were filming, so there's bits of vocals that have been grabbed from German shows. I'm always happy to talk about that stuff. You do the best you can on the night, and then you assemble whatever you can to make it work for repeated viewing, because it's tougher sometimes outside of the live situation. It's only artifice when you're pretending it's something that it isn't.

You didn't opt to go 3D this time.

Not on this one. For many years, I've been a fan of 3D. I think we're not far away from having 3D without glasses because there is still some effort involved. That might be a good moment to look at it again, assuming I'm still up and at it.

But you've always enjoyed being on the cutting edge of new audio-visual technology.

Yes. As my dad was an inventor, the latest toy is always something I'll look out for. The advantage is that you get to pioneer stuff and play with it before other people. The disadvantage is that it doesn't all work. I do tend to do that. This time we couldn't get the picture to sync up with the sound with these cameras – they had to be laid in manually in an old-fashioned way, frame by frame, so that was tough for the editors.

With the portrayal of *So*, you obviously wanted to show the history of the album.

Yeah, and we haven't changed at all in 30 years! [laughs].

Well, Tony Levin hasn't.

No, Tony is extraordinary. Whatever he's taking, we need. But yeah, you want to try to get as much of what was there in Round 1, and let it live and breathe as Round 2, and I felt fairly comfortable with that in the end.

Some songs from *So* have been live staples since the album came out. Are there any you hadn't performed in the interim?

I had done *We Do What We're Told* before we did that album, but not much after, because at the time we couldn't get it to sound good. There was the discipline of playing everything in the order in which it was intended, but it wasn't just that we'd scored the record and were reproducing it note for note – there are some slight variations. A song like *That Voice Again* we did in a slightly different way.

Are there any other echoes from the original *So* era?

I brought back the moving lights thing, which we'd done 25 years ago. That's just camera booms with lights stuck on the end and I enjoyed that again because it always felt quite moody, and I don't think anybody else has really done it in the intervening period. So that felt familiar. But the rest of it, I have a slightly different team now and obviously there's a very different set of technology. It's a lot easier to do different things now.

Back To Front is released by Eagle Rock in DVD, Blu-ray and Deluxe editions on June 14. See www.petergabriel.com for more information.

"The advantage is that you get to pioneer stuff. The disadvantage is that it doesn't all work..."



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A FEAST OF
CONSEQUENCES



The Adventure Continues...

The Herculean effort of taking *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* back on the road for its 40th anniversary celebrations has finally come to fruition. On the eve of the tour that every prog fan has been waiting for, **Rick Wakeman** explains how he's put together the ultimate show. Bring forth the golden cape...

Words: Chris Roberts

Portraits: Kevin Nixon/Chris Stocker

"Fear nothing. We shall overcome these and many other difficulties. Besides, as we approach the centre, I expect to find it luminous. Nothing is impossible."

taken from Jules Verne's Journey To The Centre Of The Earth

"The logistics of everything are taking up my every waking second," says the indefatigable Rick Wakeman. "But if when you look back at it in years to come it isn't totally Spinal

Tap, you've got it wrong! You've got to both take it seriously and have a lot of fun. It's got to be an adventure."

A great jovial bear of a man – and anything but grumpy – Rick is pulling together "the world's biggest jigsaw puzzle" as he prepares the 40th anniversary tour of *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*. "It seems like yesterday there were five months to go, then five weeks... five days... hold on, where did the time go? But then I'm up at 5.30am every day: I get up, walk round the garden with a cup of tea – come rain, shine, snow, whatever – feed the cats, and I'm in the office by 6.30am. And I can't wait for the day to start. My late father was a musician and he died in 1980. He once said



"It gives you faith that there's no longer any stigma around what people want to listen to and see."





Sonic explorer:
Rick Wakeman, shot
exclusively in Holborn
for Prog, March 19 2014.

to me: 'The day you don't have the enthusiasm to do it, shut the lid. Shut the piano lid down.' That's never going to happen."

Journey To The Centre Of The Earth was of course one of the great prog masterpieces (or grand follies) of its era, and established Wakeman's prolific solo career away from Yes, selling, despite initial scepticism that a live band-orchestra-choir opus could thrive, a whopping 15 million copies worldwide. It's been described over the years as both "genuinely appalling" and "one of progressive rock's crowning achievements".

Affably greeting me (and everyone else there, as he seems to know most people in London) in a Covent Garden café full of friends, Rick describes the labours of Hercules involved in bringing the glories of old back to the stage four decades on.

"In a strange way, it began naturally, unplanned. When the lost music was found and we recorded the full studio version in 2012, everybody kept saying, 'You've got to play this live, you've just got to!' So I spoke to the orchestra, and the promoters, and they were well



"There's one story heavily involving leaving the orchestral manager naked in the middle of Sydney!"



up for it. Suddenly, before you know it, a tour is booked. What persuaded me most was the number of emails I get from people saying, 'Please do it: daft as it might sound, I'm 45 years old so I missed it first time round.'

"Plus, I love that an amazing amount of young people are keen to hear *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* performed. In some respects I'm surprised, but it gives you faith back that there's no longer any stigma around what people want to listen to and see."

Ahoy there! Rick spots another loud tie on the horizon.





September 2012: Rick and conductor Guy Protheroe oversee the re-recording of *Journey* at Abbey Road.

ROB MONK

With the latter-day restructuring of *Journey*... including the full score, there arose questions of which version to play at the shows.

The newer, longer *Journey*... prevails, having been "test-driven" in South America. "We did find out one or two things there, I must admit." Nobody had anticipated the riotous applause that would follow the opening overture.

"They were going nuts. We were literally halfway through the first song by the time they'd calmed down. There was nothing we could do. Then they went nuts again and missed another whole section... So we thought: aaahhh. Between the first and second shows there we stayed up all night, marking places where there was going to be applause whether we liked it or not. So we made pauses in the music where we'd repeat two bars or whatever and the orchestra and the narrator could just wait, and the story could breathe. Hell of a job for Guy Protheroe, the conductor – it's like controlling traffic. But it worked and, amazingly, that takes the 55 minutes of the record to over an hour.

"And then, years ago, I'd said that if the full music was ever found I'd also love to slot in *Dance Of A Thousand Lights* from *Return To The Centre Of The Earth*. Eric, my engineer, and I sat down and played *Journey*... through, looking for a place where it would work well. Two-thirds of the way through, just after one of the new bits, *Quaternary*

Man, it was as if it was asking for it. A little adaptation on the narration, and we had it. So now it runs around 70 minutes. And that's the second half of the show."

The encore will see a brief reprise "with no holds barred, everybody relaxed having successfully made it through". And our narrator this time will be Philip Franks, the well-known actor who's previously narrated *The Rocky Horror Show* onstage. "Peter Egan (who's on the studio album) has ten weeks at The Old Vic booked, so he's not available. Peter said: 'Philip's the guy you want.' He has a perfect story-telling voice. And I'm thrilled that [original narrator] David Hemmings' widow is coming to the Albert Hall, because David really loved doing it back then."

The first (shorter) half will see Rick, the noted raconteur, telling war stories, as only he can, from the '74 days. "It should be hilarious. Although I take the music seriously, the ridiculous things that happened around it back then, you can't. I'll also talk about working with David Bowie on *Hunky Dory*, and play three or four pieces I was involved with. It's an appetite-whetter, because I won't be talking after that, just the narrator will."

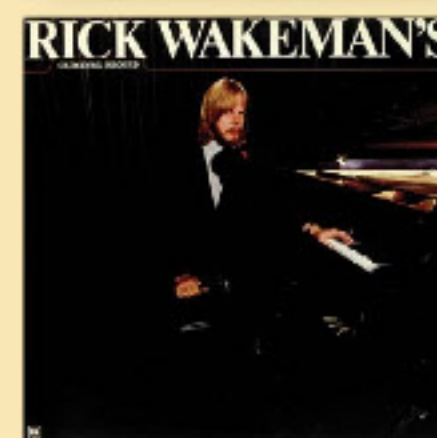
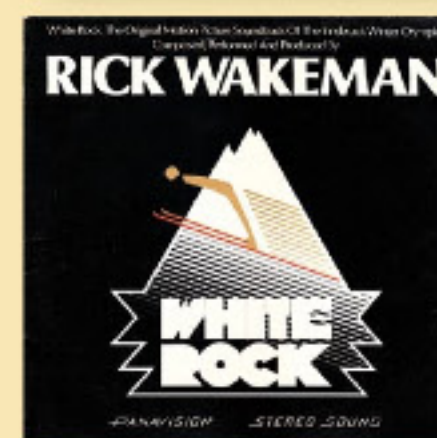
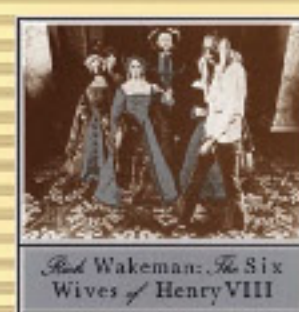
Well, his talking is a natural asset that must be tapped! "Oh yeah, I've started making notes," he laughs.

We all enjoyed his *Grumpy Old Rock Star* books: can he give us any teasers? "Oh, I shouldn't. There's one heavily involving leaving the orchestral manager naked in the middle of

WAKEMAN: THE A&M YEARS

The eight albums lost in the ether that are finally, blessedly, getting a special re-release...

Universal Records will be re-releasing remastered versions of Rick's eight A&M albums from the 70s: *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*, *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur And The Knights Of The Round Table*, *Lisztomania*, *No Earthly Connection*, *White Rock*, *Criminal Record* and *Rhapsodies*.



"I'm very pleased about the situation because to any artist, big or small, the music means a lot," says Wakeman. "And it's sad if it's lost in the ether. One of the major problems is when record companies are sold to new owners who don't even know what they've got; they're just acquisitions and part of a portfolio. They don't know the artists. So as A&M had been sold various times, my stuff sat in a box with nothing happening. On a couple of occasions I got quite close, but then – another bloody sell-on. You end up tearing your hair out!

"I'd get emails from people everywhere, saying, 'I've just had to pay £45 for an import of, say, *No Earthly Connection* from Japan, with the credits in Japanese... Why isn't it available here?' And I couldn't answer them. All I could say was: 'Trust me, it's not for the want of trying.' It was wrong, totally wrong.

"And then Universal ended up with A&M's catalogue. And I've got friends there in the archive department who said they wanted to remaster and re-release these albums. They said: 'You look sceptical.' I said: 'Well, I've heard it before.' They said: 'Oh no, we're for real, this is gonna happen. And we'd like you involved, with ideas, suggestions...' So, every single one of the A&M albums is happening, as staggered releases. They've found some rare additional stuff and it's a possibility the 'missing' music from each might feature. I think *No Earthly Connection* will be first, and they're looking at ideas for three-CD box sets, maybe eventually in vinyl.

"Each of those albums has got a bit of history in its own way! And I'm very happy that now when the emails flood in to my website, asking why they can't get, say, *White Rock*, I can reply: 'I can guarantee you 100 per cent that very soon you will.' It's put a smile on my face, because when labels shove it away in a cupboard, the artist doesn't have a key. And those cupboards have made me really sad over the past few years. Luckily now good people are wondering what's in that cupboard and opening the doors.

"There's an element of putting my house in order, my legacy. And in the year I become a pensioner! Financially, it's not a pension, because the days of selling billions of albums have long disappeared. But there'll be a pension pot of my music, and that is very special to me. Furthermore, if I'm asked what my epitaph will be, in WC Fields or Spike Milligan style, I say: 'It's not fair, I haven't finished yet!' And that stands for most musicians and artists." **CR**



Sydney, one concerning a choir in Japan... And alcohol... And airlines... Oh, and we had inflatable dinosaurs, which were doing things you wouldn't expect inflatable dinosaurs to do. I can't tell you what they were doing but it was bloody funny. My life on the road was pure *Spinal Tap*."

Rick is hoping for a show that will make audiences "feel that time has vanished. That would be a good sign. Because *Journey...* is a story, it carries you along, like a film. So the first half may be fun, but the second half is what it's really all about. I always found it thrilling to tell stories with music. Jules Verne's book left these wonderful areas where I felt I could take things to a different level. Things either jump out at you or don't: *Journey...* did that, and allowed me to throw my own imagination in, too."

And will we be seeing any inflatable dinosaurs this time, or similar essentials? "With such an awful lot of people onstage, some sweating more than others, the truth is there's not

much room left up there," he points out. "I spoke with Roger Dean, who's done all the artwork for the new release of *Journey...*, and we're hoping to do something a bit special a year or 18 months hence. A lot depends on how this goes, because we'd have to go up to a much bigger scale for that. But onstage, this time round, it's ridiculous. I'm on a mad diet, I've already lost two stone and I've got to lose another one, otherwise even I won't get on the bloody stage. The crew said, 'It's full now, unless you have a stick insect doing a hopping dance.' And the focal point changes all the time, from singer to band to soloist to orchestra, so you can't have a ton of stuff going on elsewhere or people lose the thread of the journey you're trying to take them on.

"I remember once we did *Return...*, in Canada, and we had more special effects than New Year's Eve on the Embankment. It was way too much; people kept missing things because they couldn't decide what to look at.

Wakeman wants to take *Journey...* to its real-life locations at some point. Well, the ones that actually exist, that is.

So we've mapped this out to not interfere with the music and narration too much. And the artwork and images have to be what you'd expect, otherwise it's pointless. If you're talking about gothic cathedrals or underground caves, that's what you've got to show. If we're onto the volcano, we can't show you a picture of an anthill. It's a balancing act."

If the aspired-to "wonderfully over-the-top" version with Roger Dean does come to fruition in future, it'd need an enormous venue and a deep-pocketed sponsor. "Could that happen? I'd like to think so, yeah."

Rick also retains a dream of taking *Journey...* to its spiritual roots and tracing the paths – to an extent – of Jules Verne's characters. "I always had a plan of taking the audience on a boat to Iceland, through all the ice floes and everything, and perform the concert as close to Sneffels, where they entered the tunnels, as possible. Which, as Sneffels takes up most of Iceland, is not too difficult. At the right time of year, you could do it open air. Then a plane down to Mount Etna, Sicily, where they exited, and do it there. What an experience. I think there'd be a fair few nutcases like me who'd be up for that. I've got TV companies interested. Holiday of a lifetime!"

The new adventures of *Journey...* should keep Rick busy for this year and some of next, alongside the extensive remaster/reissue campaign of his back catalogue. And after all that?

"Well, it's got to be *Arthur On Ice*, hasn't it?"

Really? Would he do it again?

"Cor, not much!"

Arthur On Ice, for the uninitiated, was the maverick maestro's 1975 live



spectacular which still stands as perhaps the very pinnacle of over-the-top prog bravado (or ambition, or pompous pretension, call it what you will). Presenting three nights at Wembley of the 12-million-selling album *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur And The Knights Of The Round Table*, much of it written as Rick recovered from his first (of three) heart attacks, provided Rick's accountants with nightmares and gave audiences a whirl of orchestras, choirs, more than 60 skaters and knights on horseback (the 'horses' were also people in costume).

Rick remembers it fondly, with a mix of pride and, of course, humour. "I mean, we made it work, and ice skating wasn't even popular then. There was no Torvill and Dean. The only ice skating on telly was the world championships, which was all Russian and on a Sunday afternoon and no one ever watched it. Yet I shipped in all these skaters from around the world... I flew the world champion lady in from Australia to play Guinevere. It was hilarious. Back then we were very limited, but what you could do now with ice would be amazing: we could have an absolute field day!"

What made you think it was a good idea at the time?

"Accident, like a lot of good things. I wanted to do *Arthur* at Wembley, in the round, but was told we couldn't because of the PAs – and because there was an ice show going into it in two weeks' time, and they had to freeze the ice there beforehand, which took ages. So it was: 'Wembley will be ice, you can't do it there.' I was annoyed; I'd set my heart on it."



TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!

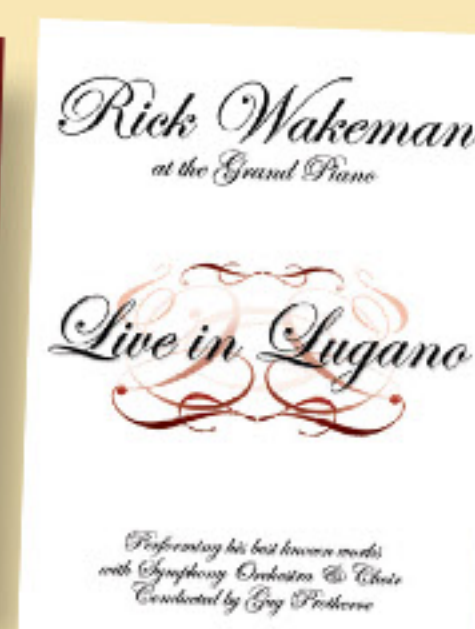
With Esoteric reissuing the best of the rest of his canon, Rick recalls his space obsession...

Out There from 2003 and Live In Lugano 2009 DVD are newly re-released. June sees *Softsword* and *Out Of The Blue* re-emerge. The plan then, say Esoteric Recordings, is to reissue two titles from the following list every two months: *2000AD - Into The Future*, *Always With You*, *Almost Live In Europe*, *Art In Music Trilogy*, *Fields Of Green*, *In The Nick Of Time - Live In 2003*, *Past, Present & Future*, *Phantom Power*, *The Natural World Trilogy*, *Tribute*, *Wakeman With Wakeman* and *White Rock 2*. Rick Wakeman's 80s albums such as *1984*, *Rock'N'Roll Prophet* and *Time Machine* are still owned by other labels, but new deals are being considered.

"This is an interesting one. There are quite a few albums that have been available in the UK or online but, for various reasons, were never released worldwide. They've never had a fair crack of the whip, and maybe they should. It started with *Out There*. Esoteric said: 'We love that album, why can't we get it? Who owns it?' I said: 'I do.' So they were keen to release it, and said, 'What else have you got?' It's a fantastic year, with all these things coming out again: I feel fortunate. Get the stuff out of the cupboard – use it or lose it!"

"With *Out There*, I was fascinated by space and set out unashamedly to make a Wakeman-

style prog rock band album. I have friends at NASA, many of them astronauts. Scott, the chief paymaster at NASA, showed me a cassette of an album of mine, *2000AD - Into The Future*, and said, 'This has been up into space. We always play stuff up there.' He



said they loved my music and wanted me to do more. I'd ask the astronauts questions, such as if they'd seen any UFOs up there, and if they weren't allowed to answer they'd just grin and say, 'Next question!' They said, 'Let's just say that not everything that we see is charted on the maps!'

"*Out There* was inspired by the thought that there are all these invisible radio signals flying around. Once in a while, as a receiver, we'll pick one up, and that's where inspired music comes from: 'out there'. Scott asked if I'd like to launch the album by playing live under the *Saturn 5* moon rocket at Kennedy, with the first notes playing as the *Columbia* shuttle landed back in the desert

from its mission. For me, this was Christmas. But there were problems, technical and otherwise – I was going through a divorce at the time – and we fell behind schedule. I had to call him and say the proposed live event wouldn't be ready.

"Then the day the shuttle was due to land, I was quite emotional, because I should have been playing under the *Saturn 5* and I'd met three of the crew. But of course the shuttle never came back: it disintegrated on re-entry. All seven died. I remember sitting in my house feeling very cold. Devastated. Weeks later, Scott rang me: imagine the

conversation. I suggested I'd like to dedicate the album to the crew, and after checking with the families he said that'd be lovely. I stressed that the connection would certainly not be used as publicity. Yet all the record companies that were keen did want to play up the publicity, so I said no, and in the end we pretty much pressed it up ourselves.

"Now I think there has been a respectable amount of time since the tragedy. I spoke to Scott again, and he said nobody in their right mind could say we were trying to cash in. So, in tune with the theme of the track *Cathedral Of The Sky*, it seems there is a home for all music. It's all been sitting up there in the sky, waiting to find a house..." **CR**



"What do I do after this? Well, it's got to be *Arthur On Ice*, hasn't it?"



Rick went off and had a drink ("Because this was still my drinking days") with a *Melody Maker* journalist. Asked what was happening, Rick spontaneously and mischievously answered, "I can't tell you officially, this is between friends, but we're doing *Arthur*. On ice. At Wembley." The next day, as Rick had suspected, *Melody Maker* bore the front page headline: "*King Arthur On Ice!*"

This fait accompli saw Rick's manager, Brian, apoplectic, shrieking: "What the...? What have you gone and done? How the hell can we do that?"

Unperturbed, Rick said, "It'll work. Build the castle, net and hang the PAs like we did in America. The ice is already there, just get some skaters."

"There are no ice skaters here!" gasped Brian.

"Oh, just get some Russians in," clarified Rick.

"A couple of guys at the label grinned and said, 'C'mon, let's roll our sleeves up and go for this.' They contacted ice-skating agencies from Russia and elsewhere, who thought it was a fantastic idea. After about a week, Brian called me and said, 'Y'know what? It's going to happen. And this is going to be something that people will talk about for the rest of their lives.'"

Likewise, they're still talking about *Journey*... 40 years on, and its revival is growing into what Verne would have called a voyage extraordinaire. As Wakeman heads off to further preparations and rehearsals, one burning question remains to be asked: does he have a new cape for these shows? "The vintage gold sequinned one is coming back out to play!" **P**

Next step: 1975's *King Arthur On Ice* revisited. Yes, really.

The Journey Begins

The record company hated it, classical musicians laughed and even the milkman tried to sue him... Rick Wakeman recalls how the original ***Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*** got off the ground, the album's legacy and the best advice he ever had from David Bowie.

Words: Chris Roberts **Portraits:** Kevin Nixon

Rick vividly remembers the day he was presented with his first gold ("or platinum, or whatever it was") disc for *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, at a music industry conference Midem. In a proud moment for irony, one of the heads of A&M, who had been "very anti" the album and hadn't wanted it released, was doing the honours in front of a shedload of journalists. "He stood up," recalls Rick, "and spoke words to the effect of: 'Every now and then, an album lands on your desk and the minute you hear it you know you've got something very special here. Something you must nurture and go forward with. And that's exactly how I felt when *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* came to me.'"

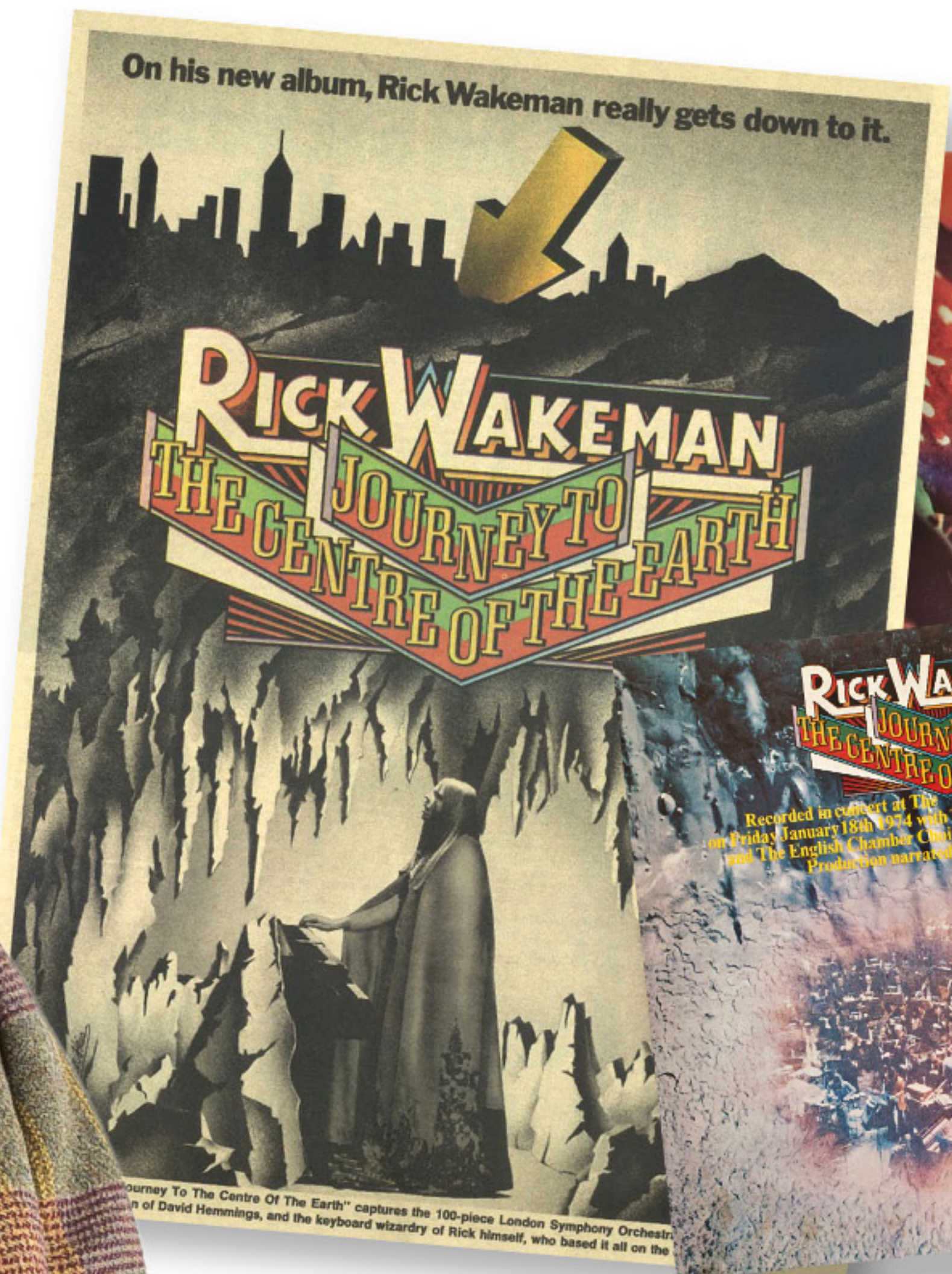
Our man, waiting at the side of the stage, felt his jaw dropping with disbelief. "But what was really brilliant, as I approached him, under the applause he leaned over into my ear and said, very clearly: 'Don't. You. Fucking. Dare!'"

So onstage, Rick, choosing the route of diplomacy, declared his gratitude to A&M and afterwards the pair shook

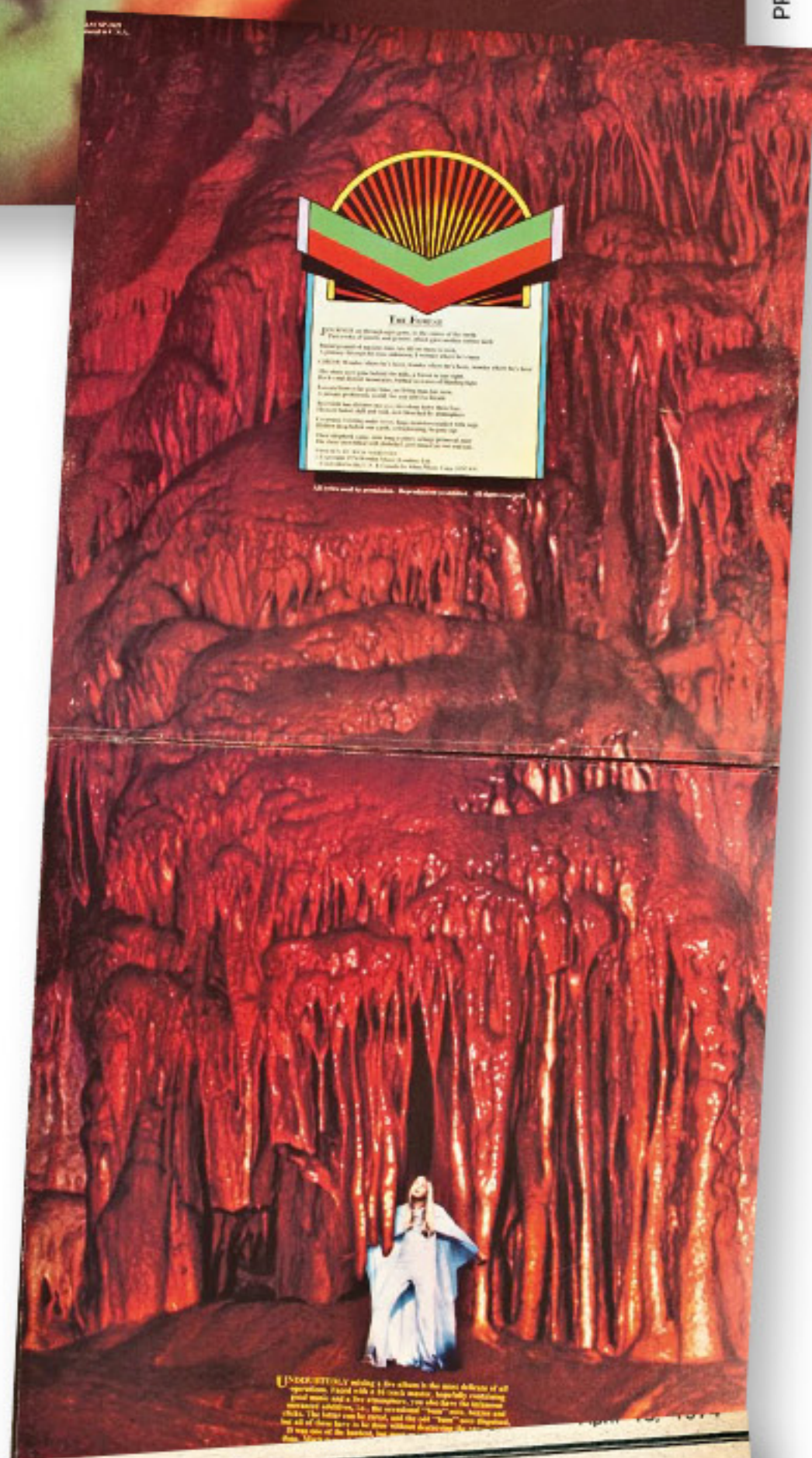
hands. "Many years later, with A&M long since sold off, this guy was asked about the history of the label — The Carpenters, The Police, The Tubes (who, by the way, I took to A&M co-founder Jerry Moss, Fee Waybill being a close friend) — and then they came to the 'and Rick Wakeman?' bit. The chap acknowledged that I had the label's first UK Number One album and other massive sellers. 'The interesting thing was,' he said, 'that I neither liked nor understood one single note of anything he ever recorded or played. I used to sit in my office and think, but why should I fucking question it? He paid for most of this.' He added that, 'You don't always have to like everything you release. Thankfully, there were millions of people who did. So probably I was the one that was wrong.' I've seen him since and we laugh about it and he says, 'I still don't get it...'"

Journey To The Centre Of The Earth, and the works of Jules Verne in general, had been a passion of

"I do like a good yarn." And you wear one as well, sir!



The original advert, gatefold and music press coverage from *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, 1974.



"Jon Anderson and I were watching *Spinal Tap* together, and when the bass player is caught in the pod, we looked at each other... because that's exactly what happened to our drummer Alan White in one of Roger Dean's stage sets!"

Rick's since he first read a compendium borrowed from the school library, aged about 12. He knew then he wanted to adapt it, having been enchanted by Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf*, which his dad had taken him to see four years earlier. "How wonderful to tell stories with music," he thought.

"And I do like a good yarn; a story with a beginning, a middle and an end," he tells me. His own *Journey...* has now become one of those. A happy ending is within view.

Wakeman recorded the original live at the Royal Festival Hall in January 1974, with the London Symphony Orchestra and the actor David Hemmings narrating. It cost a fortune, was unloved by the label in the UK until Rick took it to Jerry Moss (the M in A&M) in the US, and our caped crusader had to sell everything he had

to make it happen. Famously, he remortgaged his house, flogged some cars, and received a writ for failing to pay the milk bill for two months. He defied common sense by getting his friends from the local pub band to play when names such as Clapton and Blackmore were being suggested. The day after his lavish tour ended, with a show at Crystal Palace Bowl, he had a heart attack and went into hospital for nine weeks (where he wrote the *King Arthur...* album).

By May of '74, *Journey...* was number one in the UK and number three in the US: nothing succeeds like excess. In 2012 the long-lost conductor's score for the full story, with material pruned to make it fit a single album, mysteriously turned up, and Rick was able to put together a fully realised Abbey Road recording.



Long labelled the epitome of outlandish, pompous pretension, *Journey*... now sounds like someone's thrown open the windows in the stuffy, cramped rooms of predictable, prescriptive, musical possibility.

"One thing I'd learnt from David Bowie, while working on *Space Oddity*, was to fight for what you believe in. He fought tooth and nail for that single to be stereo, which might not sound like much now, but there weren't many stereo singles then. He said to me: 'If you battle for what you believe in, and get people around you who believe in you, then you really can make things happen.' That was key. I was quite happy being a band member, both with Yes and Strawbs, and others. I liked being part of a team, but I'd always had clear ideas of other things I wanted to do. I wouldn't say it was that I'd lacked the courage to do it but I'd thought it



"In the 70s there was a kind of them-and-us issue between the classical musicians and the rock musicians."



looks very difficult. David said: 'No, it's not so difficult.' And the moment I started pulling in a group of like-minded people, we were on a roll. *Journey*... was my major breakthrough. Of course in the end it was difficult, with A&M not wanting it, but I persevered by going to America... without Jerry Moss there would be no *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*."

With a Warners box set imminent, Rick's belief in the va-va-voom of Verne is vindicated all over again. The renowned joker takes his day job seriously. "You'll have the original live version, plus a remastered version, plus the recent studio version, which for me is the definitive one, as it was meant to be. It's all there, and it means a lot to me. Without being morbid, I did one of the eulogies at Jon Lord's funeral, standing very close to his coffin. And I couldn't help thinking: I wonder what you've taken with you, Jon – what other great things would you have given us? So I'm going to continue to cram in as much as much as I bloody well can."

Backstage at Crystal Palace, 1974: Mr Wakeman cuts a regal figure.



BARRY PLUMMER

You don't want to know what these guys got up to next.

THE RETURN...

In 1991 Rick enlisted Trevor Rabin, Ozzy Osbourne, Justin Hayward and Patrick Stewart to boldly go back to the centre of the Earth. His new label boss was delighted. The rest of the label? Less so. And it nearly killed him...

"Do I wish it had come out at a different time than '99, with prog more in vogue? No I don't, actually, and I'll tell you why. Because we wouldn't be able to do what we're doing with it now. It's getting a new lease of life. So maybe that was meant to be. Everything happens for a reason. Back then, some countries wouldn't accept it as 'classical' because it had a drummer on it. And Ozzy Osbourne. 'Good God! Can't have this!' they exclaimed.

"The president of EMI Classics, Sir Richard Lyttelton, actually wanted a studio album of *Journey...*, but I told him over lunch it wasn't possible because of the missing music. So we pondered my doing another Jules Verne story – *Around The World In Eighty Days*, *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*, *Voyage To The Moon*; there are plenty to choose from. Then he said: 'Or how about going back to the centre of the Earth? Could that work?'

"I said I'd try to come up with a synopsis. This was 1998. I had a house in Tenerife so I went there on my own and over the first few days I did nothing but read *Journey...* again, twice. On the third reading I had this Eureka moment: the sun could shine on

a different entrance, then they could have completely different adventures. I took my synopsis in and Sir Richard said: 'Fantastic, do it.' It was written, narrative-wise, in the style of Verne. Whereas *Journey...* is accurate to the book (albeit a précis), *Return To The Centre Of The Earth* isn't. The travellers saw things differently to their predecessors. I could have fun with the cavern of lights and the antediluvian shepherd...

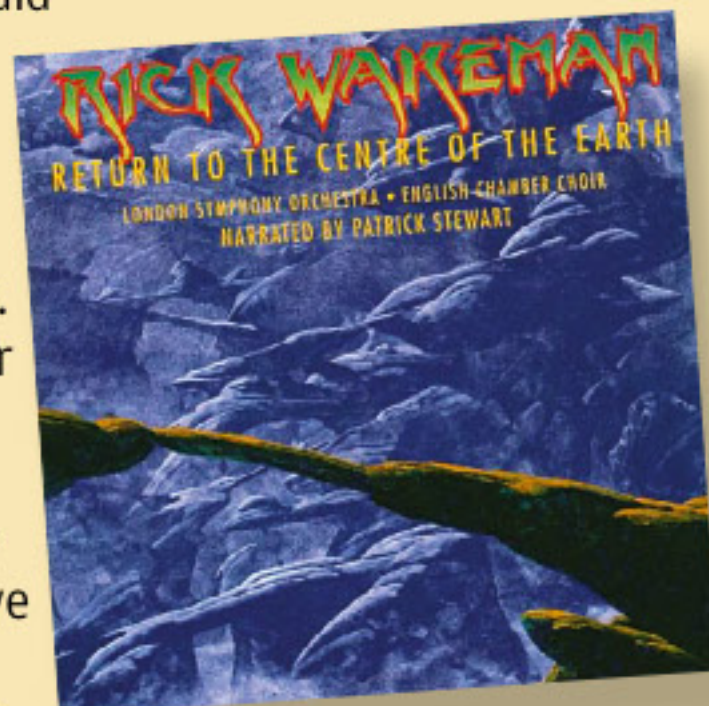
"And I got seriously obsessed with that project. I shut the door on my inner voice of reason. I became unbearable. There comes a moment when you know how to make it work, you've cracked the code – but *Return...* actually made me very ill in the end. It took its toll. I had chronic pneumonia and pleurisy. I was in an induced coma and given 48 hours to live. I'd been overdoing it... I was 50, I wasn't drinking any more, but I'd gone six days without sleep. Apart from ridiculous hours with band sessions, I was

orchestrating all night, then back in the studio. In the middle of all that I flew to LA to record Patrick Stewart (the narrator), then flew straight back. Upon my return I was walking into walls. I decided I'd go and play nine holes of golf, get some fresh air before going back to the studio. But I collapsed on the golf course, and that's the last thing I remember.

"I'd been chasing the clock with so many studio dates booked with band and with orchestra. The irony was I never made all those dates because I was in hospital, so everything was moved. I mean – I know I have fun and I'm a laugh, but I do try my very hardest, and take the music seriously.

If people don't like it, and think it's horrible, I can at least look them straight in the eye and say: I gave it my every shot to make this the best I possibly could.

"So – for *Return...* to have a second chance now, along with *Journey...*, is really rather lovely." **CR**



Did it frustrate him that *Journey...* – perceived by many as the high water mark of prog preciousness – wasn't taken seriously for years, after punk's burning-of-the-books barrage?

"In a way, as I do indeed take the music seriously. A lot of those problems came about even before punk, because in the 70s there was a kind of them-and-us issue between the classical musicians and the rock musicians. I got away with it a bit because I'd been to the Royal College Of Music and done all my bits, so both sides somehow thought: oh, he's okay, he's sort of one of us. But back then the classical players couldn't actually play the stuff. I could write music and give it to classical players and to blues-rock musicians, and their feel for the music was completely different to each other's. In the 60s and 70s, the classical players were going, 'Ooh, that dreadful rock stuff!'

"But, yes, for years it was, by some parties, mocked. It was an era of: 'I don't understand it, it must be shit.' Yet if you look back at the early 70s, prog or prog-related bands probably sold more albums than all other types of music put together, in numbers the pop stars of today could only dream of. And still the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame barely acknowledges that prog ever existed."

Cause championed, Rick is – as regular *Prog* readers will be aware – a fan of anything comedic. The thing with his anecdotes and tour stories is that they're not just "like" *Spinal Tap*:

they almost certainly begat *Spinal Tap*. "Never mind the film," he says. "At the time, it was *real*. The 70s tours I did with *Journey...*, and other albums, were *it*. The secret that *Spinal Tap* hones in on is that when you look back at reality, hindsight shows you how funny it is, even though it wasn't when it was happening. The first time I saw that film, Jon Anderson and I were watching it together in Montserrat, and when the bass player is caught in the pod, we looked at each other... because that's exactly what happened to our drummer, Alan White, in one of Roger Dean's stage sets. Alan was trapped in a giant clam. And the crew had to run

on with pick-axes, trying to feed oxygen to him, trying to break him out."

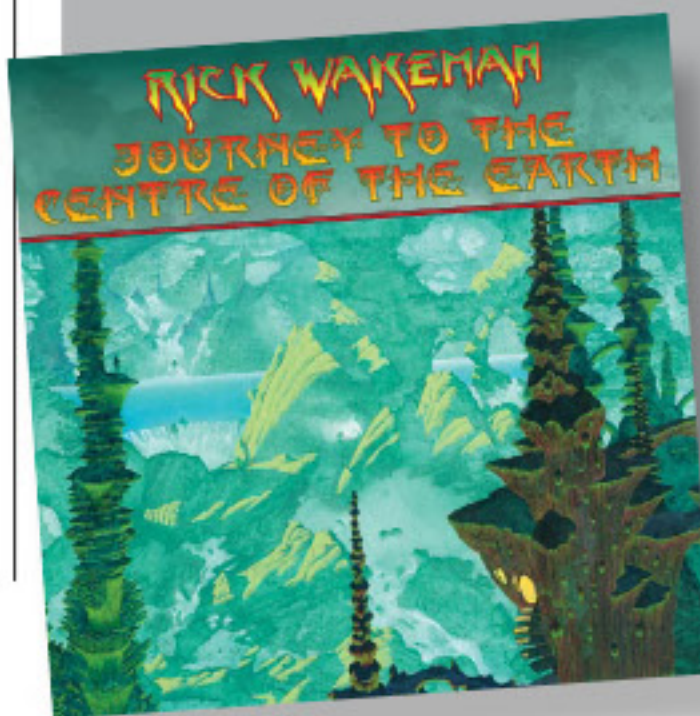
So did *Spinal Tap* nick the idea from there? "They had to have: there's no way they didn't. I'd like to meet Christopher Guest or Harry Shearer. The '11' on the amp wasn't us though: that was Pete Townshend. The 70s offered them rich source material."

Wakeman found his rich source material in Jules Verne's book, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. Now his very own time machine brings *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* back to the surface. A return to core values? "Great stories," muses Rick, "are limitless." **P**

BOXES OF DISCOVERY!

Journey... goes truly epic with **three opulent updates**, out in May.

A very special **Limited Edition Box Set** will be released soon. It will contain: a double heavyweight 180g LP of the newly recorded *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, double 180g LP of the newly reissued *Return To The Centre Of The Earth* (both albums packaged in full colour casebound 12-inch gatefold sleeve), a full-length CD of both albums in a 32-page 12 x 12-inch in-bound book featuring never before seen photos, images and sketches from the personal archives of Rick Wakeman and Roger Dean, and a numbered certificate of authenticity and ownership, signed by Roger Dean, all packed in full colour case bound 12-inch sleeve. All of this will be further housed in a rigid, Wibalin cloth-bound slipcase with a printed, foil-blocked cover and spine. All artwork is newly designed by Roger Dean (see sleeve, left), and the box set will be limited to one pressing only and not be repressed.



A **Super Deluxe Collectors Edition** will also feature a frame-ready Roger Dean lithograph, signed and numbered by Rick and Roger – limited to 100 copies worldwide, and available on a first come first served basis.

Both the new *Journey...* and the reissued *Return...* will be released as a **Deluxe Vinyl Edition**, on 180g vinyl with newly expanded booklet, rare photos, and original Roger Dean artwork. They will also be released as CD digipacks with new Roger Dean artwork. All are available from www.rwcc.com. **JE**

ROLL THE

On the eve of their tenth and darkest album yet, **IQ** are in better shape than ever. Founder members Peter Nicholls and Mike Holmes tell us how they've survived more than three decades in the music business, the departure of Martin Orford and the trials and tribulations of the digital age.

Words: Johnny Sharp
Images: Mark Latham

IQ, shot exclusively for *Prog* at Christ Church, Walshaw in Bury, February 2014. From left: Tim Esau, Michael Holmes, Paul Cook, Neil Durant, Peter Nicholls.

"There's no physical and sensory joy of having music on your iPod and there's a reaction against that now. An album sleeve is not supposed to be a tiny little image on an iPod – it's meant to be something you can actually see and feel."

Peter Nicholls

BONES



“If we’d ever split up, it would probably have been due to ‘geographical differences’.”

IQ frontman Peter Nicholls is only half joking when he recounts the logistical headaches involved in keeping his band’s show on the road, and indeed in the studio, as they prepare to release their 10th album. He’s talking to us from his home near Manchester, a few hours after we’ve met his fellow founder member of the band, guitarist and producer Mike Holmes, 200-odd miles away in London.

If we’d wanted to meet the other three members, we’d have had to put a pretty hefty dent in the *Prog* travel budget, going all the way up to Inverness to see drummer Paul Cook, taking a diversion via Newcastle to hook up with bassist Tim Esau, and stopping off in Luton to meet new keyboard player Neil Durant. And, naturally, the studio where they did most of the album’s recording is back in the band’s original home base of Southampton. Then again, who ever said progressive rock was meant to be easy?

The struggles of the band’s salad days in the early 1980s, when four of them shared a one-bedroom flat in Kensal Green, were perhaps par for the course, and helped to fire up classic early releases *Tales From The Lush Attic* and *The Wake*. But despite having long since carved out a respected niche in the prog scene, simply functioning as a gigging, recording unit as 50-something musicians in 2014 remains a continual logistical and financial challenge. This is a band that’ve been paying their dues for 33 years.

“We were trying to arrange a gig recently and we worked out it was going to cost two grand in travel just to get the band to three weekends of rehearsals,” says Holmes, with a rueful grin.

But where there’s a will, there sure as hell is a way. Despite three more line-up changes since 2009’s *Frequency*, the band are now back with four of their original five members on board, and what promises to be one of their darkest and most compelling sets of songs to date.

We meet Holmes near his Docklands home, during a day off from putting the finishing touches to mastering *The Road Of Bones*, a new album that promises to be more ambitious than ever, not just creatively but also commercially.

Having completed an hour’s worth of music for the finished album, they’ve decided also to offer fans an option of a double-CD extended edition featuring an extra 40 minutes of the wealth of material that didn’t make it onto the finished album (for sequencing reasons, according to Holmes).

It’s the kind of ‘deluxe’ edition that has become pretty commonplace for bands re-releasing albums, but any music biz accountants reading this will surely be choking on their extra-shot lattes right about now. Releasing the damn thing at the same time so record buyers can choose between editions? Passing up the opportunity to fleece loyal fans for the same album twice in the space of a year? What fresh lunacy is this?! 

“As a fan I actually quite like those special editions,” says the guitarist, “but there is something in me that thinks it’s a little bit of a rip-off. That may be harsh in some cases, but if you can do something up front, I think people will appreciate that more.”

The band also offered fans another limited-edition package (now sold out), including a box set of the extended-edition album, another CD of exclusive material, programme, T-shirt and a ticket for the album’s London launch gig.

All of this aims to turn the humble album into a real, inclusive event, and gives fans the chance to decide among themselves if they agree with the band’s choice of cuts for the main album, not to mention providing a physical package that’s worth treasuring in an age where music sometimes feels as if it’s as ephemeral and disposable as a free newspaper or a shared YouTube link.

“There’s no physical and sensory joy of having music on your iPod,” reckons Nicholls, “and I think there’s a reaction against that now. An album sleeve is not supposed to be a tiny little image on an iPod – it’s meant to be something you can actually see and feel. There’s an aesthetic, visceral appeal to it all for our fans, and that’s why we present CDs in digipaks and make it more of a physical artefact. And our fans seem to appreciate that.”

Sometimes when you listen to ‘special’ or ‘deluxe’ editions of albums, you’re struck by the deep store of quality songs a band has in their locker. But other times you conclude that the extra tracks that didn’t make the original album only serve to highlight the judicious editing of the original release.

Fans will no doubt make up their own minds as to which of these categories *The Road Of Bones*’ special edition belongs in. And we’ll surely give our view on the subject, but at the time of writing that’s not possible as Holmes still hasn’t finished off the two CDs – as well as a third for the limited-edition box set. He admits, “We’re essentially putting three albums out, and we didn’t take that into account,” hence the slight delay in finishing it all off.

This essentially means that all *Prog* manages to hear is the album’s title track. But if that’s a sign of things to come, it sounds mightily promising. Any worries that the changes in personnel and songwriting process since *Frequency* might have had an effect on the finished product would appear to be unfounded on this evidence. A slow-burning epic that builds from a whisper to a near-scream, its eight minutes climax in a fearsome, almost Wagnerian wall of sound that grips your head in a vice and leaves you pretty much speechless.

It might be structurally simpler than IQ’s best-known work, without the guitar and keyboard flourishes that often accompany their songs, but it’s every bit as potent a piece for its relative simplicity.

“It’s quite a different track for us,” admits Nicholls. “Sometimes there’s a temptation to pack everything with as many drum fills as you can and demonstrate your musical virtuosity, but you learn later to leave space for

Rite of passage: After all their ups and downs, IQ are a “happy, harmonious line-up” now.



Intel inside: in the studio at Big City Jacks in Tottington.

the track to breathe. It's quite filmic, I think, and with the massive build-up towards the end, there's a real feel of a journey you're going on. You want there to be a progression through the track and I think this track has real dynamics."

He's right about that, and both Nicholls and Holmes sound buoyant about the way the band have been re-energised by reuniting with Cook (who left in 2005 but returned in 2011) and Esau (who came back into the fold to replace John Jowitt around the same time).

"It's a happy, harmonious line-up now," says Nicholls. And it's been a happier recording process than *Frequency*, as it was during the sessions for that record that the fifth founder member – keyboardist and important creative contributor Martin Orford – decided to quit.

Holmes' role as producer of the band meant he had the guiding creative hand in the band's sound, a situation with which Orford became increasingly frustrated.

"I seemed to be writing all this material but then having no control at all over how those songs were arranged," he told *Grande Rock* eZine soon after his departure, "or even any say in what keyboard sounds were used on the albums. This was an unsatisfactory situation and the more time wore on, the more irritated I became that my songs were really not being improved at all by the intervention of the other members of IQ... So in the end, I walked – the music wasn't being improved by going through the whole 'band process', and it just wasn't any fun any more."

No doubt his bandmates saw things a little differently, but that was back in 2007, and today they are understandably reluctant to go over that difficult territory once again, or rekindle any animosity that may have resulted from the split.

"We all talked to Martin and tried to resolve the situation," says Nicholls, "but he was quite resolute in wanting to go, and we were in a position where we had to accept that reality."

"It's always difficult when someone leaves the band," says Holmes, "and for a time there's a tendency to panic about what to do next. But in the long term, it wasn't the end of the world, and the line-up of the band now is really strong, with four original members and Neil's keyboards making a really strong contribution."

Creative tensions between Holmes and Orford were nothing new. We interviewed the pair for *Prog* about their newly remixed and reissued debut album *Tales Of The Lush Attic* last year, and Orford admitted that the two had their fair share of musical differences, even in the early days, leading to some heated disputes. In some ways it sounds like it was a power struggle that couldn't be contained. But evidently the Mellotron maestro also had other major issues that went beyond personal or creative differences.

"As I understand it, he got very disillusioned with the music business, particularly the whole downloading thing," says Holmes. "At that time no one knew quite what the hell was going on. Sales were falling and it seemed everyone was downloading without paying. I don't think that was the case, but he'd got

Dark Vision

Peter Nicholls on the inspiration behind the title track of *The Road Of Bones*.

"I had a pretty clear picture in my mind for *The Road Of Bones*. It opens with these sparse piano chords, and I saw it almost like the start of a David Lynch film – you imagine the camera fading in on a woodland area early in the morning. The camera's panning across and I imagined a hand peeping out from under a bunch of leaves. The place is unspecified – although I imagined it to be a small Midwest American town – and this guy is holding this town in the grip of fear, picking people off and nobody knows who the next victim is going to be or when."

"It gives him a sense of power and a sense of self-worth. Sometimes people who commit these awful things claim to be possessed by some sort of monster, but this guy knows what he's doing and he enjoys what he's doing. It gives him a sense of control and self-importance, so he actually delights in leaving little clues. I imagine him standing back at a safe

distance, watching as people discover this body the next morning and people realise he's still here and he's still doing this."

"So the road of bones is a metaphor – as he's picking off these people, he's building a road he walks upon that's littered with the corpses of the people he's killed." JS

The Road Of Bones:
a Lynchian vision
of murder and fear.

it into his head that it was, and he got very angry and decided to call it a day, not just from IQ but from music in general."

Indeed, after releasing his second solo album, *The Old Road*, Orford announced his retirement from music, pretty much in protest at the unhealthy state of affairs he saw in the industry.

"I now completely, 100 per cent despise the internet and the free music culture,"

"One of the lyrics is about vampires, and another one on the second album is about schizophrenia. But I think that kind of subject matter suits prog."

Mike Holmes

he admitted, and his activities since have certainly been fairly sparse, although he has made some occasional live appearances.

"I think he's dipped his toe back in the water since," says Nicholls, "and I'm really glad about that because he's got way too much talent to completely turn his back on music."

Fast forward to the present day and any fears that the onus on Holmes to come up with many of the initial musical ideas for this record would prove too taxing a burden appear to be unfounded.

While the aforementioned title track might suggest a more straightforward stylistic approach at times, there seems to be no sign of any middle-age mellowing on the new album. Holmes' Phil Oakey-style New Romantic fringe, as depicted on the back sleeve of the band's debut album, may have long since been shorn to a more respectable

length, and Nicholls no longer wears the theatrical face paint of yore, but they're still growing old disgracefully.

The Road Of Bones in particular includes some of the heaviest music IQ have made, and the subject matter, even by their own standards, isn't just bleak, but positively chilling at times. It's built around an initially soft-sung soliloquy from the point of view of a serial killer that builds into a brooding, cinematic soundscape and then a thunderous storm of symphonic rock malevolence.

'Shallow graves I mark with stones,' sings Nicholls, 'as I walk the road of bones.'

"More cheery stuff from IQ," he deadpans, but somehow the darker side of human nature just makes for a more compelling listen. Holmes is tempted to agree.

"I know one of the other lyrics is about vampires, and I think another one on the second album is about schizophrenia. But I think that kind of subject matter suits prog. There are very few progressive albums that you could say are actually upbeat, are there? Maybe *Selling England By The Pound*, that's a nice, summery album, or *Breathless* by Camel is fairly upbeat. But maybe the darker mood goes hand in hand with the kind of person who's driven to make progressive rock."

"We've always said we're progressive rock and made no apologies about that," says Nicholls. "But I've always been very conscious of the genre's detractors. You get these documentaries on TV and there's always someone slagging prog off, saying, 'Oh, it's all wizards and elves and hobbits,' so I've always studiously avoided the fantasy side as a lyricist. But it's easier to gravitate to the darker side and it's more interesting to write. Whether it's the story of a serial killer or a broken heart, it feels more satisfying to write about. Even back in 1985 when we did *The Wake*, that was all about death and the possibility of life after death. So we've always lyrically migrated towards the bleaker side of things and I think *The Road Of Bones* takes it one step further."

"Lyrically, it's informed by what's happened in my personal life in the last five years, 

which haven't been particularly good ones for me, so there's a natural leaning towards a more introspective view. Then there's the economic climate that means it all seems a bit of a bleak, grim time at the moment. So all of that is spewed out."

He doesn't go into detail on his personal circumstances, but all of this, of course, only adds to the challenges of keeping a band together after 33 years, despite a sizeable fanbase and a business model that just about keeps their heads above water.

The Road Of Bones marks the final stage of a particularly busy chapter in IQ's career. A tour in 2011 commemorated the 30th anniversary of the band's formation, following a year after a 25th-anniversary reissue of their classic 1985 album *The Wake*. Then in 2012 they restaged 1998's *Subterranea* on its 15th anniversary, before last year saw the 30th-anniversary collector's edition of *Tales From The Lush Attic*, for which Holmes dug out the original 24-track tapes and painstakingly remixed the whole album (see Prog 36 for more on that story).

In the meantime, *The Road Of Bones* has been 18 months in the making – a result of

"You get these documentaries on TV and there's always someone slagging prog off, saying, 'Oh, it's all wizards and elves and hobbits,' so I've always studiously avoided the fantasy side as a lyricist."

Mike Holmes

the band's painstaking approach to making albums. "Albums are the things we leave behind," reasons Nicholls, "so it needs to be as good as we can make it. It's a long process for us, a lot of material gets rejected, a lot of rearranging goes on before we're happy with the finished product."

And then, of course, there's the two other CDs' worth of material to put out with it. Mike Holmes' workload is particularly heavy, given that he not only produces IQ and comes up with the bulk of their initial musical ideas, but he also runs the independent prog label that IQ set up, Giant Electric Pea, which has helped acts such as Big Big Train and, most recently, Synaesthesia to prominence. Given such stresses, it's a wonder his ginger hair



***The Road Of Bones* is out in May as a standard CD and in a deluxe format.**



Grave expressions: the band explore dark, bleak territory on *The Road Of Bones*.

has yet to turn a stressed-out shade of white. Thankfully, though, unlike the rest of the band, he was able to take early retirement from his day job a few years ago in order to concentrate full-time on his music and label activities.

Nonetheless, when Holmes talks about arranging time for the band to get together, he refers to the headaches of arranging rehearsals and studio time around commitments to partners and ex-partners, time with kids and juggling day jobs. The Rolling Stones may have been going 52 years, but when you've got their money, these problems don't seem quite as thorny. So

what keeps IQ going through thick and thin?

"Stubbornness!" admits Nicholls. "Back in the early days we were all on the dole

and it was all for one, one for all, and in many ways it was a great adventure. But the price we paid was not to go to college or university, not to start climbing a career ladder. We made the decision to devote our early 20s and we slogged away with the band. None of us have earned a colossal amount from it, and there were many times when we questioned why we did it.

"We have made sacrifices personally and financially, but the satisfaction and excitement of releasing a new album outweighs all of that. I love being part of a creative team and bringing something new into the world. Besides, there comes a point when it's in your blood and it's just the thing that you do."

And as *The Road Of Bones* looks set to prove once again, few modern prog acts do it better than IQ. 

The Road Of Bones is released in May via GEP. See www.iq-hq.co.uk for more information.

NICK MAGNUS

'n'monix'

The new studio album by Nick Magnus, formerly a member of The Enid and keyboard player in Steve Hackett's band for five years, Nick graced legendary Hackett albums such as "Spectral Mornings" and "Defector". With his new album "n'monix", Nick Magnus has been joined in the studio by Steve Hackett



and vocalists Pete Hicks, Tim Bowness, Kate Faber, Tony Patterson and James Reeves and lyricist Dick Foster to produce a collection of songs and music in the finest tradition of his past work with Steve Hackett.

the finest tradition of his past work with Steve Hackett.

MATT STEVENS

'Lucid'

The new album by acclaimed guitarist Matt Stevens, noted for his work as a solo artist and as a member of Fierce and The Dead. Featured guest musicians: Pat Mastelotto (drums, King Crimson), Lorenzo Feliciati (bass, Naked Truth), Charlie Cawood (Knifeworld) and Kev



Feazey, keyboard players Jem Godfrey (Frost) and Emmett Elvin (Chrome Hoof and Guapo), Chrissie Caulfield (violin, Helicopter Quartet and Crippled Black Phoenix), vibe player Jon Hart and Nicholas Wyatt Duke (Trojan Horse).

HI FICTION SCIENCE

'Curious Yellow'

This Bristol based quintet formed in 2007 and features Maria Charles (vocals, guitar), James Green (bass), James McKeown (guitar), Matt Rich (keyboards), Adrian Searle (drums & percussion). Their early gigs saw them perform motorik, Kosmiche influenced instrumental workouts with a nod to Cluster, Neu! and Can. With the addition of singer Maria Charles - formerly of Bristol experimentalists Fuzz Against Junk - the band took a direction that filters Acid-Folk, Art Rock, Post-Punk and Electronica. The album was recorded at State of Art Studio and mixed with Jim Barr (Get The Blessing / Portishead).



SONTAAG 'Sontaag'

In the grand tradition of high concept progressive rock comes an epic cross-media hybrid where cerebral science fiction meets visceral rock 'n' roll. Sontaag's eponymous debut album has been described as 'the rock opera that Pink Floyd never wrote', 'a modern-day Tubular Bells', 'a prog-rock War Of The Worlds'. Recorded in New York City and London, co-produced and mixed by Youth (Killing Joke, The Fireman), 'Sontaag' is a stunning and immersive listening experience. SONTAAG features Richard Sontaag (composition, instruments, concept, co-production), Ian Fortnam (story, lyrics, voice, concept) with Milo Venter (drums) and Amanda Cross (vocals).



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HAWKWIND 'The Flicknife Years'

• 5CD Clamshell Boxed Set •

A box set compilation of Hawkwind releases originally issued on the Flicknife label between 1981 & 1988. During this period Flicknife Records released three classic compilations in the "Friends and Relations" series, along with the albums "Zones" and "Out & Intake" which drew together studio tracks and live recordings made by Hawkwind. These albums have all been newly remastered and are presented here in one collection, with each CD in a slip case with restored original artwork. Also included are 11 bonus tracks taken from singles, including the "Hurry on Sundown" EP, 2 live tracks recorded at Stonehenge Free Festival in June 1984 and 2 live tracks recorded at Bristol Custom Bike show in August 1986.

KEITH CROSS & PETER ROSS 'Bored Civilians'

Highly sought after by collectors of the Progressive era, "Bored Civilians" has been newly remastered from the original Decca master tapes and includes 2 rare B-sides. Keith Cross had earned plaudits as a young guitar virtuoso with the power trio T2 (who recorded an album for Decca Records in 1970). In 1972 he teamed up with PETER ROSS to record this marvellous album with guest musicians such as Nick Lowe, Jimmy Hastings and B.J. Cole.



RICK WAKEMAN

'Live in Lugano'

New DVD (NTSC / Region 0) of Rick Wakeman's entire concert performance at Estival Jazz Lugano in July 2009 with The Orchestra Della Svizzera Italiana in July 2009. This event was the perfect setting for Wakeman's classically inspired compositions to be performed, including "The King Arthur Suite", "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" and "Catherine Howard". The Lugano concert was a special event by one of Rock's greatest keyboard players.

Rick Wakeman
at the Grand Piano

Live in Lugano

Performing his best known works
with Symphonic Orchestra & Choir
Conducted by Guy Rothermel



JOHN MARTYN

'Well Kept Secret'

Newly remastered and expanded edition of John Martyn's classic album from 1982, his second for WEA. Includes: "Could've Been Me", "Hung Up" and "Never Let Me Go" - featuring a wonderful saxophone solo by Ronnie Scott. NME declared the record to be "pacier and louder than he's ever been on one album before". Includes 2 bonus single tracks.



SASSAFRAS

'Expecting Company'

One of the great unsung rock albums of the early 1970s, "Expecting Company" has been newly remastered from the original master tapes and includes both sides of a rare single. Formed in Wales, the band signed to George Martin's AIR Productions in 1972. Utilising to great effect the twin lead guitar approach of Dai Shell and Ralph Evans.



PANIC ROOM 'Satellite'

Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a CD/DVD edition of "Satellite", the 2nd album by Panic Room. The album established them as one of the leading bands in the new wave of British Progressive Rock groups. The line-up featured Anne Marie Helder (Vocals, Guitar, Keyboards, Flute), Jonathan Edwards (Keyboards), Paul Davies (Lead Guitar, Backing Vocals), Alan Vaughan (Bass) and Gavin Griffiths (Drums), and is an album of power, dynamics and beauty. This edition includes a bonus DVD disc featuring all 4 audio tracks of the "Little Satellite" EP and a promo video of "Satellite".

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Esoteric Recordings Remastering and Expanding the Classics



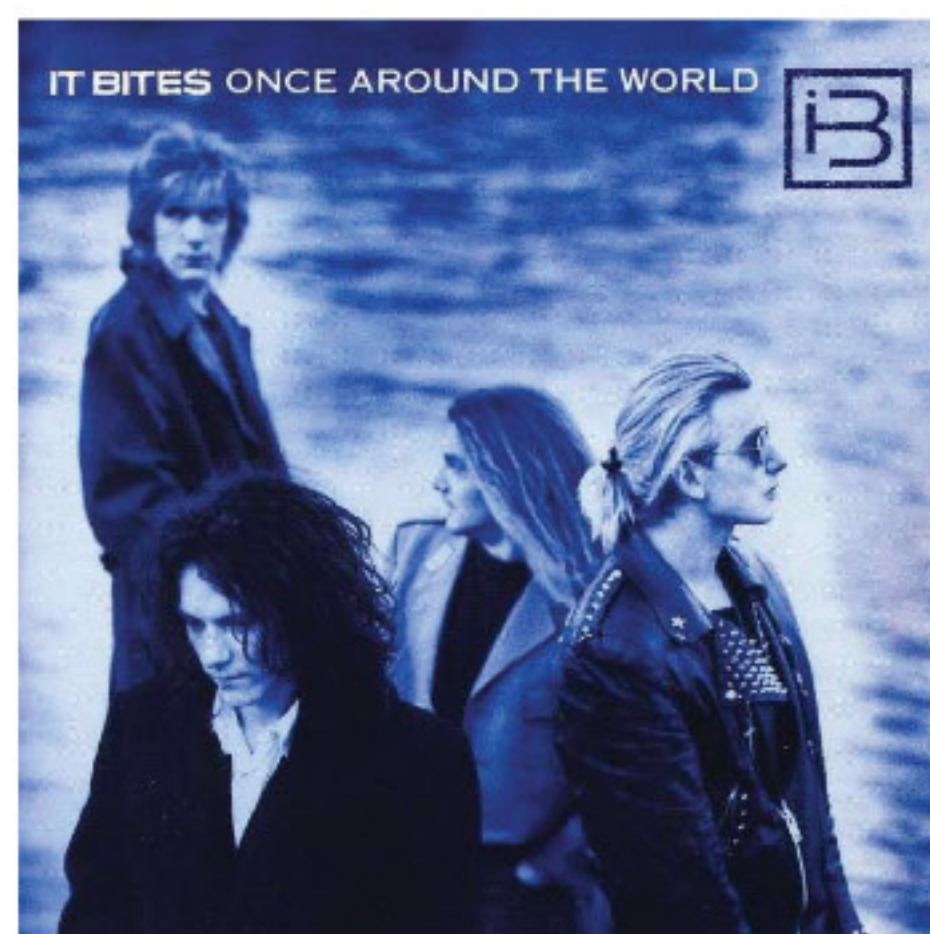
Once Around The World

Two years after *The Big Lad In The Windmill* and their hit single *Calling All The Heroes*, **It Bites** were out to prove there was more to them than a squeaky clean pop anthem. But it took three different producers and a cellar full of wine to nail the winning formula.

Off on his travels: Dave Ling

BELOW: GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX LEAD: PHOTOFEATURES

ONCE AROUND THE WORLD	
RELEASE DATE	March 1988
CHART POSITION	Number 43
BAND MEMBERS	Francis Dunnery, John Beck, Bob Dalton, Dick Nolan
TRACKLISTING	<i>Midnight, Kiss Like Judas, Yellow Christian, Rose Marie, Black December, Old Man And The Angel, Hunting The Whale, Plastic Dreamer, Once Around The World</i>
STAND-OUT TRACKS	<i>Midnight, Kiss Like Judas, Yellow Christian, Old Man And The Angel, Once Around The World</i>



Like the Bridge Of Death in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*, the structure that connects progressive rock with crossover success in the realm of pop music is rickety as fuck. Elite are those not cast into the Gorge Of Eternal Peril, and fewer still make the return journey.

In the summer of 1986, Cumbrian quartet It Bites scored a Top Ten hit with their second ever single, a sprightly, hook-laden but decidedly clean-cut song entitled *Calling All The Heroes*. Unsurprisingly, their lives were changed forever. Appearing on *Top Of The Pops* and in the pages of *Smash Hits* were fun for a while, but for a band of serious musicians – Francis Dunnery in particular was a precocious, gobby talent who could run rings around most other guitar players of the era – the ramifications of those five minutes of popstardom linger on.

“It was like Jeff Beck and *Hi Ho* bloody *Silver Lining*,” observes keyboard player John Beck now, “a big hit but unrepresentative of the artist.”

“That was a very exciting time,” reflects Dunnery. “I was very, very unsure of myself back then, so a lot of my reaction to [the success] was stupid and selfish. But there’s nothing like watching your songs go zooming up the charts. It meant even more pot, women and alcohol.”

Completed by bass player Dick Nolan and drummer Bob Dalton, the band had formed at the turn of that decade, and before Beck’s arrival in ’82, cut their teeth playing Level 42 and Haircut One Hundred covers. After a split they reconvened in 1984, relocating to London to be snapped up by Virgin Records.

Produced by Babe Ruth guitarist Alan Shacklock, *The Big Lad In The Windmill* was a bold, adventurous full-length debut that fused clean, pristine sonics with a set of diverse influences, which of course included Yes and Genesis.

“None of us listened to Yes until the critics started comparing us to them,” points out Beck, “and as far as Genesis were concerned, they weren’t Dick or Bob’s bag at all.”

“I don’t like prog for prog’s sake; if a song doesn’t have a beautiful melody then I want nothing to do with it,” clarifies Dunnery. He lists Necromandus (a Cumbrian hard rock band discovered by Black Sabbath’s Tony Iommi), Focus, UK, Bruford, Soft Machine, Mahavishnu, Allan Holdsworth, Level 42, George Benson, Steve Arrington, Michael Franks and McCartney among the group’s heroes. This was no run-of-the-mill rock band; Donny Osmond, Cameo, The Carpenters and even Racey, the pop stars responsible for the bubblegum hit *Some Girls*, were all part of their influence pool.

It Bites began working on their second album with producer Nick Froome. One track, *Plastic Dreamer*, was recorded, which according to Dunnery the group’s label Virgin Records “hated.”

“Nick was part of Trevor Horn’s camp,” he relates, this decision having been made after ex-Buggles man Horn struck gold with Yes’ 90125. “Everyone who had ever walked past Horn was given a record to produce,” he laughs. “I think Trevor’s milkman produced Then Jerico and had a hit!”

A second attempt, this time with Mark Wallis of U2, The Smiths, Talking Heads and more, was made.

“It was a drug festival, but [we created] great music and Mark goes down in history as the guy who held *Once Around The World* together,” observes Dunnery.

Froome and Davis’ work remained, though the album was largely co-produced by the band, who had bowled up disbelievingly at the Manor Studios in Oxford, determined to maximise the experience. At the time, the facility cost £1,500 a day – another universe for a band that was still squatting together in Peckham.

“We chose our rooms and then drank the wine cellars dry,” Dunnery recalls. “It was like Heaven. All the drink you wanted, all the food you wanted, all the pot you wanted. And an amazing studio just outside the front door where we could



“

“We wrote outrageous shit together. If I didn’t have to wait three hours outside his house in a van every time I wanted to play music with him, then I’d go round there right now and I’d sleep with him.”
Francis Dunnery on John Beck

”

It Bites in 1988,
looking mean and
moody in black
and white.



“

“We weren’t particularly into being successful – we just wanted to play 20-minute long songs and smoke pot!”
Francis Dunnery on the making of *Once Around The World*

”

record songs that were over 10 minutes long. I was hungover for six weeks.”

Beck paints a slightly different picture: “The entire band and crew took LSD on that first evening, but after the blowout, we quickly knuckled down.”

Seeking a steady hand, Virgin Records brought in another of their artists, Steve Hillage of Gong fame, to coax It Bites on through the home straight. Hillage was already a noted producer, with a CV that included Simple Minds, and John Beck was a huge fan of the guitarist’s own 1976 album, *L*.

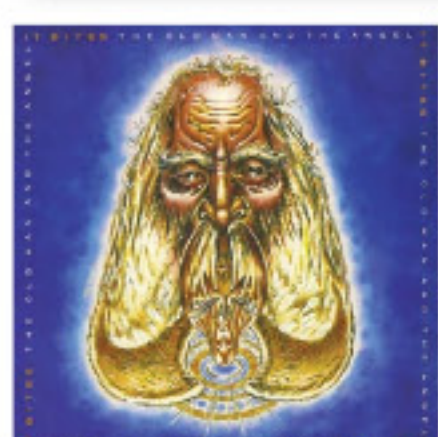
“The sessions at the Manor were deemed to have been out of control,” Dunnery smiles. “Virgin needed a single to sell the album with and they thought Hillage was their man. Steve is a gentle soul and he did an amazing job of keeping four incredibly raw lunatics who were drunk and stoned 24 hours a day serious enough to produce something that could be played on the radio.”

Steve Hillage ended up working on five of the album’s nine tracks. “It took

The drape escape. It Bites, l-r: Bob Dalton, John Beck, Francis Dunnery and Dick Nolan.



GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX



Old Man And The Angel, their third single from the album.

a while for me to understand their curious accents but, having known each other since school, they had this beautiful, organic way of playing together,” he recalls. “Their songs were cerebrally arranged but they had a lot of heart and feeling.”

If their goal had been to make a prog rock record with a modern-sounding production, then *It Bites* hit the back of the net in emphatic style.

“I think we found our own voice in among all the stealing and copying,” ventures Dunnery. “Nobody ever recognises that actually we were heavily influenced by R&B. I could spout a bunch of bollocks about what we were trying to achieve musically, but the truth is I didn’t have a fucking clue. I was just trying to play faster than John McLaughlin and drink as much as I could before the inevitable happened.”

“Look, we weren’t particularly into being successful – we just wanted to play 20-minute long songs and smoke pot, after drinking 30 bottles of wine,” he continues. “It was tremendous. We were frighteningly authentic. *It Bites* were always the real deal we just didn’t have the savvy to market ourselves because we weren’t trying to be successful. To this day I don’t think Bob, Dick or John gave a shit about success or fame. None of us did.”

The band could rightly feel cocky about the quality of their material, which ranged from the thunderous groove of opener *Midnight* to the shimmering *Old Man And The Angel* to the joyous, whimsical escapism of *Plastic Dreamer*, which would have been

“It was the perfect mix of progressive rock and pop.”

Maschine guitarist/vocalist Luke Machin circumnavigates *It Bites’ World*.



“Because I was born in 1988 – the same year that it was released – I never saw the original *It Bites* line-up live, but *Once Around The World* is my favourite album of all time. I grew up in a house where *It Bites* were played all the time; my mum and dad were both huge fans. They’d sit around watching VHS tapes of the band and of Francis Dunnery as a solo artist rocking the stage. And of course it was going to rub off on me.

“*Once Around The World* is one of those perfect albums. Its title track was so long that it literally did circumnavigate the globe. In terms of attention to detail, it had so much going on, but beneath it all there were these great

melodies. It was the perfect mixture of progressive rock and pop, with a high-energy delivery. I also loved the fact that its subject matter was quite dark.

“I’ve since seen the new incarnation of *It Bites* playing most of the album’s tracks, which was great. It was also a dream come true to play with Francis Dunnery, who of course is my biggest influence [Machin appeared on his 2009 album *There’s A Whole New World Out There*].

“It was even more of a thrill when he told me that hearing Maschine’s album [*Rubidium*] actually made him swear with delight!” **DL**

perfect for the soundtrack of the movie *Toy Story* seven years later (“It could’ve made a cracking Christmas single, too,” observes Beck).

The songs had all been written in the group’s squat, Dunnery supplying the lion’s share of the lyrics with the band collaborating on everything else. Their subject matter was every bit as varied and inspiring as the music. *Kiss Like Judas*, for instance, was It Bites’ take on the story of Quasimodo and Esmeralda, while Beck reveals that *Yellow Christian* was inspired by “the apparition of the Bethlehem star”.

When asked whether *Old Man And The Angel* had religious overtones of its own, Beck splutters with laughter: “All of our songs have bloody religious overtones!” he reveals.

Most crucial of all, though, was an almost 15-minute title track which incorporated various changes of mood, including a very British-sounding musical hall-style section about supping champagne “in the good old summertime”.

“Yeah, that bit’s killer, isn’t it?” smiles Beck. “Perhaps Frank threw a Stan Laurel influence in there; we were all huge fans.”

This writer had always assumed that the song was inspired by the Jules Verne novel *Around The World In 80 Days* – until realising that it was set in 1872 and not 1924.

“As far as I’m aware lyrically, it’s about a day in the life of no one in particular,” comments Beck.

In April 1988, *Once Around The World* peaked at Number 43, eight chart places below its predecessor. Of the three singles released, only an edited

version of the title track dented the Top 50. In those pre-internet days and before the advent of specialist titles like *Prog* and *Classic Rock*, exposure was limited to only one magazine, *Kerrang!*, who didn’t get It Bites at all.

“No-one did, we were too good for them to understand,” Dunnery volunteers. “The so-called music press were so incredibly unmusical that we went over their heads. They all work at Sainsbury’s now and at weekends they do write-ups on beans.”

Nevertheless, it was an important time for hard rock music – King’s X, Living Colour, Queensrÿche and Dan Reed Network were doing important things away from leather and studs, and Maiden had just released the proggiest album of their career, *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*.

“Iron Maiden? Don’t make me laugh,” Beck snorts derisively. “We were light years ahead of everyone.”

When they were granted a platform, Dunnery would brag to journalists: “Anyone who knows anything about music will know there’s not one band around to touch It Bites. We don’t get any credit for it, and that’s sad.” Or he would resort to slagging the media off from the stage.

“I was an arrogant cunt when it comes to It Bites – I still am,” he admits. “I threatened those thick wankers many times because I was so hurt. And in hindsight I proved myself correct.”

“No regrets from me,” Beck agrees. “Frank spoke the truth.”

Something had to give, and unfortunately it was It Bites. Despite

GEORGE CHIN/ICONPIX

BELOW: TONY MOTTRAM VIA GEORGE CHIN/ICONPIX



Mad Hatter: John Beck’s synth technique was a tad unorthodox.



Kiss Like Judas: based on *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*.



Still Too Young To Remember: from next album *Eat Me In St Louis*.

having worked hard to put ...*Heroes* behind them and reaching the level of Hammersmith Odeon headliners, Dunnery quit during the early stages of recording their fourth album in California. The guitarist later joined Robert Plant’s band and carved a solo career. It Bites reinvented themselves as Navajo Kiss and then Sister Sarah before succumbing to the inevitable.

There were brief hopes of a reunion when the four original members performed together at a Dunnery gig in 2003, but it took the appointment of mega-fan John Mitchell of Frost*/Arena fame to resuscitate them permanently.

Steve Hillage admits to having been “gutted” by Dunnery’s departure, but is happy that later line-ups – now minus Dick Nolan – still record and play live. “They were always a very combustive mixture, though,” Steve points out, “that’s what made them so special.”

In ’09 the John Mitchell-fronted group toured ...*World* in its entirety. Whether or not the classic-era It Bites will reunite remains to be seen. Beck plays the “never say never” card, but believes that Nolan would never play ball.

“John and I haven’t spoken for ages but I can tell by his photos that he’s gloriously, stark raving mad,” Francis sums up with a loud cackle. “We wrote outrageous shit together. If I didn’t have to wait three hours outside his house in a van every time I wanted to play music with him, then I’d go round there right now and I’d sleep with him.” ☺

Francis Dunnery is touring Europe in May. see www.francisdunnery.com. It Bites headline *Holmfirth Prog Splash* on June 7. More info at www.itbites.com.

Kings of the road: hanging with tour buddies Jethro Tull, 1989.



LOVE MAKES



"Justin is a machine, I tell you. A fucking machine. I'm still in a bit of shock that he pulled it all off. I would've had a Kodak moment mental collapse..."

Belinda Kordic on the making of The Fall

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Se Delan: Belinda Kordic and Justin Greaves enjoying the honeymoon period of their musical relationship.

SWEET MUSIC

If Disney did a prog-rock movie, it would go something like this: two disillusioned musicians find each other, find love, and find their passion for music again, recording a glorious, filmic album together. Enter Justin Greaves and Belinda Kordic – aka **Se Delan** – the real-life fairytale couple. **Words:** Polly Glass

Sometimes you have to be on the verge of losing your passion before you can really reignite it. Or at least, that seems to have been the case for Justin Greaves; founder of knarly-n-interesting rock posse Crippled Black Phoenix, and now also half of progressive act Se Delan. The latter is a stirring outfit completed by enigmatic Swedish songstress Belinda Kordic, who formerly recorded as Killing Mood.

You wouldn't know, listening to the beguiling, atmospheric tones of debut album *The Fall*, but Se Delan is the product of two people who had been leaning away from music. Kordic had actually retired from singing altogether, following the release of her Killing Mood record in 2009. It wasn't until meeting Greaves – himself disenchanted by the industry – that enthusiasm was rekindled.

Initially, Greaves harnessed Kordic's voice for CBP, having ingested the Killing Mood album. "It was on in my car constantly!" he enthuses. "And I'm not the world's biggest fan of female vocals, to be honest. But Belinda's just got a voice and attitude that I really like. So, putting our relationship aside for a second [the pair are now an item], that's what attracted me to her."

Romance developed and musical lust blossomed, along with the idea to make music together, initially just for themselves until Kscope snapped them up. Still, inadvertently, the pair lured each other back into a world they'd fallen out of love with.

"We were a match in every sense,"

Kordic says, speaking to us from Stockholm. "I thought I'd never be involved in music again, but with Justin it just felt so damned right. It awakened my slumbering passion for music."

Happily living together now, up north in the countryside with their five cats, it doesn't seem to have done their relationship any disservice.

"I did have concerns about making an album with my partner," Greaves concedes. "But over the course of about a year, it seemed the right thing to do. And it's really nice to see Belinda excited about making music again."

That excitement has been sustained since recording *The Fall* in April and May last year, although CBP commitments and label logistics slowed things down. The sum of it all saw the

new, stripped-back CBP record, *White Light Generator*, and *The Fall* being released within about a month of each other.

"We were going to put the Se Delan record out as a DIY release, but then Kscope got involved, and sorting out the contract and everything took a while. So we had to sit on it," Greaves explains. "But we are really excited to actually get *The Fall* out now."

It's curious to think that this contemporary progressive leader ("I don't like to call it a solo project, but it is my baby," he says of CBP, arguably more a 'collective' than a 'band' with its sizeable ex-members list) started life in a back-of-the-stage capacity – Greaves began drumming for sludge metallers Iron Monkey, before also drumming with Electric Wizard. Then he dived into freaky but cool rock with CBP.

So, from metal bands to unwieldy group and now a melodic duo – quite a transition. "It's got a lot to do with compromise," Greaves says. "Belinda's really good for me, and it's an absolute pleasure working on music together. She keeps me grounded."

"I know I can be quite stubborn in the creative process," Kordic concedes. "I recall hearing the name Yoko Ono a few times..."

"But compromise is really healthy," Greaves adds. "It opens your mind. And when working with Belinda, I'm confident that whatever we play, she's going to sound amazing."

Atmospheric and delicate, but also drawing from early 90s noise rock in *The Hunt*, elements of the alt/prog likes of Panic Room and older classic rock touches, Se Delan fully realise the prettily harrowing, ambient qualities tapped into with CBP. The result echoes steely film influences and life experience as much as it does other music.

Having heard its faraway strains and introspective filmic sprawls, it seems natural for Kordic to cite old Disney flicks, spaghetti westerns ("I love the big choirs of wordless singing and sad Disney vocals") and Ennio Morricone [composer of *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* soundtrack among others] as influences. Oh, and nomadic Mongolian music.

"We didn't set out to make Se Delan sound like anything else," Greaves tells us. "We

knew we liked dark acoustic music and older classic rock. Belinda likes the more simple song structures, melodic but really dark. That's our mutual ground."

Indeed, the only downside of the recording process was the time constraint they faced. Amazingly, Greaves recorded all of the instrumental tracks – and this is a decidedly layered, multi-instrumental album – in just four days. Did he sleep at all?

"Not much!" he laughs. "Kostas [Panagiotou, ex-CBP] played piano, we had violin... Then there were a couple of days for vocals, a couple for mixing... so it wasn't much time. But in a way it captures something you might not get from a longer process."

Kordic is blunter: "Justin is a machine, I tell you. A fucking machine. I'm still in a bit of shock that he pulled it all off. I would've had a Kodak moment mental collapse..."

A notable point to emerge is Greaves's evolution from metal origins. By reaching a spacier, softer sphere, he's echoed the path of multiple heroes. Mikael Åkerfeldt moved from death metal with Opeth to increasingly ambient leanings; heavy Swedes Katatonia released a semi-acoustic album last year; prog kings Anathema began as a death/doom act; Ulver started with black/folk metal before going avant-garde... How does one extreme successfully breed another?

"With any of these groups, the attitude remains the same," Greaves muses. "Ulver or Opeth are making really interesting, different music now, but you know where they've come from. And if CBP or Se Delan play a show, it's still my adolescent punk vibe there."

Teenage years listening to punk and thrash metal, along with his dad's classic rock albums (Pink Floyd et al), laid fighting foundations. But the variety here signalled something more unusual, that led Greaves from metallic extremes towards the soundscapes he and Kordic pursue with Se Delan. And as they embark on UK dates with Gazpacho, Greaves is clear that this is no one-off side project.

"After I left Electric Wizard, I was very disillusioned," he confesses. "You get to a point in life where you want to do what you really want, and all your influences come out."

"The spirit of progressive music is to stick your neck out. It doesn't have to be particularly cutting edge; just something genuine that doesn't fit neatly into a category. With prog rock now, it's like putting a square peg in a round hole."

And that's what appeals about Se Delan – their sense of freedom. Other-worldly, profoundly dark but strangely beautiful... 

The Fall is out now on Kscope. For info see www.kscopemusic.com/artists/se-delan.



Over And Above

Nearly four decades since their last studio album, **Curved Air** are back with *North Star*, and long-serving frontwoman Sonja Kristina reckons it's one of their best yet.

Stars In His Eyes: Sid Smith **Images:** Kevin Nixon

“At the beginning of last year, the thought of making a studio album seemed like a very high mountain to climb,” admits Sonja Kristina. Curved Air’s lead singer and constant guiding light throughout the band’s 43-year history is in reflective mood recounting the events that went into making *North Star*. “We’d done a couple of live albums since we reformed in 2009, and *Atmosphere*, released in 2012, really captured the spirit and energy of the band in concert. But our management said for us to grow and develop, we needed to get into the studio and work together on new material.”

The last time a unit calling itself Curved Air had ventured into the darkened womb-world of a recording studio was for 1976’s *Airborne*, the last album in the 70s by the band and released prior to drummer (and Kristina’s then-partner) Stewart Copeland’s departure for The Police. Now consisting of Kristina and original drummer Florian Pilkington-Miksa, alongside Paul Sax (violin), Chris Harris (bass), Robert Norton (keyboards) and Kit Morgan (guitars), in 2013 they set about putting ideas together. However, with everyone far-flung geographically, this wasn’t easy.

“This band has been so

great and so loyal,” says Kristina. “They travel such long distances because most of them live in the South West and I live in London. That means they drive miles and miles to meet up and go to gigs and then have to drive all the way back. I’m really indebted to the magic of their playing, and their loyalty.”

Were you to examine the ups and downs of those bands who’ve been around for any length of time, money – and more specifically, its allocation and distribution – if not actually the root of all evil is usually a significant reason for disharmony within those groups. “At the first meeting we had to discuss the new album, Florian suggested that all money be shared equally when it came to publishing. As a drummer, he’d contributed lots of ideas

but felt he’d not been recognised regarding songwriting credits and publishing royalties. So we decided to split all the money evenly. That’s unlike any previous line-up of Curved Air.”

Having established fundamental ground rules, work commenced – but it wasn’t without its problems. Ideas worked on by Kristina, Norton and Sax in early writing sessions failed to find favour with the rest of the band. Rather than be daunted by this turn of affairs, it forced everyone to dig deep rather than simply coast along. With a renewed sense of

“
Somebody said to
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Phantasmagoria.”
”





“Fans tell us they accept this version of the band as a living incarnation that honours the spirit of the original group.”

The thrill of the chaise:
Sonja Kristina at the Kings
Theatre, Southsea, March 2014.

purpose, that mountain climb Kristina talked about inched forward to the point where backing tracks were safely in the can, requiring only a few overdubs for the album to be finished. Then, seemingly within sight of the summit, guitarist Kit Morgan decided to quit. Of course, he wasn't the first notable departure in Curved Air's history.

"Francis Monkman and Darryl Way both left because of stress or as a way of shutting out the stress that comes of being in a band," notes Kristina. She also cites the loss in 1973 of wunderkind violinist Eddie Jobson and guitarist Kirby Gregory (simply known as Kirby), to Roxy Music and Stretch respectively, as being equally significant and destabilising events that required a dramatic reappraisal.

Although ostensibly a setback, Morgan's departure also presented the band with an opportunity. "We'd seen Kirby at a gig where he'd come up and done a guest spot with us and we'd kept in touch since then. Kirby really wanted to be back in a band and part of something new, so it seemed natural to offer him the opportunity to rejoin the group. He was very excited about being on the album."

While there's no denying that a change in personnel at such a critical juncture delayed the album, Kirby's arrival was also an invigorating experience, providing the project with fresh impetus. Kristina says: "Kirby started working on the tracks and put his own parts on them, working with our producer, Marvin Ayres. Then, of course, the band had to hear what Kirby had done and then make yet further adjustments for it all to gel. It's strange having another voice coming in and that can be disconcerting because there are new notes and different harmonies. Yet it was a very creative period actually, and it meant that finishing off the album with everyone an equal part of the process was a really positive experience."

The finished album has the combination of knotty tracks alternating between baroque filigree work and muscular riffs that have always been part of the Curved Air modus operandi. *Time Games* is typical of this approach, showcasing clean and fluid violin lines swerving between fast and furious guitar and keyboard arrangements, with quick-changing time signatures. This song and the instrumental *Spider* would be easy to mistake for jazz-rock epics by the likes of Chick Corea's *Return To Forever* or late-70s *Soft Machine*.

Kristina is quick to point out that the contributions made by Paul Sax (violin) and Robert Norton (keyboards) since joining in 2009 have been absolutely integral to the band's continuing evolution. "They are so terrifically talented and they really don't get the kind of recognition they truly deserve," she says emphatically.

When it comes to writing lyrics, Kristina eagerly taps into both the subconscious and the everyday. *Time Games* draws on a disturbing dream brimming with post-apocalyptic imagery of a ravaged earth wherein survivors wander, 'waiting like ghosts around a grave'. Meanwhile, *Old Town News* is rooted in the streets of Vauxhall in



“
I’m really indebted
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line-up: the magic
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”

Condensed Air! From left:
Florian Pilkington-Miksa,
Sonja Kristina, Chris
Harris, Paul Sax, Robert
Norton, Kirby Gregory.

London, where the singer inhabits the persona and point of view of an elderly woman struggling to cope with being a stranger in the place she’d spent her entire life. By contrast, Kristina came to relish her return to urban life after a spell away from the metropolis.

“I think Stuart [Copeland] and I had just parted company and I was going to make my home in the city. It was around 1991 and I was recording my solo album, *Songs From The Acid Folk* at The Beat Factory. I remember just standing on the street, amidst the bustle of it all, and there out on the Euston Road, the traffic sounded like an orchestra to me. It was absolutely beautiful.”

Tales of two different cities proved to be basis of *Stay Human*. “I’d been watching the news about the 2011 Tahrir Square uprising in Egypt and also in Libya, where people were putting up barricades and standing up against the police. I was tuning in every day to this independent internet TV station in Benghazi set-up by Mohammed ‘Mo’ Nabbous. I really felt like I got to know him though his work – I remember his voice so well. Mo got killed by

a sniper on one of his filming rounds. His favourite saying was “a candle loses nothing lighting another candle” and I’ve included that in the song. Although people find themselves on different sides of a divide, ultimately we mustn’t harden our hearts. We shouldn’t forget that we are all human.”

The album title *North Star* wasn’t obvious at first but, as Kristina relates, a series of seemingly cosmic coincidences helped them decide upon it. Although recording had started at Kristina’s home in Clapham’s North Street, the sale of her house meant shipping out the Curved Air crew to a new location.

“I was eating at the North Street Deli and got talking to the guy who ran it and told him we were looking for a place to finish the album. He told me there was a studio in North Street Mews, which used to belong to the trip-hop band Morcheeba, that had become available. We hadn’t known about it and, as it hadn’t been advertised as being for hire, we wouldn’t have known about it if it hadn’t been for this totally random conversation. So that’s where we ended up finishing the record.

“Not long after it was all done, I was walking through Clapham Old Town when this big blue coach from a Belgian travel company came whizzing past me with white stars painted all over it and the words ‘North Star’ along the side,” she laughs incredulously. “After that, it all fell into place.”

Sometimes you get the feeling the universe is trying to tell you something.

“Somebody said to us that this material sounded like the ‘fourth’ Curved Air album, meaning it followed on from *Phantasmagoria*. And many of the audience members who saw us all those years ago tell us they accept this version of the band as a living incarnation that honours the spirit of the original group.”

The pole or north star, as it is known, has been used by travellers both ancient and modern as a navigational aide. Sonja Kristina doesn’t quite know where this *North Star* will take Curved Air next, but she’s looking forward to the journey. 

North Star is out now via Cherry Red.
See www.curvedair.com for details.



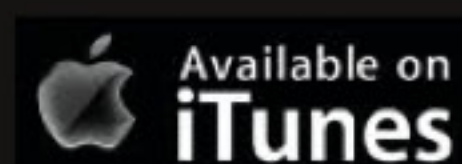
MIKE HYDER CRAFTSMAN

New Album from Bandleader/Songwriter/Guitarist/Vocalist
with Classic Rock/Prog/Psyche British band, THE TREAT.

Album contains four lengthy pieces which take in Mike Hyder's broad songwriting style,
adventurous arrangements & meticulous production.

Genre hopping through classic hard rock, psychedelia, folk, blues, a hint of jazz, a dash of country, exhilarating symphonic passages, multi-layered guitar orchestrations & vocal harmonies, seamlessly woven together with a pop sensibility. An album that retains the true freewheeling spirit of traditional prog, with all its mid-song, key and tempo changes. Thrilling.

www.thetreat.co.uk



Bass - the final frontier. Taking their instrument to new levels, **Colin Edwin** and **Lorenzo Feliciati** boldly explore sonic soundscapes on a prog-fusion album with soul.

Words: Chris Roberts

An Australian and an Italian walk into a studio and both play bass. They emerge with one of the year's first truly immersive albums, on which intriguing instrumentals sing. *Twinscapes* is the result of a collaboration between Colin Edwin (best known for his part in Porcupine Tree, but also busy with Metallic Taste Of Blood, Ex-Wise Heads and Burnt Belief) and Lorenzo Feliciati (lynchpin of jazz-rock mavericks Naked Truth, and Berserk!). It takes the much-maligned bass into fresh places: outer bass.

"We didn't set out to make any kind of statement about the bass," says Edwin, "but I guess it shows that what some might perceive as a limitation is nothing of the sort. For me, the bass guitar is a never-ending source of fascination. It's certainly an underappreciated instrument. It's my gateway to playing music, a totally absorbing activity, and the more contexts I can play it in, the more it interests me."

Feliciati adds: "I think the album makes it evident that to overplay and show 'super chops' is not the only way for a bass player to be upfront in the sonic spectrum of a song. It's an album of music, not just a *Gunfight At The OK Corral* between me and Colin!"

Like many inspired ideas, *Twinscapes* came about almost by accident. While Feliciati was visiting London, a mutual friend at RareNoise Records suggested the pair combine. Edwin was "immediately interested" as he'd already been pondering doing something in a two-bass format. They met for four hours of rehearsal before an impromptu low-key gig.

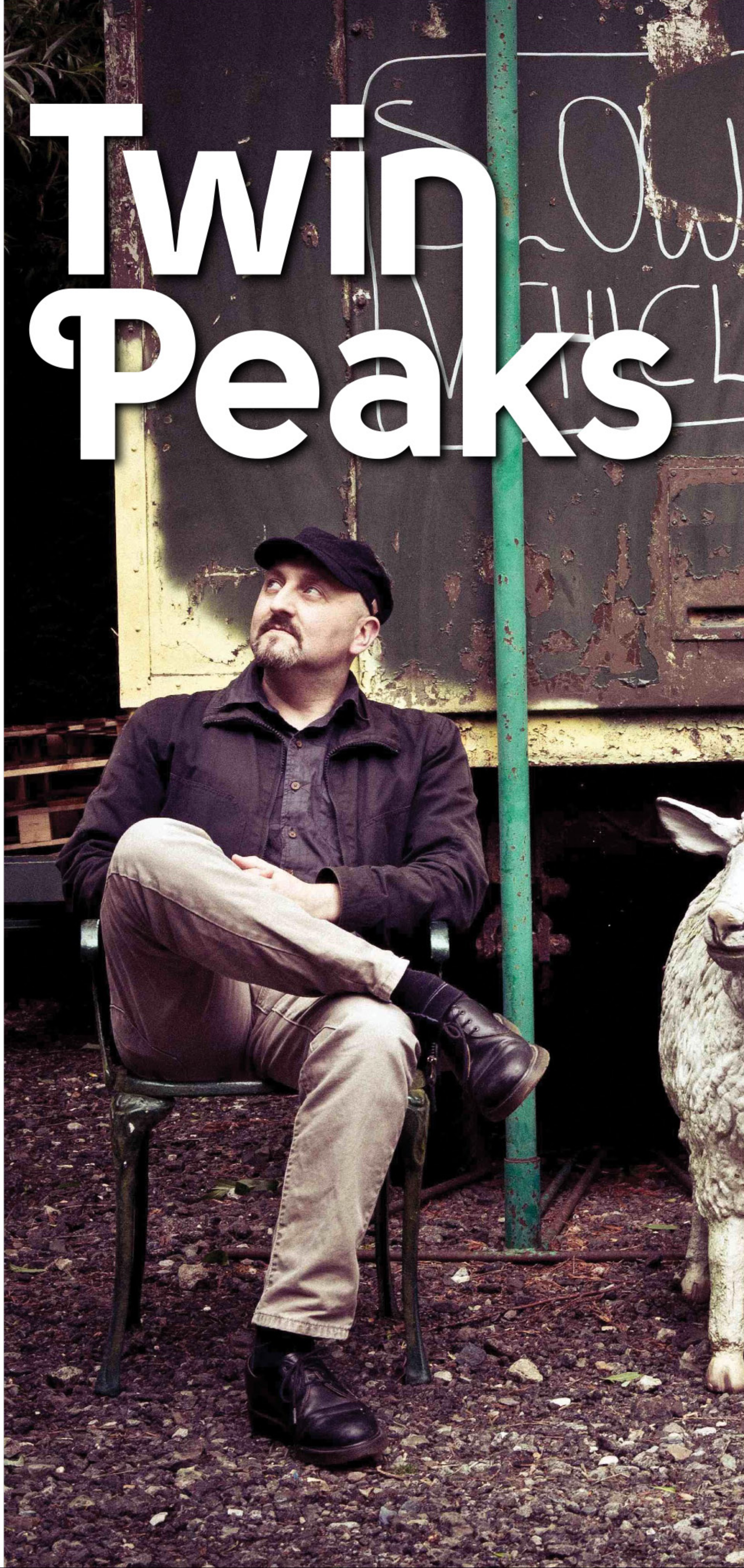
"Other than a few emails and a brief Skype conversation, we hadn't met in person until the day before the gig," reveals Edwin, who knew of Feliciati's playing in Naked Truth.

Meanwhile, Feliciati had been an audience member when Porcupine Tree played in Rome back in the 90s. "After five minutes together it was clear to me that I was in front of a great artist," enthuses the Italian, "but also a very nice, easy-to-deal-with person. That makes everything relaxed."

Prog's live review praised their poise and simpatico. "As soon as we started, I knew Lorenzo and I were finding our own way coherently, with next to no discussion," says Edwin. "This can be a rare thing - too many musicians put the idea of interaction some way below their own egos."

The duo decided to make an album as soon as possible, while what Feliciati calls "the magic and chemistry" were still crackling. From the shimmering *Shaken* to the bustling

Twin Peaks



A man with glasses and a goatee, wearing a dark jacket and jeans, sits on a black metal chair. To his left is a white, textured sculpture of a sheep. Behind him is a dark, weathered wall covered in white graffiti. The graffiti includes "NO SIGNALS" in a large box, "M584 RKM" in a smaller box, and "WOMEN FOR CH..." with a smiley face. The ground is covered in dark gravel.

Colin Edwin (left) and Lorenzo Feliciati: far from following the herd, *Twinscapes* is a bold, bass-driven adventure.

“The bass guitar is a never-ending source of fascination... It’s my gateway to playing music, a totally absorbing activity.”

Colin Edwin

Breathsketch, echoing everyone from Tangerine Dream to Brand X, it came together with what Feliciati says was “telepathy”.

Aiding and abetting these aces of bass with guest spots were some high-end musicians. Andi Pupato brought percussion, and Roberto Gualdi of PFM drummed on a couple of tracks. Trumpeter Nils Petter Molvaer was Edwin’s “wish-list soloist”, while David Jackson of Van der Graaf Generator fame was “a perfect fit” for the strangely seductive track *i-Dea*.

These cameos helped the duo “discover new sides to the music”, reveals Feliciati. Vocals, however, were never considered. “I think we kind of got carried away with the instrumentals,” laughs Edwin.

Feliciati describes Bill Laswell, who mixed *Twinscapes*, as “a master of bass”, and Edwin says there couldn’t have been a better person for the job. “I’d count him as a big influence. He added a clarity and depth.”

Listening to *Twinscapes*, the spirit of the late, great Mick Karn, once of Japan, can be discerned. Obviously it’s a tad lame to compare all bass virtuosos to one, but the pair are delighted with the reference. “I love Mick Karn’s bass playing,” says Edwin, “especially with Dali’s Car. He had such a unique voice as a musician. It’s impossible and also pointless to try to copy him, but I’ve absorbed so much of his music it’s bound to come out somehow. He’s also one reason I gravitated towards using a fretless bass a lot of the time; Percy Jones and Kev Hopper being the other two.”

Feliciati “always loved the way he created bass lines that were the melody. You can sing them! He was one of the few bass players you’d recognise after two notes. Maybe just one!”

Both assert that the album succeeds because they complement each other, rather than jockeying for position. Feliciati’s had too many bad experiences of bassists trying to outdo each other with aggression and force. This is about, in Edwin’s words, “the overall sonic tapestry... it’s an album created out of curiosity, initially, and then the desire to explore and document our shared chemistry.”

Asked if his previous work informs it, he says, “Yes, for sure. I’ve had all sorts of great experiences. A lot with Porcupine Tree, of course, but also with others, and everything feeds everything else, even if not consciously. There’s an identifiable thread in everything I’ve been involved in.”

“It is strange but I sometimes feel like I’m doing the same music over and over,” says Feliciati. “When you work together with another artist, you are forced to move in new directions.”

Next up for Edwin are his first shows (in Italy) with his Endless Tapes project, some recording with guitarist Jon Durant for *Burnt Belief*, and further work on the next *Metallic Taste Of Blood* album. Feliciati is progressing his solo project, *Frequent Flyer*, for *RareNoise*, as well as nurturing *Naked Truth*. The tender, trippy *Twinscapes*, meanwhile, is a quiet triumph. “Part planned, part luck,” says Feliciati. “Absolute sincere satisfaction.” 

Twinscapes is out now via *RareNoise Records*. See www.rarenoiserecords.com for details.



SAILING THE SEAS OF PROG

A stellar line-up of bands hand-picked by Mike Portnoy, all performing on a luxury cruise ship sailing the sun-soaked Bahamas? **Prog Nation At Sea** is the future of touring, reckons *Prog*, lounging in the on-deck hot tub, cocktail in hand...

Our salty dog: Raziq Rauf **Main Image:** Karel Zuiderveld

This is surely the zenith of watching progressive rock music — it won't get any better than this. Where are we? We're on a boat. Why are we on a boat? This is the inaugural Progressive Nation At Sea 2014 and these are four days we did not want to miss.

Setting sail from Miami to be trapped in a tin can with a couple of thousand other prog fanatics for four days might fill some with trepidation, but when the event has been curated by the mighty Mike Portnoy and there's a 24-hour buffet, you know it's not going to disappoint. Taking his Progressive Nation tour franchise to the waters doesn't seem like the most obvious thing to do, but when you consider the likes of Kid Rock, Weezer and even Paramore have their own dedicated cruises, it's about time prog got in on the act. There's already Yes's Cruise To

The Edge and the Moody Blues' Moodies Cruise. Now, with 43 hand-picked bands, a couple of stops in the Bahamas and enough sunshine to replenish even the very worst Vitamin D deficiency, Mike Portnoy's seafaring prog vision sets sail.

Walking onto the ship, rubbing shoulders with artists of all calibres in the queue, a welcoming tequila shot is placed carefully but definitely into our hands. Directions to that buffet through the labyrinthine ship are doled out and the gluttonous, star-studded framework for the trip is established in rude fashion.

Bookending the musical itinerary is Mike Portnoy's flagship band for the weekend, Transatlantic. The quartet step out onto the stage on the top deck to weigh the metaphorical anchor by flying into a grand performance of their brand new album

Kaleidoscope in its entirety while the captain raises the actual anchor. If you're thinking up ways to kick off four days of progressive music, starting with a supergroup playing next to a swimming pool probably won't be the first idea that springs to mind, but by gum, it's a good one.

It's sad that regular touring member Daniel Gildenlöw can't make it onto the cruise due to the not-too-small matter of a flesh-eating bacterial infection. However, Ted Leonard of Spock's Beard is an able deputy, taking care of the Swede's vocal lines with aplomb. The wind blows the sound around slightly and the setting sun is in everyone's eyes, but the band seem genuinely happy to be performing in front of this healthy and enthusiastic crowd, some of whom are actually watching from hot tubs with a cocktail in hand.

Just as they opened proceedings, Transatlantic will close them in three days' time, but more about that later. Now it's time to traverse the corridors and stairwells of this ship to find former Yes vocalist Jon Anderson. One of the founding fathers of the genre, this acoustic set in the 1,500-capacity Stardust Theater is as far removed from the bombast at the pool as you can get. Between ukulele and guitar-led versions of *Close To The Edge* and

All aboard: the
Progressive Nation
At Sea 2014 cruise
is underway!



Yours Is No Disgrace, he regales us with some highly entertaining tales from his illustrious career. There's another cruise setting sale from Miami a few weeks later hosted by the latest incarnation of his former band but, needless to say, all the history is right here.

Other highlights of the first jam-packed evening are watching Animals As Leaders expel their imaginatively instrumental prog metal while lying on a bed (yes, a bed) in the salubrious surrounds of the Spinnaker Lounge. It's as novel and relaxing a form of experiencing their mind-bending music as there possibly could be. Back up by the pool, Anathema provide a relaxing symphonic soundtrack to the waves that surround us before Mike Portnoy is in action again, this time drumming for Bigelf in the Stardust Theater. They play several cuts from their new album, *Into The Maelstrom*, which sound incredible, and Portnoy jokes about not only seeing every band on the PNAS, but also playing in every band. While there are two hour-long opportunities to see each of the 23 original bands, Portnoy will also be performing with three of them. He's a busy man.

British band The Safety Fire aren't benefiting from the drummer's magic touch

tonight as they suffer technical issues – you could say they're all at sea – but back in the Atrium, a makeshift stage has been erected as the cruise's fourth venue. New Yorkers Jolly play their energetic rock to just a handful of people, but do so with some gusto.

Devin Townsend then makes himself at home by the pool, where he throws out an impressively consistent stream of jibes about the crowd during an *Epicloud*-heavy set. He makes reference to the well-established heavy metal cruise by referring to tonight's crowd as "70,000 tons of dude" and then jokes about locating all eight women on the ship. Luckily, one of them, Anneke van Giersbergen, is onstage with him, adding dynamism and melody to the metal machine he has created to replace the huge production he normally carts around with him.

It also helps that Townsend sounds fantastic – whatever sound issues there may have been earlier have been eradicated. When you're cruising around the Atlantic Ocean, you'll find that there are no nosey neighbours

nearby to complain about the volume, so the songs feel powerful even when you're perched way up on the sun deck.

Upstairs in the Spinnaker Lounge, Periphery's Spencer Sotelo proclaims, "Boats and hoes," but it's truer that the PNAS is probably not the best place to hold a speed-dating event (it would be very, very speedy). On that note, it's a good moment to head to our cabin after a long day of sun, sea and time changes.

While contemplating the first dilemma of Wednesday (whether breakfast would be a healthy one or not), we bump into Ragnar Zolberg from Pain Of Salvation by the pickled herring.

"Another highlight of the first jam-packed evening is watching Animals As Leaders expel their imaginatively instrumental prog metal – while we lie on a bed!"



Adrian Belew enjoys some star-light.

BUSTER HARVEY FOR LIVESHOTSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



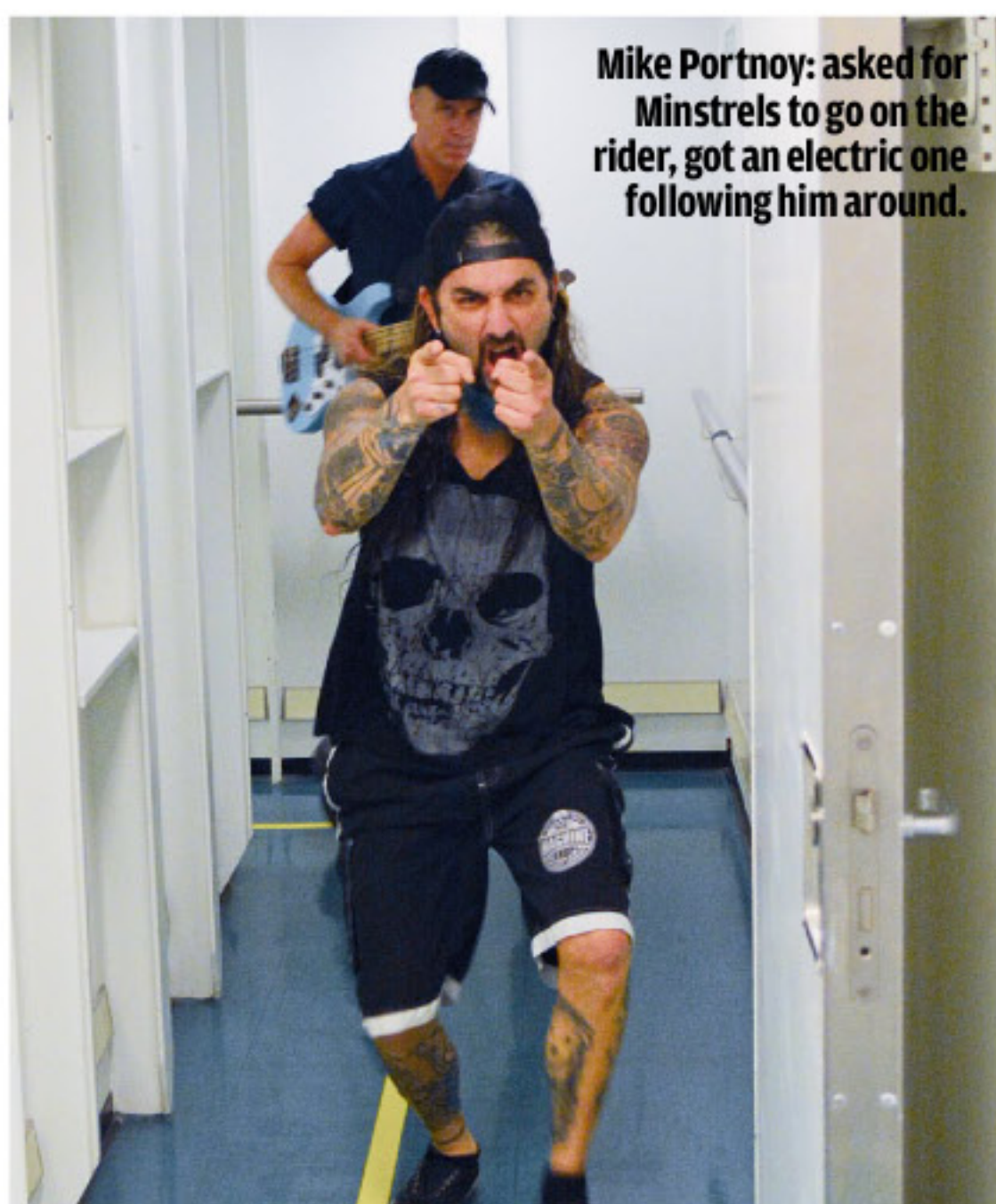
Bite me: Tosin from Animals As Leaders.

KAREL ZUIDERVELD



Bigelf's Damon Fox whips up a storm...

RICHARD TRIANA



Mike Portnoy: asked for Minstrels to go on the rider, got an electric one following him around.

RICHARD TRIANA



Devin: surrounded by "70,000 tonnes of dude."

BUSTER HARVEY FOR LIVESHOTSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

The Iclander informs us that he will be taking over the majority of Daniel Gildenlöw's vocal duties and gives due warning not to miss tonight's show.

With the first band starting at noon, there's time to work off at least one rasher of bacon and again we're flanked by rock stars, but this time on treadmills and performing burpees. If 'prog jogging' wasn't a thing before this cruise...

Healthy thoughts put to one side, today's speciality cocktail is called The Painkiller. Our hangover isn't that bad, but the sentiment is appreciated nonetheless and the rum punch is enjoyed during Eumeria, one of the original competition-winning unsigned bands to be given a slot on the PNAS. Playing polished thrash-oriented metal in the vein of Dream Theater, this transatlantic quintet are certainly proficient, if not particularly unique. A schedule clash means we miss Haken at 1pm but we do catch a clutch of unsigned bands playing the Atrium today, along with Next To None, a spirited quartet of tween metallers with one Max Portnoy on drums. It's his dad's cruise. What are you gonna do?

While Felix Martin and his guitar with a million strings provides incredible musicianship and a tapping frenzy, it's Bad Salad who deserve a special mention. Not only do they make themselves visible by wearing their bright

Anneke van Giersbergen: one of eight ladies in attendance.

red T-shirts across all four days, but if Devin Townsend was correct in his count of all the women on board (eight), the Brazilian rockers contribute half of that total with their delightful entourage alone. Ten out of ten for effort, at least.

The next stop is the bowling alley for some beer tasting with The Safety Fire and The Dear Hunter. After trying five beers in record time, we all decide it would be a good idea to have a game of football up on the top deck, in the shadow of the climbing wall. Needless to say, the ball is booted overboard in a matter of minutes by some unnamed scoundrel...

The first band after dinner is Pain Of Salvation and it's clear that Mr Zolberg has mastered Daniel Gildenlöw's vocals as he delivers a huge, passionate performance. While the man is in a hospital bed, Gildenlöw's glasses are onstage at least, attached to his guitar. It's a fitting tribute and the band are received incredibly well. Back on the chaise lounge in the Spinnaker Lounge, Anneke van Giersbergen performs an enchanting solo set to a crowd content to sit on the floor and listen, before Anathema's Danny Cavanagh joins her onstage for a rich finale.

King's X are probably the most overtly metal band on the bill but the trio are excellent in terms of precision and power. After distorted bass and with ringing ears, we head back to the Atrium to see Tony Harnell singing alongside Bumblefoot. It's not immediately apparent what they're doing and it's not much more apparent after they've struggled through a patchy set of covers. There's no doubt that the dozen people here are waiting to see the Guns N' Roses guitarist weave some magic, but it's all very disjointed.

It's a relief to go back to an accomplished performance as Portnoy Sheehan

MacAlpine Sherinian (PSMS) hit the 'huge metal overdrive' button.

It's another display of pure prog extravagance led by Mike Portnoy – their rendition of Planet X's *Apocalypse 1470 BC* is exceptional. Derek Sherinian



BUSTER HARVEY FOR LIVESHOTSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



It can happen: Jon Anderson jamming with the mighty Transatlantic.

RICHARD TRIANA



He's got pluck: Felix Martin.

BUSTER HARVEY FOR LIVESHOTSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



Haken: we knew we'd find them somewhere, if not in the feature...

BUSTER HARVEY FOR LIVESHOTSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



Lady number two! Lee Douglas from Anathema.

KAREL ZUIDERVELD



Mariusz Duda and co: less "river-side", more "on-sea".

BUSTER HARVEY FOR LIVESHOTSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

must've been sad that he was the only one not to get to perform a solo, but this is a great performance to end a long, long day of music.

It was important to rest after that, and so Thursday is a day of lounging around on the beach of a private island, slurping piña coladas while avoiding a third dose of sunburn. It's a tough job. One band that made sure to get back to the ship early in order to make sure their set ran smoothly were The Safety Fire, whose second set of the cruise in the much larger Stardust Theater is ten times better. The Adrian Belew Power Trio flip the mood completely by the pool as he and his cronies play some absolutely bonkers tunes to a smaller than usual crowd – maybe beach life is more draining than previously suggested. Next up is the emotive folk of The Dear Hunter, and Mike Portnoy is seen in the crowd, making good on his pledge to see every band. It's late by now, but the odd rhythms that the Rhode Island sextet throw out invigorate the crowd somewhat and while

“When you're cruising around the Atlantic, there are no nosey neighbours to complain about the volume, so the songs feel powerful even when you're perched way up on the sun deck.”

Friday beckons for many, the 24-hour casino beckons for others. Apparently, every day is Friday night when you're at sea.

The final day is here and we're on Grand Bahama Island. After a day of excursions and dodging tourist traps, we get back on the ship to see PSMS play a special set with guest appearances. It all makes sense with Tony Harnell and Bumblefoot as they come on and play Deep Purple's *Burn*, and Derek Sherinian's keyboard solo finally happens – an event

surely anticipated by more than just Derek and Prog – but the real story today centres around one of the 17 unsigned bands. Thank You Scientist are from New Jersey and they play a heady mix of jazz, groove metal and emo rock. The buzz clearly has spread that they're the ones to watch, because the New Millennium Stage has more people in the audience than the other 16 bands had combined. Even Bumblefoot joins them for a song. They make the kind of joyous music that not even a brass section can ruin and there's no doubt you'll be hearing from Thank You Scientist again.

The big finish, however, comes as Transatlantic take to the stage for a set mainly culled from third album *The Whirlwind*, before Jon Anderson joins them an hour later to play the songs he performed acoustically on the opening night. It sounds great. Roine Stolt can't seem to believe that he's playing Yes songs with one of his heroes and there's just an overwhelming feeling of joy in the air. Members of several other bands then jump up on stage during *Starship Trooper* to make for a grand celebratory finale enjoyed by all.

This may have been the first Progressive Nation At Sea but it was an unmitigated success. Here's to 2015. 

Transatlantic are still on their world tour, with new album Kaleidoscope out now via InsideOut. See www.transatlanticweb.com for details.

While **Galahad** may be veterans of the prog scene, their new-found love of metal, dance and even drum'n'bass has led to their traditional prog sounds evolving in surprising new directions, winning over a whole new generation of fans on the way.

Words: Rich Wilson

Galahad's Stu Nicholson drops it into the conversation so casually that you wonder if you've actually heard it. After

all, for a band whose roots are firmly in the prog scene of the mid 80s, their apparent love of industrial metal isn't exactly what you might be expecting.

"I've been trying to keep it quiet but we've recorded a Rammstein track for an upcoming EP," he says nonchalantly. "We performed *Mein Herz Brennt* live in

Combat Rock

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Germany last year as a tryout. I sang it in German and it seemed to go down pretty well, as we didn't get bottled off! We've reworked it a bit and I've put in a few English words to make it a bit different. We all like the band and we thought that it was a bit less obvious than covering Rush or Genesis or something. It will be interesting to see what kind of reaction we get and hopefully it might broaden our horizons a little bit in terms of audience, although after all these years, I doubt it will make that much difference."

Musically, the last few years have been a fertile time for the band, with the pair of albums released in 2012 being both well received and providing a welcome uplift in sales. With Galahad

determined to continue to incorporate modern influences – ranging from dance to metal – into their sound, rather than relying on their old, neo-progressive roots, their escalating popularity is perhaps unexpected. Yet Nicholson has been encouraged by the lack of any perceptible backlash from the more traditionally minded elements of their fanbase.

"Yeah, to be honest we were a bit surprised as we really weren't sure how people would react," he confesses. "The interest in the more modern direction in which we were going really outweighed any negativity. It wasn't something that was necessarily a conscious decision but over the years your taste in music changes and gets more diverse. I mean, I love bands like Yes and Genesis but they've already done it really well and we don't see the point these days in

Knights of Knowlton Church, Dorset. From left: Roy Keyworth, Spencer Luckman, Dean Baker and Stuart Nicholson.

trying to replicate that. Most people seem to understand what we're trying to do, although you do get the more traditional, dyed-in-the-wool prog fans who don't really like or understand it. But it doesn't worry us and it's up to them to open their minds. The whole thing about prog is that the clue's in the name."

Keen to maintain momentum, Galahad are recording a number of EPs during the year, the first of which, *Seize The Day*, came out in February. Containing an edited-down and tweaked version of the title track from the 2012 album, they also decided to rework some songs from their past, notably *Bug Eye* and *Painted Lady*.

"We were messing around with *Painted Lady* and Dean [Baker, keyboards] came up with quite a radical version of that track with drum and bass," says Nicholson cautiously. "We thought that would be pushing it a bit, so we recorded this version instead. I also had an unused verse from the original which I wanted to record as I felt there was unfinished business. That's true of a lot of old songs, in that back then we didn't have the time, experience or budget to get them to sound quite like we wanted it." Part of that continual evolution of the band's influences can be traced to their line-up changes over the years. With an alumni that extends to over 20 past members, each of whom brought their own idiosyncrasies and musical passions into Galahad, the band were able to evolve naturally and not simply rely on the template they used in the 80s. It's an analogy accepted by Nicholson.

"The band



"Some of the more traditional fans don't really like or understand our new direction. But it doesn't worry us and it's up to them to open their minds."

Stu Nicholson

members are all quite a bit different to what they were all those years ago when we started," he says. "Obviously there's myself and Roy [Keyworth] who have been here since the beginning. I think Dean probably brought in the biggest influence, because when he joined in 1996, he wasn't even into prog. He was more into 80s bands like Depeche Mode and The Human League. They were all the bands that we despised back in the 80s, but you look back now and they released some really good music. I like the fact that he's not from a prog background as it gives the music a different twist. We're quite into the dance music, as well as the heavier stuff, but not so much the traditional prog these days. So we're trying to do something different and incorporate modern influences and it's gone down really well."

What Nicholson finds most surprising is that their music is attracting a new, younger audience, something the singer believes is due to a lack of tribalism among their new listeners. With prog no longer possessing the unfashionable stigma it once had, he cites a recent example of how their music is crossing previously impassable boundaries.

"These days, younger people don't know what the fuss was about," he argues. "The guy who has just done the video for *Seize The Day* is a 20-year-old student who loves his prog. He was saying that his friends were playing that track before their nights out on the town, which I find incredible. Of course the competition is a lot greater these days, but it's great to see so many younger bands involved. I find it quite bizarre really and wonder how they got to know about it."

It's this renewed interest that has helped the band's album sales to

"We've made bugger all money but we've had a bloody good time," says Stu.

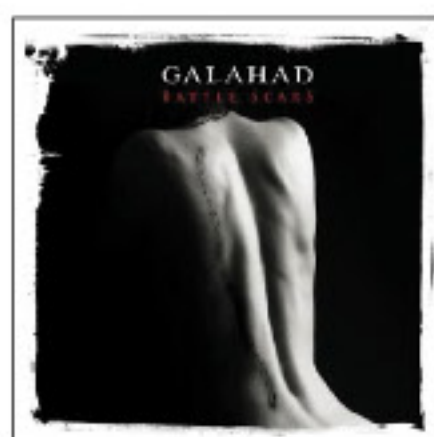
JASON PARNELL-BROOKES

Chez Nicholson, Ferndown, Dorset: Spence, Stu and Roy raid the archive.



"It would have been nice to play Wembley though, even if it was in the toilets or car park!"

Stu Nicholson



The boys are 'back', ahem. *Battle Scars*, the next phase for Galahad.

significantly increase over recent months. Back in the 80s, though, it was their apparent inability to secure a major record deal that held them back. Appearing on the scene in 1985, they'd missed the fleeting prog-revival bubble by a couple of years – bad timing that ensured they wouldn't achieve the cult status and devoted fanbase that aided bands such as Marillion, IQ and Pendragon. It's something Nicholson is very much aware of, although he admits that the lack of a deal was as much down to his stubbornness as major-label disinterest.

"By 1985, the interest had dissipated," he says. "We formed the band at the worst time possible, as prog really was a dirty word. We did have labels sniffing around but I'm a stubborn old bugger and I'm a stickler for getting what we want. A lot of our contemporaries had what they thought were big deals, but in most cases they fell through and some of them lost money. If someone came along who wanted to nurture the band and were interested in the music, then maybe we would have gone along with that. But I have a drawer full of contracts here that we've never signed as the royalty rates were pitiful."

The band are currently in the early stages of writing an album that they hope to release next year, yet it has been painful. The band's bassist Neil Pepper died at the end of 2011 after completing work on *Battle Scars*.

Understandably, Nicholson still finds it difficult writing without his presence in the studio.

"It's very strange and it's an odd situation," he sighs. "It's very difficult to deal with."

Neil was associated with the band for 20-odd years and was a massively integral part of Galahad. Even when we play live now, there are a couple of the songs where we actually use his bass as a backing track, so he's sort of playing with us.

"It was bizarre writing the last album with Neal, especially lyrically, when some of them were actually about him. It did bring a lump to the throat, especially when we were recording, as towards the end he would have to sit down because the bass was too heavy for him. But Neil's contribution was particularly immense on that album and it's a great tribute to him."

With the band's 30th anniversary looming, and sketchy plans for celebratory reunion gigs with former members, the band are perceptibly appreciating their journey over the last three decades. With Galahad never quite making that big breakthrough, though, does Nicholson look back with any regrets?

"It would have been good if we'd started earlier but there's not a lot you can do about that!" he laughs. "But no, I have a positive outlook and I don't regret anything. Of course, next year is our 30th anniversary so we're hoping to celebrate that with some special shows. Galahad is like a big family and we're all friends, especially the early guys, so it would be good to get them on a recording. We've made bugger all money but we've had a bloody good time. It would have been nice to play Wembley Stadium though. You know, just the once, even if it was in the toilets or the car park..."

Battle Scars is out now. For more information, visit www.galahadonline.com.

- Emerson Lake & Palmer
- Fleetwood Mac
- Gabriel, Peter
- Greenslade
- Hadouk Trio
- Hans Zimmer, The City Of Prague P 004/018

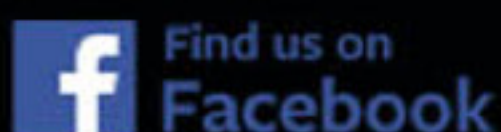
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The Stranglers

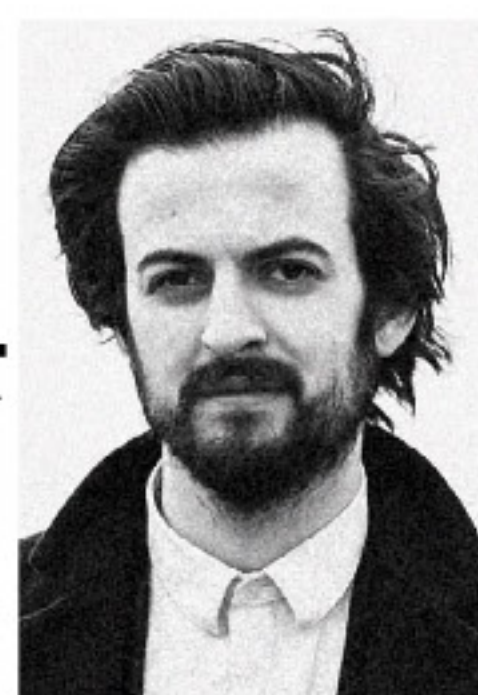
They're known as the punk band with a taste for violence, but the fiercely intelligent outsiders soon outgrew their genre, experimenting in esoteric concepts and seven-minute singles. With their 40th-anniversary tour under way, it's time to ask: **just how prog were The Stranglers?** **Ourmaninblack:** Paul Lester

"They were never a standard punk band," says Matthew Aldus from Bath's fast-rising anthemic prog rockers Pylo. "Between 1979 and 1982 they really started experimenting and embracing the world of concept albums. I was born in 1987 but where I'm from, Burnham-on-Sea, they were local favourites, so I was always going to discover them. I love their progressive attitude and their dedication to the craft: they're still out there, exploring and making music that goes against the grain, and that really appeals to me as a musician."

There were several bands who emerged during the punk era who have latterly been reassessed as prog-ish, including XTC, Magazine and Wire. But the group who have been unjustly overlooked are The Stranglers. After all, their albums featured multipartite song suites from the start (see the eight-minute *Down In The Sewer* from 1977's debut *Rattus Norvegicus*). They also made quantum leaps and unexpected diversions from record to record (hello, backwards psychronica on *Yellowcake UF6* from 1979's *The Raven*), and they frequently avoided the obvious commercial route: their offer to their record company of a follow-up to 1982's massive hit *Golden Brown* was a seven-minute single – in French. Nor were they averse to the grandly conceptual: 1981's *(The Gospel According To) The Meninblack*, for example, dealt with all manner of esoterica and conspiracy theories, from alien invasions to sinister forces of governmental control. Not for nothing did *Sounds* journalist Chas de Whalley rechristen the band "Punk Floyd".

Plus, of course, they had their very own keyboard whiz, Dave Greenfield, at a time

"I love their progressive attitude: they're still making music against the grain."
Matthew Aldus, Pylo



when anything but guitar/bass/drums was strictly *verboten*.

"It has been said that we're a bit prog," agrees Greenfield, two days after the band's show at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire, one triumphant stop on their ongoing 40th anniversary tour. "We don't do anything to fit the market; we just do what suits, and luckily it sells."

Greenfield, who was ancient in punk terms by the late 70s (he was born in 1949), had been in progressive rock band Rusty Butler before bringing his brand of rapid arpeggios to The Stranglers in 1975. He was the last member to join, after spying an ad in *Melody Maker* that read: "Soft rock band requires keyboard player and



Above: debut album *Rattus Norvegicus* was the rat's whiskers. Below: Rick Wakeman orders two cups of tea for him and JJ Burnel, 2011.

saxophonist." The saxophonist only lasted a week, but the keyboardist was there to stay. Already in place were Hugh Cornwell (guitar, vocals), Jean-Jacques Burnel (bass, vocals), and Brian John Duffy, aka Jet Black, the drummer who made Greenfield look positively youthful (he was 38 when *Rattus* was released).

So who were Greenfield's keyboard heroes at the time? "Jon Lord and Rick Wakeman," he replies. "Why did I like them? Probably because I was jealous! I loved those first three or four Yes albums, then it all got a bit self-indulgent."

Did he aspire to similar levels of virtuosic prowess, or was he more into brevity and concision?

"I've always been known for speed rather than technique," he admits, "so that's how I developed."

Comparisons were often made between The Stranglers and The Doors, largely because of Greenfield's keyboard style, which was considered to have been influenced by Ray Manzarek, but he insists he was only aware of *Light My Fire* and *Riders On The Storm*, "so it's just a coincidence that we have very similar styles".

Who would dare argue? The Stranglers had a reputation as the hard men of punk – Greenfield reveals that he used to stab his keyboard, à la Keith Emerson, in the early days. But when asked how he dealt with violence at Stranglers gigs – a common occurrence back then – he says he didn't have to, mainly because

the band had their own built-in security squad.

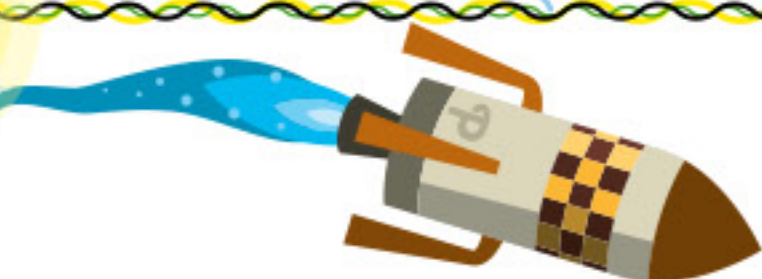
Known as The Finchley Boys, the contingent of hardcore punks from North London made it their job to look after the band. Not that



The boys attend to a rather pressing matter, 1979. Clockwise from centre: Hugh Cornwell, Dave Greenfield, JJ Burnel and Jet Black.



THE OUTER LIMITS



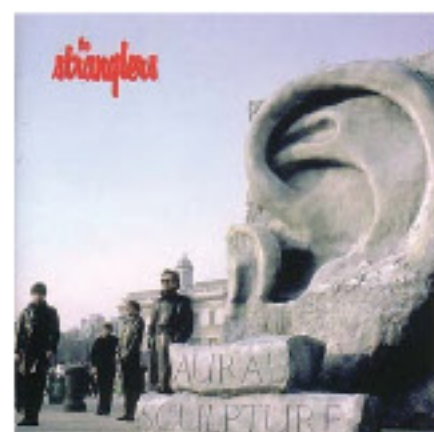
they needed much protection, because they also boasted in their ranks one JJ Burnel, these days a black belt sixth-dan karate expert but, even then, one of the few punk musicians who regularly proved the dictum that actions speak louder than words.

"It was a violent time," recalls the uber-bassist, who talks of "this siege mentality" whereby the band "were almost disappointed when we didn't get a punch-up". The Stranglers' antics earned them a reputation in the music press for toughness, although it was hardly helped by their treatment of journalists, which in one instance involved them kidnapping a hack who had been negative in a review, and in another, stripping naked a writer and gaffer-taping him upside down to the top of the Eiffel Tower.

He remembers that notorious *NME* journalists Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons "had it in" for him, proclaiming Burnel "a Nazi homosexual thug" in their punk-era tome *The Boy Looked At Johnny*. He feigns hurt at this. "I'm not a thug," he deadpans. "The Nazi bit was because of an article that Parsons wrote after he came on the road with us and he didn't like the fact that we had these kids from North London – The Finchley Boys – who he described as our 'stormtroopers'."

As for the violence, in which he routinely took an active role, he adds: "We were inured to it because it happened every night. I'd like to apologise to everyone I hurt. But the situation demanded that someone had to come off better, and it might as well have been me."

The element of tension that was part and parcel of every Stranglers gig was still there at the March 2014 Shepherd's Bush Empire concert, where *Prog* was surprised to see police on horseback



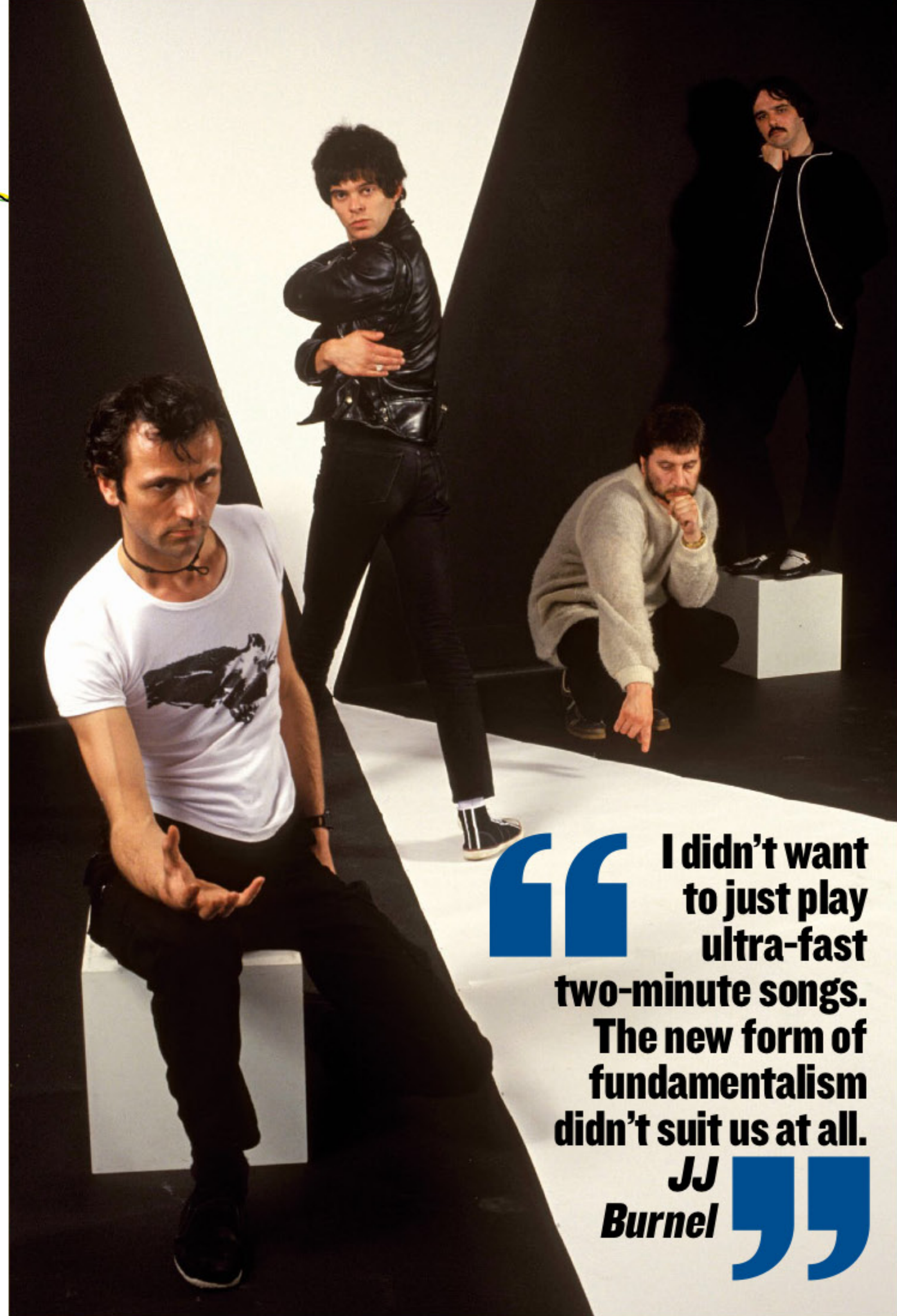
Highs and lows: *The Meninblack* album was made during the band's heroin escapade, while *Aural Sculpture* dealt with the hangover.

Right: the black and white minstrels weren't popular with the New Wave music press.

1984: From black-shirted thugs to the 'Punk Floyd' in five years.



RICHARD YOUNG/REX



I didn't want to just play ultra-fast two-minute songs. The new form of fundamentalism didn't suit us at all.
JJ Burnel

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

outside the venue, as though they were expecting trouble.

"I saw that," says Burnel. "There were a few police vans around the area as well. They still assume it might kick off. We must be doing something right..."

Not that The Stranglers are boneheads; far from it. In fact, they are among the brainiest bands of their era. Burnel studied History and French "with a bit of Economics" at Bradford University; Cornwell has a Biochemistry degree and pursued his studies (in Sweden) at postgraduate level; Black is, considers Burnel, "one of the brightest autodidacts I know"; and Greenfield – who until recently took part in medieval battle re-enactments – "always had very esoteric tastes".

It was the broad-mindedness of the individual players that meant they would always be open to change.

"Punk was liberating at first," Burnel says, "but it quickly got ambushed by whoever and redefined as very fast R&B. It became a new orthodoxy and it was suffocating. I didn't want to just play ultra-fast two-minute songs. The new form of fundamentalism didn't suit us at all."

The Stranglers' golden age – between 1977 and 1986 – produced nine albums, which as a body of work displayed

a heady array of musical styles and lyrical obsessions. There are few rock bands who have made departures as radical as the one between late-70s and early-80s Stranglers, although it made them hard to pigeonhole. Electro punk waltz'n'roll, anyone?

"For me, that's a good thing," says Burnel. "It's a pain in the arse for record companies and journalists who always want to categorise you, but I don't want to live in a ghetto. We're one of the few bands lucky enough not to be dependent on one strand of music for success. Surely everyone aspires to that level of freedom?"

As an example of the band's stubborn refusal to stick to the formula, he cites their proposal to EMI that the seven-minute title track to 1981's *La Folie* should be the single to capitalise on *Golden Brown*'s unprecedented Number Two chart success.

"We weren't going to do another *Golden Brown*," he laughs, still amazed that this should even remotely be considered a possibility. "Why would we? We wanted success on our own terms. We had a broad-minded audience and we wanted to experiment. Sometimes we fell flat on our face, but look at our back catalogue. It covers a lot of ground."

How horrified were EMI when the band delivered *The Raven*?

"Oh, they didn't know what to make of it," he says. "People were perplexed. But surely perplexing is good! It seemed like a natural evolution for us."

Arguably their furthest-out statement was *The Meninblack*. Burnel asks whether Prog has heard it. He gets an affirmative and seems genuinely surprised that someone might have willingly submitted to the ordeal.

"Oh, have you?" he smiles, as if the record was a cross between Laibach and Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*. "And you came out the other side? Bless you."

The band's experimental ethos extended to matters extracurricular: circa 1979, they all decided to use heroin for a year.

"We did it to see what would come out the other end," he recalls.

"*Meninblack* was an attempt to create something out of that self-abuse. Fortunately, we never used syringes. Dave and Jet gave up after a bit; Hugh and I carried on. With help from Dave I managed to get over it. I don't know about Hugh," he adds of the frontman, who was jailed in 1980 for drug possession.

Heroin aside, their prolific output – their first three albums came out between April 1977 and May 1978 – was a result of natural energy.

"We were on a natural high, apart from smoking the odd joint at night and drinking far too much," laughs Burnel. "There was an energy between the four of us that wasn't really fuelled by artificial stimulants. I didn't like the look of people who took speed – their teeth always fell out."

EMI have just issued an 11-CD box set of The Stranglers' albums, from *Rattus* to 2012's *Giants*, the latter regarded by diehard fans as a substantial return to peak form. Burnel takes the opportunity to survey the band's career and break the catalogue into discrete parts.

"There are certain periods," he decides. "*Rattus* and *No More Heroes* go together. *Black And White* is a one-off. Then we started travelling and experiencing the world outside the UK so *The Raven* became a journalistic runaround. Then we started getting into esoterica, and we started experimenting with ourselves – that ended up with *The Meninblack*, and the hangover was *La Folie*. After that we were going to America and doing quite well there, but I wasn't prepared to pay the price of success in the USA: spending nine to 12 months there



Stage invasion, featuring The Finchley Boys (and girl), 1977: JJ Burnel was "almost disappointed" if there wasn't a punch-up.

touring and ending up wearing cowboy hats and cowboy boots like The Clash, U2 and The Police. So I started looking more towards Europe and the result was *Feline*."

After 1984's *Aural Sculpture* and 1986's *Dreamtime*, there was a gap of four years before 1990's *10*, the last Stranglers album to feature Cornwell. Greenfield last saw him about 10 years ago and Burnel did make several overtures, but now they are letting sleeping dogs lie.

After Cornwell's departure, there were a series of line-up changes and albums with which the band are less than happy, before the arrival in their ranks of Baz Warne on guitar and vocals in 2000. Since then, there has been an upturn in the band's fortunes, notwithstanding the 75-year-old Black's various health problems.

As Greenfield points out with some relish, the ticket sales on this tour were up by 10,000 on the last one, while *Giants* was their first Top 50 album for 17 years. And yet for Burnel, for all the dozens of hit singles and millions of records sold, The Stranglers remain outsiders, the *Meninblack* on the margins.

"We're still seen as an underground, cultish band, which I kind of like," he says finally, casting an eye over their turbulent history. "We've always tried to do what we want, and sometimes it's broken us, but we've managed to re-emerge, even after we've been bent double, skint, having to borrow money to get around. We've had to deal with the opprobrium of our peers and the press. But we're still here, still going, and with records as good as *Giants*, we have proven that Christ might have risen from the dead." ☺

The *Giants And Gems* 11-CD box set is available now via Parlophone. See www.thestranglers.net for details.



The Raven (1979) and *La Folie* (1981) both delved into esoterica.



YOUR SHOUT!

Aural sculptors or heroes no more?

"Not prog per se, but rather the sum of their influences, which includes some prog via Dave Greenfield's previous band, Rusty Butler."

Terry Lewis

"They've got prog roots. Listen to *Down In The Sewer* – it's the best track the Doors never recorded. *Walk On By*? Progged-up Dionne Warwick!"

John Merrick

"Can't see it myself, on the one hand commercial pop, on the other soft punk."

Michael Ward

"The Stranglers are their own genre... neither prog nor punk. If they are prog, then so are The Damned."

Dave Goldthorpe

"JJ Burnel's bass sound certainly owes a debt to Chris Squire."

George S

"Litmus test. *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. Red. *Rattus Norvegicus*. Green. *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Pink. *The Gospel According To Themblack*. Red."

Nicholas John Payne

"Fully agree. The first band I was truly obsessive about and set the tone for everything I listen to."

Amitron_7

"They were about as prog as they were punk, which was not in the least bit."

Alan Rodger

"They proved that you could be musically adept and still be punk, and that complex songs could be about things other than hobbits. Progressive? Of course they were."

Moray Macdonald

"Listen to the track *Norfolk Coast*. Prog as you like."

Rob Hickman

"Very. Harpsichord on *Golden Brown*? C'mon that says it all."

James McKeown

"Not at all!" **Paul Burgess**

"Pronk!" **Paul McElroy**

"Very, and I've argued it for years! They had prog elements on their first album and it got more obvious over the years. I'd argue that *Black And White* has prog written all over it! Can we call it dark-prog? Immense band either way."

Jason Richards

"If you'd asked me this 10 years ago, I'd have laughed in your face. Thirty years ago I'd probably have punched you in your face! But now... well, yes, they probably were a bit..."

Chris Parkins

"Absolutely!" **Kathryn Davies**

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

Known for his blistering solos with prog-metal giants Dream Theater, keyboardist **Jordan Rudess** has gone back to his roots for his new solo album *All That Is Now*, a classically inspired love letter to the piano. **Words:** Dom Lawson **Portraits:** Kevin Nixon

Even in the world of progressive rock, where figures like Keith Emerson and Tony Banks loom large in the pages of the genre's history books, the keyboard player's role often remains a humble and only intermittently celebrated one. But if one man has contributed to propelling the dextrous tickling of ivories into the forefront of prog fans' consciousness, it's Dream Theater's Jordan Rudess.

As fundamental to that band's all-conquering and genre-defining sound as the six-string prowess of John Petrucci, Rudess' reputation as a remorselessly inventive creative spirit and restless artisan grows more potent by the year.

In 2014 his stock is rising ever higher, not least due to the release of two distinctly different but equally impressive forays into territory that, you may reasonably assume, the nimble-fingered one has always intended to occupy with his customary zeal. Perhaps the more stridently prog-centric of the pair is *Explorations For Keyboard And Orchestra*, a sumptuous affair wherein Rudess explores his love of orchestral music via a bold, ambitious and brand new composition of his own, alongside several reworkings of older material. The other, *All That Is Now*, is arguably the more startling of the two: a beautifully serene and elegant collection of solo piano compositions that sees its creator revisit his roots as a classical maestro. Both albums were funded via the now ubiquitous PledgeMusic and both, it hardly needs stating, add fresh, brightly coloured

feathers to the Dream Theater man's increasingly overstocked cap.

"I choose to do different things mostly because of my background, I guess," Rudess tells *Prog*. "I started out as a classical pianist and then I discovered synthesizers when I was 17 or 18 and got really into electronic music. I listened to a lot of Tangerine Dream and a lot of crazy stuff. I found my way to progressive rock but always maintained my connection with the piano, so my musical interests vary so much. Being someone who doesn't really have a hobby outside of music, it's just my way to express myself."

A million miles from the intricate bluster of his work with Dream Theater, *All That Is Now* provides a very personal glimpse into Rudess' plainly profound relationship with his instrument and its ability to express great emotional subtlety. The wonderful resonance of the Steinway, coupled with the simple beauty of the album's 13 gently idiosyncratic pieces, may well prove a little delicate and mellifluous for those who

regularly marvel at the American's blistering solos and wild flights of sonic fancy as part of prog metal's premier act. Everyone needs a little down time though, and *All That Is Now*'s real charm is in the way it seems to momentarily halt time's march with cascading melodies that revel in their own quiet fragility.

"The piano album is very mellow and I guess that reflects who I am to some extent," says Rudess. "If I have a particular idea or mood, the easiest way to get it out is to just play and improvise. Not that many years ago, my wife and I bought this really incredible Steinway grand piano for my home. I'd never really done a proper

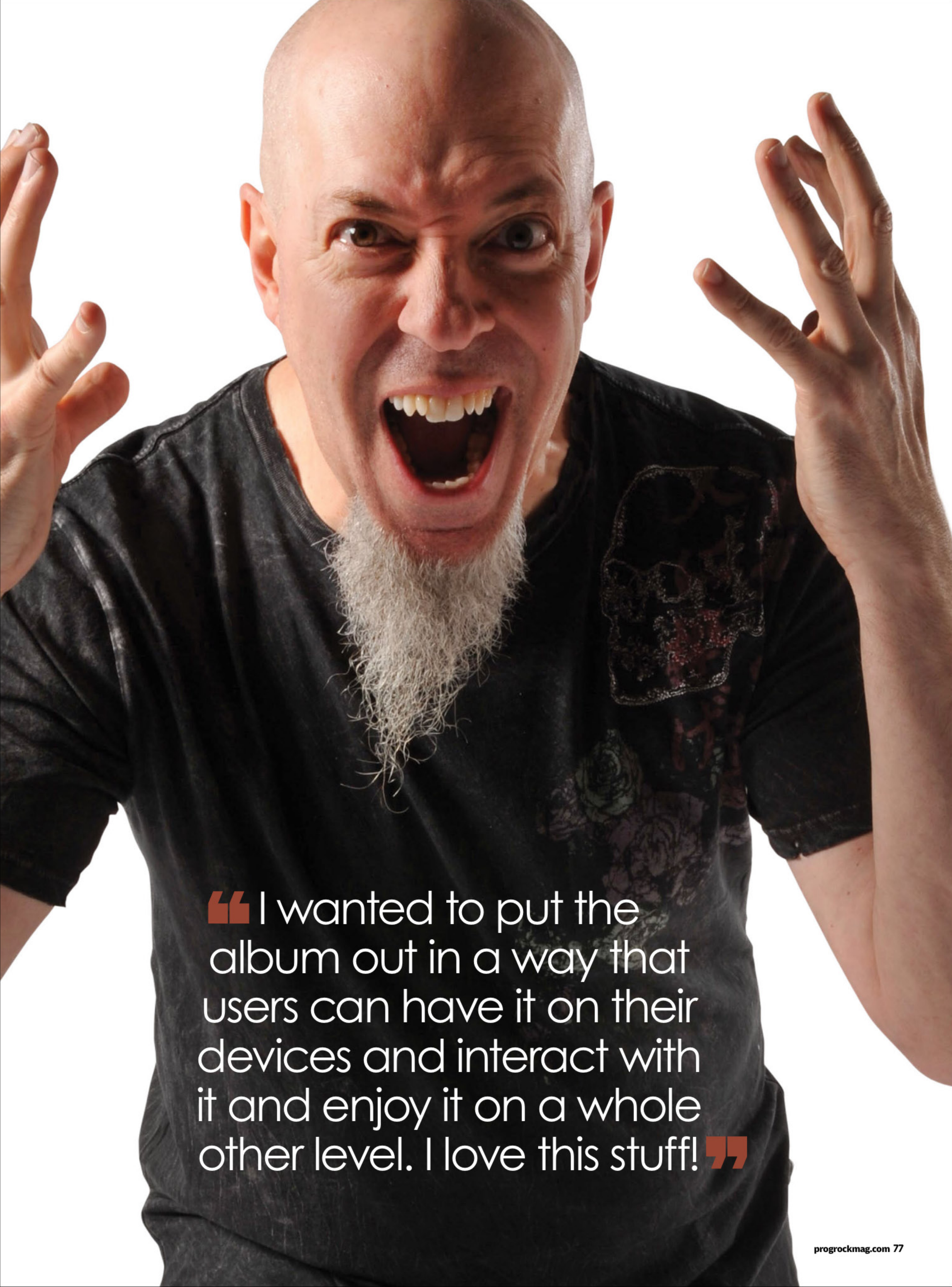
recording with it and I had it in the back of my mind that one day I'd put aside a bunch of time and really capture the spirit of what I like to do when I sit down at the piano. So I just got in that headspace and made the time, and I really feel I accomplished what I set out to do, which was to capture that intimacy."

Guitarists and drummers in prog metal are often driven by a desire to push themselves to the very limits of their physical capabilities, and while that's certainly true of Jordan Rudess when he's locked in harmonious combat with Petrucci, Myung, Mangini and LaBrie, the keyboardist's solo career has often seemed like a never-ending love letter to the piano, organ and synth, and the endless impossibilities that they conjure. Meanwhile, there's undeniable romance in the notion of the lone piano player, lost in thought and immersed in the tumbling timbres of those white and black keys. *All That Is Now* is that romance brought to vivid life by a master of the art.

"Yes, I agree with that in a way," Rudess smiles. "I always loved playing Chopin, and there are certain composers who really understood how the piano resonates and how best to express the beauty of the instrument. For me, there's nothing quite like sitting at the piano and enjoying and working with the resonance, letting the piano sing and carry you away. The way a piano's sound enters into a room is so unique. The whole experience of



Tech that and party! London, 2013: prog wizard Rudess' ideas are so big they can hardly fit in his beardy bonce.



“ I wanted to put the album out in a way that users can have it on their devices and interact with it and enjoy it on a whole other level. I love this stuff! ”



playing in that mode is so personally healing, and that's what I wanted to put out there."

Rudess's prolific musical activities have, in recent times, encompassed everything from thunderous prog metal with Dream Theater, mind-bending left-field jazz fusion in collaboration with Tony Levin and Marco Minnemann, and, of course, his recent orchestral and piano projects. However, Rudess has also been making a considerable name for himself in recent years as a pioneer and passionate advocate of iPhone and iPad music technology apps. Having formed his own company, Wizdom Music, a few years ago, Rudess has produced several groundbreaking bits of touchscreen kit, all of which emphasise his delight at the seemingly limitless options that keyboard players in the 21st century are now capable of enjoying.

"Ever since I got into synthesizers I've been very passionate about ways to make sounds and I've always been involved with the synthesizer manufacturers," he explains. "I was *fascinated* with my first iPhone. My wife looked at me and said, 'Why are you sitting there with that iPhone when we bought this amazing piano for you in the other room?' I said, 'Honey, don't worry! I'm really onto something!' She was thinking I was absolutely nuts, obviously. But as the Apple App Store started to flourish, I got totally into it.

"I saw in my mind's eye this new way of creating expression with a multi-touch device and we put together my first app, which was called MorphWiz. As you touch, you're morphing between sonic waveforms at the same time that you're morphing between visual waveforms, so you're getting the visual information from the sounds you're making, but it's also entertaining because it looks really cool. It has such amazing flexibility. It was meant to shake up the music technology community a little bit — a ten-dollar app that enables you to do things that you can't do even on really expensive synthesizers.

So it started a little revolution of sorts."

As he delves ever

deeper into what seems to be an admirable combination of altruistic venture and personal quest, Rudess' excursions into the world of apps have increasingly become part of his life as a musician, with various pieces of inspirational software being incorporated into his live set-up with Dream Theater and, more recently, becoming an integral part of the music he's making as a solo artist.

"A good tie-in to what we've been talking about is the latest app I have, called Jordan Rudess Explores," he enthuses. "Basically, it's the music of *All That Is Now* but also an interactive experience. You can use gestures on the screen to modify and make changes to the music. You can do different cool and spacey and trippy things just by touching the screen, and there are visuals that go along with it. I wanted to put out an album but not just do it in the standard way as a CD and on iTunes and so on. I wanted to put it out so users can have it on their devices and interact with it and enjoy it on a whole other level. I love this stuff!"

Non-believers routinely deride those of us who worship at the prog altar as nerds and obsessives, and in fairness, there's a great deal of truth to that somewhat uncharitable slur. However, it would take a peculiarly callous observer to deny that what Jordan Rudess brings to the world of music is an infectious combination of childlike glee and turbocharged curiosity as he blurs the lines between his own febrile creativity, the ever-expanding technological realm and that very basic human need for entertainment and enlightenment.

Whether alone at the piano, directing a full orchestra or tinkering excitedly away on another miraculous iPhone app, he is every inch the 21st-century Renaissance progger, with boundless energy, the hands of a craftsman and the soul of a poet. The geek may yet inherit the Earth.

"Doing the orchestral album was a dream come true and making the piano album was a dream come true too," he grins. "My plans for the future? Well, I had so much fun working with Levin and Minnemann that when there's some time, there's every chance I'll do more of that with those guys. But one thing I haven't done in a while, and that I'd really like to do, is another Jordan Rudess solo rock album, but this time I'd really like to incorporate some of my electronic music interests. I love things like Autechre and Aphex Twin, so I can see that in my not so distant future. I just have all these desires to do cool and interesting stuff!" 

All That Is Now and *Explorations For Keyboard And Orchestra* are available now via www.jordanrudess.com.

“For me, there's nothing quite like sitting at the piano and enjoying and working with the resonance, letting the piano sing and carry you away.”

"Did I leave the gas on, or turn it off? Who cares? I'll invent an app for that!"

THE BLUES

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Totally quackers: Tuomas Holopainen, Nightwish songwriter and *immense* Scrooge McDuck fan.

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“When I read Don’s beautiful stories, I could hear instruments: I could hear the uilleann pipes... and the banjo when Scrooge is having his adventures in the Wild West.”

Duckling & Diving

Composing a concept album based on Disney's **Scrooge McDuck** comic books is a childhood dream come true for Nightwish's **Tuomas Holopainen**. Fifteen years in the making, with a stellar cast of musicians, it's not just for kids. **Words:** Natasha Scharf

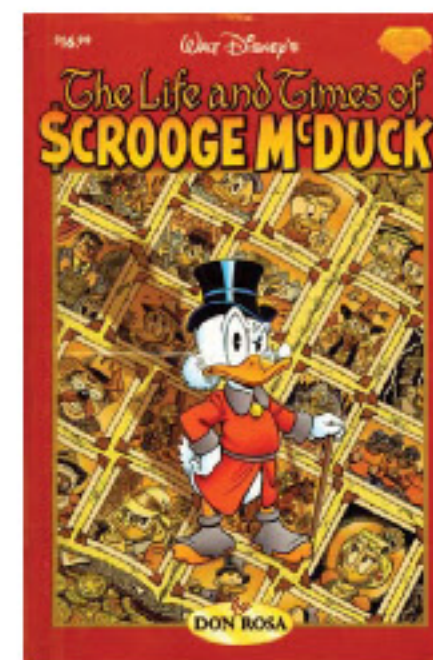
This is not the end of Nightwish and Tuomas Holopainen is quite emphatic about that. "I have no ambition to go solo," declares the mastermind of Finland's biggest symphonic metal exports. "This is just something I really wanted to do for me."

The "this" in question is his magnum opus, *Music Inspired By The Life And Times Of Scrooge* – an ambitious concept album that was inspired by a Disney cartoon character. "I couldn't have done a Scrooge McDuck album with Nightwish; it wouldn't have felt right." He pauses and then adds with a giggle, "I guess the other band members don't have such an intimate relationship with him!"

That relationship begins way back in the 80s, when a young Holopainen spotted the comic strip *Last Sled To Dawson* in Finland's own Donald Duck magazine, *Aku Ankka*, featuring the

character Scrooge McDuck and illustrated by the US cartoonist Don Rosa. He was instantly drawn to it. When a compendium of the artist's Scrooge stories was published in 1995, succinctly titled *The Life And Times Of Scrooge McDuck*, Holopainen was completely sold. "I've been a huge Disney comic and movie fan since I was two years old," he reveals, "and when I discovered Don Rosa's work, he became my favourite Disney artist and storyteller. Rosa's ...Scrooge McDuck is my desert island book."

Ask him what it was about the stories that resonated so much and he's full of enthusiasm: "These are definitely not just for kids – there are strong life philosophies and moral lessons to be learnt... and they're funny as hell! When I read Don's beautiful stories, I could hear instruments: I could hear the uilleann pipes... and the banjo when Scrooge is having his adventures in the Wild West."



The comic-book that started it all: *The Life And Times Of Scrooge McDuck*.

Yet it wasn't until Nightwish's *Oceanborn* tour in 1999 that Holopainen started to think about turning the music in his head into a soundtrack others could enjoy. Interestingly, references to Scrooge McDuck have popped up in virtually every interview he's given since. It's taken 15 years but finally he can now hold the finished product in his hands.

Tuomas Holopainen is one of those people whose enthusiasm is so infectious it's no surprise he was able to convince those around him to take part in this personal musical journey.

"I just felt that I had to get this music out of my head," he explains.

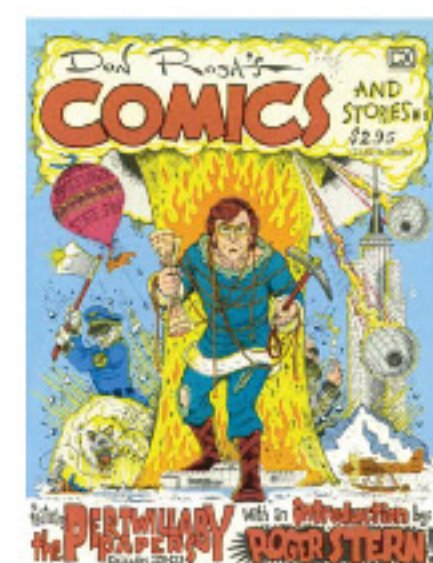
Early last year, when Nightwish took a five-month break to catch up on life before the festival season, Holopainen used the opportunity to finish the songs he'd written. "It was also the first time that I'd had the money to do it," he reveals. "I paid for everything; the orchestra and the choir were pretty expensive, but I finally had enough savings."

Not one to compromise, he brought in Nightwish producer Pip Williams and conductor Jim Sherman, along with the same Metro Voices choir and London orchestra he's been working with since 2004's *Once*. Other guest musicians and vocalists include Alan Reid from the Battlefield Band, as well as contributions from Nightwish's Troy Donockley. "Alan's one of my best mates," he reveals, "and if you're doing a soundtrack of Scrooge, who originates from Scotland, you need to have the Scottish touch, so I leant heavily on him for this production," he admits.

Driven by his passion for making music, the composer's inspiration lies in classical and cinematic scores as much as it does in hard rock and heavy metal. His love for film scores, particularly those by Hans Zimmer [*Inception*, *The Dark Knight*] and Howard Blake [*The Snowman*], are evident from his work with Nightwish and even more so on the cinematic



Scrooge surveys the future: Tuomas and a rough sketch of Don Rosa's cover art.



A hero in Finland, Don Rosa's works – not just Scrooge – have legions of fans.

Music Inspired By... Fans will love the sweeping chorale arrangements and symphonic elements, but those in search of something less metal-orientated should also enjoy its deliberately lighter touch.

After months of preparation and demoing – the latter taking place in a Finnish log cabin – the recording sessions were squeezed into four months in the UK and Finland. It was during this time that the original score started to evolve and transform beyond Holopainen's wildest dreams. A didgeridoo, harmonica and banjo add what the composer refers to as "comic reliefs" to the music; each one enhancing a different Scrooge adventure. There's also the unexpected addition of some lead vocals which rounds the whole package off perfectly. "Originally this was supposed to be an instrumental album," he reveals, "but then I started having these lyrics in my head and I thought it would make the album a bit more interesting to have

human voices here or there. It got a bit out of hand and I ended up with vocals on seven songs, which does make it closer to Nightwish, but I also think it makes the package more appealing."

But what of Don Rosa's involvement? Holopainen met the illustrator briefly at a press conference back in 2010 and told him all about his idea for a soundtrack album. "He was very nice, very polite but I don't think he took it that seriously and I don't blame him!" he laughs. It wasn't until the composer had written the songs and booked in studio time that Rosa realised he was really serious about this ambitious project. Yet Holopainen was in for a surprise when he requested Rosa draw the cover art: "He asked if I was really sure because he hadn't done anything since 2006. I told him that he had to do it because the project was screaming his name. Then he sent me the cover art and it was just perfect – it was really beautiful."

And it seems that Rosa himself was in for a surprise when he heard the album. "He listened to it with his eyes closed and a big smile on his face,"

Scrooge Uncovered

The background on the bird's fascinating duck tales.



Scrooge McDuck is the wealthy but penny-pinching maternal uncle of Disney's famous cartoon character Donald Duck. The Glaswegian-born bird made his first appearance in 1947 in a story called *Christmas On Bear Mountain*, which was written by Carl Banks, but over the years many different artists have illustrated the character. American illustrator Don Rosa is considered by many fans to be Banks's natural successor: he drew his first Scrooge cartoon in 1986 and started *The Life And Times Of Scrooge McDuck* series in 1991, based on an unofficial timeline he adapted from Banks's original stories. Scrooge also made regular appearances with his grand-nephews in the Disney-animated series *DuckTales* in the 80s.

According to Rosa, Scrooge was born in 1867 and lived until the ripe old age of 100, having enjoyed many incredible adventures along the way. He accrued his wealth through hard work and cunning but his prize possession was the first coin he ever earned, the so-called Number One Dime, which he believed brought him luck. Although his net worth has always been subject to debate, Scrooge's fortune is believed to have been so immense that he tops *The Forbes Fictional 15*: a rich list of characters that includes C Montgomery Burns from *The Simpsons* and Batman doppelgänger Bruce Wayne.

Although the Disney brand is extremely popular in the USA, Scrooge McDuck has found a welcome home in Finland where his stories appear in the long-running Donald Duck magazine, *Aku Ankka*, established in 1951. Remarkably, it's the country's most popular periodical and attracts more than a million readers every week, having also played a large role in turning Don Rosa into a national celebrity. However, contrary to a bizarre urban legend, Donald Duck has never been banned in Finland for appearing without his trousers! **NS**

Holopainen recalls. "Then he gave me a bear hug afterwards – talk about a fanboy moment!"

A teaser single from the album, *A Lifetime Of Adventure*, was released earlier in the year with a video shot during the recording process, but, by the time *Music Inspired By...* is released, Holopainen will already have begun work on Nightwish's as-yet untitled eighth album.

"My life philosophy is to find your dreams and do the best you can to fulfil them," Holopainen says. "I'm really happy to look back at my life, and Nightwish's career, and see that we have done all those crazy things." So would he consider performing this album live? "I doubt it will happen but it would be lovely..."

Given that it's already taken him 15 years to get this far, who knows what the future holds? **PD**

Music Inspired By The Life And Times Of Scrooge is out now via Nuclear Blast.
www.tuomas-holopainen.com

With Don Rosa, legendary Disney cartoonist and the force behind Scrooge.

"Don Rosa listened to the whole thing with his eyes closed and a big smile on his face. Then he gave me a bear hug afterwards – talk about a fanboy moment!"



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It takes a certain aptitude and self-assurance to turn down Pink Floyd, yet after masterfully engineering *Dark Side Of The Moon* in 1974, Alan Parsons declined an offer that most of his contemporaries would have gleefully accepted.

"It was a difficult decision and they made me a very good offer to work with them full time, not just to work on *Wish You Were Here*," he reveals. "They asked me to do all their live and recorded sound but, by the time that offer came, I was already having success as a producer with the likes of Pilot and Cockney Rebel. So I decided to pass and continue on my successful path, as I felt I was doing something right at the time."

For all the plaudits and everlasting recognition Parsons has received for one of the Floyd's pivotal recordings, there have been a few niggles that have surfaced over the intervening years, not least David Gilmour's one-time assertion that they "would have got there with any engineer operating the knobs and buttons".

"Yes, occasionally it was upsetting that David Gilmour would say that the album would have been just the same no matter who'd engineered it," says Parsons, with a tinge of sadness. "He later retracted that remark and both Roger and Nick have always been very complimentary. Of course the biggest blow of all was when I wasn't asked to do the surround sound version. That was unforgivable."

Venturing away from Floyd at least gave Parsons the opportunity to form his intensely successful partnership with Eric Woolfson and begin work on the Alan Parsons Project. Adopting a revolving door approach to using other musicians and vocalists — in excess of 30 musicians appeared on their albums — they created ten hugely successful albums between 1976 and 1987.

The recent release of *The Complete Albums Collection* box set collating these recordings has given Parsons the

PARSONS' THEORY

Formed at the height of punk, **The Alan Parsons Project's** studio mastery earned them huge album sales without touring. Alan Parsons reflects on life after Pink Floyd and making an album in three days.

Words: Rich Wilson

CAMERA PRESS STEVE EMBERTON



In yer face, punks.
Eric Woolfson and Alan
Parsons celebrate their
70s whoppers.

**“We were punk
rebellion... We
really struck
gold by releasing
I Robot at the
same time as
Star Wars.”**

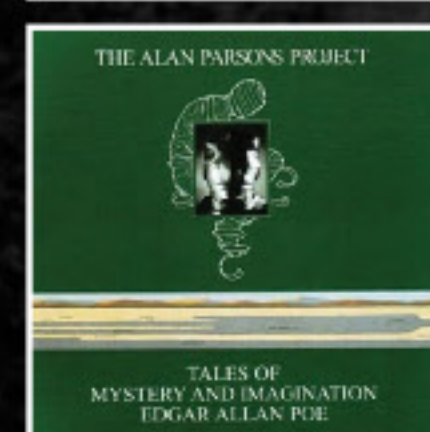
opportunity to critically review the material. So has time provided him with a positive perspective and a renewed sense of pride?

“There was that feeling on occasion but there was also the feeling of ‘Why did we do that?’” he laughs. “But yes, it was nice to be able to listen to them all the way through again, as I really hadn’t done that in a long time. I have certain favourite songs such as *Limelight*, and *Stereotomy* was a good album, but I still maintain that the first album, *Tales Of Mystery And Imagination Edgar Allan Poe* is the one. It was the time when I could get the most ideas off my chest. That remains the one that I’m most proud of.”

The set also includes their mysterious *Sicilian Defence* album, which until now had remained in the vaults of the record label. This “contractual obligation” album was recorded in three days as the ultimate statement of petulance at the label’s insistence that they provide another album. Yet for all the anticipation, Parson’s reveals that the legend of this missing album may not quite live up to the hype generated over the last two decades.

“People may think that it wasn’t justifiably long awaited,” he laughs, self-deprecatingly. “It’s a piece of history. It was a contractual obligation album and wasn’t meant to be a serious release. I mean, it’s not totally crap, and it’s a collection of instrumental demos that may one day have seen the light as proper songs. So they’re pretty unpolished, shall we say. It’s okay and not as bad as I thought it was going to be when I first heard it again after 30 years. I really didn’t think it would emerge again, but it was something that would crop up in interviews.”

Eric Woolfson died in 2009. His daughter Sally says: “It’s a very interesting bonus album. Dad listened to it before he died and it rather amused him remembering back to the circumstances in which they made it. They were at odds with the record label and said, ‘Well, you want an album,



***Stereotomy* and
*Tales Of Mystery And
Imagination* - Parsons’
personal favourites.**



ACTION PRESS/REX

we'll give you an album,' and then doing it in three days. It was a little tongue in cheek in places and I think he would be very amused and pleased that it has ended up in this box set."

With the band avoiding live performances until the 1990s, The Alan Parsons Project were a pretty faceless act, relying on album success to drive their immense popularity. Indeed, with hindsight, it's a remarkable feat that an act with such a low public profile and the moniker of their producer managed to amass such a huge level of support. When you consider they came to prominence at the height of punk, their achievement is even more inspiring. So how does Parsons explain that success?

"I think we were punk rebellion," he says, without any hint of irony. "Concept albums had been proved to be de rigueur at the time. We really struck gold by releasing *I Robot* at the same time as *Star Wars*, which helped. There was just a corner of the market that we fit into on progressive rock radio. Pink Floyd, Genesis and Yes were getting lots of play on certain radio stations and back then radio really sold records."

Timing aside, they were also able to tap into contemporary music of the time, whether that was with the aforementioned sci-fi tones of *I Robot* or the new wave influences that infiltrated *Pyramid*. They had the grand concepts which fitted the progressive mould, but pop was as much as part of their sound. It's not lost on Parsons.

"I was kind of surprised when we were called progressive rock as I think progressive pop would have been better," he considers. "There is very little in the way of the lengthy solos which prog rock became famous for and only occasionally were there odd time signatures. Songs like *The Games People Play* and *Eye In The Sky* were pure pop. What made it progressive was the epic sound and the orchestration which very few people were doing that at the time."

Sally Woolfson adds: "My dad always tried not to be pigeonholed. The Alan Parsons Project was an interesting idea in itself, where

Wave energy: The Alan Parsons Live Project on stage in Mainz, Germany, March 2013.



A glimpse of the previously rare *Sicilian Defence* album (top) with *I Robot* (below).

Waiting for the great gig: has anyone got the number for Mr Wembley?



you could hand-pick the musicians and you were marketing it based on the producer and engineer. They had the freedom to pick lead singers depending on the material and weren't trying to mould it for the artist. Many of the musicians really enjoyed it, as there wasn't the pressure of it being their solo album. They could just come in, do their thing, and go off and do whatever else they were doing."

There is, however, a palpable sense of regret that the band delayed touring for the best part of 20 years. Parsons does now embark on lengthy Alan Parsons Live Project tours, but there had previously been a reticence to perform live that seems to have been rooted in a belief that the records could not be faithfully reproduced.

"We should have done it and gone out there, as even with a small orchestra it would have been fine," he sighs. "I deeply regret not doing that. If we toured we could have been become as big as anybody, and been a stadium act. We just felt that the orchestral sounds could not be faithfully produced enough; by the time we did start playing live, synthesizer technology was such that you could record and reproduce sounds. That was the first time it had happened."

Sally Woolfson also points out that, by having a producer as the band leader who at that time rarely played any instruments on the album or live, would have been a hindrance.

"The tricky thing was that Alan would perform only small amounts on the odd track. So his role was really behind the mixing desk. So how could you tour something called The Alan Parsons Project where Alan was behind a mixing desk? The idea that you would have musicians on stage and a spotlight on Alan at a sound desk, in the back of the theatre, didn't really work. The other aspect was that dad didn't crave the limelight and was very nervous of fame. So there was a level of protection that came as a result of not playing live. He could enjoy the success without the fame. He saw what fame did to other people in the industry and their children and the invasion of privacy. He was a very private man and didn't want to give that up."

Parsons is set to continue touring in South America and Europe during this year, once again eschewing any UK dates. So when can British fans expect to see him?

"To be honest, I'm waiting for the phone to ring and we haven't found the right promoter in the UK yet," he explains. "But I'd love to do it..." 

The Complete Albums Collection is available now. For more information head to www.alanparsonsmusic.com

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GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Their origins may lie in the heaviest of metal, yet **Messenger** have delivered one of the year's most surprising and captivating albums in *Illusory Blues*, a 70s-inspired psychedelic prog epic. "It's not about genres," frontman Khaled Lowe tells us. "It's all about feeling." **Words:** Holly Wright **Images:** Tina K

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Once a metal pub festooned with gargoyles, Mayfair's Marlborough Head is now a traditional haunt smothered in autumnal colours and serving up pub grub. In it sits guitarist/vocalist Khaled

Lowe and drummer Jaime Gomez Arellano of London band Messenger, who have come here for a chinwag with *Prog* on a sunny afternoon. The setting is somewhat apt. Arellano is a prominent producer in the metal scene, Lowe previously played in a death metal band, while bassist James Leach plays with progressive tech pioneers Sikth – their history runs the gamut of music designed to be played 'up to 11'. And yet Messenger are an entirely different beast, spawning an album of shimmering optimism and psychedelic machinations. This is 70s tradition for the 21st century.

The conversation begins with their musical background and as Lowe ponders Messenger's response to the modern-day musical landscape, he looks backwards for reassurance.

"If you look at something like Yes's *Close To The Edge* or King Crimson's *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, the atmosphere, the feeling, the everything... there are really simplistic, beautiful bits in there but then there are crazy whirlwind 'What the fuck is that?!' moments going on. They run across a whole gamut of emotion. A lot of bands are like, 'Hey, I'm a technical pimp who can play an eight-string guitar, shredding,' but that's not really being musical for me."

Messenger's pursuit of the paradoxically simplistic yet rich sound that resonates with psychedelic explorations forms the crux of their new album, *Illusory Blues*, echoing *Meddle*-era Floyd with the chiming folk-rock merriment of Von Hertzen Brothers. The element of surprise that is unearthed from progressive records that unfailingly captivate the listener is the bait that has got these multifaceted Londoners hooked on something far removed from the lead-weight gravitational field of heavy metal.

"For me, it's not about genres – it's all about the feeling," says Lowe. "Take Talk Talk, for example. He [Arellano] played me the record *Laughing Stock*. The only thing I'd heard of them before was that Gwen Stefani cover she made famous [*It's My Life*, with No Doubt], but when I heard *Laughing Stock*, it exploded my mind."

He continues, "When I first heard Camel, like *The Snow Goose* or *Rain Dances*, Andy Latimer wasn't playing anything particularly technical but the way he plays the guitar and the emotion just kind of pouring out of it... you can just hear it. I went to see

Camel at their reunion show at the Barbican when they did *The Snow Goose* – it was one of the best things I've seen in my life. That whole album is orchestral but they did it with five people on stage. The sentiment was there – it was real."

The key ingredients of Messenger's early successes are a combination of serendipitous fortune, Arellano's prodigious production skills and the union of five self-confessed 'gear heads' with a natural musicality. But the *je ne sais quoi* seems to be in their like-mindedness, conceived from an long list of influences. "We're super eclectic," says Arellano. "That's one of the amazing things about the band."

Lowe takes his cue, describing the myriad tastes of his cohorts, from "90s gangsta rap through to classical contemporary and satanic forest-dwelling black metal and jazz fusion".

"We picked people that work with our characters as well," says Arellano. "Me and Khaled are hot-headed people. Especially me. I'm like the angry guy in the band, the guy that screams at people and says, 'Why did you do that?' It's nice to have someone like Dan [Knight] and James, who are super



Debut album *Illusory Blues* blends a diverse range of influences into a thrilling whole.

“WE’RE SUPER ECLECTIC. THAT’S ONE OF THE AMAZING THINGS ABOUT THE BAND.”

Jaime Gomez Arellano



Messenger, from left: Barnaby Maddick, Khaled Lowe, Dan Knight, Jaime Gomez Arellano, James Leach.

chilled out. It's a nice group of friends now. We can scream at each other but five minutes later we're just laughing about something completely different."

In an age where it pays to be savvy, Messenger's asset is Arellano, who has used his credentials of "knowing people and knowing business" to help his band avoid the pitfalls often associated with aspiring musicians. The workaholic claims his secret is midnight jogs and minimal sleep, but his grasp of discipline, built over many years of working with big names and bigger egos, has rubbed off on his bandmates. He's inspired a work ethic that has helped Messenger get the best out of rehearsals and recording sessions.

"There was definitely some magic that occurred," says Lowe, recalling when he first started jamming with Arellano and the other guys. "It kind of all came together. We didn't have a band name, we didn't have an album name, we didn't have track titles, we just had a theme swimming through everything. But when we took a step back from it and we listened to it for the first time, we were like, 'Fucking hell!' He [Arellano] actually came up with the song titles in about five minutes and we suddenly realised there was this theme running through it in terms of nature, time, season, mood, emotions and resolution."

More cosmic than cosmopolitan, *Illusory Blues* is an unpredictable product born of the Big Smoke. With its drifting, elegant, harmonised odes that dip into references as diverse as The Doors, Jeff Buckley and Steven Wilson, there's eclecticism on the record that sustains a steady pace of wonderment. Meanwhile, its gentle patience and self-restraint, combined with an endless spread of instruments – harp, flute, Moog, guitar pedals galore – veils the record in a sheen of New Age haziness that's relaxing yet subtly rebellious (the track *Dear Departure* has blast beats, but you wouldn't know it).

"A very important word in the making of the album is 'spontaneous'," says Arellano, with absolute conviction.

As Lowe enjoys the last morsels of his fish and chips, and Arellano sips on his sparkling water (he wants to take it easy before his bender with Primordial's Alan Averill later on), they ponder the future of Messenger and their forthcoming tour with Katatonia. "It's a good start for our live career," says Arellano. "Generally speaking, we're really happy about the support and the response we've had so far."

When we ask about a follow up to *Illusory Blues*, Arellano smiles. "The next album? It could be anything... which is very exciting!" ☺

Illusory Blues is out now via Svart. See www.messengerbanduk.com for info.

New spins...

EMERSON LAKE & PALMER

ELP's 1973 masterpiece returns in deluxe form, expanded, remastered and with extras galore. It offers further proof that, for all their pomp, they were also once -whisper it - *cool*...

Words: Ian Fortnam **Illustration:** Chris Moore

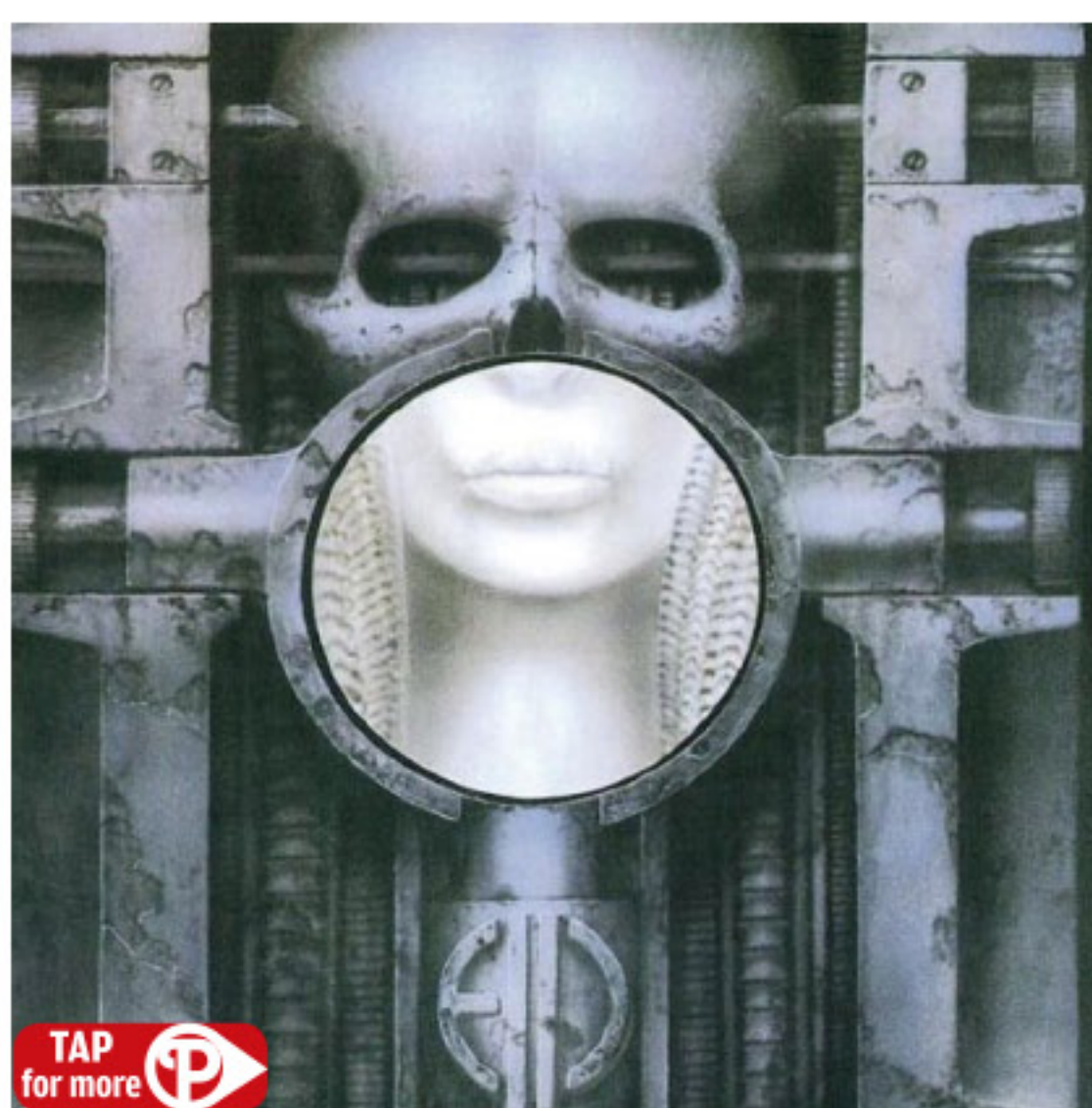
While ELP were commercially enormous, post-punk revisionism has excised from history that they were also cool. At a time when prog was seen as the mature, cerebral flipside to the visceral childishness of (the equally mega-selling) glam, ELP were prog's ultimate poster boys.

The self-consciously hip *New Musical Express*'s decision to give away an exclusive flexi-disc of *Brain Salad Surgery*'s title track in the week of the album's release was indicative of ELP's enviable position in November '73's rock zeitgeist. At a time before enormity was considered anathema, *NME* sold ELP's hugeness as a virtue to their – then – 300,000 readers, and as a prog-curious 13-year old looking for life beyond Slade's three-minute glitter-bombs, this writer (along with a generation of his music-minded teenaged peers) wanted in. As 1973 drew to its close Emerson, Lake & Palmer were very probably the coolest band in the world. Glam was on the wane, prog was on the rise and, let's not be shy, ELP were three good-looking lads. While teenyboppers were swooning over Donny Osmond their elder sisters were writing to the inkie music press offering to be Carl Palmer's drum stool. I'm not even making this up; that letter got published.

Brain Salad Surgery really shouldn't work. On paper, it appears as insane as it ever did. It kicks off with a hymn, goes into a section of piano concerto rewritten to feature the first recorded appearance of 'electronic percussion', then a pretty acoustic ballad, then a barroom piano knees-up, all topped off with a half-hour science fiction suite. It shouldn't work, but it does. Brilliantly.

Keith Emerson had been planning an assault on Parry's setting of William Blake's Preface To Milton, AKA *Jersusalem*, since his days in The Nice, but had never successfully nailed it until Carl Palmer supplied a complementary

Brain Salad Surgery Super Deluxe Edition SONY LEGACY



TAP for more

The new mix is a revelation, adding crispness, clarity and impact.

percussion part. "If somebody asked me what piece of music summed [us] up Emerson," Palmer confided to me in 2004, "the Englishness of it, the progressiveness of it, the sheer originality of it – I would say *Jerusalem*." And he's not wrong. This Super Deluxe Edition presents four remastered mixes of *Jerusalem* – first, original album, new stereo and 5.1 – and Jakko Jakszyck's new mix is a revelation, improving on the original in crispness, clarity, dynamism and sheer emotional impact.

Alberto Ginastera's *Toccata* has never been the easiest of listens. Possibly the most challenging of BSS's tracks, it's hectic, jarring

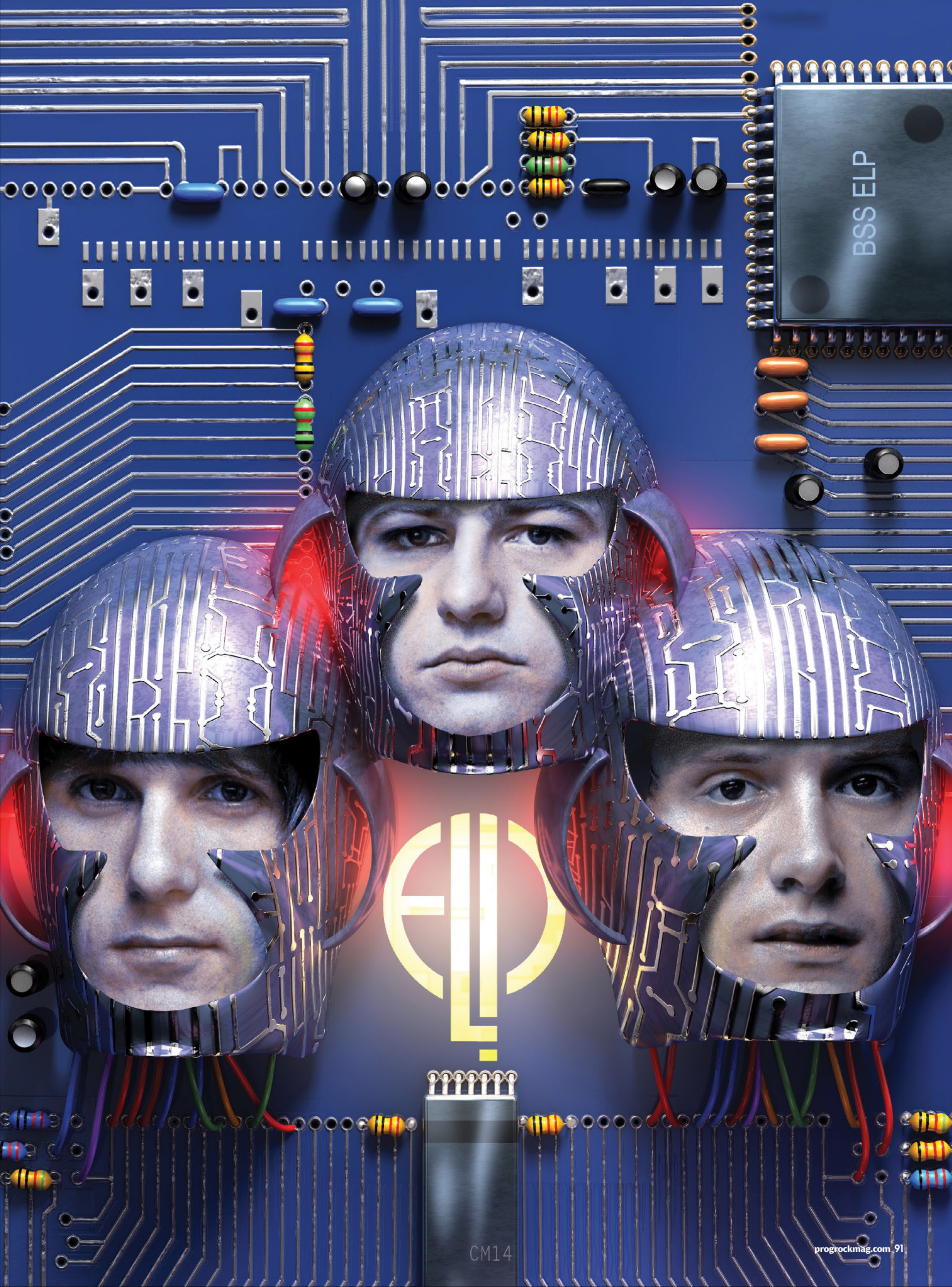
stuff and – being cutting edge – very much of its time. Technically though, it's faultless, Carl Palmer's utilisation of drum-triggered electronics dazzling, if the impression that you're hearing extracts from the soundtrack to an unseen 1970s sci-fi TV series is occasionally overwhelming.

Greg Lake's *Still... You Turn Me On* remains an unequivocally gorgeous slice of quintessential Englishness. Utilising a similar rising cadence to Nilsson's *Without You* it might have been an enormous hit single had ELP not chosen to go with the non-charting *Jerusalem* instead.

Benny The Bouncer is a novelty Winifred Atwell bounce-along ditty. Imagine Keith Moon singing a post-*Clockwork Orange* update of Benny Hill's *Ernie* lyric over the *Pot Black* theme and you're halfway there. Again, it sounds a lot better than it reads.

The album's closer, *Karn Evil 9*, is arguably ELP's magnum opus. Lyricist Pete Sinfield's evocative dystopian tale of a future battle between man and computers drives the trio's creative imaginations to career-topping heights. While newcomers should seek this out, upgraders (the more likely market for such a lavish box) will also find that it's never sounded better. Jakko Jakszyck's remixes are staggeringly good, and need to be heard. There's a 5.1 mix for those with widescreen ears, extensive sleeve-notes, limited extras (that *NME* flexi-disc, *Jerusalem*'s B-side, a discful of early mixes/alternative versions) and an illuminating period documentary DVD featuring live performances and those all-important signature juggernauts.

Brain Salad Surgery's core material has finally been accorded the remix, remaster and 5.1 expansion that it's always deserved. A six-disc job might seem a little excessive, but then, prog's erstwhile poster boys didn't get where they are today by eschewing excess.



BSS ELP

ELP

CM14

IAN ANDERSON

Homo Erraticus CALLIANDRA/KSCOPE

The Tull legend's sixth solo album has its moments, whatever he's on about...

To resurrect one of prog's most celebrated fictional characters after 40 years might be considered ambitious enough. But to extend his rehabilitation to a further album might be considered a dangerous Victorian folly. Nonetheless, one thing Ian Anderson has never been guilty of is unnecessary caution. Hence the pioneering one-track album that was 1972's *Thick As A Brick* – based, we were told, on an epic poem by schoolboy prodigy Gerald Bostock – and, four decades later, the lengthy consideration of Bostock's fate, 2012 sequel, *TAAB2*.

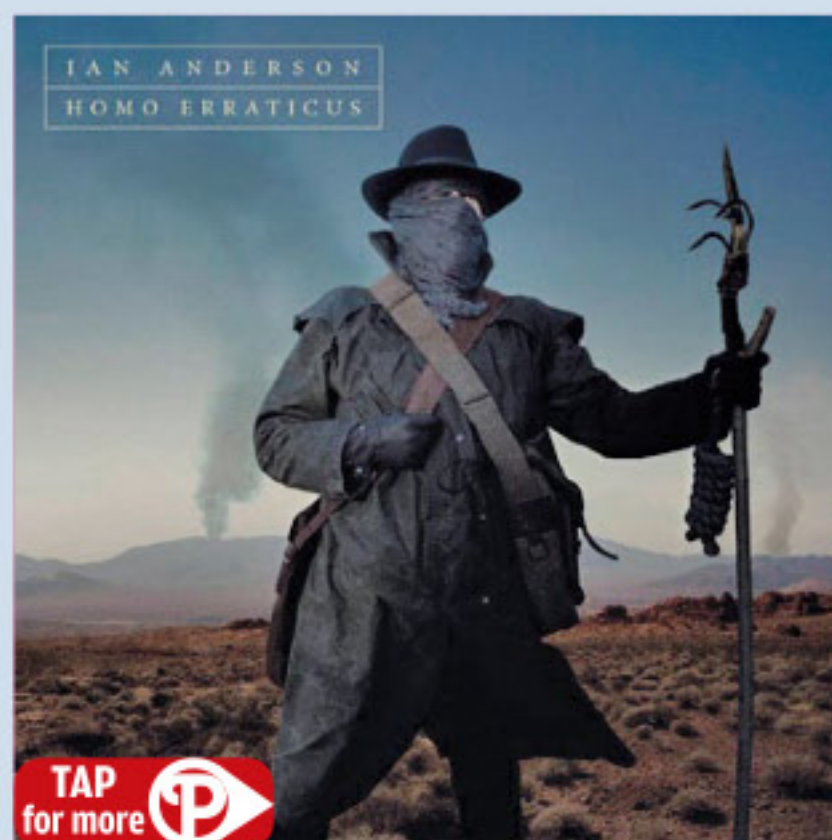
Now, however, the plot has thickened yet further. Bostock has reunited with his would-be biographer, as a scribe in his own right, penning a sprawling, free-associating set of lyrics for this follow-up album. These, in turn, are said to be 'based on an unpublished manuscript by amateur historian Ernest T. Parritt (1865-1928)', examining key events in British history by way of a series of visions of past and future scenarios. Phew...

If all those literary conceits sound a little daunting, the musical accompaniment of *Homo Erraticus* is easier to digest. Opening *Chronicles*, the first part of three, *Doggerland* instantly sets up the Tull template of coruscating rock guitar, keyboard flourishes and Anderson's freewheeling flute, as winningly malevolent hooks draw you in.

But you must make what you will of a tale that begins with references to ice age pre-history, then moves quickly onto farmhouses in Tuscany, then to the enduring image: 'All across the Doggerland... across with luggage, kids and sunscreen, melted mortgage dreams that died'.

The poetic 'vision' of Parritt/Bostock/Anderson gets no clearer on *Enter The Uninvited*, which opens with references to the Roman invasion then rockets forth through modern history. We can safely conclude that 'Pizza palace, burger kingdom, cocaine cola, nylon stockings...' are not the exact words of the late Mr. Parritt, unless he possessed an ability not only to predict history but also make questionable puns about it.

It's entertainingly head-spinning stuff at times, but this list-based



approach to songwriting has its drawbacks. At regular intervals, this particular composition resembles the theme tune from *Are You Being Served?*

We're on safer ground with feisty folk-rock like *The Engineer* and *Turnpike Inn*, but the scattershot approach to storytelling can make it hard to get to grips with. And compared to *TAAB2*'s more roundly drawn characters, these songs provide hazy, sketchy glimpses of past lives that never quite draw us in.

Musically, *The Pax Britannica* is set to a jaunty minstrel ditty that befits the war-free 19th century era it refers to, but Tull fans might find it a little too twee to fully embrace, not least because Anderson sounds uncannily like the medieval minstrel

character from children's TV hit *Mike The Knight*.

Thankfully, the second half of the album is a more robust affair, notably the second and third suites, which Anderson (or is it Bostock?) has called 'Prophecies' and 'Revelations'. *Tripudium Ad Bellum* is an instrumental that veers from the bucolic to the spiky and discordant, then *After These Wars* evokes the post-WWI period via a sweetly melodic vision of a time 'when co-op gave us daily bread, penicillin raised the dead, and combine harvesters kept us fed'.

OK, I think we get it now. *New Blood, Old Veins* offers a similarly colourful view of a post-austerity Britain of package holidays and youthful rebellion, and if *The Browning Of The Green* contains

some rather debatable sentiments on benefits culture and creeping urbanisation, it's one of the punchiest numbers on here. Then the final track, *Cold Dead Reckoning* is a similarly feisty, flinty rocker that observes that 'We are the tribe that eats itself'. It's a fine way to round off proceedings, and by this time, the old flute cake has just about rescued the overall album's shaggy-dog concept from itself.

After several listens, you may only manage to fathom about a third of what *Homo Erraticus* is trying to say. But as accompaniments to scratching your head go, you could do a lot worse.

JOHNNY SHARP

By the end, the old flute cake rescues the album's shaggy-dog concept from itself.

AGUSA

Högtid TRANSUBSTANS

Airy, unencumbered prog from the Swedish hinterlands.

Much like Finland's Svart Records, Swedish label Transubstans has a knack for discovering new homegrown talent. Theirs are acts whose earthy homages to the prog, folk and psych crosswinds of the early 70s are impeccably and unselfconsciously rendered, to the point where 'retro' is no longer a useful term. As much as Malmö's Agusa cite Colosseum and krautrockers Amon Düül II as influences – and you can throw in references to pastoral forebears such as Landberk and Fläsket Brinner too – the spirit that pervades Högtid is one of unfettered if unhurried exploration. It's tinged with nostalgia, but only in the sense that it's fuelled by an open-ended



yearning, finding a common spirit with contemporaries such as Finland's equally organ-drenched Sammal and, on the dreamy carousel of *Melodi Från St Knut*, very English fayre such as Purson and Circulus. But these are only starting points for a journey

that is very much Agusa's own. Each of the five tracks here carries its own unique imprint, from *Ut Vår Hage's* roaming, summery psychedelia through the Eastern scales of *Östan Om Sol*, *Västan Om Måne* to the rolling Hammond-impregnated pulse of *Stigen Genom Skogen*. Together, they all add up to a glorious whole whose co-ordinates are as accommodating as they are ephemeral. **JSS**

DON AIREY

Keyed Up XMUSIC THEORIES

Latest solo shot from the Deep Purple key-tickler.

Deep Purple keyboardist Airey has made up for lost time these last six years. His trilogy of low-key but distinctly enjoyable solo discs went at last some way to cancelling out the two decades since he began going it alone, back in 1988 with the conceptual piece *K2: Tales Of Triumph And Tragedy*. Airey has pretty much stuck to a trusted core of musician friends since 2008 release *A Light In The Sky*, opting to record on the hop and clearly having inordinate amounts of fun in the process. Once of Welsh NWOBHM band Persian Risk – and last seen accompanying Uli Jon Roth – vocalist Carl Sentance has a powerful delivery that befits the gutsy hard rock of the



opener here, *3 In The Morning*. But his voice is flexible enough to handle the album's twists and turns. Airey revisits Dave Brubeck's sublime jazz instrumental *Blue Rondo à La Turk*. It's a piece Airey first performed on the radio as a 14-year-old, and one of

the final recordings made by the late Gary Moore, Airey's bandmate in Colosseum II. Here the tune is carefully sculpted into the three-part *Mini Suite*, the first of which also reunites him with ex-Rainbow colleague Graham Bonnet on vocals. Maybe this solid, starry album can only occasionally be categorised as prog in the purest sense, but be that as it may, its musicianly credentials are irrefutable. **DML**

ALVARET ENSEMBLE

Skeylja DENOVALI

Intense post-rock improvisation from this Anglo-Dutch alliance.

After their 2012 debut, this UK/Netherlands ensemble collaborated with a collection of Icelandic musicians and artists for a series of special concerts. These amounted to over 10 hours worth of music, now scrupulously edited down to just 40 minutes. There's none of the hit-or-miss elements normally associated with improvisation. Instead the results sound considered and sculptural, coherence and concise. Tiny details, fleeting connections and echoed happenstance receive as much prominence as the larger, more gestural aspects of the shows from which this remarkable album is culled. Kira Kira's



TAP for more

near-whispered vocals cast silvery flashes through the otherwise inky darkness, her words merging with mournful, drifting trumpet. Greg Haines' gently inquisitive piano creates an Arvo Pärt-like air of contemplation and reverence, contained within

a sacred ambience as if made in candlelit spaces with vaulted stone ceilings. They corraling random, disparate sounds into tremulous clouds, building in structure, frequently with a seething density, and resolving into luminous transcendent coda that burn with a wondrous force. This is music as mystical revelation. **SS**

ARCHIVE

Axiom DANGERSVISIT

A moody, modern triumph from the overlooked London band.

Opening their account in the mid 90s, London collective Archive are widely revered across Europe but remain relatively obscure at home, despite inspiring cultish fervour among their disciples. 2012's *With Us Until You're Dead* was a sophisticated collection of emotive, progressive-leaning songs (it was the first album they bothered to release in the UK in a decade), but with themes of 'despair and disconnection', *Axiom* is a step up again. From heartbreaking, string-laden ballad *Distorted Angels*, this continuous 40-minute piece delivers shattering atmosphere, shimmering textures and



TAP for more

some big beats to boot. Archive's trip-hop DNA is still in evidence (the earnest *Baptism*, hypnotic *Transmission Data Terminated*), but *Shiver* shows they can be Anathema-catchy, and the title track's peeling church bells add drama gravitas.

Organic and electronic sounds fuse beautifully, with founder Darius Keeler joined by a host of guest vocalists, each adding nuance to the classy, earnest whole. They've made a companion-piece film, debuting at the London Sundance Festival right about now. If it does the music justice, it'll be an art-house triumph. **GRM**

CHAT NOIR

Elec3Cities RARENOISE

Captivating collection of atmospheric, jazz-tinged instrumentals.

The normal practice for a jazz group recording an album: enter the studio, knock out a few takes, pick the best - job done. For their fifth release, Italian trio Chat Noir tried a different approach, emailing each other music files, working on them separately, adding layers and ideas until a finished album emerged. The result is an agreeably low-lit, smoky swirl of jazzy insouciance, splintery electronica and downtempo lounge chill. Here, Mellotron flutes tremble over brooding pulses; frosted strings are stained with bowed bass, eerie twinkling musical box rhymes float by. Dayglo,



TAP for more

psych-enhanced electric piano collides with accelerating dance beats and glitches, all adding urgency and drama. Moving along the EST Cinematic Orchestra/Jaga Jazzist continuum of cool, this is not just about giving a few riffs a liberal sprinkling of

off-the-shelf atmospheric. Good quality composition underpins Michele Cavallari's assertive keyboards and Guiliano Ferrari's studied drumming. Bassist Luca Fogagnolo describes the band as 'a ship adrift'. They may have started out as a jazz trio; but now, eight years on, they've washed up on an altogether different shore. **SS**

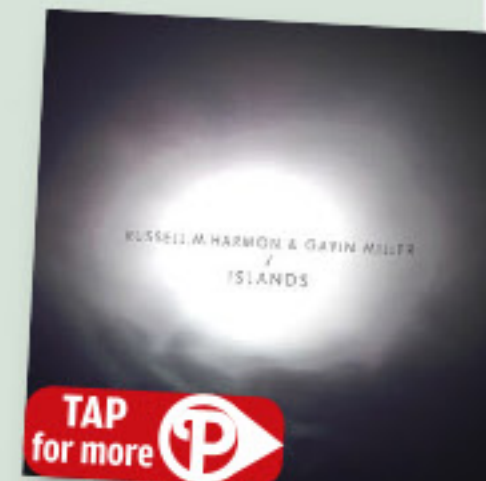


POST-ROCK

Alex Lynham guides us through the peaks and valleys of essential post-rock.

Over the last month or so, the post-rock scene in the UK has been falling over itself about this year's ArcTanGent festival. As your back issues of *Prog* will surely confirm, last year's event was a triumph, and with the *Prog*-approved LITE, Russian Circles, Three Trapped Tigers, And So I Watch You From Afar and Cleft already confirmed no doubt 2014 will be as fine a vintage.

Though the limited edition deluxe physical package has already sold out, **Gavin Miller and Russell M Harmond's** split EP *Islands* (This Is It Forever) is already an essential post-rock release for 2014. Sparse and atmospheric, Harmond's piano chords and repetitive sequences play off against auto oscillation and electronic murmurs on *Vela*, before building to a driving pulse cut with white noise on *Velorum*. If Mike Oldfield had started writing today, you can't help thinking this is the



TAP for more

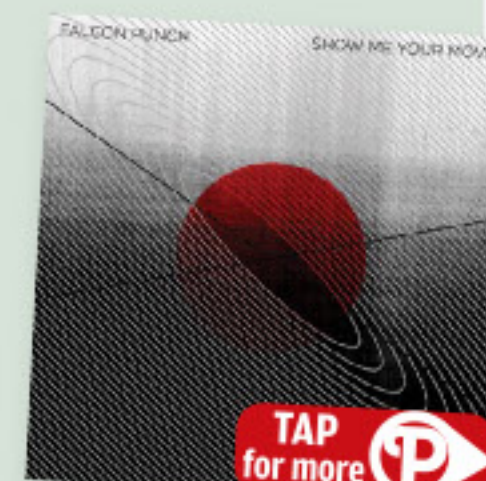
kind of cerebral and challenging music he'd be producing. Miller (of Ghosting Season and worriedaboutsatan) handles the other half of the split. His *Who Is This Who Is Coming?* is an excellent piece of rhythm-led electronica-post-rock fusion. If that grabs you, then he's also releasing a full-length, *Somn*, later this year on the same label. A polystylistic mix of dark ambient, krautrock and post-rock with some jazz influences, it is simply stunning.



TAP for more

Another new release in the grey ambient-post-rock middle ground that's well worth exploring is *Light Divide* (Thrill Jockey) by **Jon Porras**, one half of Barn Owl. This is less organic than his band work with Evan Caminiti, and many of the tracks are all the more provocative for it - rich and swirling soundscapes of indistinct, layered timbres.

Of a more frenetic flavour is **Falcon Punch's** new EP *Show Me Your Moves* (Blood And Biscuits). Much in the vein of labelmates Three Trapped Tigers or Physics House Band, it's manic instrumental prog-math-post-rock crossover with absolutely no regard for the listener's sanity.



TAP for more



TAP for more

Home to superlative Russian post-rockers I am waiting for you last summer, Flowers Blossom In The Space has just released *Closer to Cold*, the new album by **powder! go away**. Maybe it's not the most original music in the post-rock sphere but still, it's melodically complex, emphatic and head-and-shoulders above the majority of also-ran bands with their

delay pedals.

In reissue news, **Slint's** seminal *Spiderland* is getting the deluxe edition treatment on Touch and Go Records. Arguably, it's one of the genre's most influential albums, and the accompanying documentary claims to reveal the truth behind many of the urban legends around the album.

Did Brian McMahan really scream so hard that he threw up in the studio at the dramatic climax of *Good Morning, Captain*? Now the truth can be told...

And if all this wasn't enough, ascendant Leicester post-rock wizards **Maybeshewill** are currently in the studio working on their new album...



TAP for more

ANIMALS AS LEADERS

The Joy Of Motion SUMERIAN

The insanely talented musicians gallop ahead of the herd.



Tosin Abasi dresses well. It's fair to say that the major protagonist in the Animals As Leaders saga is a very fashionable man. His clothes are eye-catching but within reason. The styles fit within the normal boundaries, acceptable to the everyman, but there might be a little dart in the design to set his sartorial choices apart from your average rock star's taste. It's the same with the music that he creates. It's why this Washington DC band has risen to the top of the djent genre.

The riffs feel like they mean something, so linger in the mind.

It's bordering on the absurd that in, a world of ubiquitous, corporate pop stars, AAL's 2011 album *Weightless* scaled the the US Billboard 200, reaching as high as Number 92. After all, this is an instrumental jazz-metal band on an independent label. Luckily though, we live in a world where the theatre of the absurd is still celebrated. However, while *Weightless* was successful and the levels of musicianship (and heaviness) exceeded that of the self-titled 2009 debut that Abasi wrote and recorded on his own, it felt a little mechanical – as if the vulgar display of technical prowess was there as a trophy rather than as a musical experience.

The second album with a full band, *The Joy Of Motion* feels more complete, more comfortable. Maybe this is down in part to the re-introduction of Misha Mansoor – of fellow big cats in the djent jungle, Periphery – on production and co-writing duties. But also the riffs are more than an incomprehensible arrangement of rapid-fire finger wizardry here. They feel like they mean something, and linger long in the mind as a result.

Accompanied by one of Abasi's beautiful, symphonic jazz riffs, *Another Year* barely ascends into gently chugging guitars as it climaxes. There is more in the way of their trademark clean, complicated guitar work in *Para Mexer*, the sole aim of which is to astound you with the complexity of its Latin-inspired sections.

Mind-Spun, with its swooping, siren guitars and scratchy electronics, however, is a seething exercise in attrition, but it feels like they're telling a story (you'll have to make up your own lyrics, of course). There are similarly dark undertones to be found in *Physical Education*, an exceptional song in an album replete with excellence. Centred around a luxuriously memorable eight-stringed guitar riff, its proportions are vast, even cinematic.

Animals As Leaders have found the right personnel to achieve the perfect balance in their music. There is more than enough heavy drama remaining here but, as is his way, Tosin Abasi has added those flashes of glorious colour and detail to *The Joy of Motion*. The result is magnificent.

RAZIQ RAUF

DEAD RIDER

Chills On Glass DRAG CITY

Insidious third from the Chicago quartet.

Todd Rittmann spent over a decade at the heart of U.S. Maple, one of Chicago's eminent post-hardcore bands in the grand tradition of Big Black and Shellac. His latest project finds the guitarist reaching deeper into noise-rock, making merry with fractured riffs, spasmodic rhythms and vaguely paranoid vocals. The first two albums were largely centered on Rittman's distorted guitar splurges, but *Chills On Glass* feels more expansive. The key difference is the band's appropriation of electronica, with the dual synths of Andrea Fraught and Thymme Jones adding dense textures



and, as on *Weird Summer* and *Four Cocks*, a twitchy layer of techno. *Of One Thousand Aside* is a slight concession to 'normal' rock, but the bulk of this record is busily experimental. *New Eyes* is a ruptured collage of sounds with a vocal turn

that pitches Rittman in some avant netherworld between Skip Spence and Berlin-era Bowie. Elsewhere, Dead Rider carry distinct echoes of early Bad Seeds, Blixa Bargeld and John Cale in his freakoid hockey-mask phase. Not an album to throw your arms around after a first date, but given time it reveals itself as a dark, if bruising, pleasure. **RH**

DJAM KARET

Regenerator 3017 HC PRODUCTIONS

Thirty-year anniversary release from California's innovative instrumentalists.

Djam Karet might be the coolest progressive instrumental group you've never heard of. They're certainly prolific, with 17 studio albums to their name, and not that mainstream appeal seems a mega priority (one of the 17 is called *No Commercial Potential*). *Regenerator 3017* promised to be a polished, confident oeuvre, the mark of a sharp, imaginative group. So, if not riches, what have three decades of quietly pioneering prog brought them? Well, for one, a taste for jazz, if *Prince Of The Inland Empire* is anything to go by. Think cool-school bass-lines, clean guitar syncopation and



images of very hip California beach parties at sunset, after the surfers have gone home and the louche musos are arriving. (Then, you could happily slink around to *Living In The Future Past* in a trench-coat and trilby.) Waves of psychedelic classic rock

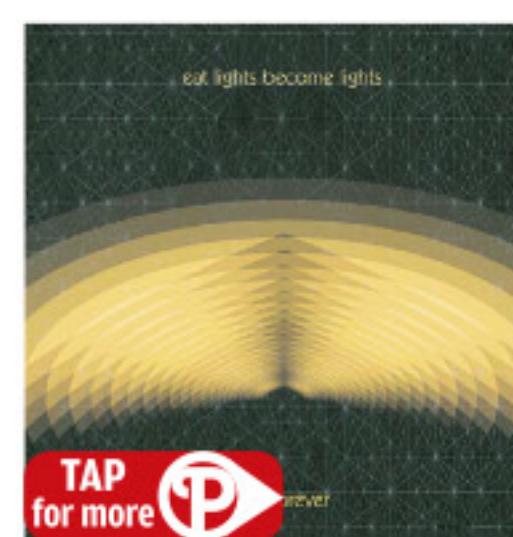
add warmth to the songs like *Empty House*, and there are echoes of earlier, experimental Porcupine Tree appear in prog-meets-jazz-meets-ambient passages, along with King Crimson-esque moments of peace. In all, an accomplished record wrought from veteran hands, balancing progressive intricacies with spacious clarity. **PG**

EAT LIGHTS BECOME LIGHTS

Into Forever ROCKET GIRL

Latest from the Brit band in with the in-kraut!

Channelling Neu! '75, with slivers of Can and Cluster, London's wonderfully-named Eat Lights Become Lights are the brainchild of Neil Rudd, and seven years into their career they speed down new autobahns on this heart-racing fourth album. It accelerates through exhilarating, manic-motorik opener *Velocet Vir Nesat*, before shifting into melodic, minimalist patterns and deftly detailed electronic drones. If Steve Reich and Moondog are influences on the more mesmeric Moog-led tracks, the bad-ass beat kicks back in again for the primal, euphoric *You Are Disko*. But EBL are no mere



pasticheurs. Like Stereolab before them, they adapt the muse to their own moment in time, as *Into Forever* both ripples with evocative echoes and forges furiously forward into future days. In just 47 minutes, it invites you on more rides and journeys than most

offerings twice that length could muster, thrilling and chilling with impeccable taste and diamond-hard drama. The farewell of the 10-minute title track leaves you eager to play the album on repeat, immersing yourself in its sometimes melancholy, sometimes motivational moods, and gorging on lights that refuse to go out. **CR**

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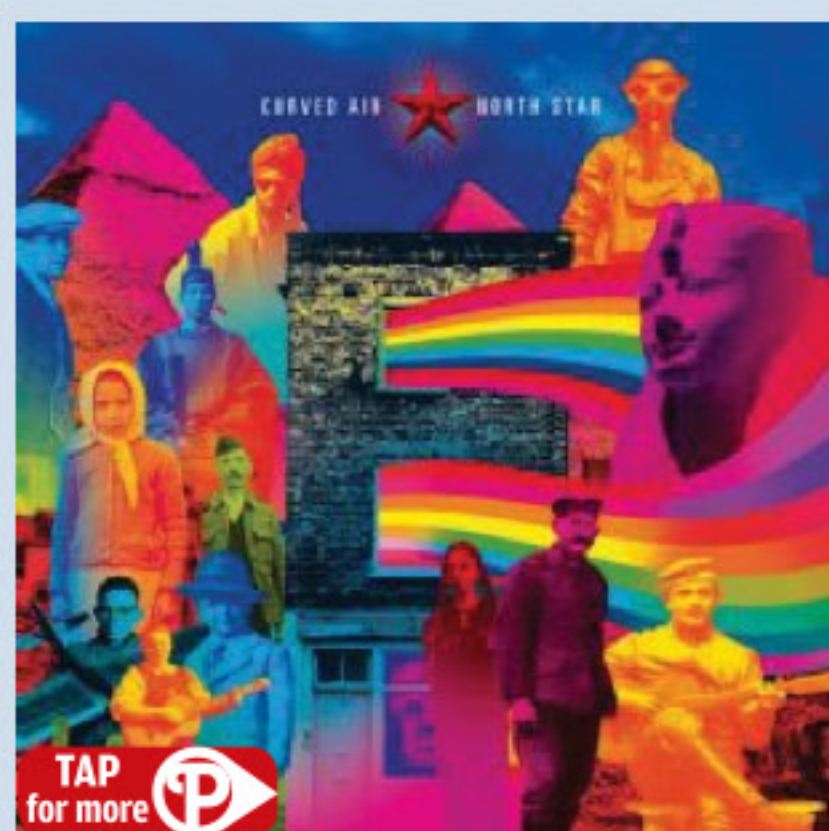
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CURVED AIR

North Star CHERRY RED

Prog veterans join new travellers to breathe fresh Air.



It makes plenty of sense that Curved Air would be among those vintage progsters to feel the warmth of an Indian summer. Since 2009, iconic figurehead Sonja Kristina has been joined in their late flowering by original drummer Florian Pilkington-Miksa and accomplished recruits Chris Harris, Robert Norton and Paul Sax.



Their first set of studio material in fully 38 years.



But the line-up gathering for this, their first set of studio material in fully 38 years, has been afforded extra authenticity by the return of 1970s-era guitarist Kirby Gregory. Gregory arrived for the first time just after *Phantasmagoria* had become the last of the groups three visits to the Top 20 of the British album chart.

Their nimble art-rock iteration had become known to the *Top Of The Pops* generation via the mystical, alluring 1971 top five hit *Back Street Luv*, and had another few years in the light, with various line-ups, before the band demobilised in 1976. With a 2011 performance at High Voltage followed by a live record, the momentum towards *North Star* has been building for some time.

From the confident outset of *Stay Human*, it's palpable that the sextet have decided that it's only worth taking the Air again if they're going to take it seriously. Not to mention with all the mysticism of yesteryear, as Kristina confirms in her exposition of new material that 'reflects on humanity, love, solutions, perspectives and staying human through changing times and revolutions, virtual lives and delicate attractions — love and shamanic sub-atomic worlds.' Now you know.

Kristina is ever the magnetic gypsy at the vocal helm, and equally crucially, Paul Sax a worthy descendent of the violin wizardry of the chart era's Darryl Way. Sax's nimble playing informs the whole work, landing a starring role on the instrumental *Spider* and weaving a creative path through Sonja's vocals on the likes of *Time Games* and the dream-folk of *Magnetism*, on which Gregory plays a triumphant guitar part. A remake of *Puppets*, originally on the eponymous second album that housed *Back Street Luv*, is equally poised.

All is well until the piano ballad *Colder Than A Rose In Snow* veers a little towards the trite, before a series of cover versions signals, to these ears, a surprising mis-step. Their attempt at The Police's *Spirits In The Material World* makes artistic sense, but whether Curved Air need to be covering Snow Patrol, as they do on a laboured *Chasing Cars*, will be a subject of debate among devotees. A closing pass at the Beatles' *Across The Universe* helps little. Those aside, the path to the *North Star* has been expertly plotted.

PAUL SEXTON

ELBOW

The Take Off And Landing Of Everything FICTION

The Mercury Prize winners get their prog on...

Back in *Prog 38*, Elbow frontman Guy Garvey boldly told us that the band's sixth album was "probably going to be our most progressive album." Of course, such statements are relative, and no one in their right mind was expecting the Mancunian quintet to go delivering *Gates Of Delirium*. This being prog however, there's sure to be a few among our readership who have already scoffed at seeing Elbow's very name in this magazine. But there's certainly enough moments of progressive grandeur on display here to warrant its inclusion in our reviews pages. And although things



start sombrely enough with *This Blue World* (which is unsurprising as it details the split between Garvey and his former girlfriend), and the singer's Gabriel-esque vocals are soon drawing the listener into the more intriguing *Charge*,

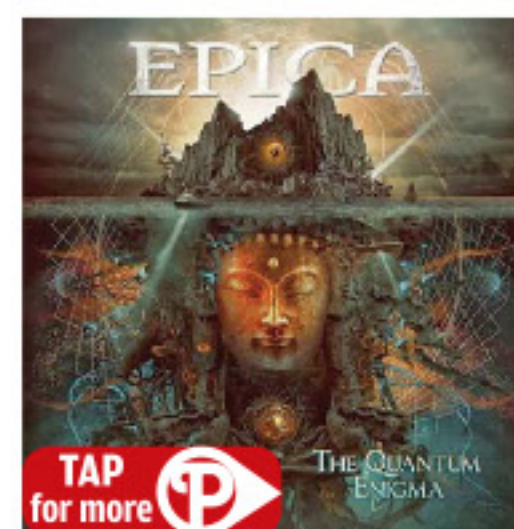
resplendent with soaring, Hallé Orchestra strings, and *Fly Boy Blue/Lunette*. The band do seem to lose their footing somewhat mid-way, around *Real Life (Angel)* and *Honey Sun*, before steadying themselves with the epic and morose *My Sad Captains*, and finally they soar with the title track and moody *The Blanket Of Night*, the two most progressive pieces here. **JE**

EPICA

The Quantum Enigma NUCLEAR BLAST

The Dutch metallers' lofty sixth album.

Those who dismiss rock music as shallow should prepare to consume vast quantities of humble pie. The sixth full-length album from these female-fronted Dutch symphonic-metallers is based on "the most mind-bending scientific proof in all of quantum physics; [namely] that our physical environment is directly influenced by our consciousness". And this from the band who, for their recent 10th anniversary concert, called upon a 70-piece orchestra and full choir. Musically, *The Quantum Enigma* juxtaposes speaker-busting cinematic-style bombast (*The Second Stone*, *Victims Of Contingency*)



with tributaries of serene, introspective relief (*The Fifth Guardian*, *The Canvas Of Life*). Their ace-in-the-pack, the flame haired Simone Simons, remains nothing less than a mezzo-soprano goddess. However - and it's a sizeable caveat, this - for many prog-minded

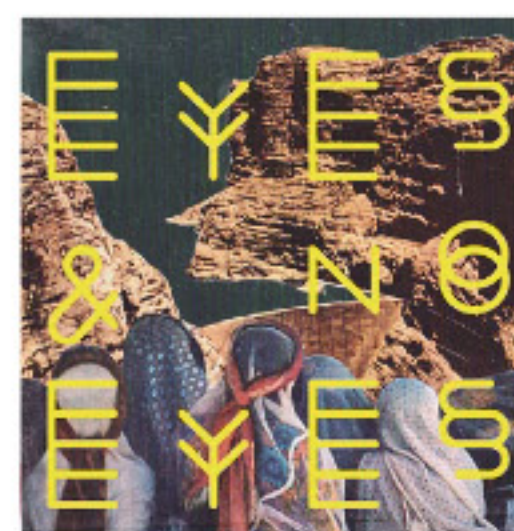
listeners the growled vocals and screams of guitarist Mark Jansen will represent nothing less than a steaming great turd amid what's otherwise an exquisitely presented banquet. For all their lofty aspirations, Epica really are still a gothic heavy metal band with symphonic ambitions, rather than the reverse. **DML**

EYES & NO EYES

Eyes & No Eyes WILKOMMEN

Quality debut album by the Brighton quartet.

This album opens with free-form percussion and electronics (provided by guest noisemaker, Woodpecker Wooliams) under tolling guitar chords. At this point Brighton's Eyes And No Eyes have already gripped the attention, but what next? The drums come in, twitchy and syncopated against the guitar. Then bass, then a rich, melodic cello. Now all the musicians are glancing off each other and it's only in the last minute of the seven-minute track that the tension is broken, as they head as one to the finish line. It's a subtle but exciting reconfiguration of rock band as



rhythmic and melodic unit. Their music is full of odd angles and melodic shapes, with its roots in the sort of jagged, choppy guitars of early Talking Heads, Josef K. *Autocrat* is a gorgeous tune with chattering electronics backing the high velocity drum figures.

It's Becca Mears' cello that really distinguishes them, with her gnawing mid-range drones and rhapsodic melody lines. And when it seems like it might be getting just a bit too uptight they deliver the spangly guitar picking of the drumless *Blackwaterside* (not the traditional folk tune), and the haunted processional, *The Drowned World*. **MB**

THE GIFT

Land Of Shadows BAD ELEPHANT

London symph-rockers find their future, and their past.

For a band that started life in 2003, The Gift are notably thrifty when it comes to releasing new music – *Land Of Shadows* is only their second album. The music is firmly rooted in classic British prog, most evidently 70s Pink Floyd, with strong melodies bolstered by flashes of virtuosity. The catchy choruses of *Too Many Hands* show off their pop sensibility, while *You Are The Song* is an unabashed ballad. Yet there is plenty for prog purists to embrace here too, particularly in the 20 minutes of *The Comforting Cold*, which weaves between strings, wide-open soundscapes and heavier rock



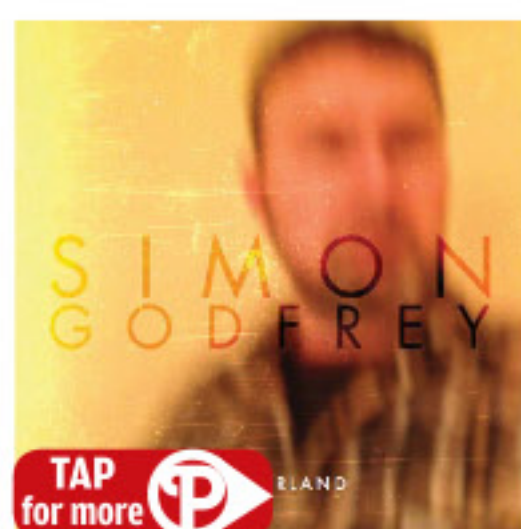
instrumental sections to great effect. Guitarist David Lloyd channels David Gilmour in his solos in *Road Runs On 'Til Morning* and *The Willow*. Mike Morton's voice isn't particularly imposing. His vocals lack the range and resonance of rock's real powerhouse frontmen – he's more Neal Morse than James LaBrie. But there is a sense of honesty in his delivery and heartfelt lyrics which carries him through the moments where he reaches for notes that threaten to elude him. A long time coming, *Land Of Shadows* may not break new ground, but it successfully evokes the spirit of prog gone by. **DW**

SIMON GODFREY

Motherland BAD ELEPHANT

Shineback and Tinyfish man – unplugged and unpretentious.

With Tinyfish on hiatus, a withdrawal from live work, the release of last year's ambitious dance flavoured Shineback project, and time spent in America (a precursor to permanent residency), Simon Godfrey has paused to reflect. His first 'proper' solo album comprises personal and varied compositions ruminating on what we give up and leave behind. He himself says it's unfair to present *Motherland* as a 'prog' album. No 15-minute epics here: this is stripped down singer/songwriter fare – acoustic guitars and voice, with occasional bass, drums and additional instrumentation.



It's retro in places, *Tearing Up the Room* strikes an early Beatles vibe, harmonica and all. Fans of Godfrey's vocals and writing style should be happy, with Tinyfish and Shineback tracks (*The June Jar* and *Faultlines* respectively) getting the acoustic treatment here. The crop of new songs are catchy (*Dust and Wires*, *God Help Me if I'm Wrong*) and tender (*The Inaccurate Man*, *Sally Won't Remember*). Former lyricist Robert Ramsay even pops up, delivering the evocative spoken words of the title track. Low-tech perhaps, but undeniable quality nonetheless. **GMM**

HALO BLIND

Occupying Forces NAUTICAL

The York band's second album is a triumphant trip to the dark side.

What makes York such fertile ground for prog? They gave us Mostly Autumn, Heather Findlay, and now Halo Blind. Three years on from lauded debut *The Fabric* they're back, and it was well worth the wait. *Occupying Forces* is no mere progression, it's a daring revolution. Their debut was pure alt-rock beauty, but this is bleak, dystopian and unexpectedly spiritual. Here the Halos meditate on how loss can occupy our very selves and make music for grown-ups, akin to late Floyd and Radiohead circa *OK Computer*. The mesmeric *Better?*, the entrancing *Analogue* and impassioned *Coma* – these

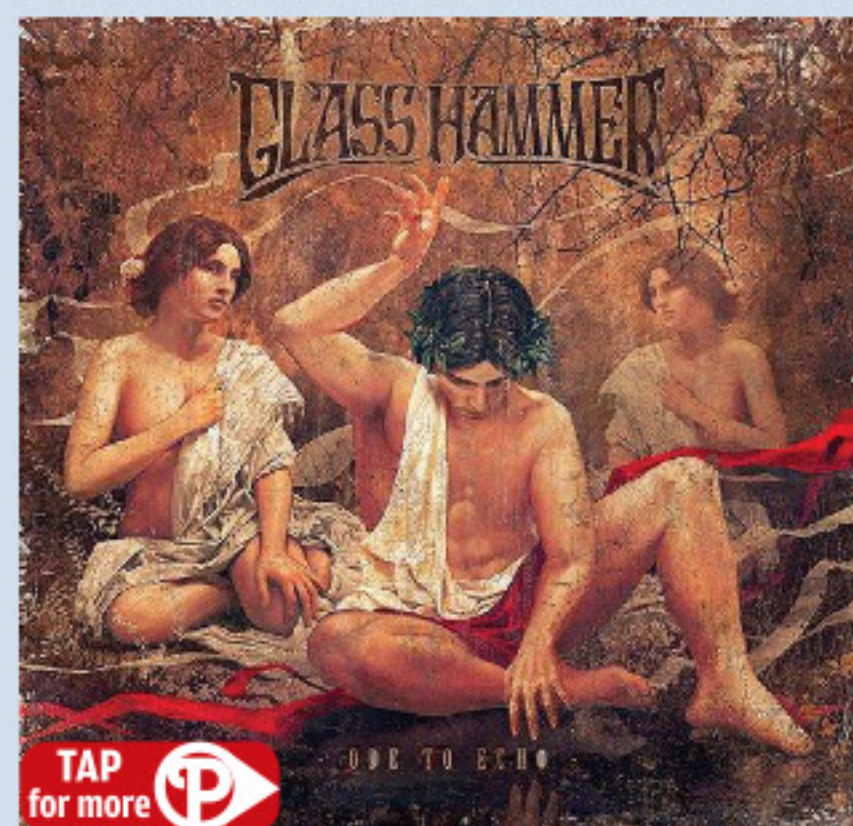


are pieces of rare intelligence and maturity. Despite the loss of Anne-Marie Helder, the new line-up (shaped in part around ex-Seahorses personnel) has pushed mainstay Chris Johnson into darker and more complicated territory. Andy Knights' Thom Yorke-influenced vocals provide a bleak counterpoint to Johnson's cleaner vox. The band members' stellar credentials led to the previous incarnation being dubbed a 'supergroup'. On the back of this can we call them a mega-group? Death, obsession and fear are elemental. This is a nightmare you will want to explore again and again. **RM**

GLASS HAMMER

Ode To Echo ARION

Faces old and new at the Hammer's latest feast.



Glass Hammer's 14th studio album is something of a minor nostalgia trip for aficionados. Only multi-instrumentalists Steve Babbs and Fred Schendel remain from the band's earliest incarnation, and said fans tend to disagree on the question of their 'best ever' vocalist. *Ode To Echo* deals with this very pragmatically, by featuring every vocalist ever to appear on a Glass Hammer album.



Showcases the breadth and variety of their talent.



Lead vocals are mostly shared between Jon Davison (taking time off from his Yes duties), Carl Groves and Susie Bogdanowicz, with welcome appearances from Walter Moore and original female vocalist Michelle Young. This brings a pleasing extra layer of aural diversity to the album, and opener *Garden of Hedon* certainly benefits from the extra textures of these different voices. This and the lengthy, jazz-tinged *Misanthrope* represent Glass Hammer at their best: punchy riffs, a bit of odd-time, quirky guitar interludes, various piano and keyboard sounds flitting in and out, almost playful vocal hooks, and the heavier sections balanced with richness and space.

In a first, lyrics come from an outside source. GH fan and *Oathsworn* author Robert Low offered Steve Babbs an unused poem from his book, *Crowbone*. The resulting track is by turns lilting, menacing and triumphant, with Kansas' David Raglan contributing some juicy violin playing. With more multiple voices, *I Am I* is a highlights, as different feels and time signatures alternate with scant regard for the listener's expectations. It's jaunty, then urgent, then dark, with some great rhythm section muscle. Representing a two-way conversation, it typifies the theme of the album, namely preoccupations and obsessions with the self.

Before closer *Ozymandias*, we get a few musical detours. *The Porpoise Song* is a strange little track, prompting (perhaps deliberately?) distinct comparisons with mid-period Beatles – smooth poppy 60s psychedelia, immediately followed by the album's most fragile and haunting song, *Panegyric*, with its tentative piano and lone female voice. One of the longer songs here, *Ozymandias* itself is an anti-climax. Despite its promising, Gentle Giant-esque intro, it doesn't possess the momentum or majesty its length and title suggest.

Ode To Echo successfully showcases the breadth of Glass Hammer's talent and the variety of their songwriting. But it is less immediate and more finely textured than their last few releases. It is a very diverse collection indeed, and fully digesting the whole may require time and effort. But then, would those aficionados have it any other way?

GARY MACKENZIE

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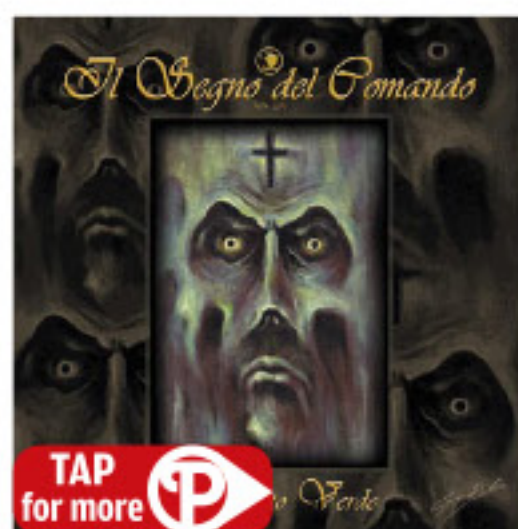
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IL SEGNO DEL COMANDO

Il Volto Verde BLACK WIDOW

A crazy slice of Italian genius – brave or foolhardy?

Because only the brave or the foolhardy would attempt an album such as this! Based on the Gustav Meyrink novel of the same name, *Il Volto Verde* ('The Green Face') tells a tale of surreal mysticism and spirituality in post-World War I Amsterdam. It's dense and shocking, sad and haunting, funny and a little bonkers. The Genoa band favour ambitious and multi-layered instrumentation, with wildly varied keyboard and guitar sounds and diverse voices. This can border on musical madness – edgy, aggressive, raw and downright noisy in places without ever morphing into metal. They're bold –



TAP for more

experimental in places, resonant of classic Italian prog bands in others. They're good players (check out the bass in *Il rituale*) and give good unhinged opera (*Il manoscritto*), and they're diverse too, blending space rock and scary chanting (*La congrega dello zee dyk*) while unafraid of their gentle side (*Tremodia della dolci parole*). *Il Segno del Comando* has taken around a decade to return with this, their third album, but hopefully it won't be so long before the next one. It's an album no 'mainstream' prog band (if that isn't an oxymoron?) would ever make, and is, ultimately, brilliant. **GMM**

LAZULI

Tant Que L'Herbe Est Grasse L'ABEILLE RÔDE

Another modern prog tour de force from les frères Léonetti.

One of France's most interesting progressive bands, Lazuli have been adding to their credentials over the past few years. They gave notable turns at RoSFEST, Night Of The Prog and Summer's End, and 2011's *4603 Battements* was a powerful mélange of prog-leaning rock, electronica and thoughtful French lyrics. Led by brothers Dominique and Claude Léonetti, they continue in this vein with *Tant Que L'Herbe Est Grasse* (literally, 'While The Grass Is Fat'). Again, their anthemic tunes come in irresistible, armour-plated arrangements. The opening chug of *Déraille* sets the rocky, literate tone.



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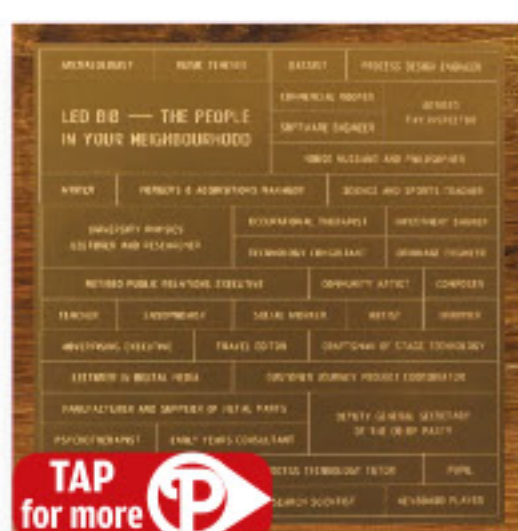
Vocalist Dominique's trademark crystal-clear, dramatic vocals are to the fore on the emotive *Une Pente Qu'On Dévale* and *Prisonnière D'Une Cellule Mâle*. Their versatility is clear in the clever orchestral stabs and Vangelis/*Blade Runner* flavour of *Tistes Moitiés*, and the Eastern flavour of *L'Essence Des Odyssées*. Claude's léode (a one-off, guitar-like instrument) adds inimitable colour to the lilting *J'ai Trouvé Ta Faille*, which features a guest vocal from Fish, no less. That's a good artistic fit and a ringing, righteous endorsement too: Lazuli are simply grand. **GRM**

LED BIB

The People In Your Neighbourhood CUINEIFORM

The UK jazz rockers' sixth album in a decade.

It's unusual in jazz for line-ups to have any kind of extended continuity from album to album, but this Mercury Prize-nominated outfit have managed to hold onto the same personnel for the last 10 years. A close bond and powerful unity develops over such a period, a quality that's abundantly obvious during this vibrant live-in-the-studio recording. Such longevity also recruits fans willing to invest in the band via Kickstarter, and that's how this album came to be. Like previous Led Bib offerings the material here is wide-ranging in scope: from ballsy rock and dub-tinged ruminations to boisterous



TAP for more

avant-freakery. The bulk of the writing comes from Mark Holub, whose crisp drumming anchors everything, and when Tony McLaren's not exhorting his electric piano to perform wildly coruscating sonar pings and other electronic exoticisms, his left hand adds grit and punch to Liran Donin's already waspish bass work. Driven by the rattling interplay between Pete Grogan and Chris Williams' turbo-charged alto saxes, they deliver a hybrid fusion with resplendently rough, pointy edges, with a riotous desire for exploration that's still undiminished a decade in. **SS**

PROGRESSIVE FOLK

Paul Sexton scours the new releases to find there's nowt so prog as folk.

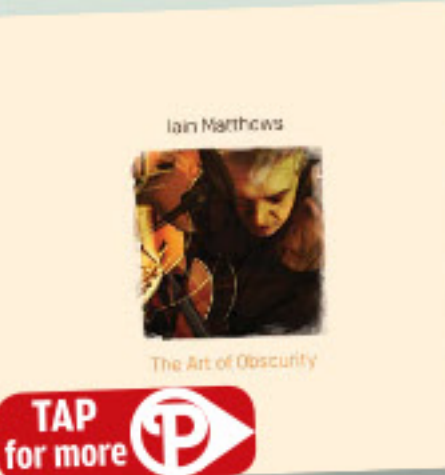
At the bucolic end of this month's prog spectrum reside artists with monumental histories, and newer names with increasingly admirable resumé's.

The biggest event has to be the return of a woman with the very history of British folk-rock in her veins, **Beverley Martyn**. Never mind the pivotal late 1960s period when she and future husband John helped phrase the very constitution of the acoustic troubadour, Beverley's even earlier history is a thing of awe. She did one of Randy Newman's first covers, recorded with Simon & Garfunkel, played at Monterey Pop, and so it goes on. *The Phoenix And The Turtle* (Proper Records) is her first album for 14 years, made in Wales with guitarist-producer Mark Pavey. The often wistful selection includes new renditions of her very first song, *Sweet Joy*, and the opening *Reckless Jane*, started in 1974 with her then-neighbour, Nick Drake.



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Martyn's rough-hewn voice certainly wins no prizes for note-perfection, but offers the lived-in sagacity of a latter-day Marianne Faithfull. She'll also sometimes evoke the combination of strident and wounded personified by Joan Armatrading, on a work of impeccable arrangements and playing.



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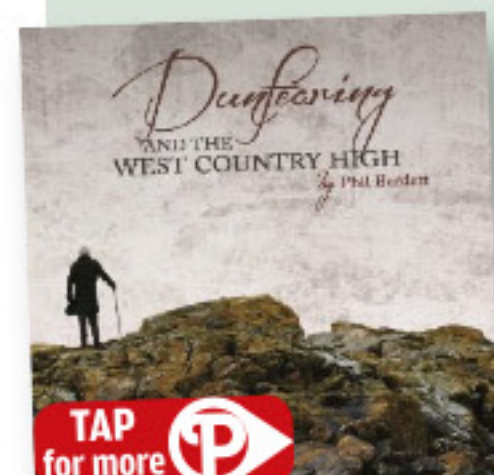
The equally venerable **Iain Matthews** has decreed that *The Art of Obscurity* (Omnivore) will be the last entry in a hefty catalogue of 25 solo albums – but thankfully not his final album since, as he assures us, music is still his "mistress". All the same, there's an even more overt nostalgic flavour here than on Martyn's record.

When I Was A Boy is a flypast of mid-20th century memories about two-penneth of sweets and Bolton winning the Cup. It could be cloying, but in skilled hands remains charming, and you bathe in the album's acoustic glow in the company of another original with real credentials.

Jesca Hoop follows 2012's *The House That Jack Built* with *Undress* (Last Laugh/Curuja), another fine showcase for her delicate and cool Californian songcraft. Listeners to Guy Garvey's BBC 6 Music show will know what an advocate he has been of Hoop's, and his vocal presence on the opening *Murder of Birds* will bestow deserved extra attention.



TAP for more



TAP for more

All of 21 years ago, I was taken with *Diesel Poems*, an F-Beat release by **Phil Burdett And The New World Troubadours**. Sadly under the radar for much of the interim but with loyal champions, Burdett now offers *Dunfearing And The West Country High* (Drumfire), his ninth studio album. It has an impressive and confident aura of boho narratives and Van Morrisonesque deliveries such as *At Columbus & Hope*, and may be the best Americana album to emanate from Bexleyheath.

Finally, on the indie-folk register, **Aidan Knight** is an experimental Canadian group and their 26-year-old songwriter. Their second album *Small Reveal* (Outside) remains a warm bath of sonic introspection with haunting strings, shimmering reflections and the back-to-nature ambience of a record made in a forest cabin in British Columbia without running water.



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MEKONG DELTA

In A Mirror Darkly SPV/STEAMHAMMER

A prog metal masterpiece, with orchestral manoeuvres.

Germany's undervalued Mekong Delta have been making fascinating, intricate progressive metal for three decades. They've always been forced to live in the shadow of others, such as Cynic, but *In A Mirror Darkly* has the potential to change everything. This is a masterpiece, with a craving for extremity expressed through epic tonalities, as much as the more obvious riffs. Ralf Hubert and Erik Adam H. Grosch's guitar virtuosity provides the backbone for compositions such as *The Silver In Gods Eye* and *Janus*, allowing the four-piece as a whole to develop a sound that owes as much to



TAP for more

classical giants such as Stravinsky and Holst as it does to Voivod, Meshuggah or Tool. However, their brilliance lies not in the individual tracks - impressive as they are in isolation - but rather in the way everything is woven together into a full-blown symphony. Whether you listen intently, or just allow the music to wash over you, there's a magic here that comes from the fact that Mekong Delta have thought about *In A Mirror Darkly* as being an old school progressive album. It may not be conceptual, but recurring ideas flow through it, and in its vision it is simply breathtaking. **MD**

NINETAILS

Quiet Confidence POND LIFE

Stunning third release from the Liverpool post-rockers.

From their baby steps as a math-pop band on 2011 EP *Ghost Ride The Whip* to their dabblings with post-rock, shoegaze, prog and hip hop on *Slept And Did Not Sleep*, Ninetails have never shied away from drastic artistic evolution. On *Quiet Confidence* the Liverpool trio have finally hit the confluence of cerebral experimentalism and pop nous they have been seeking all along. Opener *Radiant Hex* expertly mixes sound collage and sparse guitar licks with spoken-word vocals and field recordings. It is at once intimate and disorientating, with a directness to its melody parts that belies the dense



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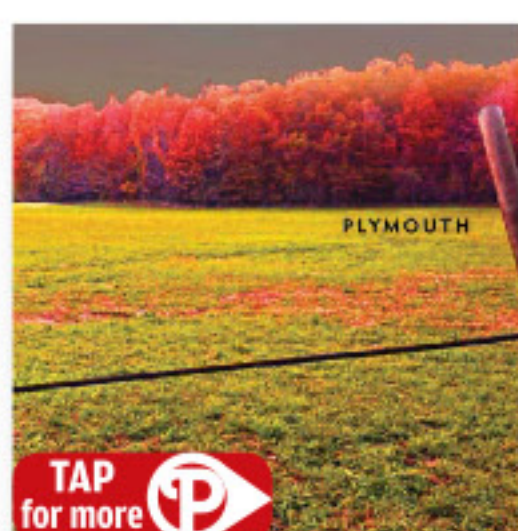
accompaniment. *An Aria* is the centrepiece of the cycle; there's almost a taste of *Tubular Bells II*'s more related moments in the harmonised guitars and syncopated rhythms, but it's a track for the Spotify generation - capricious in influence and restless in execution. *O for Two* has existed in their live sets for some time, but its final recorded version is drastically different, even if the intro retains a hint of Ninetails' last release. The trio have always been an enigma to the listener, but to the explorer stumbling across *Quiet Confidence*, the results speak for themselves. Stunning. **AL**

PLYMOUTH

Plymouth RARENOISE

Improv veterans' blow-out tests the nerves and the patience.

Late of Slobber Pup, improv veterans Jamie Saft and Joe Morris (keyboards and guitar respectively), lock horns this time within a bustling and blustery quintet for three big-scale blowouts. Gerald Cleaver's drums scuttle between Chris Lightcap's scampering bass and the terse and quick-fire interjections between Morris and Brooklyn-based avant-guitarist. Mary Halvorson. Her grungy chord work and harmonic blips detonate against volatile beats and erratic pulses. There are long sections which sound more like a by-product of five individuals charging forward



TAP for more

in separate directions than a result of careful collective endeavour. Not a problem when players of this calibre are present, but as they search for a rallying point from which to aim their considerable firepower, patience is required. (The title track meanders for over half its 13-minute length before they eventually hit the target.) Saft's omnipresent Hammond organ summons up fiery, pervasive chords and the group is driven by a sulphurous fury. The musical language here is clipped, and often coarse to the point of brutality, but their unerring sense of self-belief carries the day. **SS**

KITTEN PYRAMID

Uh-Oh! KITTENPYRAMID.CO.UK

Motley Midlands crew conjure up eclectic romp of a debut.



TAP for more

You're always encouraged when a band is pictured on a CD sleeve looking like a day trip from a rehab centre. And it suits them well: The jumble of styles and influences this Burton-on-Trent five-piece bring to the table make for the kind of wildly idiosyncratic, original sound that many a band aims for but few get close to achieving. 'I want to see you naked in an open field,' sings frontman Scott Milligan by way of a fine 'how d'you do', and from there on all bets are off as to what the next bar of music will bring.



A gloriously strange musical rollercoaster ride.



That opening track, *Chester*, begins with crunching power chords and thumping rhythm before excitable mariachi horns steam in, like a gang of Mexican bandits gatecrashing a street drinkers' party. *Whale* follows with a strange slide-guitar driven chant-folk mantra before the delicately psychedelic *Red Shoes* channels Syd Barrett in its swirling oddball surrealism. It's all entertainingly wrong-footing stuff, and when you learn that these songs will feature in a movie made by Milligan about his mentally ill Polish uncle, centred on a day in his life after checking out of hospital, it only adds to the sense of 'WTF?'

The expect-the-unexpected theme continues as current single *English Rosa*'s circus folk descends into a cacophonous mess, but then *Traffic* builds from a soft acoustic lament into an arms-outstretched, anthemic swell that would be the envy of Coldplay in arena-straddling mode. This further instils the feeling that this mob could pretty much turn their hand to any style that took their fancy, and that's before the title track blasts from the speakers, full of staccato energy and rabble-raising parochial hardcore punk for the first minute and a half, before its doors are flung open onto windswept piano and horn-strewn vistas, with a sky-scraping guitar solo to see us out. 'There goes the Pyramid army,' Milligan observes later, 'with their bags of peshwari. They're waiting for us by the bins... in their ladybird jumpers.'

I bet they are. I mean, what's the target demographic for this kind of everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to music? Well, whoever they are, *Marmalade*'s superb glam rock chorus suggests they'll be able to buy some pretty unique merchandising: 'Kitten Pyramid hand grenade, Kitten Pyramid marmalade'. After a twin-guitar outro is thrown in, just because they can, we end with the piano-laced reverie of *Nod Off*, its a metronomic tempo lulling you woozily in before noodling guitar and organ tickles meander off into that good night with a tale of a trip 'across to China in an oompa-loompa's bed'. It's a fittingly barking end to a gloriously strange musical rollercoaster ride.

JOHNNY SHARP

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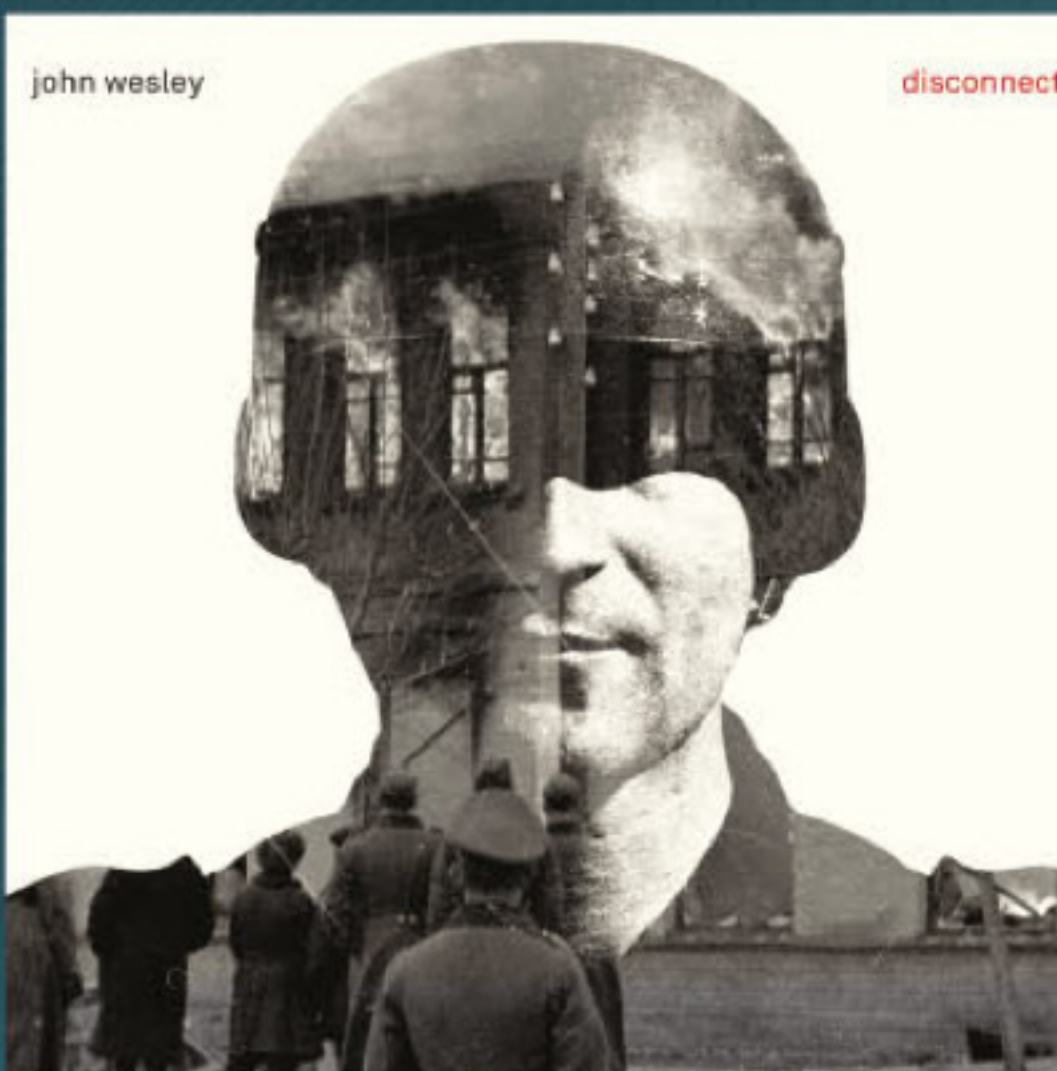
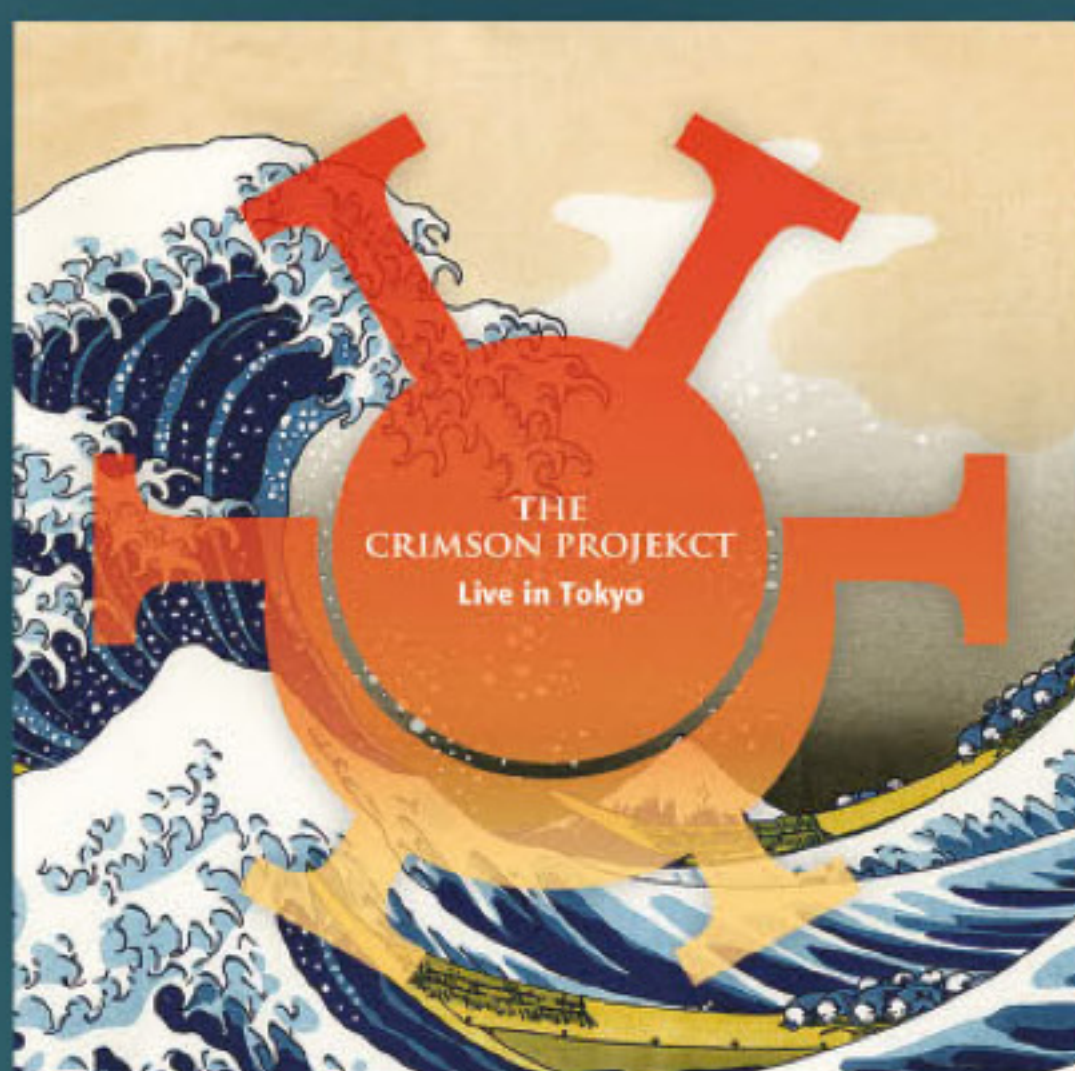
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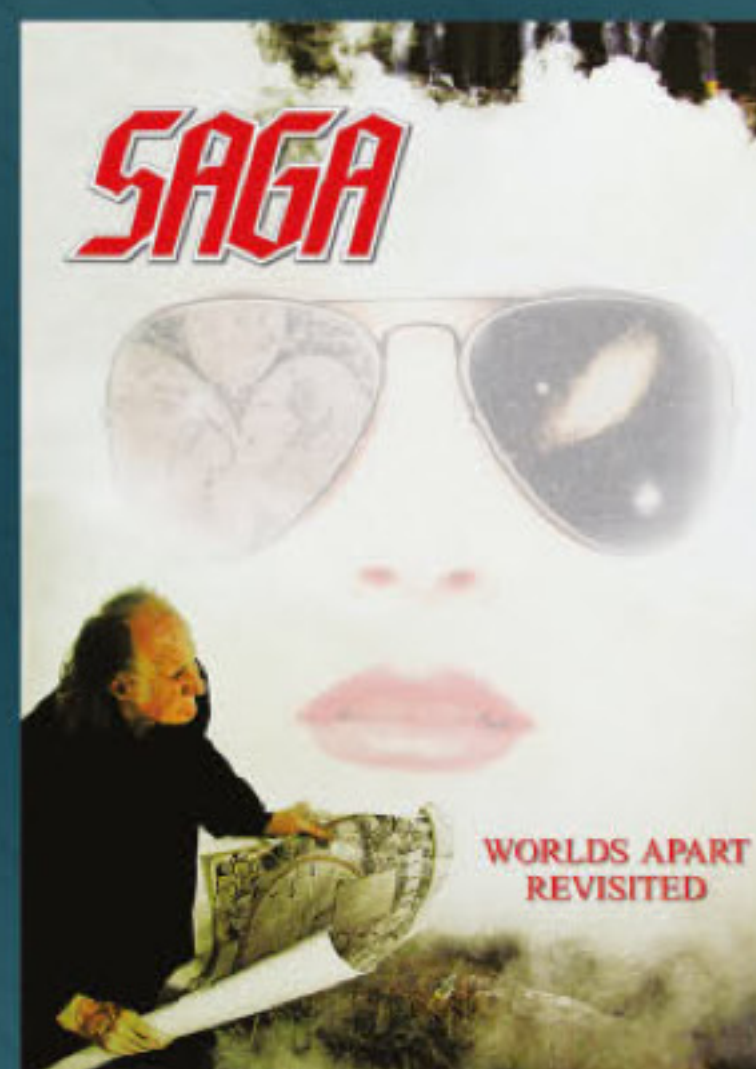
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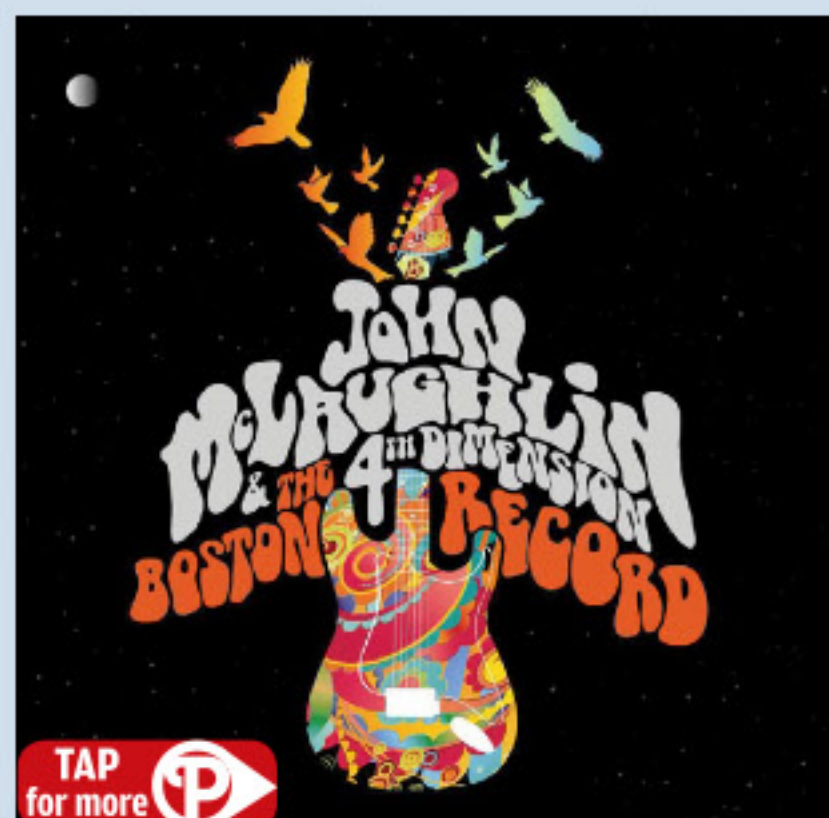
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JOHN MCLAUGHLIN AND THE 4TH DIMENSION

The Boston Record ABSTRACT LOGIX

Guitar magician and band captured one memorable night last year.



Trust John McLaughlin to conquer another Dimension! From the moment he and the band hit the ground rocking on *Raju*, you can almost smell the octane of this performance on a rare US tour in June of last year, in the august surroundings of Berklee College of Music in Boston. Forty five years since his solo debut with *Extrapolation* and 50 since he was paying rhythm and blues dues with the likes of Georgie Fame and Brian Auger, McLaughlin doesn't need to play another note for his place at the absolute pinnacle of his profession to be assured. But that doesn't mean that *The Boston Record* is anything other than an invigorating refresher from start to finish.



An invigorating refresher from start to finish.



The guitar sorcerer comes out of the traps at top speed on that typically intricate opener, but generously, and repeatedly, leaves plenty of room for almost equal billing of his stellar sidemen. On that opener, it's Gary Husband's piano that shares the spotlight, and he's front and centre at the organ for the ensuing, near 10-minute *Little Miss Valley*, the pair ably supported by Etienne Mbappé on bass and Ranjit Barot, who shares drum duties with Husband. Already by this stage, the intense yet loose-limbed cohesion of this quartet is recalling the intuitive spark of Weather Report at their finest.

Barot weighs in with some gently soulful vocals on *Abbaji*, and scats acrobatically on *Echoes From Then*, on which McLaughlin wields a mighty riff. The bandmaster himself has said he's particularly delighted with the whole business, from the quality of the recording and the collective playing to the responsiveness of the audience, which gel in a way that happens on a live album all too rarely.

Husband co-stars again with a piano tour de force on *Call & Answer*, in a performance every bit as dexterous as the one that complements it by John himself. That track and *Echoes From Then* both took their place in the set from McLaughlin's most recent studio record with the 4th Dimension, 2012's warmly-received *Now Here This*.

The disc, and the evening, draw towards a close as the loudest cheer of the night greets the opening of *You Know, You Know*, introduced on the first Mahavishnu album *The Inner Mounting Flame* in 1971 (and sampled far and wide, from Massive Attack to David Sylvian). Billy Cobham, Jan Hammer and co may be absent, but their spirit isn't. Partly because of the relative rarity of his tours, and partly in the way it captures the unique ambience of one night in Massachusetts, this is a record in every sense.

PAUL SEXTON

PRESCOTT

One Did SLOWFOOT

Oddball brilliance from ex-Stump bass maverick Kev Hopper.

Despite a lengthy and varied career, Kev Hopper remains best known for his stint as bassist with quirky, Beefheartian indie types Stump during the mid to late 80s. Anyone who thrilled to that wonderful band's wildly idiosyncratic sound should find Hopper's new band distinctly enthralling, not least because his trademark dismantling of four-string norms is firmly at the forefront of Prescott's cock-eyed, semi-improvised jams. Aided by Scritti Politti alumnus (and our Fad Gadget columnist) Rhodri Marsden on keyboards and Frank Byng on drums, Hopper revels in angular mischief



throughout *One Did*'s 11 gleefully perverse instrumentals. Those stretched bass harmonics and skittering, lop-sided funk riffs guide rather than dominate his compadres' endlessly inventive backdrops, which owe a fair amount to both Beefheart

and The Residents at their most wickedly playful. The finest moments here – the tense, Can-like shuffle of *Didism*; the twitching, cinematic jazz menace of *Philby Flies* – are throwbacks to Stump's heroically non-conformist clatter, and a tantalising glimpse of what's in store if Hopper continues this joyously wayward course. **DL**

QUI

Life, Water, Living COBRASIDE

The LA duo's third album - no holds barred.

Having collaborated with The Jesus Lizard frontman David Yow and getting heartily endorsed by Mike Patton (via his acclaimed label Ipecac), LA duo Qui are evidently not in the business of delivering the expected. On album three, they make a welcome return to the off-kilter vocal harmonies and subtly intricate arrangements of their 2003 debut *Baby Kisses*, the band's obvious love of 70s rock's oddest fish – Sparks, Queen, Zappa – colliding with a refined pop sensibility that places them on vaguely similar territory to the UK's own Field Music, albeit with a less heavily



disguised penchant for progressive sonic hues. The noise-mongery of the band's work with Yow rears its head again on the spiky *Mucho Sex In America*, wherein ugly distortion and a kraut-punk pulse conspire to evoke the spirit of early Pere Ubu. In contrast, the

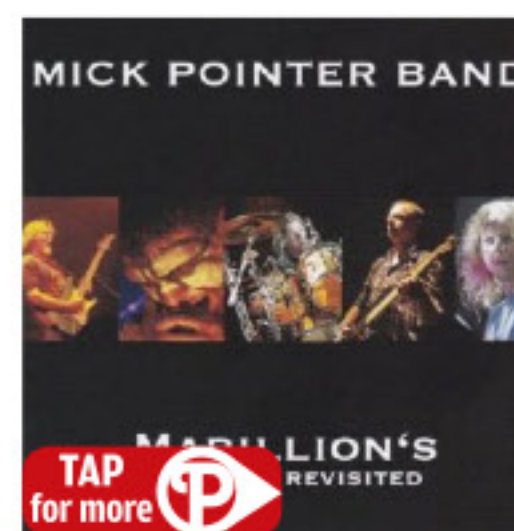
watery jazz fumbblings of *Boogie Down Disappointment* and serene staccato drift of *Awkward Human Interest* indicate a devotion to elegance and subtlety that suits Qui perfectly. The freakish note-flurries and demented detours of *The Kind Of Jazz This Is* promise to delight fans of Fripp and Gentle Giant. **DL**

MICK POINTER BAND

Marillion's "Script" Revisited VERGLAS/MICKPOINTER.COM

The band's original drummer gives their debut a neo lease of life.

Before founding Arena with Clive Nolan, Mick Pointer was the original drummer for Marillion, and their 1983 debut *Script For A Jester's Tear* was his one contribution to their catalogue. Last March, three decades after *Script*'s release, Pointer performed the album in its entirety at a concert in De Boerderij, Zoetermeer in Holland. This double-disc set captures their faithful, loving and convincing anniversary re-tread of that album for an appreciative, vocal crowd. Recorded by the album's original engineer, Simon Hanhart, the show is brimming with quality performances, unsurprising



given the other prog journeymen in the line-up (Pendragon's Nick Barrett on guitar, Arena bassist Ian Salmon, Credo/Landmarq keyboardist Mike Varty). Stepping into Fish's intimidating size 14s is Brian Cummins, frontman for Genesis tribute band

Carpet Crawlers. A tough job, but he succeeds, and with panache. Add to that B-sides – *Three Boats Down From The Candy* and *Charting The Single* – accomplished reads of *Market Square Heroes*, *Grendel* and *Margaret*, and Pointer helms a stirring, evocative and highly listenable tribute to one of the genre's cornerstone recordings. **GRM**



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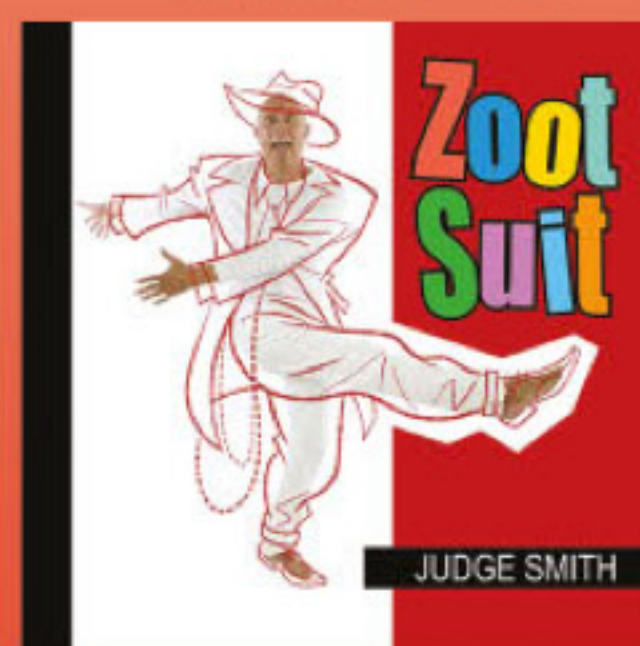
Glass Hammer
Perilous



Big Big Train
English Electric Part One



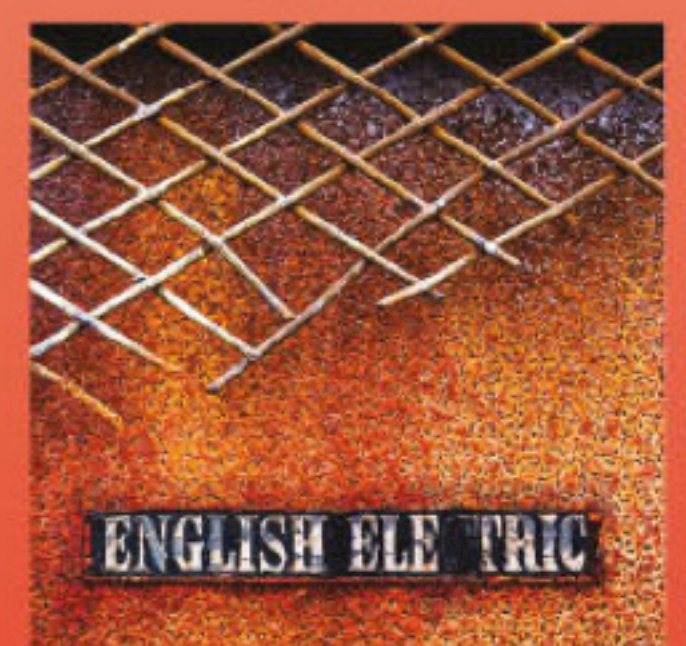
Comedy of Errors
Fanfare and Fantasy



Judge Smith
Zoot Suit



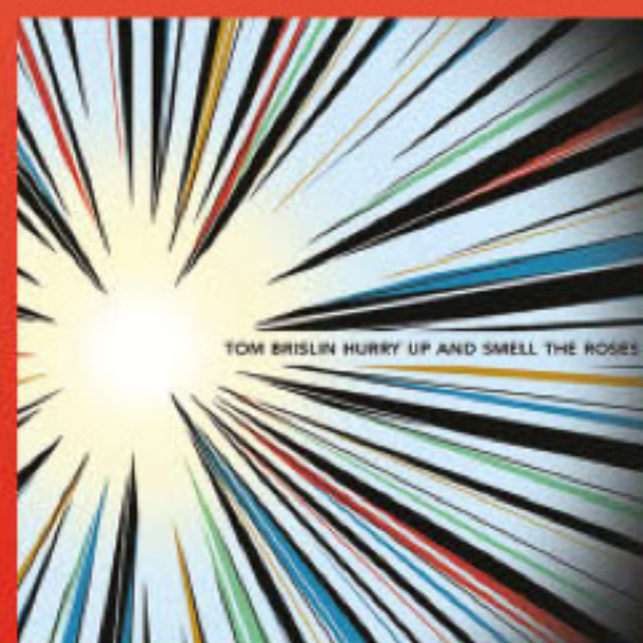
Thieves' Kitchen
One for Sorrow, Two for Joy



Big Big Train
English Electric Part Two



Magenta
The Twenty Seven Club



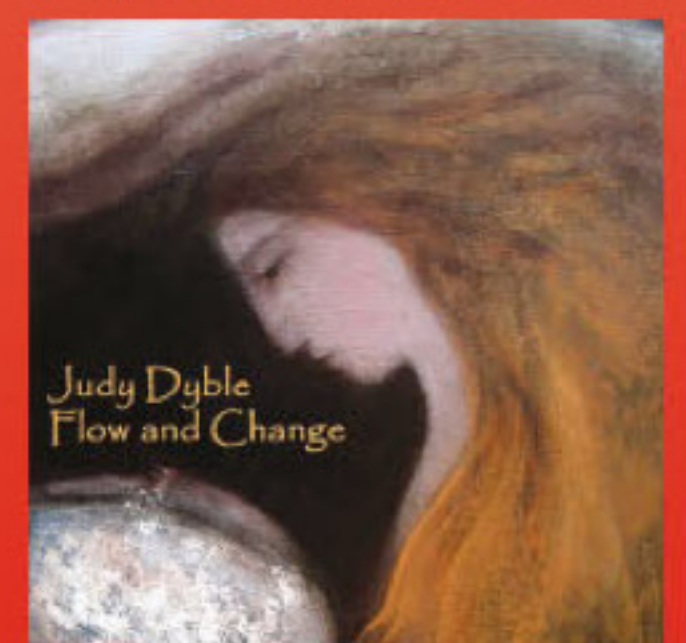
Tom Brislin
Hurry Up and Smell the Roses



Francis Dunnery
Frankenstein Monster



Also Eden
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SE DELAN

The Fall KSCOPE

Highly promising opener from Justin Greaves and Belinda Kordic.



You get these collaborations from time to time. When two highly individual talents get together, and craft something altogether different that simultaneously reflects both their separate abilities and yet also creates a joint vision. Such is the case here. Crippled Black Phoenix mastermind Justin Greaves and Killing Mood's Belinda Kordic each have a passionate perspective on the music they've helped to shape over the years. Consequently, the pair could have actually been incapable of complementing one another. However, the opposite has happened. Each appears to have discovered within the idiosyncrasies of the other something that allows them to infiltrate further into their own musical subconscious.



An album of deep artistic trust and understanding.



If you can imagine what might have occurred if Kate Bush and Mike Oldfield had secretly jammed together in the late 70s, then you'll get some idea of what's going on here. Not that Greaves and Kordic are in any way comparable to Bush and Oldfield, but it's the manner in which each enhances the uniqueness of the other, yet they also work as a firmly focused duo. The album would simply not have been possible without their deep artistic trust and understanding.

The Fall opens with *Chasing Changes* and *Beneath The Sea*, which allow Greaves to show how acoustic presentation can be both intense and cinematic, while Swedish vocalist Kordic develops her voice as an extra, eerily enticing instrument. Further along, *Today* actually has a leftfield funkiness that's also prevalent in the musical maze of *The Hunt*, a composition that seemingly meanders, yet has a melancholy purpose.

Perhaps the most effective musical moments are *Dirge* and *Lost Never Found*. It's here that Se Delan draw in inspiration from Ennio Morricone, and the way in which he can bring emotions to the surface through a claustrophobic causality. These two songs are linked by *On My Way*, a tone poem that helps to make this a defining trilogy within the album. It's as if the two are creating a prelude to something greater they will explore on the next album. These tracks are seemingly self-contained, but also fit into the context of *The Fall*.

Greaves and Koerdic have a special rapport that's only hinted at here. There's obviously more depth to be brought out on future works. What they have done is show the possibilities which exist in their partnership. *The Fall* is certainly an impressive beginning, but the exciting prospect is what will come next. Se Delan actually do come across as being fully appreciative here of how they are taking tentative steps towards something miraculous. It's a fine start, but the next album could be significant.

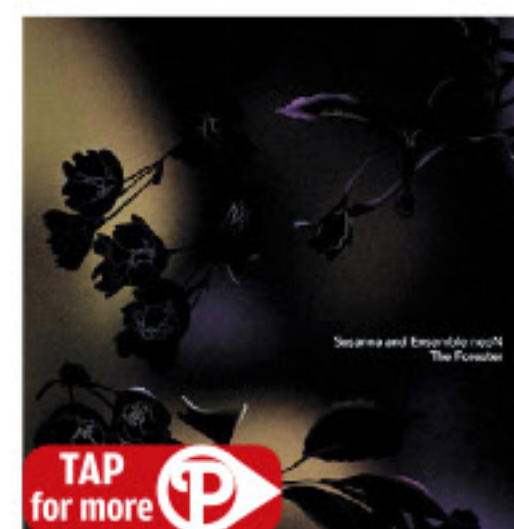
MALCOLM DOME

SUSANNA AND THE ENSEMBLE NEON

The Forester SUSANNASONATA

The artist's first release on her own label is tasteful and charged.

Vocalist Susanna K. Wallumrød is most often associated with the Rune Grammofon label, having released a decade's worth of material through that Scandinavian avant jazz institution. *The Forester* is the first release on her own label, yet represents a continuation of her aesthetic of measured disquiet. That said, the album may be her most substantial effort to date. The three-part title track finds our heroine lost in a symbolic forest, striving for self-determination and sense amid a landscape whose familiarity only serves to confound and confuse. Like



the ill-fated protagonists of *The Blair Witch Project*, Susanna is driven in circles by the 'ever changing same' of her arboreal surroundings. It's an apt metaphor for the vagaries of human interaction. Wallumrød's performance is emotionally charged throughout, and enhanced by spartan arrangements which make inspired use of brass, woodwind and strings. The sound palette might be too tasteful, and the pervasive mood of melancholy too polite for some, but Wallumrød's vision rewards persistence, and her latest offers much to those with a taste for elegant introspection. **SS**

THE GHOST OF A SABER TOOTH TIGER

Midnight Sun CHIMERA

Beatles heir + US model = psychedelic bliss.

Sean Lennon and Charlotte Kemp Muhl first met at Coachella about 10 years ago, since when they've co-opted their romantic union into a musical one. *Acoustic Sessions*, their first album as The GOASTT, arrived in the wake of a Mark Ronson-produced single in 2010. Its stripped nature hinted at a tripsy folk future, with gentle overtones of 60s psych. Pleasant as that was, *Midnight Sun* feels like the first true flowering of their combined talents. There are delightfully spacey tunes about Orpheus, "lipstick anarchists" and forays down the yellow brick road, while the settings - all



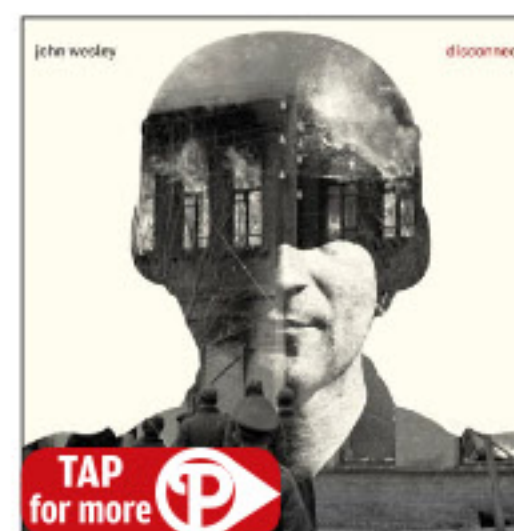
cosmic whimsy and rich dreamscapes - suggest a bucolic American pow-wow between Kevin Ayers and Teenage Fanclub. While it all feels very deliberately kaleidoscopic, there's a genuine sense of innocence and wonder to these songs that ultimately wins out. Their voices dovetail sweetly (hers like Isobel Campbell's; his like his dad's), while the arrangements are endlessly inventive, with splashy beats and warm traces of The Zombies and latterday voyagers Tame Impala. Hard to pick a highlight, but the sweeping fade of *Moth To A Flame* sounds like one giant hallelujah to the heavens. **RH**

JOHN WESLEY

Disconnect INSIDEOUT

Guitar star sidles convincingly centre-stage.

John Wesley is among the very few musicians equally entrusted by both sides of the Fish-Marillion divide, though despite having released five of his own full-length albums between 1994 and 2005, and also helped out Sound Of Contact during a recent batch of live dates, the Floridian is probably best known as a long-term touring guitarist for both Porcupine Tree and Steven Wilson. After rediscovering his mojo a year ago, an underrated talent has stepped back out from the shadows. *Disconnect* is very much a guitarist's album, though its creator rarely resorts to mere widdling. There's



a real substance to the likes of *Any Old Saint* and *Take What You Need*; personal songs with real dirt under their fingernails. Alex Lifeson from Rush also contributes a majestic guitar solo to one of the album's weightiest yet most memorable tunes, *Once A Warrior*. Indeed, last issue Wesley proposed the notion that the album has 'a Rush vibe'. With its references to booze, sweat, drowning and greed, it's patently the handiwork of a man who's lived a bit. More than just a gun for hire, John Wesley craves a little of your time. On this evidence, he's been hiding away for too long. **DML**

THE UNSEMBLE

The Unsemble IPECAC

After-dark jams from underground rock veterans.

Guitarist Duane Denison (The Jesus Lizard, Tomahawk), bassist Alexander Hacke (Einstürzende Neubauten) and drummer Brian Kotzur (Silver Jews) prove highly compatible bedfellows on this collaborative debut for Mike Patton's Ipecac label. The Unsemble finds the trio pursuing a distinctly noirish strain of instrumentalism. The more conspicuously rock-orientated tracks generate a needlepoint tension strongly reminiscent of *Discipline*-era King Crimson: *Circles*, *Shadows* and *Act 3* are the most obviously Frippish in their nightmarish scuttling. Yet The Unsemble



TAP for more

is no carbon copy Crimson. Kotzur may not be the virtuoso Bill Bruford is, but coming from rock rather than jazz, he anchors the music rather than elbowing his way into it. There are also hints of non-rock music, such as dub on *Waves*, which indicate

a broad outlook. They echo Weather Report's oft-repeated motto, 'nobody solos, everybody solos', the three musicians advancing as one, united in their explorations and although they do little to revolutionise the cause of instrumental rock here, they captivate by virtue of the considerable skill and chemistry at their command. **JS**

STIAN WESTERHUS & PALE HORSES

Maelstrom RUNE GRAMMOPHON

The remarkable Norwegian guitarist steps up to the mic.

It's a cliché but it's true here: with Norway's Stian Westerhus, you can expect the unexpected. Nothing on the improvisatory dialogue between Westerhus and Sidsel Endersen's *Didymoi Dreams* or the close-up solo explorations of *The Matriarch* prepares the listener for his latest outing. Teaming up with keyboardist Øystein Moen (Jaga Jazzist) and drummer/percussionist Erland Dahlen, Westerhus steps into the limelight as a lead singer. His vocals sit somewhere between Thom Yorke and The Blue Nile's Paul Buchanan. It suits the fraught, angst-driven sound emanating from the Pale Horses project



TAP for more

and its prog-inspired vocabulary. It's a suite of songs that generally avoid the usual verse/chorus traps by taking a more circuitous and sometimes occluded route, there are nevertheless times when *Maelstrom's* tumultuous rolls spill and

crash into something approximating stadium swagger. They generate a cavernous, My Bloody Valentine-style industrial thrum refracted through the widescreen prism of Simple Minds-type sonics, and it's remarkably accessible. If you've not encountered Westerhus's impassioned playing before you'll find this isn't a bad place to begin. **SS**

YAMATANKA/SONIC TITAN

Uzu ATP

Asian-Canadian aesthetes unveil mythic second album.

This Toronto/Montreal epic art rock collective present their eagerly awaited second effort, in which they continue their interrogation of cultural identity (founders Alaska B and Ruby Kato Attwood are Asian-Canadian art students) with a special focus on tragic female characters from world mythology, particularly those whose stories involve the sea. Lost and adrift in the modern world, our protagonists encounter superhuman beings dreamed up to rationalise the constant movement of the oceans and, by extension, life itself. Uzu is best appreciated as a continuous



TAP for more

experience, but is not without its moments of immediacy. *Lamia* impresses, with the band aiming for simplicity and scale as an immense tsunami-like riff crashes down accompanied by an otherworldly lead vocal and spectral choral

arrangements. The similarly impressive *Windflower* blends gothic New Wave pop with brittle electronic sequences and pomp rock grandeur to addictive effect. *One* folds in traditional Iroquois song without sacrificing any of its baroque pop appeal. That the album's coherent and not irksomely eclectic is down to the artists' sheer vision. **JS**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

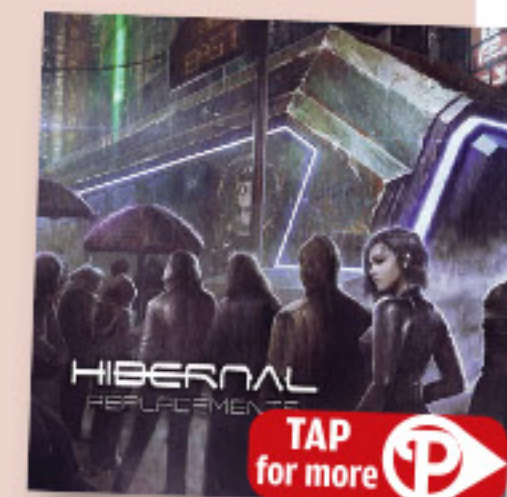
Just some of the many other records passing under the Prog portcullis recently...

We close with dystopian visions, alien visitations, doomy avant-jazz, but let's start with some Finnish. On their new EP *No.2* (Svart) the excellent **Sammal** brandish a vibrant Hammond organ, set it to strident rhythms and top it with some thoroughly self-possessed vocals. The Finns excel themselves here. No oblique chord or time changes perhaps, but their solid rock lifts from 60s psych, with these ageing ears picking up on The Doors, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Deep Purple and a splash of Tull perhaps. Despite the crystal-clear production job, it's almost like the past 40 years never happened – high praise indeed!



TAP for more

If dystopian near-futures are more your thing, then look no further than *Replacements* (hibernal.bandcamp.com) from **Hibernal**, aka rising prog name Mark Healy. The follow-up to *The Machine* is an evocative story very much in the *I, Robot* or *Blade Runner* world, though one populated by 'Synthetics' rather than 'Replicants'. This compelling, future-noir story is told by various voice actors and set to a wash of Vangelis-lite synths and wiry electric guitars. It's sort of akin to closing your eyes and listening while your nephew makes his way through a next-gen computer game. Take a look at the album cover just to your right – this album sounds how this looks, and is an oddly reassuring, cinematic experience.



TAP for more

There's sci-fi of a subtler stripe on the very pleasing new album from Ayreshire's **Preacher**. *Signals* (preacherrock.co.uk) draws on Floydian tropes as it tells the story 'of a visitation from an extra-terrestrial higher order of intelligence'. While the production's



TAP for more

homespun in parts, there's some high-end songcraft here, drawing on neo, the more melodic proggers of yore and much in between. Martin Murphy's likeable vocals and Greg Murphy's versatile guitar chops make this a vulcan good listen.

Miami-based musician **Stephen Gizzi** is a budding composer for film but his labour of love *The Terrestrial Orchestra* (stephengizzi.

bandcamp.com) shows he has much to offer the progressive world. As over-used as the term is these days, this album is a proper 'journey'. Big-beat, electronic moments – evoking *Frost in parts – are set tooth-by-jowl with downbeat jazz, world music elements and Nyman-esque piano minimalism. It's so earthy, widescreen and strangely spiritual that all it's lacking are Jon Anderson's vocals.

And snapping us out of all this whimsy like a cold wet flannel in the face is the debut, double EP from recent RareNoise signing **Free Nelson Mandomo Jazz**. *The Shape Of Doom To Come/Saxophone Giganticus* is ushered in on an ominous fuzz bassline, and there on in the trio give us a set as inscrutable as that name. They know their way around the tritone – that devil's interval – alright, and through tunes like *The Mask Of The Red Death* and *Nobody Posts To The Fucking UAE* Rebecca Sneddon's alto sax teeters precariously between electric-era Miles brilliance



TAP for more



TAP for more

and bemusing squeals and honks that are probably more exciting live. Not for the faint-hearted then, though Prog's Art God In Chief Russell Fairbrother – a man renowned more for his love of Wishbone Ash than outré jazz – did make a point of treating the office to their enticing, affectionate take on *Black Sabbath*. They're doing something very right.

GRANT MOON

RUSH

Rush Rediscovered UNIVERSAL

Genre-creating debut gets the lavish repackage treatment.

Earlier this year, when we first broke the news that Rush's 1974 debut was receiving a lavish reissue treatment for its 40th Anniversary, we bore the brunt of a torrent of erroneous comments on our social media. 'Not prog!' said the naysayers. 'Missing the point!' we retorted. By way of rejoinder, let's open this review with a suitably ambiguous question: when is a Rush album not strictly a Rush album?

When it comes in a package like this 'Rediscovered' vinyl reissue. This isn't just a vinyl copy of the original album (although alas there are no extra tracks, just the original eight songs). This is the original Moon Records, pre-Mercury Records release, cut from original 1974 analog stereo masters.

The whole thing comes housed in a sturdy custom box, with original Moon jacket art, the original MN-100-A/B Matrix etching, poster, lithographs of Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and drummer John Rutsey and a Rush family tree (although given the band's recording line-up featured merely one change, with Neil Peart replacing Rutsey in July 1974, how many branches can that tree have?)

It'll be interesting to see if such ephemera is enough to induce Rush fans to shell out for what is essentially 'just' the original album. After all, extra discs full of unreleased material and alternate versions are very much the norm for such re-releases these days. (Just take a look at Brain Salad Surgery box in this very issue.)

But then, really early Rush material is pretty thin on the ground. *Garden Road* and *Fancy Dancer* spring to mind, but only the former has surfaced, on the non-official Rush ABC: *Live From Cleveland's Agora Ballroom*.

And given that the band told *Prog* back in April 2013 that their debut single, a cover of Buddy Holly's *Not Fade Away* backed with their own *You Can't Fight It* was "really tinny and shitty", that's unlikely to see the light of day either.



Still, for what it is, the eight tracks that do comprise *Rush* constitute some mighty fine music. I can still recall the first time I heard the album, round a mate's house, both of us tittering at Geddy Lee's high-pitched voice as he screeching into opener *Finding My Way* (well, that's what you did when you first heard Geddy), and we also marvelled at Alex Lifeson's excellent, instantly appealing guitar work.

I can also remember when I actually purchased this album for myself, in a shopping mall in a suburb of Toronto (how apt!) while on holiday when I was 16 – on the Anthem label no less! And somehow, listening back to tracks like *Here Again*, *Need Some Love* and *Before And After*

(the ones you never listened to much first time around) the original sense of awe comes flooding back.

Rush were unique, even on their debut. They were a little bit like Led Zeppelin and Cream. But they were also a little bit like Yes. We didn't know that prog epics like *By-Tor And The Snow Dog* and *The Fountain Of Lamneth* were waiting in the wings. Of course the titanic album closer

Working Man, still a live favourite, is the jewel in the crown here with its monolithic riffing, but it is ably backed up by the equally inventive *What You're Doing* (the first Rush song I learned to play on guitar!),

while *In The Mood* and *Take A Friend* hold down a rocking groove.

In much the same way as Dream Theater's often overlooked debut *When Dream And Day Unite* mixed Rush with Metallica and helped reignite the prog genre for a new audience in 1989, so *Rush* opened up the hitherto unknown possibility of melding hard rock with progressive flourishes, kick-starting a whole new genre. True, you might not feel the same eight tracks warrant further expenditure (around £35), but – regardless of the naysayers – there is no denying the importance of this pivotal album.

JERRY EWING

A little bit Led Zeppelin, a little bit Yes - Even on their debut Rush were unique.

BRAINIAC 5

When Silence Was Sound RECKLESS

Re-formed Cornwall psych-punks anthologised.

Back in the late 70s, Cornish outfit Brainiac 5 attempted to reconcile the superficially disparate sonic universes of punk and psychedelia. They also dropped hefty measures of reggae and space rock into the broth, becoming John Peel faves in the process.

A little too ahead of their time for their own good, they released one EP, one 7" and recorded an album with Hawkwind's Martin Griffin, before promptly splitting in 1980. Listening to *When Silence Was Sound*, which bundles their posthumously-released sole album, *World Inside* together with their single, *Mushy Doubt* EP and live cuts recorded back in 1980, it's possible to discern the early stirrings of what



would become the 80s psych revival, manifesting itself via The Soft Boys and their ilk in the UK, and the loose group of acts known as the Paisley Underground (Rain Parade, Green On Red, The Dream Academy, The Bangles) in the US. It's unclear how much

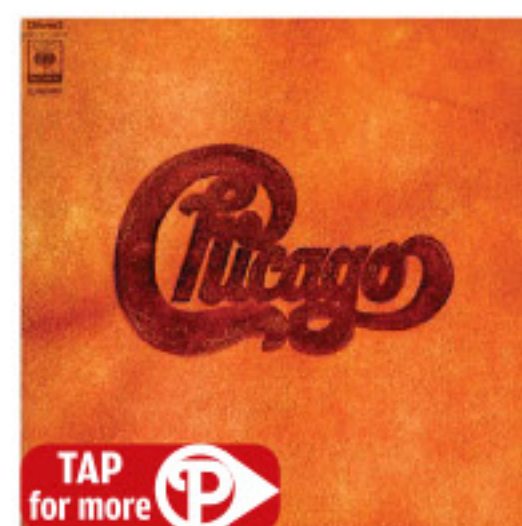
of Brainiac 5's innovation was intentional. *Primal Screaming*'s motorik rhythm for example recalls the constant forward motion of seminal German groups such as Neu! - but could this simply have been a happy accident? In any case, notwithstanding the occasional whiff of pub rock, the group's music has a freshness and verve that makes their recent reformation seem entirely justified. JS

CHICAGO

Live In Japan RHINO

The windy city boys blowing it up in Osaka in 1972.

A decade after the recording of this excellent live album Chicago had become pretty much a by-word for the kind of simpering, platinum-selling AOR balladry that would ultimately make their name. Back in 1972 though they were riding high on the success of *Chicago V* (their first US No.1 album) and considered a serious proposition, purveying a highbrow amalgam of prog, jazz and rock. *Live In Japan* wasn't released until 1975 - the band's own admittedly inferior *Live At Carnegie Hall* had originally been released in '71 - and then only in... Japan. This title finally appeared on CD in the States in '96, released by the band themselves,



but now at last this much sought-after item has been released in a replica sleeve, complete with a lyric sheet insert so small it might as well have been scripted in Japanese. In fact, Chicago sing two songs (*Lowdown* and *Questions 67 & 68*) in the local lingo, as they did

for the whole tour. They're oddities, but the rest is bold, brassy pomp with Terry Kath, Robert Lamm and Peter Cetera in fine voice on the likes of *25 Or 6 To 4*, *Saturday In The Park* and *Beginnings*. The epic *Ballet For A Girl In Buchannon* will surprise anyone who thought there wasn't much more to Chicago than *Habit To Break*, while their cover of Spencer Davis Group's *I'm A Man* still rocks 40-plus years later. JE

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Moat On The Ledge/From Cropredy.../XXXV EAGLE

A neat, satisfying bargain bundle of Fairport joy.

Fairport have been around longer than several countries, so it's hardly surprising their back catalogue is chunkier than a Mellotron 400. These reissues are a timely and delicious bumble through large swathes of their 40-plus years. It's great to have *Moat On The Ledge* aired again, despite various reissues. Recorded in 1981 at an early reunion at Broughton Castle, it includes appearances from the mighty Swarbs and Richard Thompson and generates enough live power to raise the dead. In contrast, *From Cropredy to Portmerion* showcases a later Fairport incarnation.



Capturing their live power circa 1990, it's enlivened by Maartin Allcock's singular playing and key tunes from their 80s rebirth, such as *Red & Gold*. However, it is studio retrospective XXXV - which looks at the years 1967 to 2002 -

that is perhaps the most fascinating. It covers both Fairport's stellar past while allowing them to push themselves with material by Anna Ryder among others. In addition to this, Chris Leslie's tunes also underline how significant he has been in Fairports' renaissance. This box is both a snip and a delight. **RM**

THE GATHERING

Always PEACEVILLE

Dutch eclecticists revisit doom-laden origins.

Holland's The Gathering are notable for the organic manner in which the group blossomed from a moderately experimental metal outfit into one capable of effectively absorbing more or less any genre that happened to take their fancy.

Nevertheless, a metal band they once were, and this reissue of their 1992 debut serves as a fine illustration of their early sound. The heavier 1994 alternate mix, presented here on the bonus disc, is superior to the original. The keyboards are nudged gently into the background while the guitars gain extra presence. It's fascinating to revisit



aspects albums from the early 90s, especially when you recall that this was a period when a band was not under pressure to reinvent the wheel with their initial release. Indeed, it would take The Gathering a couple of years to forge a truly distinctive identity.

The arrival of vocalist Anneke Van Giersbergen on 1995's *Mandyliion* ushered in the elusive magic that would elevate them above the level of a highly competent yet derivative death-doom act and pave the way for the genre-defying experimentation of 1998's *How To Measure A Planet?* and 2003's *Souvenirs*. **JS**

PAVLOV'S DOG

Has Anyone Here Seen Siegfried? ROCKVILLE

Updated reissue of a real lost classic.

Given the disjointed history of this album, you'd have every right to expect it to be a mess. The band's third record, it was pieced together in fits and starts during 1977, but Pavlov's Dog had fallen apart before it was released. And, until 2007, it was only available in a bootleg version. This latest edition has been updated with a vast array of bonus material, mostly live. But the real bonus lies in the impressive, if understated quality of the original album. The band took a surprising turn towards melodic hard rock, even recording a discarded REO Speedwagon song, namely *It's All For*



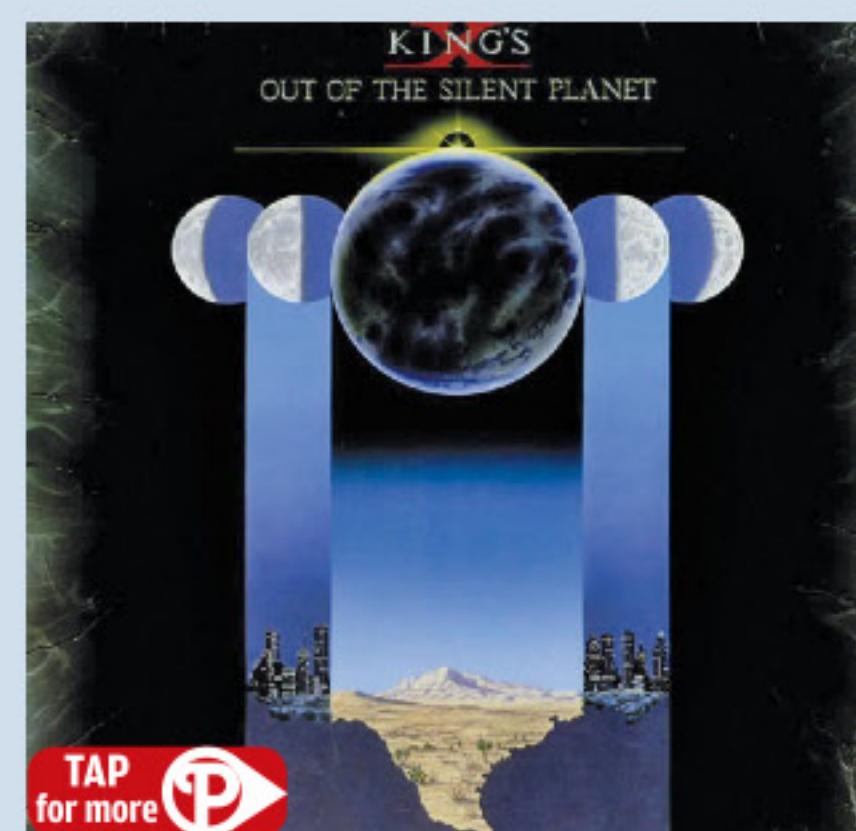
You. There's also a Marty Balin cover, *Today*, done to be more commercial. But this track pales alongside *Jenny* and *I Love You Still*, both of which balance a new AOR quiver with exhaustive musicality, and David Surkamp's high-pitched

tones. Under different circumstances, Pavlov's Dog could have been sitting on a huge seller. The extra tracks really are no more than filler material, although it is intriguing to hear *Stop Short*, a catchy amalgam of progressive intricacy and a radio friendly tunefulness. 'Lost classic' is an overused term, but there's really no better description for this. **MD**

KING'S X

Out Of The Silent Planet - Collector's Edition

ROCK CANDY



If *Out Of The Silent Planet* was ahead of its time when it was originally released in 1988, the passing of the years have done nothing to diminish its power. The trio of lead vocalist/bassist Doug Pinnick (who now calls himself dUg apparently), guitarist Ty Tabor and drummer Jerry Gaskill had been searching for an outlet for their music for years under the name Sneak Preview before they found an unlikely home at Megaforce Records. The label was known at the time as the flagship for the burgeoning thrash metal scene led by Metallica and Anthrax. Rebranded as King's X, their sound was tricky to categorise, but it definitely wasn't thrash.

They had an ear for soaring melodies and vocal harmonies.

With the benefit of hindsight, the trio's debut can be seen as a precursor to the grunge explosion, thanks to Tabor's chugging drop-tuned guitar riffs. But there's more to them than that. They had an ear for soaring melodies and vocal harmonies that most grunge bands never replicated. And where grunge songwriters were resolutely downbeat in their lyrics - heroin is a hell of a drug - King's X came out of the Christian rock circuit (even if Pinnick has since rejected any attempt to categorise the outfit under the label). Certainly, they weren't slinging bibles out to their audiences like Stryper, but their faith was never far from the surface. 'I stand here waiting for New Jerusalem,' sings Pinnick in *Sometimes, I know it's greater than the world outside.*

The album kicks off with the rollicking *In The New Age* as the vocalist unleashes his trademark bluesy wail, then when Tabor's exquisite guitar lick starts *Goldilox* the hooks sink in deep and never let go. The song showcases another key component to the King's X sound: the use of close vocal harmonies between the three members to lift the melodies to a higher plane.

Wonder might be the most overtly grungy track on the album, with a growling riff from Tabor. *King* features a call and response between Pinnick and the rest of the band that reveals their gospel influences, a technique they repeat in the enormously catchy *Shot Of Love* which boasts a chorus three miles wide.

Out Of The Silent Planet might not be prog in the classic sense (odd-time signatures, concept album, sci fi, fantasy lyrical sense), but its unmistakably progressive music that sounds as fresh and vital now as it did in 1988. Upon release, the album was embraced by critics but failed to set the charts alight, peaking at Number 144 in the United States. Here in its new form - with a decent set of pics from yore and a solid new essay on the genesis of this band from Prog's own Malcolm Dome - it's a lost album ripe for rediscovery.

DAVID WEST

YES

The Yes Album - Definitive Edition PANEGYRIC

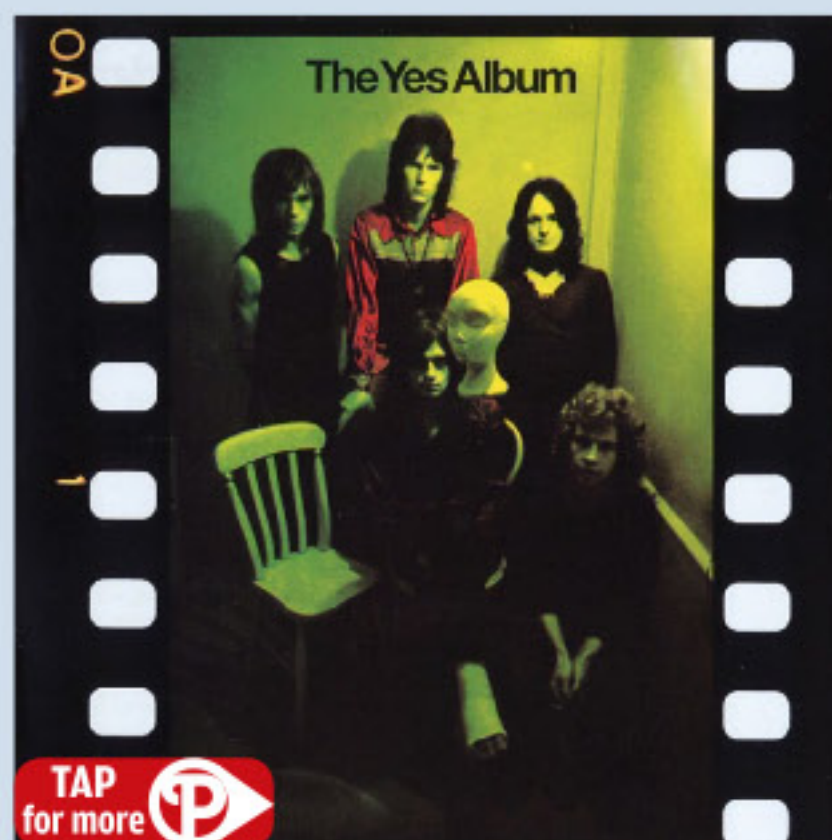
Another Yes diamond is given the Steven Wilson treatment with sparkling extras.

"The *Yes Album* started a new plane for Yes," Steve Howe said last year, "where we were completely original. Not doing other people's songs, but creating our own music. When I joined, I said: 'Isn't it time Yes did the whole thing?' They all felt the same."

First released in February 1971, Yes' third full-length "felt like the first real Yes album" according to Jon Anderson. With Peter Banks having left, Howe came in with a dazzling scope of guitar sonics and styles while the band, skint and fed up of watching other bands they knew break big, jettisoned the stabilisers. Co-producer and engineer Eddy Offord too played a vital role in their invention of a new post-psychedelia landscape. Like radical sculptors, they curved and warped the structure of their material until it offered resonant revelations in sound. The trippy trinity of *Yours Is No Disgrace*, *I've Seen All Good People* and *Starship Trooper* stand as evergreen Yes masterworks. Your ears enter them through fresh windows and doorways every time, even over four decades later.

Steven Wilson has upped the ante on those windows and doorways. After last year's expanded remaster of *Close To The Edge*, this second in an ongoing series offers a wealth of reinvigoration. The CD includes a new stereo mix, with two bonus tracks: a longer *A Venture* (now nudging five minutes) and the studio version of Howe's *Clap*. Thank goodness the new sleeve has dropped the unfortunate, erroneously-allocated definite article at last. The former allows the band to ad lib spectacularly, with the guitars and Tony Kaye's keyboards duelling in the mode of relaxed flames. Howe's acoustic guitar piece (written to celebrate the birth of his son Dylan, who now plays drums with Wilko Johnson) was never on multi-track tape, but Wilson has up-mixed it with modern software.

A hybrid DVD-A features his 5.1 Surround mix and high-res stereo mixes, plus a version of the album compiled from alternate live and studio renditions. Then there's a Blu-ray with all of the above,



instrumentals, single edits and a needle-drop of an original vinyl pressing. If this is all getting a bit like taking in a maths lecture, here's what matters: it sounds stunning. The 5.1 brings out the nuances of every colour, like a restored Michelangelo. The *Wurm* section of *Starship Trooper*, for example, makes that chord cadenza ride the channels more gracefully and emotively than ever. It remains the flanger's finest hour. Anderson's fluency on *Your Move* and his visionary-nonsense generally, the shivery rhythms of Squire and Bruford on *Yours Is No Disgrace*, the swoops of *Perpetual Change*: all these stand strong under the lights. The musicianship is, to state the obvious, incredible.

Nobody recognises that more than Wilson, who appreciates the then-young players' giant act of affirmation and frames their gusto lovingly.

Prior to recording in the late 70s the band – getting to know Howe – "got away from it all" in Devon, renting a farmhouse in which they wrote, rehearsed and realised they could break the time-honoured rules of popular music. In the London studio, they then put down the tracks in sections and listened back to Offord's ingenious assemblages. The artful eclecticism surprised even its creators.

Even though Kaye's subsequent departure (a Hammond aficionado, he wasn't keen on emerging technology) and Rick Wakeman's arrival marked what most believe to be the definitive Yes line-up,

it's a pity this quintet crafted only this one diamond, unique in its sparkle and flow. It was and is funkier, looser, than their later jewels, while always knowing where it's going. It's exploratory, but concise: so much happens, but every second counts. *The Yes Album* gave the band their first number one (albeit thanks at first to a dubious chart, taken hurriedly from the Oxford Street Virgin store because of a postal strike), and sold a million. Yes were doing "the whole thing", and this voracious music – still on its own plane – will not brook a no.

CHRIS ROBERTS



The musicianship on the album is, to state the obvious, incredible.



GREENSLADE

Large Afternoon ANGEL AIR

The 70s greats' slight return in 2000.

Another listen to Greenslade's glory days in the 1970s, from their '73 debut to *Time And Tide* two years later, and you get to thinking that, in the grand scheme of things, maybe David Greenslade and band have yet to received their full due. Fast-forward to 2000, and the keyboard great returned with co-keyboardist/vocalist John Young, bassist Tony Reeves and drummer Chris Cozens for *Large Afternoon*. Listening to the album in the cold light of 2014, there's much to enjoy here. With its brassy synths, jaunty opener *Cakewalk* is a clarion call for the rest of the album. The title track has ample proggy chicanes of time and melody,



No Room - But A View and *Anthems* are MOR-smooth, and the whole feels familiar, almost cosy. Of course, any synth album will be dated by the digital presets of the time, and not quite enough time has yet passed for the pads and parps that form the substance of these

tunes to become stylishly retro. If there's a chink in the armour it's the reverb-assisted vocals, as on the thoughtful *Hallelujah Anyway* and imploring *Blues In The Night*. These may be the album's weakest element, but there's no denying the heart and skill put into this ultimately likeable album. Not for everyone, but for Mr Greenslade's fans the fresh interview in the liners will add to the appeal. **GRM**

JOHN LODGE

Natural Avenue ESOTERIC

Remaster and reappraisal for Moodies bassman's solo spinoff.

The mid-70s may have signalled a lengthy intermission for the Moody Blues as a group, but its members put the downtime to good use. Justin Hayward and John Lodge had already recharged their batteries with the *Blue Jays* collaboration before each embarked on solo endeavours, 1977 bringing Hayward's *Songwriter* while Lodge delivered this set, now restored by Esoteric with customary precision. While he employed band producer Tony Clarke and recorded at Threshold, Lodge was free to cast a wider net than in Moodies mode. Orchestrations were by Brian Rogers, recommended, as Lodge explains in a new note, by Glyn Johns, while Kenney Jones drummed



throughout and Mick Weaver played piano. Chris Spedding guested on electric guitar on some tracks, complementing the frontman's six and 12-string acoustic and bass. The results still give off a pleasantly relaxed aura, sometimes touching on

Moodies territory on such pieces of superior, whimsical easy listening as *Carry Me (A Song For Kristian)*. *Who Could Change* is a romantic piano ballad mood with orchestral underpinning, but elsewhere Lodge puts his rocking roots to good use, as on the title track and the autobiographical *Children Of Rock 'N' Roll*. Both sides of the 1980 single *Street Café* are added for good measure. **PS**

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THE ENID

40 Years Anniversary Box Set OPERATION SERAPHIM

Robert John Godfrey gets into the nitty-gritty of four decades.



It might well take you aback when you realise that, if you count the period of relative inactivity for the band between 1999 and 2007, The Enid have now been with us for 40 years. Since 1973 Robert John Godfrey has, with many differing line-ups (drummer Dave Storey's been along for the ride, on and off, since 1974 – but who remembers original bassist Terry 'Thunderbags' Pack?) intrigued, confounded, excited and probably exasperated many with his singular vision for a symphonic rock sound that marries his beloved classical music with the titillation of bombastic rock.

Full of insightful, intriguing minutiae, and wicked humour.

This impressive set merely takes us up to the period when the band signed to PYE Records, who would release *Touch Me* in 1978, and given that the DVD section runs for almost two and a half hours (without counting the extras), then this is some insightful stuff.

The wise old sage Godfrey is questioned by younger members of the current line-up about his career, and he expounds considerably on how everything Enid-like evolved. Naturally there's some intriguing stuff about his troubled time as musical director of Barclay James Harvest and snippets about life at George Lyward's Finchden Manor as a youth. But the real meat and potatoes here – and we're talking full banquet rather than help yourself buffet – is the sheer detail of the minutiae of the beginnings of this most unique of bands.

Taking an objective view, this will, quite frankly, bore the pants off anyone not swayed the orchestral sweeps of *Fand* or *Mayday Galliard*, both of which are included on the extended versions of *In The Region of The Summer Stars* and *Aerie Faerie Nonsense* also included with this set.

This reviewer is still chuckling over Godfrey's revelations about how the latter came to be named – but if you were beguiled by hearing the former on the BBC's *Friday Rock Show*, or even being mindboggled by watching the band tear through *Land Of Hope And Glory* and *The Dambusters March* on a sunny Sunday afternoon at Reading Festival, then this is the kind of stuff that makes you wish more bands might pay such attention to detailing their history.

An intriguingly amusing aside is both mention of, and inclusion as an extra track on *Aerie Faerie Nonsense*, of 1977's frivolous single *Golden Earrings*, which shows Godfrey as a master of high tongue-in-cheek camp, giving Freddie Mercury a serious run for his money.

His is a wicked sense of humour, and it's good to see that it's one still inherent in the current incarnation of his band.

JERRY EWING

THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW

Eclipsed By The Moon TAFPS/AUSSIEFLOYD.COM

The uber-tribute band show their *Dark Side*...

Since they formed in Adelaide in 1998 The Australian Pink Floyd Show have sold some three million tickets sold in performances in 35 countries. It is testament to just how pervasive they've become that on the day our promo copy of *Eclipsed By The Moon* arrived, a member of the editorial team of *Prog's* hairier younger brother *Metal Hammer* saw it and raved how he, his mum and his girlfriend had just seen them on their Set The Controls Tour, at the O2 Arena. That's, *The O2 Arena*. Watching this two-disc DVD set (one disc for Blu-ray), you really can understand what the fuss is about and,



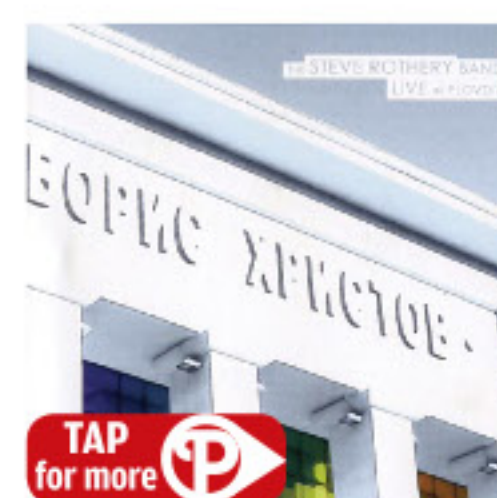
whatever your views on the tribute act scene, accept that maybe things are progressing as they should. Recorded over two nights at the Trier Arena and Oberhausen Arena in Germany last April, their copybook run-through of *Dark Side Of The Moon* is pretty irreproachable, as are their re-treads of loved tunes from *The Wall*, *Wish You Were Here* and *The Division Bell*. The sheer scale and professionalism of the undertaking, from the band's authenticity to their light show, is awe-inspiring, a fact that's backed up by the accompanying booklet and behind the scenes doco. **GRM**

STEVE ROTHERY BAND

Live In Plovdiv STEVE ROTHERY MUSIC

The Marillion man's Sofia-sticated guitar masterclass.

Every year the Bulgarian town of Plovdiv plays host to the International Guitar Festival, a celebration of the stringed instrument and its many masters. Last October Steve Rothery brought his band to the stage on the closing night of the festival at City House Of Culture Boris Hristov, which is captured here on both CD and DVD. The setting, spartan but classy, reflects the music the band make together, from the languorous, sustained guitar lines of the enigmatic opener *Morpheus*, into the near-tribal quest music of *Kendris* and superb 11-minuter *Old Man Of The Sea*. This one shows the man in full flight, with its



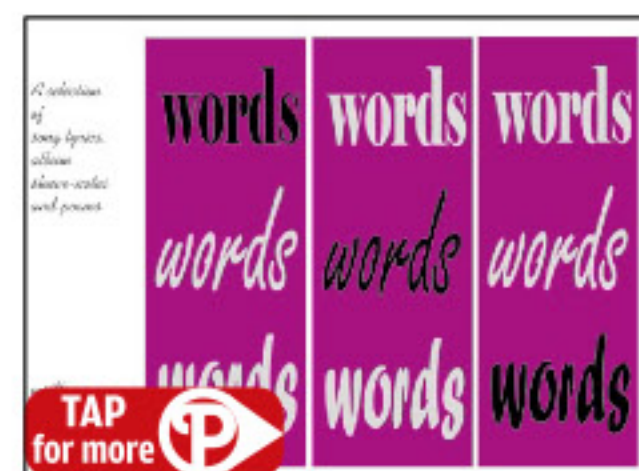
lyrical, shifts from echoing atmospherics to full-throated, ever-melodic distorted guitar. Rhythm player Dave Foster, bassist Yatim Halimi and drummer Leon Parr make perfect foils for Rothery's lead performance, which really is what this is. Only occasionally, as on the tuneful *Yesterday's Hero*, can you imagine H coming in with his vocals (even sounds like a Marillion title, that), while the solos from *Sugar Mice* and *Easter* keep fans of that other band happy. His crowd-funded solo album *The Ghosts Of Pripyat* is on the way, but until then this'll make for one frightfully civilised placeholder. **GRM**

ASHLEY HUTCHINGS

Words Words Words TALKING ELEPHANT

The Guv'nor selects his own favourite lyrics and poems.

Recently we reviewed Hutchings' superb solo work *By Gloucester Dock I Sat Down And Wept*. 'Literate and compelling', we called it, which equally applies to the Fairport/Steeleye/Albion Band founder himself. Hutchings' way with words is one of the things that's marked him out over the years and here he curates 'a selection of song lyrics, album sleeve-notes and poems'. The words are catalogued in 10 typically idiosyncratic sections ('This And That', 'Dancing', 'What Goes On', 'Human Nature' etc). From the very first entry, the Rainbow Chasers' *About Dawn*, his



ear for nostalgia and eye for detail are evident. On the page the startling *Song Of Two Bridges* reads almost like a Renaissance poem, there's an everyman brilliance to *Welsh Girls* ('*Flashing fire/Saturday night, just got paid*'), and louring working-class sedition in *Ivory Tower*. The sleeve notes (all from his Big Band Combo albums) are fun, but the poems are perhaps the most satisfying, broaching fear of flying, the sun and God, a tattoo of his, even Grace Slick. Despite its budget, A-level project binding, this will please fans of the Guv'nor's elegant wordsmithery. **GRM**

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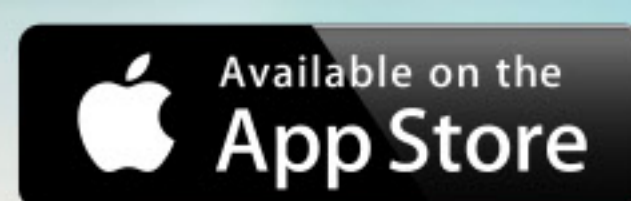
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Take a bow

HRH: PROG 2

VENUE HAFAN Y MOR, NORTH WALES DATE 20-22/03/14

After last year's sub-arctic conditions in a battered ex-steel foundry, HRH: Prog 2, with its clement indoor environment, comfortable onsite accommodation and better all-round facilities (although admittedly the Prog arena did run out of Guinness and Hobgoblin on Saturday evening), can only go down as a resounding success. Well, we haven't registered anywhere near as many complaints (at the time of writing) as last year, anyway...

THURSDAY

Flower Kings hoodies, Dream Theater T-shirts, one Porcupine Tree jacket and two guys debating the merits of Hawklords versus Hawkwind. HRH:Prog hath begun, as Welshies **Sankara** melodically rock the festival into action.

A streak of Split Enz-esque pop/new-wave piques the guitar-led neo-prog of British troupe **Jump**. "I dedicate this next song to all of you

who are 50!" declares good-humoured vocalist John Dexter Jones. Virtually everyone cheers. And they keep cheering for newer kids on the prog block **Synaesthesia**.

The brainchild of delightfully chipper vocalist/synthesizer/keys man Adam Warne, **Synaesthesia** master difficult proggy tempo changes, electronic layers and soaring rock riffs with fresh sophistication. Save some off-kilter vocals (not helped today by sound imbalances) it's a sterling, grin-inducing performance. Exactly what we hoped for. What we did not hope for was the sound of **Credo's** sports-shirted mainman Mark Colton lacing one anecdote with the expression "sex on my hand"... Thankfully he and his Credo compatriots knock out some very enjoyable space/prog rock, complete with slightly trancey keys and Marillion-inspired melodies.

It then only remains for everyone to get down with their bad selves at the Prog Disco. People sway on the edges, one couple do the chicken dance, and a man lies on the floor. Ladies and gentlemen, goodnight.

FRIDAY

The chord orientated, gently progressive soundscapes of **The Custodian** kick things off

in a subtle manner. While the set never really ups the gears needed to banish last night's hangovers, the few non-instrumentals keep you enticed. Proving that men *can* multi-task, however, **Physics House Band** baffle and bewilder the audience with crazy jazz beats, soaring synthesizers and mind-bending guitar and bass runs. It's a show-stopping set that leaves the rule book in tatters.

Luna Kiss have a sign up imploring everyone to download their *Conjure & Sin* EP in the hope that it'll make the charts. That there is no sign of it in the listings come Monday essentially says on a large scale, even at a prog event like this, most people just don't care enough about anything any more unless it's fed to them on a plate, and that, energetic as they are, Luna Kiss are a young band still finding their own character.

Unlike **Shattered Skies**, who are back for a second year running. This year it's good to see the more neo (read older) crowd not flee almost in fear when confronted with anything not doused in swirling keyboards, instead staying to lap up a sound that is equal parts tech prog and melodically engaging. **Chimp Spanner** have it in them to be equally appealing, but large swathes of their set is sometimes just too loud and too heavy. Tech fest this ain't, guys!

The Pineapple Thief, despite being the perfect example of a modern-day prog band (ie ways thinking outside the box), are



Invicta victorious: Joe Payne leads The Enid's jawdropping performance.



"Thank God Robert John Godfrey brought The Enid back this year, for they are simply sensational."

When your headstock is this pointy, you mean business. Monkey business. Cheers for the endless inspiration for puns, Chimp Spanner.



There once was a raven that refused to sing. Luckily, it would do hair and make-up, much to Panic Room's relief.



King Leer: the Focus mainman sends us all flute loopy.



Synaesthesia's Sam Warne left the coat hanger in his hoodie again.





Invisible fan pinches Bruce Soord's finger cymbals shocker!

sometimes questioned by those who can't accept that prog can't be anything that doesn't sound like *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. Their performance tonight makes a mockery of suchlike, as does the terrific crowd response to a stunning set that highlights the adroitness of Bruce Soord's compelling songwriting with a quite splendid adeptness on guitar. Performance of the weekend? Most probably. Certainly good enough to leave crowd faves **Focus** seeming pale by comparison, despite the expected crowd sing-a-longs to *Sylvia* and *Hocus Pocus*.



Sweet sensations: Solstice, just before the chocolate throwing began.

"We are such old farts!" chuckles **The Flower Kings** keyboardist Tomas Bodin. It's funny, in the scale of prog time we don't think of the Swedish progsters as especially 'old' (hell, they were conceived in the 90s, for god's sake). Still, the likes of *Big Puzzle* tonight showcase their blend of traditional progressive twiddles and forward-reaching, spacey prettiness. A couple of sound glitches spike out initially – off

balance, feedback – but these smooth out and everyone relaxes into celestial synths, Genesis-meets-Floyd licks and more luxuriant hair-flicking than a Beyonce video (from guitarist Hasse Fröberg). Roine Stolt's yearning, articulated vocals and the long-playing nature of proceedings lend a space-rock opera quality. And then, seemingly in a flash, it's over.

Closing the late night, Londoners **Deadly Circus Fire** produce a heavy, ear-battering performance. Think Tool meets Mastodon in a dark alleyway when things get bloody. It's great, but sadly for the band, only about 30 people have stayed up to watch it.

SATURDAY

Saturday begins with Editor Jerry grinning like a loon and snapper Will crying into his beer; something to do with Chelsea beating Arsenal, apparently [*Decimate is the word you're looking*



Purson of interest: Rosalie hits the right note.



for, I think! – Ed]. Greece is hardly renowned for its prog rock, but **September Code** are here to break the mould. Strong vocals, solid bass and swirling guitars help make their first venture to foreign lands worthwhile.

DeeExpus have had to pull out due to Andy Ditchfield falling ill – not that the organisers seem to have bothered telling anyone – but eventually **Crimson Sky** take to the stage seemingly intent on out-progging everyone. Singer Jane Setter, resplendent in outlandish red garb, is a university professor of languages with charming, Marillion-spirited songs about child language development, although she has everyone tittering when, at the end of the set, she attempts to throw a T-shirt into the crowd, only to leave it hanging in the lighting rig directly above her.

The general smooth running of events is turned on its head by the time rising stars **Purson** should be hitting the stage, and it's clear there are technical issues which do nothing for lead singer Rosalie Cunningham's mood. She'll eventually end up hurling one of her guitar peddles into the crowd. Alas for her, she ends up throwing the wrong one which then needs retrieving. But fired up, Purson turn in a winning performance, coming on like a modern day Curved Air with a dash of Sabbath thrown in for good measure.

So good, indeed, were Purson, it had you wondering how **Panic Room** might follow it up, given the more genteel approach of not only some of their music but also Anne-Marie Helder's ever-polite demeanour. Wisely, instead of trying to take on the young guns, Panic Room stick to guns of their own, turning an assured set built largely around their latest album *Incarnate*, easily their best record since debut *Visionary Thing*. It probably hardly needs saying they deservedly go down a proverbial storm.

Hawklords, by comparison, are very much something of an acquired taste. Not a patch on



Deadly Circus Fire. No, that look won't scare the neo-proggers off at all. Carry on flaying our eyes and eardrums.

Hawkwind themselves, the rag-tag troupe's psychedelic observations seem to lose the crowd, who dwindle noticeably. Equally **Arcane Roots** hardly cover themselves in glory with a set that veers towards the band's more abrasive side, when airing some of their finer more subtle moments would have endeared them far more to an HRH crowd.

Still, this all merely plays into the hands of **The Enid**. Robert John Godfrey might not have enjoyed playing last year, but thank God he brought the band back this year, for they are simply sensational. With Joe Payne in great voice ("Are you Freddie Mercury's younger brother?" quips Fish backstage), the band's flamboyant pomp gives everyone a lift, moving one of *Prog's* viewing companions, who've never witnessed them, to tears of awe and amazement.

"Are you ready, boys and girls?" asks prog Scotsman **Fish**, before instigating one of approximately 2000 audience clap-alongs in tonight's marathon show. Fish likes a good clap-along, oh yes. Shimmying around like some tribal king, delighting the crowd with slices ranging from Marillion's *Script For A Jester's Tear* to 2013's *A Feast Of Consequences*, he's a sizeable bear-like presence; revelling in the melodic neo-prog rock he's pioneered all these years. He camps around in cheery rocker *All Loved Up*, heartily booms "I was off mah tits on speeed!" in one nostalgic recollection, and edges (slightly righteously) into 'it's-all-about-our-planet' territory with *Blind To The Beautiful*.

Which leaves **Solstice** to wrap things up with soaring harmonies, quality modern rock guitar and skipping-through-Stonehenge freakery. Everyone cheers, people throw chocolate and *Flight* draws the night to a hippie-friendly but invigorated conclusion.

A winning weekend then all round. Same again next year?

JERRY EWING/POLLY GLASS/PHIL WELLER



Fish presents his three-hour Ukrainian sympathist allegory, *Vlad's Life*. We were rather hoping for Kayleigh.



"We are such old farts!" chuckles the Flower Kings keyboardist Tomas Bodin."

Flower Kings: old farts, letting rip.

ROVO AND SYSTEM 7

VENUE 02 ACADEMY ISLINGTON, LONDON **DATE** 08/03/14

A cursory glance at the array of equipment onstage informs us that this will not be a typical prog gig. More-or-less standard rock instruments grace the perimeter, surrounding a raised island of laptops and other DJ gear – an intriguing juxtaposition.

Steve Hillage heralds the live London premiere of Rovo, who don't delay in taking those conventional instruments into unconventional (and unearthly) territories. An insistent bassline underpins a mesmeric opening jam. The tentative blow grows into a raging psychedelic squall, barely containing the ecstatic violin of Yuji Katsui in its vortex but with two drummers the combined centripetal force is indomitable.

A drum duet threatens to culminate in *Los Endos*, instead climaxing in Latin-tinged unison stabs recalling Santana's band at its peak. The crowd reaction as they leave the stage assures them the debut of their dextrous space rock

and affable characters have won us over.

After a brief interval, Hillage and Miquette Giraudy ascend their podium. The playful husband-and-wife dynamic is a joy to watch – Giraudy feigning to start a sequenced sample and then leaving hubby hanging for another four bars – enhancing the already palpable feelgood factor. The happiness meter hits the red though with the unrelenting classic, *Alpha Wave*.

A headless Steinberger guitar perma-slung around his neck, Hillage augments the primal pounding with his trademark palm-muted, heavily delayed melodic phrases. Atmospheric and restrained, his playing whets the appetite for the full band performance to follow.

Soon the ensuing congregation of eight musicians displays what a prime synthesis the two acts make as they present the *Phoenix Rising* album. During *Hinotori*, the electronica duo's beats mesh with those twin percussionists to form a tribalistic foundation for the ethereal flights of the soloists. Soaring electric violin and guitars

harmonise and dance around one another like courting birds.

Their cover of Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Meeting Of The Spirits* is an inspired choice, conjuring the magical pairing of John McLaughlin and Jerry Goodman. The star of the show is, predictably, Hillage. His forays to the front of the stage for solos are met with adulation and much pocket-fumbling for camera phones. He has lost none of his fire, each exploratory improvisation searches for

and finds the spark time after time. Self-effacing, he keeps stage left for much of the set, enjoying trading the limelight with his latest collaborators.

Mid-album highlight *Cisco* is cannily reserved for the end. Its motorik beat duels with an uptempo surge which carries us headlong to a dizzying crescendo and unusually early 10pm finish. After more than three hours of trance-prog there isn't a face in the exit queue that isn't wearing a blissful smile.

CHRIS MCGAREL



"Steve Hillage has lost none of his fire... searching for and finding the spark time after time."



Meeting of the spirits: Steve Hillage and Yuji Katsui weave Rovo's magic.



Visionary thing: Prog's 2013 award winner doesn't smash the system – he is the system!

WILL IRELAND

SCHNAUSER

VENUE BRIXTON WINDMILL, LONDON **DATE** 13/03/14

A sparse but keen audience greets Schnauser's debut gig in the capital, eager for a dose of southwest coast trippiness (via the Bristol estuary) cut with superlative English eccentric prog-pop and quirky time signatures.

The first thing we note is the absence of bass mistress Holly McIntosh and her sublime harmonies (later it transpires that she's no longer with the band for personal reasons). Her temporary replacement, the beaming and bearded Gaz 'Goldstar'

Williams, fills in admirably in all other respects. Evidently a vastly assured and experienced musician, the most recent string to his bow is featuring on the new Brian Eno/Karl Hyde collab *Someday World*.

Another newish face is Jasper Williams on drums, who brings with him a fine line in striped Victorian bathing tops and twirly moustaches. He propels the whole shebang with meaty, beaty power and precision, bringing to mind The Who's *Sell Out*.

In a set brimming with melodies and socially awkward observational humour à-la *Arthur/Village Green*-era Kinks, highlights include the deceptively jaunty theatre-based paean *Showers Of Blood*,

with its *Blackadder*-ish refrain of 'giblets and entrails/all over the stage' and the uncomfortable *Dinner Party*, both from the recent *Where Business Meets Fashion* album.

Among the new songs is *The Reason They're Alive*, about the life cycle of a wasp (which prompts a chuckle from Prog Dep Ed Jo, who is reprimanded by guitarist/singer Alan Strawbridge – "It's not funny!").

There is a tinge of disappointment at not hearing familiar songs such as *Good Looking Boy*, Strawbridge's wistful ode to the most popular lad in school and what could be his answer to *David Watts*. Be warned – once one a tune like this has

caught your ear, it will follow you around doggedly for weeks. But elsewhere in the animal kingdom, *Henry and His Magic Horse/Giant Daddy vs Big Haystacks*, delivered in Harry Secombesque sepulchral tones by keyboard player Duncan Gammon (aka Lord Gammonshire), can only be described as majestically demented genius.

Brixton Windmill is an offbeat, off-the-beaten-track venue but it's a shame that more fans haven't ventured out to witness Schnauser cut their London teeth. Works of bedroom genius sometimes fall flat in a live setting but Schnauser have bark and bite to match, and deserve a bigger audience.

CLAUDIA ELLIOTT

THE CRIMSON PROJEKCT

VENUE SHEPHERD'S BUSH 02 EMPIRE, LONDON DATE 12/03/14

While it is undeniable that excitement levels among King Crimson-loving folk will reach an apex of froth and splutter when Robert Fripp unveils the next phase of the band's extraordinary journey later this year, the fact that The Crimson ProjeKt tick so many boxes for the faithful says it all about the calibre of musicians that have passed through the ranks of the real KC. Having begun life as a joint tour featuring Tony Levin's Stick Men and Adrian Belew and his Power Trio which, with some inevitability, ended up mutating into a celebration of the 80s and 90s Crim catalogues, these six musicians plainly share a remarkable affinity with one another already and tonight's show fizzles with the joy that such chemistry brings.

After a gloriously woozy Markus Reuter soundscape lulls us into a temporary state of karmic flux, the unmistakable clang'n'grrrr of *B'Boom* sends the devotees present into raptures and, from that moment on, The Crimson ProjeKt provide a masterclass in melodic and rhythmic fluidity, the all-star cast undergoing numerous changes in formation that never once distract from the sum of those parts. When left to their own six-legged devices, both the Stick Men and Belew's group dazzle and enthrall with their own material, the latter's wickedly angular re-imagining of skeletal Frippish mischief having the most muscular impact – particularly on the blistering title track to 2009's *e* album – and the former's ethereal ramblings doing most to send brains spinning and hearts a-fluttering.

But it is, of course, the King Crimson songs that receive the most raucous cheers. Belew, Levin and Stick Men drummer Pat Mastelotto all have fully endorsed Crimson licences and can be expected to deliver *Dinosaur*, *Three Of A Perfect Pair* and *Larks' Tongues In Aspic Part Two* with laudable proficiency, but it's the stellar contributions of Reuter, bassist Julie Slick and drummer Tobias Ralph that deserve the sturdiest plaudits: playing this stuff ain't easy, let's face it, but time after time the ProjeKt click into a sublime higher gear and the resultant melee of brute force and elegant genius is simply and persistently breathtaking.

A final quartet of *Indiscipline*, *Red*, *Elephant Talk* and *Thela Hun Ginjeet* – played with vim and with spine-tingling vocals from Belew an omnipresent reassurance – threaten to incite a riot of adoration. A crowd that have exhibited great patience during a long and nebulous build-up to that forthcoming Crimson rebirth get a welcome chance to witness a few preparatory money shots and moments of hardcore prog magic. For now, this is more than enough and a sizzling reminder that greatness is there to be shared.

DOM LAWSON

The Crimson ProjeKt: sponsored by Black & Decker.



"The unmistakable clang 'n' grrrr of B'Boom sends devotees into raptures."

KEVIN 'HOMEBASE' NIXON

MIKE + THE MECHANICS

VENUE HAMMERSMITH APOLLO, LONDON
DATE 16/03/14

Normally it's pretty easy to make the call on members of Genesis, their solo careers and the 'prog perspective'. Most Genesis fans are, quite naturally, accepting of their output, and for Gabriel and Hackett particularly, most is welcomed with open arms, Tony Banks with, perhaps a bit more caution and poor old Phil Collins... well, perhaps lets not go there. But what about Mike Rutherford? The most genial interviewee from a band full of charming characters, his early solo work piqued interest, but where does that leave us with Mike + The Mechanics? His rather successful side-project since 1985. Prog? Not really? Prog-friendly? In places, very. And yet still the odd snook is cocked by the prognoscenti!

Tonight doesn't really do much to change that state of affairs. But it is two hours of perfectly pleasant, innocuous entertainment that offers up the realisation you actually know almost every song aired in the 18-strong set. They open with *A Beggar On A Beach Of Gold* and *Another Cup Of Coffee*, current vocalists Tim Howar and Andrew Roachford doing the Paul Young/ Paul Carrack, rock/ballad thing pretty convincingly. The former has a fine voice, but, given his theatre background, is just a bit too *X-Factor* for *Prog's* liking, whilst Roachford's more soulful approach appeases those in the crowd for whom this is about as heavy and rock'n'roll as they like things to get.

Admittedly most *Prog* readers will be interested in noting that, while they also play a couple of Roachford tunes, including *Cuddly Toy*, they also offer up Genesis' *Turn It On Again* and *I Can't Dance*, although the fact that *Follow You, Follow Me* has recently been dropped from the running order (this is the final night of the tour) is a bit galling.

But to be honest, you can't really go wrong with a set that contains the likes of *Silent Running (On Dangerous Ground)*, *Nobody's Perfect*, *All I Need Is A Miracle* and *The Living Years*, and *Prog* notes that as the band hit the encores, near two hours have flown by in what seems like a fraction of the time (often the yardstick that denotes a good show). And you certainly can tell by the crowd reaction to the final two songs, *Over My Shoulder* and a rousing *Word Of Mouth*, that a good time has certainly been had. By this time the entire Apollo is on their feet joining in the slightly ham theatrical arm movements of Howar for the admittedly very catchy chorus. But would *Prog* go see them, again? Possibly not (and certainly not to join in the dad dancing if we do). But did we have a good time? That's one thing that we can't really deny.

JERRY EWING

PETER HAMMILL & GARY LUCAS

VENUE HIGHBURY UNION CHAPEL, LONDON DATE 21/02/14

On paper, a collaboration between Peter Hammill and Gary Lucas looks an odd one. For a start, Hammill is a self-confessed “driven loner” who plays solo and with Van der Graaf Generator but isn’t known for musical partnerships. Lucas played with Captain Beefheart’s Magic Band in the 80s, has an illustrious solo career and has collaborated with, and written songs for, a number of others. Not since his work 20 years ago with Jeff Buckley has he co-headed a project with such a singular figure.

Already the duo have established a potent chemistry. Their recent album, *Other World*, came together quickly, and finds them exploiting the possibilities of two guitars and vocals in a mix of songs and semi-improvised soundscapes, based on loops and electronics.

Lucas has gone free-form in a number of contexts but Hammill is such a prolific songwriter it’s easy to forget that he released the experimental *Loops And Reels* in 1983 and in 2012, Van der Graaf sneaked out *Alt*, a whole CD of improvisations.

They begin with the radiant melodies of *Spinning Coins*, but on the sinister *Some Kind Of Fracas* Hammill’s voice and guitar cut angles into Lucas’s echoey psychedelic drift.

“They all have titles even if they don’t really have complete structures,” says Hammill, introducing the first instrumental *Glass*. It starts out rather clunky and tentative, with one of Lucas’s FX boxes suddenly producing searingly loud signals, while the smooth but nasty fuzz tone Hammill favours on the album come across thin and rather scratchy.

On *The Kid*, Lucas’s dazzling, high-velocity acoustic finger-picking fuels the intensity of Hammill’s vocal performance. Although an undoubted virtuoso, Lucas always serves the song and plays subtle, gently swelling chords on *Two Views*.

They play two songs that aren’t on *Other World* – *Primo On The Parapet* from Hammill’s *The Noise* album finds Lucas setting up a crunchy guitar loop and playing some inspired lead lines, while Hammill’s reading of Lucas’s allusive *The Lady Of Shallot* – originally recorded with his group Gods & Monsters – with its nod back towards Pentangle, is an unexpected treat.

As the set progresses it begins to take on a kind of cumulative coherence, with the instrumentals sounding increasingly impressive. *Reboot* consists of Hammill’s slow, riff-like sequences and some ecstatic, aggressive leads by Lucas. The best is left ‘til last – *Slippery Slope* finds both guitarists playing slide guitar: Hammill sketching out a slow, repetitive, almost country blues pattern, while Lucas favours a smoother glide. Both loop the last sequence and put their guitars on their stands. Within half a minute they have faded into silence, to be replaced by a standing ovation.

MIKE BARNES



“Lucas’s dazzling acoustic finger-picking fuels the intensity of Hammill’s vocal performance.”



Mr Lucas and Mr Hammill, for one night only.

NIFE

VENUE KING’S CROSS WATER RATS, LONDON

DATE 27/02/14

SUPPORT GOLDRAY, TWO SKIES

If you were born during the sonic recession of the 90s, there’s a good chance that the closest you’ve ever gotten to psychedelia was the barmy opening credits to *The Mighty Boosh*. Amid a digital generation so used to instant satisfaction, you might think there’s little room for music that favours the wandering astral pathways of Hawkwind. The predominantly youthful audience at The Water Rats tells a different story.

Two Skies are a cosmic-looking, three-barbed alternative rock band from Sheffield with a slapdash approach to creating big, kaleidoscopic sounds. They look, and sound, seconds away from coming unstuck, whether it’s because of the fret-mashing antics of frontman Dan Cutts or his huge, seemingly volatile vocal range that pierces their insatiable cosmic sludge.

NIFE give the impression that they, too, aren’t sure where their set is going. As with Two Skies we also suspect it’s a bluff. NIFE thrive in the looseness of this live setting, closing the evening with minimalist Faustian rhythms and a singer displaying the vocal acrobatics of Karen O. The

brilliantly understated *Chemicals* loses its *How To Destroy Angels*-sheen in this setting, allowing the audience to see the bare bones of this eccentric three-piece.

Goldray, sandwiched between these two acts, are the main draw. Kenwyn House, ex-guitarist with 90s surf rockers Reef, is put to much better use in his new outfit, as he shifts between huge grooving riffs and spidery psychedelic guitar lines. Vocalist Leah Rasmussen is a conduit to a mystic realm. This gig, sat between Goldray’s Pledge-funded debut mini album and a full release due later this year, demonstrates a level of accomplishment and confidence that wouldn’t show in their limited discography.

At root their sound is indebted to 60s expressionism, but they draw as much from Kula Shaker as they do from psychedelic stalwarts Jefferson Airplane or The Doors. Behind the free-flowing exterior, there’s a core of determined musicians whose brows furrow at any slip-ups or infrequent sonic inadequacies with the venue. Beyond the very occasional squeal of feedback, The Water Rats is a faultless stonker of a setting, managing to do the proper pub-come-gig-spot better than most. Other than minor setbacks, it’s clear why every band pays homage to tonight’s adeptly curated and promoted line-up.

DAVID KEEVILL

65DAYS OFSTATIC

VENUE CAMDEN KOKO, LONDON DATE 27/03/14

On 20 September 2004, a gang of super-smart Sheffield mavericks released *The Fall Of Math*, an instrumental, experimental thing of power and wonder that saw them shoot straight to the head of the UK's blossoming post-rock scene to join its elite. And now, 10 years on, they remain the creative force to be reckoned with. Sure, they've evolved in that time, with the electronica element amped up and twisted to add bold new flavours to the broth, but their insistence on ploughing their own furrow remains their biggest strength.

So tonight is a celebration, one they intend to make the most of with two sets. The first is a full run through the still-brilliant *The Fall Of Math* – no chance of dodging the trickier tracks that may have previously tripped them up in a live setting (a fact founder member Paul Wolinski laughingly acknowledges during the show, as they gear up towards another mind-melting collision of riffs and unpredictable time signatures). The second sees them charge full steam ahead into the rest of their enviable back catalogue.

Genres are there to be broken and manipulated, and like their spiritual brethren Mogwai, 65dos' methods are breathtaking. And yet, despite the scientific accuracy of their music and the stark, monochrome lighting of the first set, there's a sense of humour at play, Wolinski quick with a gag at their own expense. "Apparently we've sold out tonight," he says dryly, looking out over a capacity crowd who seconds earlier were leaping and air-punching to *Math* opener *Another Code Against The Gone*. "Some might say we did that years ago." The hoary old notion they



Math men: the boys celebrate 10 years of a classic.

may have 'sold out' is nonsense, of course, but a little wry self-deprecation goes and awfully long way when the music is so deadly serious.

Crashing out with a brutally otherworldly *Aren't We All Running?*, their moment of rest after a flawless set is brief, as they return to a stage suddenly bathed in brightly coloured lights to deliver part two. *Heat Death Infinity Splitter* might not sound like an obvious party anthem, but it kicks off the clubbier, less angsty, more electro side of the show with unconfined glee.

By the time they finish they've been onstage for two hours – too much for casual fans (a fair few left after set one). But for those who have kept pace with the weird and wonderful twists and turns of 65dos' musical career, it's been 120 minutes of pure, sweaty euphoria. In encapsulating their past so perfectly, they've made the prospect of what's to come in their future absolutely irresistible.

EMMA JOHNSTON



"Despite the scientific musical accuracy and the stark lighting of the first set, there's a sense of humour at play."

Wild light: 65 beam up.



KATJA OGRIN

TOOL

VENUE AXIS, PLANET HOLLYWOOD, LAS VEGAS
DATE 15/03/14

Just as Prince did recently, Tool are determined to make a stand against the public's predilection for recording every experience online. We are warned against taking photographs on five separate occasions between traversing the casino to enter the theatre and sitting down on our plush, golden banqueting chairs. We will enjoy this vulgar display of alternative prog metal through our eyes and our ears only – or Tool will kick our arses out of here.

Adam Jones appears onstage first, striking out the stark, distorted chords to *Hooker With A Penis*. You could choose to take that as a cheeky contemporaneous nod to Sin City, but they've opened with it frequently in recent years. Then Maynard James Keenan appears with his mohawk and sunglasses, brandishing a megaphone. He holds up an iPad to the crowd and takes a photograph of that with his phone. Point thoroughly made.

A curious atmosphere presides over this odd Las Vegas sinkhole. This is very much a tour that Tool's biggest fans have made sure to show up for: some flying in from as far as Alabama, Toronto and Portland. As such, you can almost taste a fug of anxious expectation in the air. While the crowd sings along to every word, there is a strange calm between songs. Similarly, the all-seater situation means there is no persistent collision of bodies in a moshpit, but the band's ageing fans have no qualms in dancing in situ, making the act a curiously solo experience. Indeed, the 50-year-old Keenan cites his age to absolve himself of the shame of forgetting his own lyrics at one point.

From the initial simple laser light show to the stage-wide screens displaying highly evocative digital imagery relating to their album art and videos, the visuals are stunning throughout and the setlist is as close to a greatest hits show as you're likely to get with Tool. No new songs are road-tested tonight but you'll not find a soul in here complaining about an *Aenema*-oriented set with choice cuts like the pulsing *Schism*, the classically groovy *Sober* and a jam-heavy *Opiate* thrown in.

Aenema appears in the encore, a song where they talk about their hatred for Los Angeles, a metropolis that is conspicuously absent from this West Coast stint, and they close with confetti cannons at the end of the dark, brooding *Stinkfist*. Finishing such a disarmingly intense 90 minutes with a shower of gold leaf does nothing to quell the anxiety and tonight has done nothing to answer any of the questions we've been asking Tool, but that's why we'll never stop wanting to ask them. This brilliant band will be back with new material soon and that will tell us everything they want us to know.

RAZIQ RAUF

MIDLAKE

VENUE	SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE, LONDON
DATE	26/02/14

Midlake may have lost their Peter Gabriel with the departure of Tim Smith prior to the release of the proggy *Antiphon* album in 2013, but they're doing just fine with their Phil Collins –vocalist/guitarist Eric Pulido – newly installed at the helm. The Texan six-piece offer a confident restatement of their principles tonight: 10 out of the 16 tracks performed, including two encores, are from *Antiphon*. Nobody seems to mind; in fact, they seem positively enthralled. Although showmanship and pyrotechnics are in short supply from these less than charismatic musos, they manage to engage throughout and, by the time they leave the stage, the audience are in mild raptures at this cult band who have managed to do what few (aside from Genesis or Lazarus) have done before them: rise from the dead.

Opener *Ages* pulls off that neat trick

of conflating lush West Coast troubadourism and Britprog adventurism, with harmonies redolent of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and a brooding post-psych atmosphere reminiscent of mid-70s Pink Floyd. The title track of the album, accompanied by flashing lights, continues the theme, being at once mellow and quietly powerful. *Provider* is moody and blue prog-folk with an undertow of menace via its allusions to foxholes. *Rulers, Ruling All Things* – from 2010's *The Courage Of Others* – confirms that, for all the talk of departing members and radical departures, Midlake's sound has essentially been in place from the start: it's in the individual members' very DNA. *Young Bride*, from 2006's breakthrough *The Trials Of Van Occupanther*, is as heady and heavenly as ever: quintessential baroque soft rock with a keen sense of melody and melancholy. They are unexpectedly joined for the song by ex-Supergrass mainman Gaz Coombes on rhythm guitar, his vocal meshing seamlessly with Pulido's.

The playing is faultless, courtesy of guitarist Joey McClellan, Paul Alexander and McKenzie Smith's fluid but inventive

rhythmic backing, Jesse Chandler's piano, organ and flute, while Eric Nicholson shifts between guitar and keyboard. With three capable vocalists in the ranks, the harmonies are sublime and the whole show is a lush treat.

For fans of prog at its more angular and epic some of the songs may have been almost too pretty: *We Gathered In Spring* isn't a million miles from the MOR mellifluousness of David Gates' Bread, even if towards the end the guitarists go into strum-overload. *Vale*'s tempo changes and sudden shifts offers a more progressive pleasure. *It's Going Down* suggests a bucolic Steely Dan. *Roscoe*, like everything Midlake do, hints at quiet drama, and a sort of mystical intrigue positing theirs as a male version of Stevie Nicks' witchy allure. *The Old And The Young* has some of the transcendental wonderment of The Flaming Lips and *Provider Reprise* is a white winter hymnal worthy of Fleet Foxes in full prog mode.

Fleet Foxtrot, anyone?

PAUL LESTER



The courage of others:
Midlake return with
a new line-up and sound.

**"This cult band
have managed
to do what
few - Genesis,
Lazarus - have
done before
them: rise from
the dead."**

Vocal provider: Eric
Pulido steps up to
the front.

ALSO EDEN

VENUE	THE RAILWAY, WINCHESTER
DATE	06/03/14
SUPPORT	THE ROOM

It's a school night but there's a sizeable knot of southern diehards out for the first of three low-key dates by Also Eden.

Tonight's support, The Room, are a hard-working hybrid. Song-driven and solid, they're a restless, uncoiled spring with a brooding presence. Tonight they play with a stand-in drummer, Grey Lady Down's former vocalist Martin Wilson. He leads the charge through most of debut album *Open Fire* plus a cover of Athlete's lacerating *Wires* and intense new offering *Full Circle*.

Also Eden is a very different proposition to the *Think Of The Children* incarnation, thanks to a change in band dynamics. Enigmatic singer Rich Harding now shares the front line with guitarist Simon Rogers and new bassist Graham Lane while another newbie, Bristolian troubadour Howard Sinclair, keeps a lower profile on keys alongside exuberant sticksman Lee Nicholas.

Harding's visions, seen through a coma while he was in hospital recovering from a motorcycle accident in 2010, colour the majority of their songs, starting with the frantic Rush-inspired *Red River* from their current album *[REDACTED]*.

Overall, the heady atmospheric of *[REDACTED]* translate well live, with subtle touches such as Sinclair's steel guitar on *A Test* and Lane's cultured basslines balancing Rogers' cascading guitar on the potentially radio-friendly *Chronologic*.

Life imitates art onstage when ear-mangling feedback during *Distortion Field* threatens to perforate Nicholas's eardrums and a crackle among the keys delays the start of *Think Of The Children*. Duly fixed and song dispatched, Harding is in excellent humour as he introduces *TOTC's Oversight* as "one of our GCHQ songs!"

1949 – Harding's experience of being in caught in drama while hospitalised – chills

the blood. His voice is packed with raw emotion and you can tell he's been there and seen it all. He curses his vanity when he tries to fit a capo on his guitar without his glasses, but he delivers a shimmering rendition of *Decoded*, with hypnotic guitar motif. Its lyrical allusions centring on rabbit holes and flying machines. Also Eden finish with *Seeing Red* and *Reality Cheque* from *Differences As Light* reflecting their ability to operate in a much harder rocking zone.

There's warmth and chemistry between the quintet and, when Harding tells us he's had lots of fun, some kind of musical alchemy is clearly at work.

ALISON HENDERSON

CURVED AIR

VENUE	KINGS THEATRE, SOUTHSEA
DATE	15/03/14

Here in Southsea's imposing Edwardian theatre, a sea of predominantly silver waves and bobs awaits prog's original poster girl Sonja Kristina and her crew. Sharing the bill with the acoustic Strawbs and Wishbone Ash-playing Martin Turner and his cohorts means everyone here is potential cannon fodder for Saga Holidays.

Tonight is the curtain-raiser of the tour for the newly released *North Star* album, with overture *Spider* giving the five male Airs a chance to get into their groove. Cruelly, hyperactive violinist Paul Sax disappears in the sound mix, but guitarist Kirby Gregory is at home and relaxed from the off, coaxing silky guitar runs from his golden axe with ease.

The art of Curved Air involves a painstaking juggle between guitar and keyboard frequencies with frenetic violin and sultry vocals, so balance is paramount. Once Sax's violin becomes audible again, Sonya Kristina arrives. The poster girl is now prog's grand-dame, still blessed with a timeless allure and heady charisma, no-one can take their eyes off her as she powers her way through *It Happened Today*.

Her own songs have a very female slant through the characters she invokes, including the deliciously dreamy *Melinda More Or Less* and the out of control Emily-Jane of *The Purple Speed Queen*, co-written with Gregory. This also extends to the eternal quest for love and affection that *Backstreet Luv* and *Young Mother* convey, an updated version of the latter included on the new album.

Their lyrics now have an endearing naivety but Sonya still sings them with great conviction and honesty. New song *Images And Signs* updates the boy meets girl story to cyberspace. Original drummer



Images and signs: Sonya takes her place as prog's grand-dame.

Florian Pilkington-Miksa drives its hefty rhythm in tandem with bassist Chris Harris, while keyboard player Robert Norton weaves a magical piano through its many nuances.

No song better epitomises modern Air than album opener *Stay Human*, fusing all the core band elements with the plea, in response to current world suffering: 'Open eyes, open heart, open mind.'

The essential balance of frequency remains intact throughout and, with their obvious renewed vigour, it's hard to believe the band, in all its incarnations, has been going for a tremendous 44 years. It only remains for Sax, looking and sounding as though he's been hotwired directly into the National Grid, to signal the end of a captivating show with another blazing Vivaldi finale.

ALISON HENDERSON



"The poster girl is now prog's grand-dame, still blessed with a timeless allure and heady charisma."

It happened today! Curved Air do like to be beside the seaside.



KEVIN NIXON

RUSSIAN CIRCLES

VENUE	EL REY THEATER, LOS ANGELES, US
DATE	10/03/14
SUPPORT	HELM'S ALEE, KEN MODE

There's something about the way Russian Circles present themselves that allows even more intrigue and mystery to flow around them. Backlit by a singular bulb, they appear on stage as dynamic silhouettes thrusting violent barbs of instrumental metal. Some might be more prone to calling the Chicagoan trio a post-rock band but it's the crushing and sinister sound of metal that is crumpling around us here tonight.

Perhaps it's the lack of a singer that makes Russian Circles less of a daunting prospect than the likes of opening band KEN Mode, for instance. The Canadian trio have just as much technical metal prowess in their atmospheric repertoire but the addition of screamed hardcore vocals over the top makes them much less palatable to many. If the vocals distract from their intricate music and political message, that's disappointing for KEN Mode have a lot to say, above and beyond their vocals.

As far from daunting as possible are alt-rockers Helm's Alee. Hailing from Seattle, the grunge sound is evident in their seemingly ramshackle tunes. Melting sludgy stoner rock, post-hardcore and a total sharing of vocal duties, the trio gives off an overwhelming sense of artistic freedom from their music - something that's becoming rarer and rarer.

Russian Circles' set starts with the seething, black metal-infused *309* and *Harper Lewis*, which is tumultuous in its beats and subtle in its picked guitar-work. Both these songs near the ten-minute mark and take us on long-winded musical journeys with a dark sharpness that shows how, while each member stands up to scrutiny, it is as a whole that it all comes to fruition. This is the same set that they've been touring since the release of fifth album, *Memorial* and it's fair to say they've never sounded or looked this good before. It's the kind of performance that 65daysofstatic put on their *Wild Light* tour - one of absolute comfort in their quality.

Tonight it's the encore that many are waiting for. Sargent House label mate, Chelsea Wolfe joins the band to add ethereal, folky vocals on *Memorial*. Under the dimly lit chandeliers, it's a beautiful song in a beautiful setting. The band calms their music down to an intense murmur so her impassioned drone can be heard and fully appreciated before the precise beats of *Youngblood* close the set. In keeping with most of the set, it's a dark ending. This is a band that uses light only to accentuate their beloved darkness and they have done so in dramatic fashion once again.

RAZIQA RAUF

JULIANNA BARWICK

VENUE	FUTURE EVERYTHING FESTIVAL, RNCM, MANCHESTER
DATE	01/04/14 HEADLINE TIM HECKER

The Royal Northern College of Music has long since been a noted habitat for Homo Hipsterus – those wan ladies and moustache-twirling gents of the musical left-field. But tonight the RNCM excels itself. This is Big Beard Central. In addition to hosting Barwick and Hecker as part of the avant-garde Future Everything fest, punters are greeted by an extraordinary Floyd-beating laser installation that uses light to make atonal music. A perfect aperitif, then, for Julianna Barwick's unworldly soundscapes – a delicious mix of Sigur Rós Nordic ice, post-rock minimalism and ambient neo-classical.

Part of Barwick's charm is just how unprepossessing she is. She ambles out onto a stage set consisting of nothing more than a mic, some keys and loop pedals and a desk covered with more electronic spaghetti than a *Big Bang Theory* fan boy's work-station. She simply adds, 'Thanks for having me,' before launching into a set balanced between tunes from her latest album, *Nepenthe* and *The Magic Place*. 'Launch' might seem an overstatement. After all her set basically consists of her icily clear voice, some loops and simple piano. Yet throughout her set – which includes spectral tunes like *The Magic Place*, *Envelop* and *The Harbinger* – a screen shows images of planets and stars, inviting us to connect her work with a space ride the outer limits. But it's her capacity to capture dream states – to place the listener in a state of 'nepenthe', forgetfulness – which is utterly beguiling. Some poets say the voice is the purest guide to the soul. Well, when Barwick opens her beautiful throat and hits the high notes she bypasses language and reaches for something glorious. Both *Bob In Your Gait* and *Forever's* insistent loops and simple piano echoing into eternity are tear-inducingly lovely. With music like this no wonder so few people go to church these days.

Such is Barwick's absorption that she doesn't even notice when there's an irritating influx of noisy punters half-way through *One Half*. She is, then, the still point for orbit. She

leaves the stage as she entered – with a quiet word of thanks and a charming wave.

A word for Tim Hecker too – nominally the headliner, his industrial low-end electronics is like listening to the jet blast from a 747 while trapped in a concrete mixer. I swear Hecker's resonant harmonics draw close to the point where people spontaneously shit themselves. Not an entirely pleasant experience then, but

brilliantly bracing and mildly terrifying.

During the performance we hear one punter say of Barwick, "This is what the future sounds like." I've no idea if there's anything resembling heaven after this life, but if there is, I bloody well hope the band have got Barwick's glorious meditations on the playlist.

RACHEL MANN

Dream girl: Julianna beguiles Manchester's art crowd.



"When Barwick opens her beautiful throat she bypasses language and reaches for something glorious."

SABRINA RAMDOYAL

HIMMEL

VENUE	DALSTON CAFÉ OTO, LONDON
DATE	16/03/14

Just listing the players on this bonkers evening could take up the whole of this review. But if we told you that Henry Cow drummer Chris Cutler, My Bloody Valentine bassist Debbie Goode and ex-Stereolab key player Kath Gifford were among the 29 (give or take a band member) musicians gathered for this event, your curiosity should be piqued. Throw in Chris Anderson, aka Crayola Lectern, Graham Carlow from Britpop oddities David Devant And His Spirit Wife

and Prog's very own Mike Barnes (a former Lemon Kitten doncha know) and that's just the tip of the avant art berg.

With tonight's performance sold out (to the ensemble's amazement), 200 bodies huddle around the contained sprawl of the 23 organists – Casios, Stylophones, Bontempis, whatever can fit on three banks of tables on Café Oto's floor – a couple of Fender Rhodes, Cutler's kit and a bass rig. As *Prog* enters the room, the thrum of the first set is underway. Lasting 30 minutes, the 11/4 time of *Massed Organs* attracts keen attention. In the midst of 'conductor' Richard Miles, doing a grand Magnus Pike move now and again to make sure

everyone can find their cue as Ian Owings' live projections flicker and flow across the throng. Meanwhile, composer and former Towering Inferno man Andy Saunders keeps his head down at a Roland-D5.

As the piece progresses and a cumulative sonic warmth permeates, we're absorbed in the concentration of players, the subtle shifts in tempo or key, the composition unfolding. It's a syncopated drone of thrilling lo-fi minimalism, sub-harmonics layering into a strangely uplifting pitch blend. When it's over, and a 15-minute interval is announced, the air is charged with mild delirium.

Covering for set two, it's Terry Riley

meets NY no wave as abrasive key-stabber Chord Pimmel climbs to the E-chord banger that is *One Bar Blues*. As the glam/garage pounding encircles Cutler's hi-hat frenzy, Chemlab's aptly-named main man Jared Louche leaps up to whoop, evangelize and punctuate every circuit. At this point, each of us is sucked into the overwhelming, magniloquent rhythm (like the woman close by doggedly munching smoky bacon crisps in time to the beat). Bodies jerk, heads shake and as Himmel end on a collective clap-a-long, many of us join in, forgetting we're, like, the audience.

Heavenly work from all involved!

JO KENDALL

BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

VENUE	POMONA GLASSHOUSE, US
DATE	12/03/14
SUPPORT	DEAFHEAVEN, INTRONAUT, THE KINDRED

Having released their wide-ranging debut album, *Life In Lucidity* in 2013, The Kindred displayed the spectrum of their djent-y music within 30 minutes tonight. For the most part, Dave Journeaux's vocals stand up to scrutiny and the intricate guitars layered with keyboards warm the crowd up perfectly well before LA natives, Intronaut bring their space-fuelled heavy prog to the stage. *Harmonicon*, from last year's *Habitual Levitations* is a highlight. Most of the set is taken from that album, in fact because despite having been around for a decade, this has been their moment in the sun, and rightly so. The way Dave Timnick and Sacha Dunable combine and spar means that half an hour is not nearly long enough.

Next up is Deafheaven who, last year, had the dubious privilege of breaking through the perceived boundaries between heavy metal and the mainstream with their second album, *Sunbather*. Leading a grand new generation of shoegaze appreciators, the San Franciscan quintet add black metal to the mix. Live, it's an exercise in pressure and release as the black metal fury personified by energetically grotesque fashion by singer, George Clarke who is accompanied by his almost statuesque bandmates adding the shimmering dreamscape behind. It's a short set by their standards and they can boast a hefty contingent of their own fans here tonight but as they aim to expand their horizons, they have adapted their show without losing a shred of dark intensity.

Lastly, headlining this evening



Tommy BTBAM keeps away from Paul's guitar-slinging menace...

of heavy prog in the suburbs of Los Angeles are Between The Buried And Me. Having performed *Parallax II: Future Sequence* in its entirety on recent tours, tonight we see a true greatest hits set with songs taken from *Alaska* and *Colors*, which pleased their older fans while ensuring plenty of focus on both editions of the *Parallax*. Tommy Giles is in enthusiastic form as he bounces around the stage delivering his barks and growls before settling back in behind his keyboards to sing huge, emotive choruses that are sung back to him by what seems like the whole room. Blake Richardson's drumkit is flanked by two circular screens upon which visuals are projected and Paul

Waggoner remains a constant guitar-slinging menace at stage right with Dustie Waring ambling over from time to time to duel, but it's that switch from death metal to wonky pop and the ease with which they do it that marks BTBAM apart from the rest. It's what makes them truly progressive and it's always a wonder to behold. Playing the new material from start to finish is a wonderful way to celebrate a piece of work but this set, encompassing BTAM's whole career is truly magnificent.

RAZIQA RAUF



"It's that easy switch from death metal to wonky pop that marks BTBAM apart from the rest."



"Pick a support band called Deafheaven, suffer the consequences," says BTBAM's Tommy...

RYAN C ESPINOZA

HAPPENING #1

VENUE	THE CLUNY, NEWCASTLE
DATE	22/03/14

The north-east may not be immediately identifiable as the seat of psychedelia and so approaching this all-day psych-fest, excitement and wariness is in the air. Any trepidation is laid to rest, however, as R A Gray's oddly named one-man operation Girl Sweat appears and plays a set that heralds an apocalypse, like an Aphex Twin of doom. It's reasonable start, showing the surprising nature of psychedelia as both thrilling and a wee bit scary.

Another one-man outfit, Fading Face, from border town Carlisle, come across as part Hendrix, part looping chaos-monger, and with ethereal samples galore he shreds and wah-wahs his way through an eclectic and interesting set. The accompanying visuals are a modern take on the golden years of psych. It's 1967 meets 2014 however and it finds Teesside's The Glass Moths channeling the spirit of Brian Wilson, while echoing of more modern acts like The Inspiral Carpets. They may be more accessible in their sound but their slow-building setlist remains un-introduced so, titleless, we find them a little mysterious and less stimulating.

Fellow Teessiders The Silver Trees are the more glamorous end of the genre, with the effulgent sprite and aptly named Belle Dove on vocals and guitar. Reminiscent of early Fleetwood Mac, pleasant harmonies and a hard-edged rhythm section underpin one of the day's undoubted highlights.

By contrast, Parastatic, from Tyneside, are straight-ahead motorik krautrock, but avoid the clichés by adding a slightly dancey element. Their single *Glaxo Chem* starts to have heads bobbing and even some bodies starting to sway in a three-quarters full Cluny. Suitably lubricated perhaps, the crowd is now beginning to embrace the spirit of the day and an enjoyable set closes with spinning oil show visuals and a maelstrom of white noise.

Anglo-Australian trio Dark Bells are slightly lacklustre and the disappointment in this begins to set in after the relative bliss of Parastatic. They pick up momentum only towards the end.

Everything climaxes with The Cult Of Dom Keller. Closing a day that's mixed in terms of quality but high on ambition and reach, a dark stew of influences from the Cream-like guitar parts to the swirling organ that summons up Ray Manzarek at his most engaging and yet far-out bubbles away like a wonderfully strange brew. Tonight's performance from this Nottingham four-piece is an impressive showing from a group that appear to be soaring upwards, and taking the scary, thrilling and surprising elements of this returning genre to new heights.

Here's to Happening #2.

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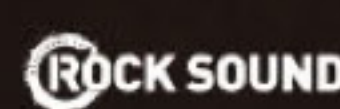
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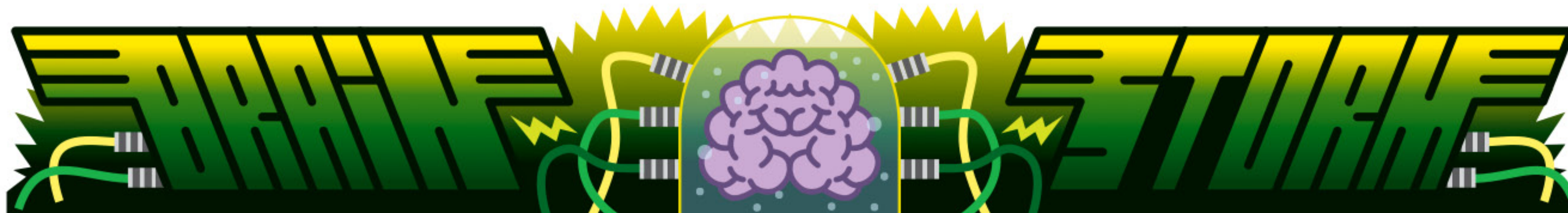
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How well do prog stars know their prog - or themselves? This month we needle

JOHN PETRUCCI Quizzard: Grant Moon



John Petrucci: he's hoping all the answers lie within!

KEVIN NIXON/PROG MAGAZINE/TEAM ROCK

Q1 Dream Theater once performed under the name Nicky Lemons And The Migraines. Which member played the role of Nicky Lemons?

JOHN PETRUCCI: That was Derek [Sherinian]. He'd come out in a boa. It was really funny - we could have been losing our minds!
A: Correct. ✓

Q2 What was unusual about DT's performance at the Sundance club on Long Island on November 17, 1990?

JP: We played without a singer. We didn't have one for a period and that was the premier venue to play, so we played it anyway.
A: Correct. ✓

Q3 DT approached John Arch in 1990 to become their singer. Which band did he formerly front?

JP: Fates Warning, of course. He's an incredible singer. That Arch/Matheos album [*Sympathetic Resonance*] is really cool.
A: Correct. ✓

Q4 Dream Theater's singer James LaBrie used to sing in which hair-metal band?

JP: Winter Rose.
A: Correct. ✓

Q4 'Where soldiers came to hide in barrels filled with wine' is a line from which DT song?

JP: *The Count Of Tuscan*. And just the other day he came to a show in Italy! He and his brother got a real kick out of the song being about them.
A: Correct, and classy! ✓

Q5 What was the number of the dorm you shared with bassist John Myung at Berklee College?

JP: I'm not sure, but we'd practise in rehearsal room E19...
A: That's good trivia, but your dorm was 817.
JP: Ah, that rings a bell. ✓

Q7 You once performed a show at Ronnie Scott's club with special guests. Which Metallica song did you perform with Napalm Death's Barney Greenway?

JP: Holy crap, what did we play? Was it *Battery*?
A: It was *Damage Inc.* ✓

Q8 What's James LaBrie's latest solo album called?

JP: *Impermanent Resonance*. It came out really great.
A: Correct, on both counts. ✓

Q9 Which of your former members once said, "Before an Alice Cooper gig, he would hire strippers. With Dream Theater, we would be practising to metronomes!"?

JP: Sounds like Nicky Lemons to me - definitely Derek.
A: It was! ✓

Q10 Which song on *Images And Words* had the working title *Oliver's Twist*, named after journalist A&R man Derek Oliver?

JP: Was it *Pull Me Under*?
A: Yes. ✓

GENERAL PROG

Q11 Opeth drummer Martín López made his debut with Opeth playing on a cover version of *Remember Tomorrow*, a song by which of Mikael Åkerfeldt's favourite bands?

JP: Iron Maiden. I love that song.
A: Correct. ✓

Q12 Can you name the original 1968 line-up of Rush?

JP: Sure - it was Geddy, Alex and John Rutsey.
A: It was John, Alex and - the guy Geddy replaced - Jeff Jones. 1/2
JP: Who?! Jeff Jones? I did not know that! ✓

Q13 Which two of Rush's albums reached Number Two on the US Billboard album chart?

JP: I'd have to say *Moving Pictures* and *Signals*.
A: *Counterparts* and *Clockwork Angels*.
JP: Ah, nice. Well, that's good to hear. ✓

Q14 Which London underground club opened with residencies from Soft Machine and Pink Floyd?

JP: I have no idea. That's the type of thing I'm horrible at!
A: The UFO Club. ✗

Q15 'And after a while, you can work on points for style/Like the club tie, and the firm handshake.' Lyrics from which Pink Floyd song?

JP: Argh, no - I've been totally tripped up!
A: *Dogs*, from *Animals*. ✗

Q16 In 1985, Dixie Dregs guitarist Steve Morse joined which big US prog rock band?

JP: Kansas.
A: For the *Power* album - correct. ✓

Q17 Which famous producer was working with Yes on their follow-up to *Tormato*, until Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman left the band?

JP: Bob Ezrin?
A: Roy Thomas Baker. ✗

Q18 Steve Howe guested on which Queen song, with his contribution credited as "wandering minstrel guitar"?

JP: [Slightly desperate laughter] You've got to be kidding me! You're killing me, my friend!
A: It was *Innuendo*. ✗

Q19 Who is the only remaining member of the original line-up of Marillion?

JP: Would I be wrong to say Steve Rothery?
A: No you would not! ✓

Q20 And can you name their latest album?

JP: I can't. To be honest, I kind of dropped off around *Brave*.
A: *Sounds That Can't Be Made*. ✗

TOTAL: 11½/20

"[Genial laughter] I'm so embarrassed! I'm always dreadful at this kind of thing. My whole music trivia knowledge is awful."

Brainstorm League 2014

Guy Manning - 18½

Rich Hinks - 16½

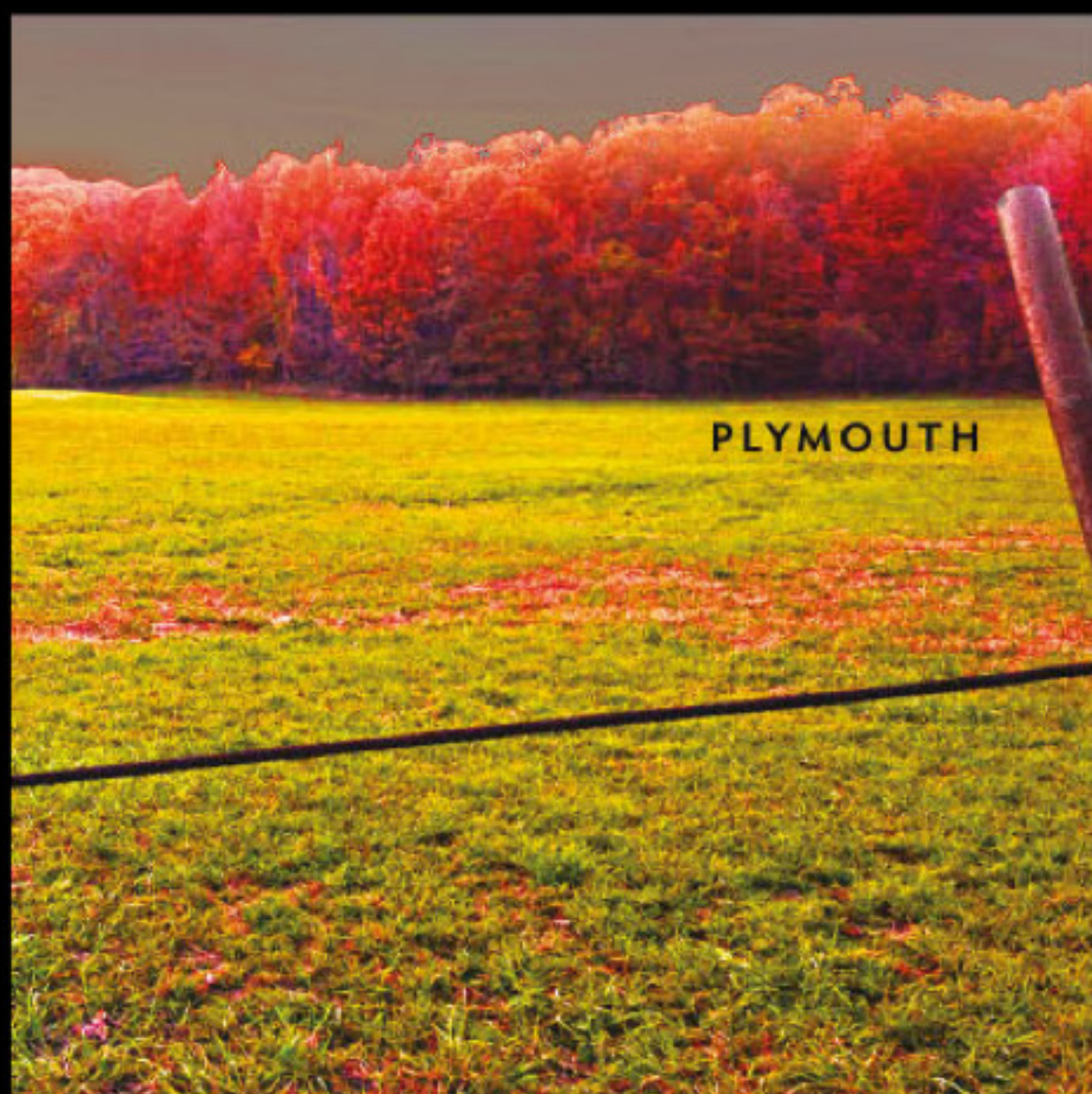
Mark Kelly - 11½

John Petrucci - 11½



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- Un suggestivo viaggio lungo 40 anni vissuti attraverso gli occhi e le esperienze di musica e di vita di un gruppo di giovanissimi "PROG-ROCKERS" italiani.
- I loro ruggenti inizi in una stagione meravigliosa, i primi concerti, Rimini 1973, il loro percorso lontano dalle grandi e luminose ribalte, ma sempre orgogliosi protagonisti, quasi in controluce, di un affascinantissimo e multiforme movimento musicale. Uno speciale su "Gerbrand" opera Rock.
- I primi riconoscimenti internazionali, le amicizie coltivate con famosissimi colleghi dell'universo Prog, concerti, partecipazioni illustri, anniversari, cene e dopo-cene, indiscrezioni e bisbocce.
- Tournè, viaggi, sale di registrazione, partecipazioni e tributi e una galleria di

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Testo in lingua italiana con traduzioni in multilingue presto disponibili in apposita sessione sul sito www.capgroup.it

- Nr. 2 audio CD con il recupero di outtakes, bonus tracks, alternativ mix, special e limited edition, "other languages" compreso un prezioso "best of" del loro percorso quarantennale risuonato oggi con strumenti vintage.

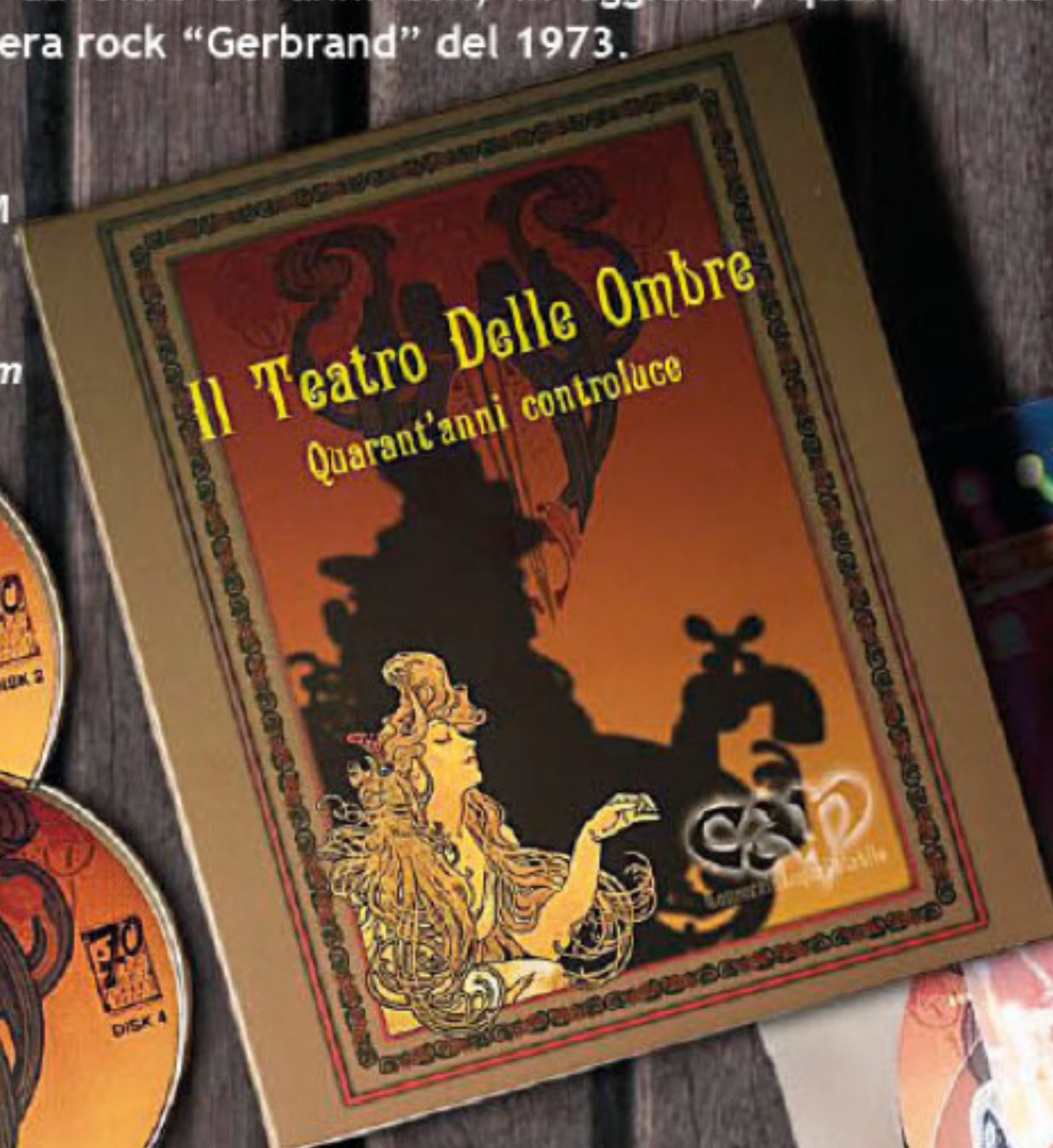
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Via Roma 104
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mail: assodnf70@gmail.com



In distribuzione: BTF Srl
info@btf.it