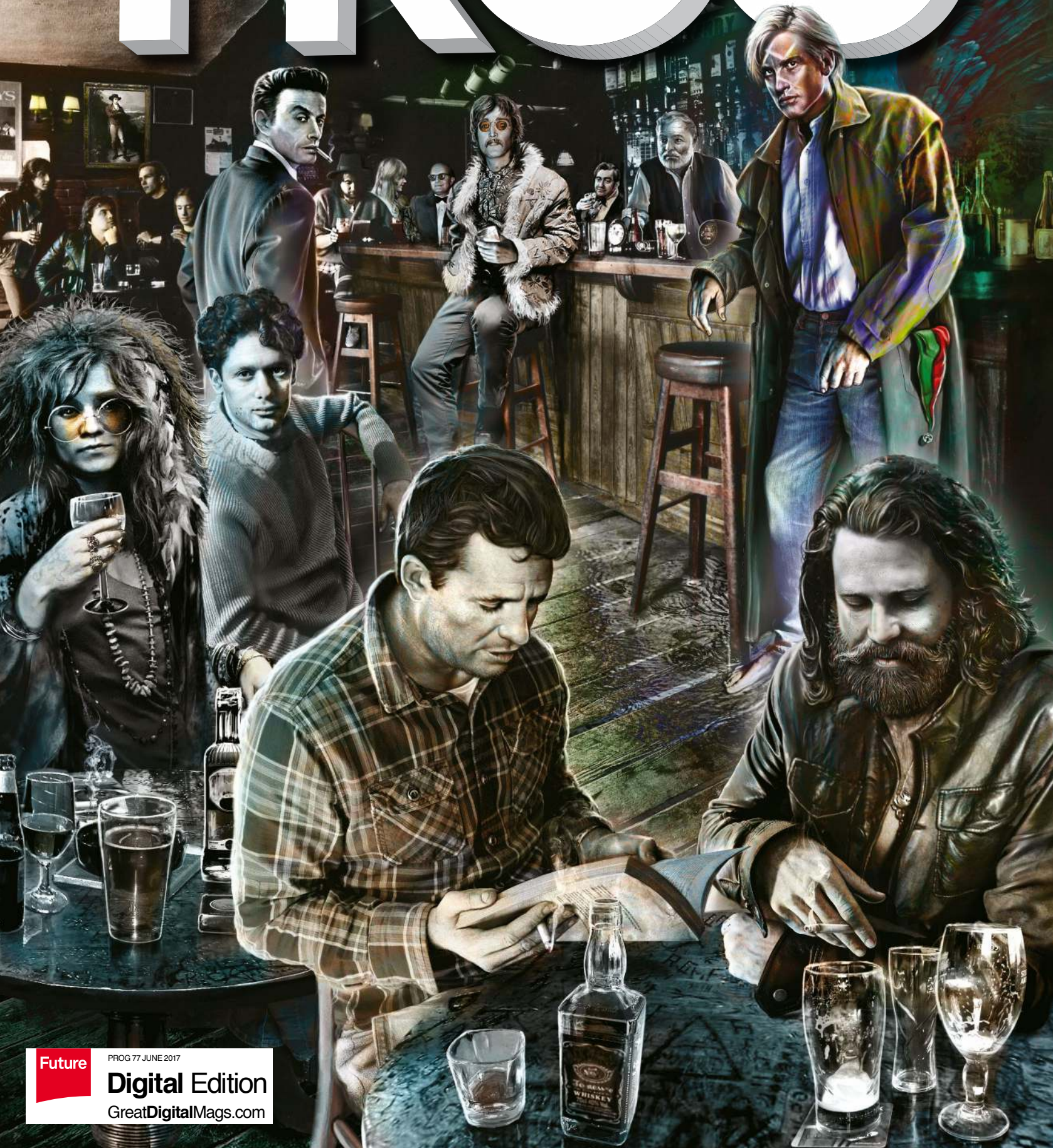


PROG

ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC



Future

PROG 77 JUNE 2017

Digital Edition

GreatDigitalMags.com

The definitive remasters series of deluxe reissues in hardback covers with 3 CD's featuring the original albums remastered by Calum Malcolm (now available: 'Field of Crows' remixed by Chris Kimsey), rare demos & live versions with sleeve designs by Mark Wilkinson containing photo & extensive sleevenotes by Fish

"If you're a Fish-ophile you'll relish swimming in the vast ocean of demos, instrumentals and live tracks that engorge these lovingly designed packages. Yet it's his intensity and his theatre that keep them aflame."

PROG Magazine



"Sunsets On Empire co-written & produced by Steven Wilson, one of his first high profile gigs outside 'No Man' and 'Porcupine Tree'. The pairing of Fish's candour and wordplay & Wilson's rhythms and reveries merits critical rehabilitation"



"Field of Crows sounds like the work of a man who'd just discovered his mojo kicking back in - with Chris Kimsey's remix the album positively booms. It's another snapshot of Fish's still evolving musical story and one image that maybe we should have all lingered a little longer over at the time"



"Fellini Days is a confident, reassuringly complex record that plays to many of Fish's greatest strengths. An often overlooked album 'Fellini Days' has aged gracefully"



"Raindogs with Zippos startlingly blending melody and mood with that flair for drama at which Fish excels. Fish possibly hasn't been given due credit for his ambition and diverse sonic palettes"



Moveable Feast: 4 cd's featuring 2 full shows with extensive set lists from Karlsruhe and Wurzburg, Germany recorded on the 'Feast of Consequences' European tour 2013-14 - **NOW AVAILABLE**



Farewell to Childhood: 2 cd's featuring a complete show from Warsaw and a DVD filmed in Berlin on the 2015-2016 European tour. Mixed and mastered by Calum Malcolm **NOW AVAILABLE**

Only available on mail order from his official website: fishheadsclub.com and from Amazon

'Weltschmerz / Clutching at Straws' 2017 UK Tour December featuring tracks from Fish's new studio album scheduled for release in 2018 and a final full performance of his last album with Marillion on its 30th anniversary

Fri 8: Leeds Uni | Sat 9: Manchester O2 Ritz | Sun 10: Leamington Assembly (special guest Doris Brendel)

Tue 12: Cardiff Tramshed | Wed 13: Bristol O2 Academy | Fri 15/Sat 16/Sun 17th (extra date now): London Islington Assembly rooms

Tues 19: Cambridge Corn Exchange (special guest Lazuli)

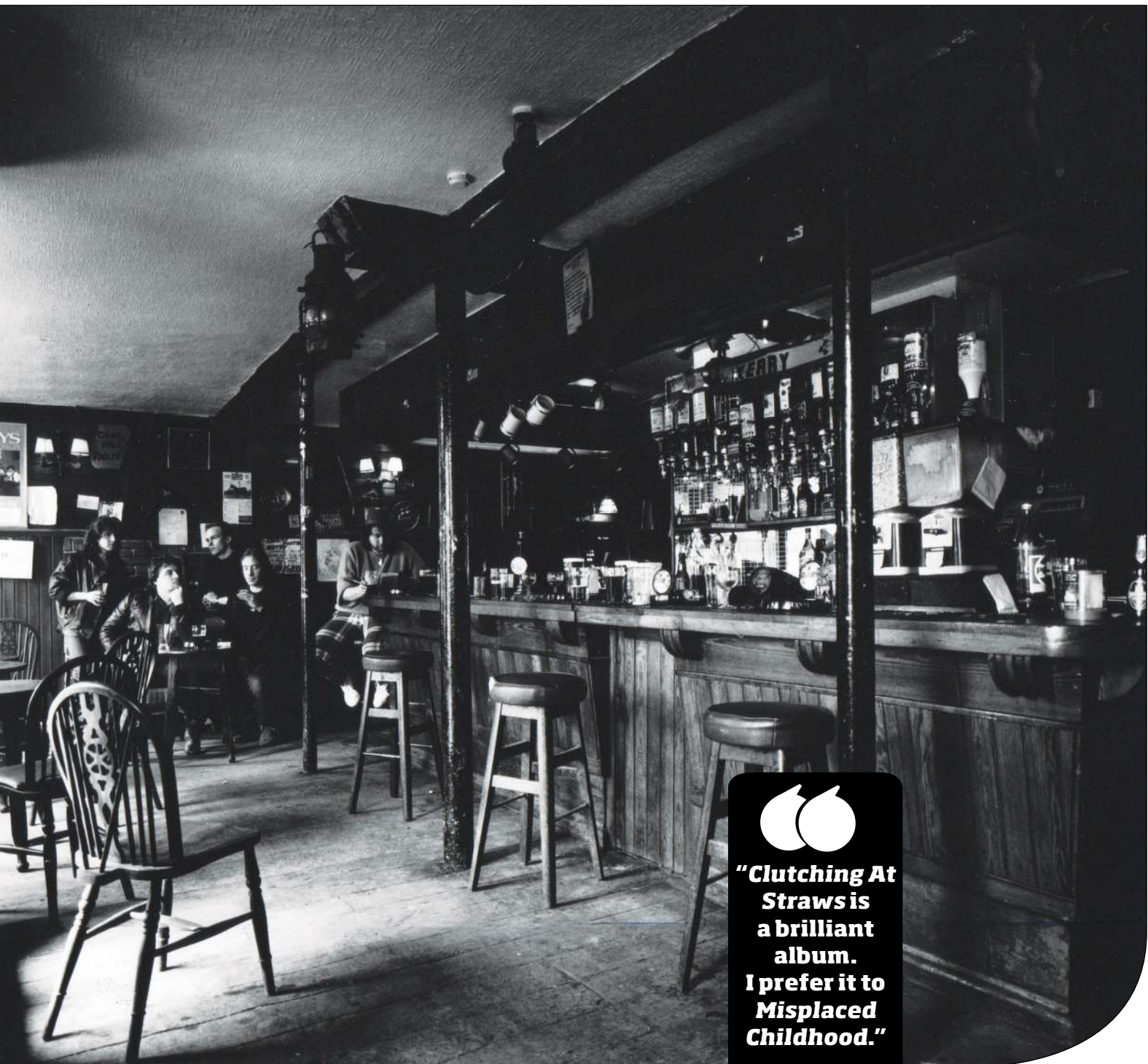
Wed 20: Newcastle Wylam Brewery | Thurs 21: Glasgow O2 ABC (special guest Doris Brendel)

Tickets available now from usual outlets

Contents

ISSUE 77 25.05.17

IF IT'S IN THERE IT'S ON HERE



COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON AND JANIS VAN HULF TEREN



**"Clutching At
Straws is
a brilliant
album.
I prefer it to
Misplaced
Childhood."**

Marillion p34

The inside story of how the band fell apart making *Clutching At Straws*...

Contents

REGULARS

BLOODY WELL WRITE pg 10

Missives, musings and tweets from Planet Prog.

THE INTRO pg12

Steven Wilson returns with the brand new album *To The Bone*, and there's the very latest news from Paul Draper, Kraftwerk, Enslaved, The Tangent, Gong Expresso, Cosmograf and more.

RECORD COLLECTION pg 30

We all know actor Stephen Mackintosh from TV's *Luther* and *Lucky Man*. Now we know he loves his prog, too!

Q&A pg 32

Guy Manning tells all about his new prog rock collective Damarek...

THE OUTER LIMITS pg 66

They're young and full of psych. But as they pepper conversations about their new album with names like Kevin Ayers and Caravan, we need to ask: how prog are Temples?

THE PROG INTERVIEW pg 92

Guitar sensation Allan Holdsworth sadly died suddenly last month. But just prior to that, *Progsat* down with him and discussed his wonderful career.

THE MUSICAL BOX pg 98

Anathema are back with new album *The Optimist*, plus there are releases from Nad Sylvan, Roger Waters, Can, ELP, Jethro Tull, Valdez, Isildurs Bane, Arcadea, Valerian Swing and more...

TAKE A BOW pg 118

Dream Theater return to the UK, plus *Prog* heads off to see Heather Findlay, Lonely Robot, Eddie Jobson, Steve Hackett, Magenta, 10cc, Soen, Wolverine, Richard Barbieri and more.

MY PROG pg 130

Pallas bass player Graeme Murray welcomes us into his own prog rock world.

FEATURES

Anathema _____ Pg 46

The Liverpool proggers are really toying with conceptuality on their new album.

Galley Beggar _____ Pg 52

The folky prog rockers who are more heavy prog rockers, apparently...

Roger Waters _____ Pg 54

Old Rog is still raging at the world. But he also wants to talk about love songs.

Sólstafir _____ Pg 58

The Icelandic prog metallers tell us how they battled through hard times.

Public Service

Broadcasting _____ Pg 62

Chart prog stars turn their attention to life in Welsh mining valleys on new album.

Lonely Robot _____ Pg 70

No celeb pals on board this time. Just some great prog music from Mr John Mitchell and band.

Procol Harum _____ Pg 74

Prog legends celebrate 50th Anniversary with great new album.

ELP _____ Pg 78

Surviving member Carl Palmer talks about the band's latest reissues.

Voivod _____ Pg 82

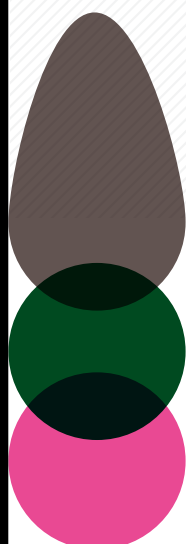
How they evolved from hardcore metallers to pioneering prog rockers.

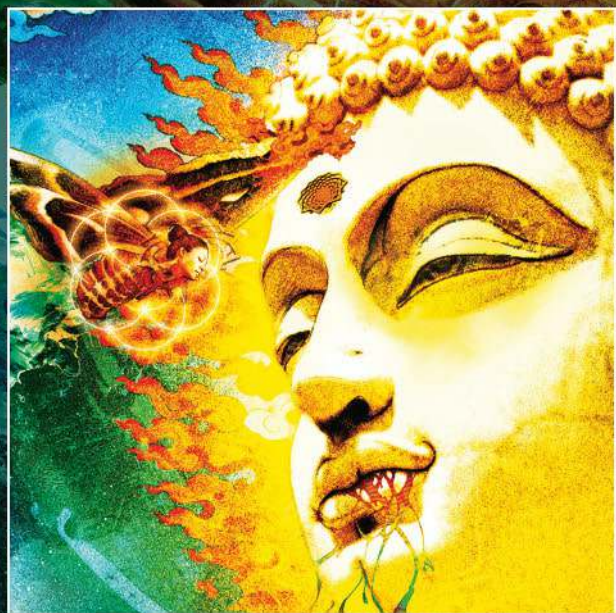
Voyager _____ Pg 86

Aussie prog metallers are back with a cracking new album packed with catchy killer tunes.

Be Prog! My Friend _____ Pg 90

Your ultimate guide to this summer's hottest prog ticket.





RIKARD SJÖBLOM'S GUNGFY

ON HER JOURNEY TO THE SUN

Out Now!

Gungfly is the musical solo outlet of **Rikard Sjöblom** (Big Big Train), the multi-instrumentalist madman behind the microphone of the now-legendary **BEARDFISH**

"a keen pop sensibility that punctuates multifaceted suites with irresistible hooks" - **Prog Magazine**

Also available as CD Digipak (incl. "Best Of Gungfly" bonus disc) and as 180g gatefold 2LP vinyl edition (incl. album on CD)



Nad Sylvan
The Bride Said No

Nad Sylvan

The Bride Said No

In Stores May 26th, 2017

Feat. **Steve Hackett** (ex-Genesis), **Tony Levin** (King Crimson, Peter Gabriel, Stick Men), **Jonas Reingold** (The Flower Kings, Kaipa, Karmakanic), **Nick D'Virgilio** (Spock's Beard) and many more!

Also available as CD Digipak and as 180g 2 LP Gatefold Edition with etching on side 4 (incl. the album on CD)

On tour with **Steve Hackett** across the globe throughout 2017!

LONELY ROBOT

THE BIG DREAM

OUT NOW!

THE MUCH ANTICIPATED SECOND ALBUM FROM PRODUCER, GUITARIST AND VOCALIST **JOHN MITCHELL** (IT BITES, FROST*).

FEATURING **CRAIG BLUNDELL** (STEVEN WILSON) ON DRUMS.

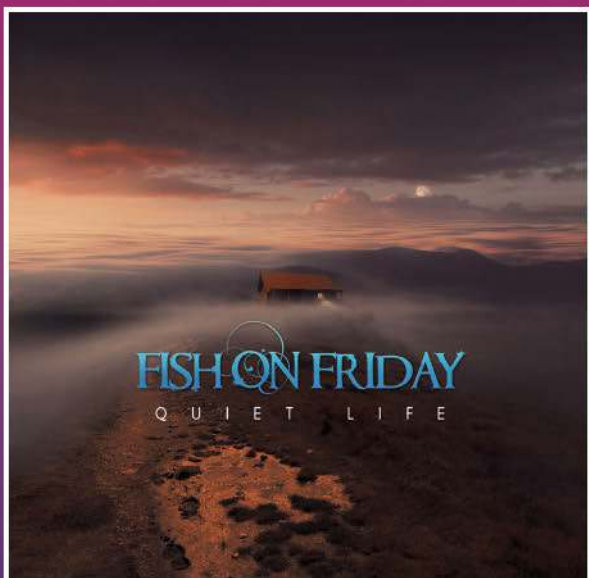
"HEAVY ON DRAMA, BIG ON HOOKS... QUITE LITERALLY OUT OF THIS WORLD."
- **PROG MAGAZINE**

AVAILABLE AS SPECIAL EDITION CD DIGIPAK (WITH 3 BONUS TRACKS), GATEFOLD BLACK 2LP + CD & DIGITAL DOWNLOAD.

SEE LONELY ROBOT LIVE IN 2017!

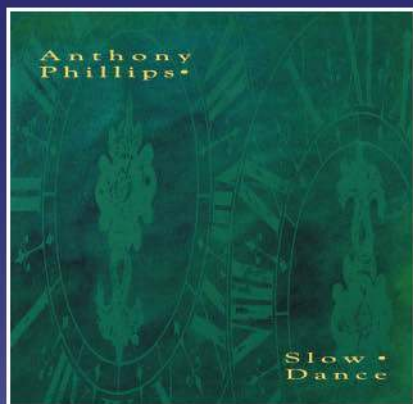
SAT 27 MAY - TRINITY LIVE, ASSEMBLY ROOMS, LEAMINGTON SPA





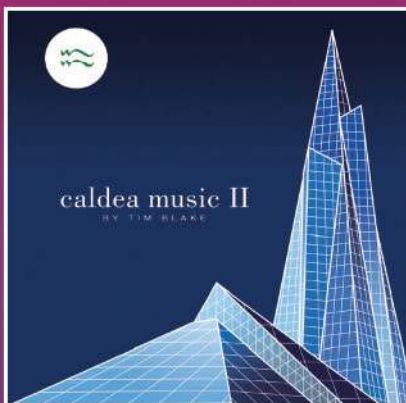
FISH ON FRIDAY 'QUIET LIFE'

- The excellent new album by progressive rock band Fish on Friday.
- Featuring Alan Parsons, Nick Beggs (Mute Gods / Steven Wilson / Lifesigns / Steve Hackett) & Theo Travis (Soft Machine Legacy / Steven Wilson / Robert Fripp).



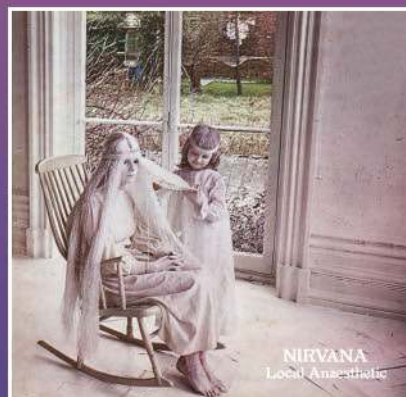
ANTHONY PHILLIPS 'SLOW DANCE'

- Released in 1990, the album is regarded by aficionados of Anthony's music as one of his finest and a two part orchestral rock suite which reflects him at his best and most imaginative.
- This new 3 disc digipack deluxe edition of the album features a newly remastered original stereo mix and a 5.1 Surround sound mix by Simon Heyworth, (on an NSTC / Region Free DVD), along with a CD of previously unreleased "Slow Dance" Vignettes. It includes a lavishly illustrated booklet that fully restores the original album artwork and features a new essay by Jon Dann.



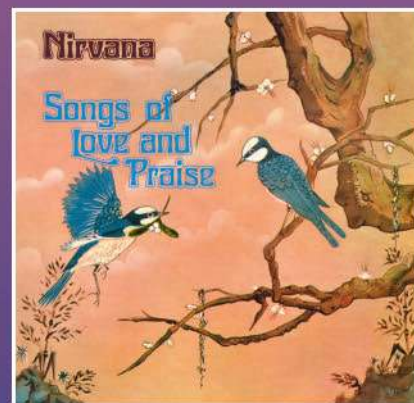
TIM BLAKE 'CALDEA MUSIC II'

- Unavailable for many years (and highly sought after by collectors), "Caldea Music II" has been newly re-mastered and features a booklet with a new essay and fully restores the original album artwork.



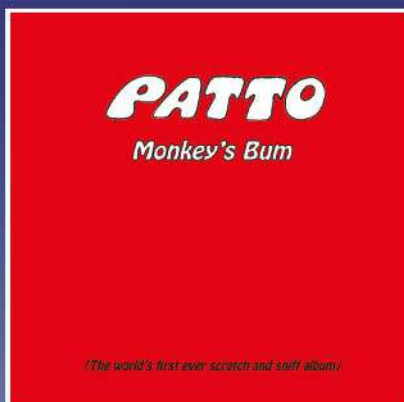
NIRVANA 'LOCAL ANAESTHETIC'

- New remastered & expanded release of the legendary album by UK band Nirvana originally issued on the Vertigo label in 1971.
- With two bonus tracks previously unreleased on CD.



NIRVANA 'SONGS OF LOVE AND PRAISE'

- New remastered & expanded release of the legendary album by UK band Nirvana originally issued in 1972.
- With two bonus tracks previously unreleased on CD.



PATTO 'MONKEY'S BUM'

- First ever officially sanctioned remastered & expanded release of the legendary unissued album by Patto recorded in 1973.
- With three previously unreleased bonus tracks.

Also available:

"Patto", Hold Your Fire (2 CD set), 'Roll 'Em Smoke 'Em, Put Another Line Out'.





"Now we were in the Premier League the label didn't want us to turn into fucking Leicester City."

Fish



STEVE BOTHERY FROM POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD. POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD BOOK AVAILABLE AT [HTTP://MARILLION.COM/SHOP/MERCH/POSTCARDSFROMTHEROAD.HTM](http://marillion.com/shop/merch/postcardsfromtheroad.htm)



It would be interesting, I think, to conduct a straw poll on how Marillion fans now feel about arguably the two giant albums of the Fish-era, *Misplaced Childhood* and follow-up *Clutching At Straws*. Popular mythology would suggest that the former would be the out and out winner. The album that turned the band into “the unlikeliest pop stars of the decade”. After all, it reached No. 1 and spawned the band’s biggest singles.

But we can be a mournful lot, us prog fans. Dish out a sad, melancholic, against the odds tale and we’re just as likely to love you for all eternity. And that, dear readers, is where *Clutching At Straws* comes in. It’s Fish’s “drunken poet” album, that tugs on the heartstrings with its sorry tales set against a timelessly classy musical background.

Thirty years on, Dave Everley, a man who knows what side of the *Misplaced/Clutching* fence he sits, gets to grips with the story of the band’s 1987 album: a dark masterpiece that ripped the band apart (p 34). I think you’ll agree, it’s a gripping tale.

Of course, covering *Clutching At Straws* allowed album artist Mark Wilkinson to finally present the artwork as he originally intended before oppressive record company deadlines curtailed his plans. He kindly created the cover of this issue as he and the band intended the album cover to look.

We’ve also given you this artwork as a huge double-sided Marillion poster this issue and thrown in a free copy of the programme for the forthcoming Be Prog! My Friend festival in Barcelona this June. We’re going. Hopefully we will see some of you there as well?

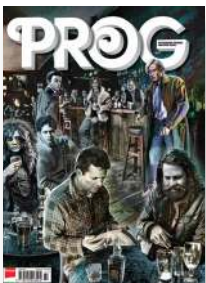
There are also big interviews with Roger Waters, Anathema, ELP, Procol Harum, Lonely Robot, Public Service Broadcasting, Voivod, Sólstafir, Voyager and more. And one of the late Allan Holdsworth’s final ever interviews. Hope you enjoy the read.

We’re back June 30. Until then, as always, prog on...



Jerry Ewing - Editor

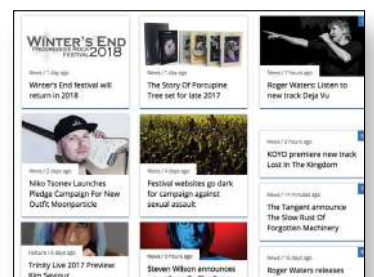
You can subscribe to Prog at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/PROG. See page 116 for further details.



FIND
US
ON-
LINE

progmagazine.com

Get your daily fix of prog news and features at www.progmagazine.com



ROCKIN' THE CITY OF ANGELS

Celebrating the Great Rock Shows of the 1970s
In Concert, On Record, and On Film

IN THIS LAVISHLY ILLUSTRATED celebration of classic and progressive rock bands of the 1970s, author Doug Harr shares his vivid memories of the mind-altering rock spectacles he witnessed in his hometown of Los Angeles—the City of Angels—at the genesis of a new art form. Get a front-row seat at three-dozen spectacular concerts and the albums that spawned them. Revisit these legendary records and concerts along with reviews of the best video documents of the era, each band illuminated by a hand-picked collection of brilliant images—most never-before seen—by the era's best rock photographers. This 396-page hardcover book features over 600 images. Foreword by Armando Gallo.



AVAILABLE NOW!

Burning Shed, Amazon.com, and

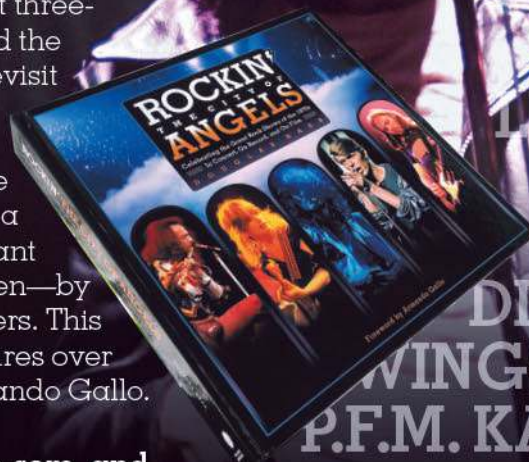
GonzoMultimedia.co.uk, www.diegospadeproductions.com

[@diego_spade](https://twitter.com/diego_spade)

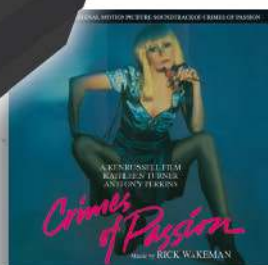


diegospadeproductions.com

PETER GABRIEL GENESIS
KING CRIMSON RUSH
JETHRO TULL CAMEL
YES GENTLE GIANT
PINK FLOYD ZAPPA
QUEEN DAVID BOWIE
THE WHO KANSAS
EMERSON
LAKE & PALMER
LED ZEPPELIN E.L.O.
ROLLING STONES
ELTON JOHN STYX
DIXIE DREGS HEART
WINGS HAPPY THE MAN
P.F.M. KATE BUSH & MORE!



Rick Wakeman Crimes of Passion



Box Set Content:

CD

DVD/BluRay

Signed/numbered Certificate

8 x Repro Lobby Cards

A6 Repro Japanese

Press Pack

A3 Repro poster

Repro Press Release

Distributed by



ALL THESE AND MUCH
MORE AVAILABLE FROM:

**GONZO
MULTIMEDIA**

www.gonzomultimedia.co.uk

Don Airey

K2 – Tales of Triumph and Tragedy



Box Set Content:

CD (with 7 previously unreleased bonus tracks)

DVD (contains new performances, interview footage and original EPK)

Signed and Numbered Certificate

Repro Press Pack

Repro Promo Photo

A4 Map of K2



PLEDGEMUSIC

Bloody Well Write

Send your letters to us at: *Prog*, Future Publishing, 1-10 Praed Mews, London W2 1QY, or email prog@futurenet.com. We regret that we cannot reply to phone calls. For more comment and prog news and views, find us on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/progmagazine) under *Prog*.

LIST OF LOVE

Firstly, may I confess that I am an occasional reader of *Prog*, rather than a regular reader (typically two to three issues per year). I have a wide range of musical interests but prog rock is one of the major ones.

What attracted me to the March issue [*Prog* 75] was the inclusion of a list: the top 100 tracks as chosen by your readers. This is a double plus for me, and I quickly found the article and headed for the end of the list. Providing *Musical Box* and/or *Supper's Ready* were in the top three the list is validated (in my opinion). Now with more time, I slowly read through the list, ticking off many cherished tracks from just under 50 years of listening and collecting.

I already have 67 of the chosen tracks in my vinyl/CD collection, but the good news is that there are 33 tracks that I don't have, including 13 bands/artists currently outside my collection.

The only band clearly missing from the list (again in my opinion) is Wishbone Ash. Although these are perhaps considered on the edge of prog rock, they are surely closer to the genre than The Beatles (apologies if this is heresy). Having said that, I didn't vote, so I shouldn't really complain.

Congratulations to you and your readers for a fantastic list.

This will keep me busy for a good few months and aid the expansion of my collection.

Alan Gascoyne

WUTHERING FIGHTS

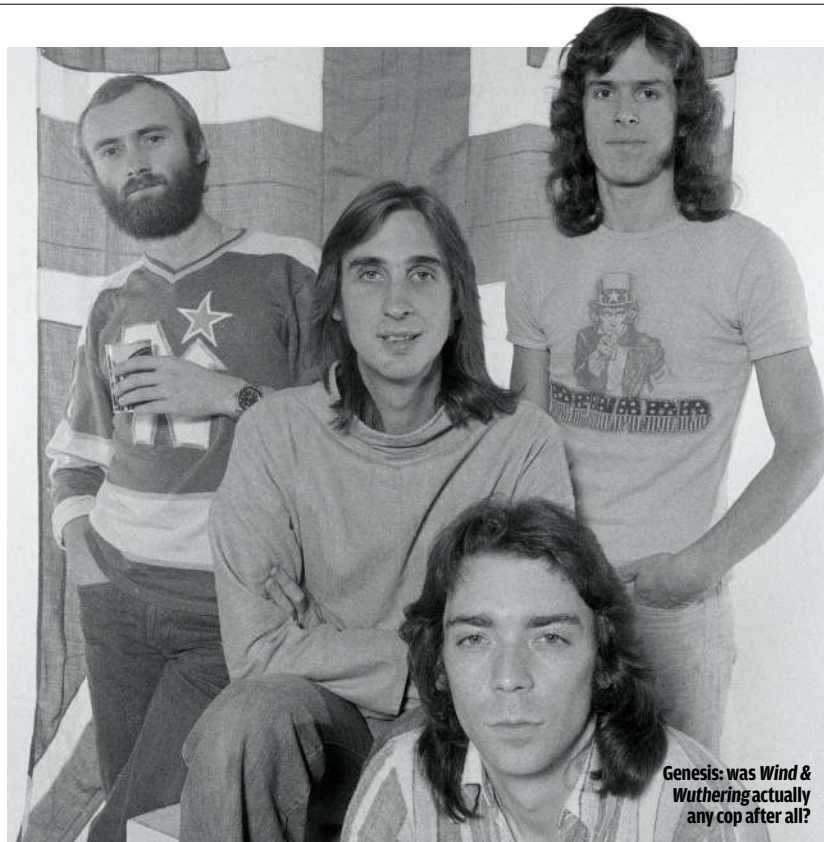
Should we really be celebrating the 40th anniversary of that flimsy slice of prog-lite *Wind & Wuthering*? At the time us fans and those critics who hadn't defected to that most pretentious of art forms, punk rock, were desperately trying to see something significant in the album, but what we were really thinking was: "Are the four guys responsible for this lightweight, shiny pap really the same ones who made *Lamb*?"

Even back in the day when it involved physically moving the stylus, with all its attendant risks, I still skipped the more toe-curling tracks on the album. These



Our Greatest Prog Anthems: inspiring debate among readers.

Wind & Wuthering: "A flimsy slice of prog-lite."



Genesis: was *Wind & Wuthering* actually any cop after all?

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

days there are even vaster tracts of material that you just wouldn't want to play if someone else was about, the supposedly full-on prog tracks of *Earl Of Mar* and *One For The Vine* having aged poorly.

Wot Gorilla? isn't in the toe-curling category, but with his Brand X project, why did Phil Collins feel the need to put such a watered-down version of fusion on a Genesis album? Totally out of place and insubstantial.

Why did Mike Rutherford take a reasonably serviceable acoustic track and put in that terrible title and chorus?

Afterglow used to be, I have to admit, something of a guilty pleasure, but these days it just seems empty, superficial and cringeworthy compared to the depth and melancholy of melodies such as *The Lamia*.

It's only the three tracks on the second side that Steve Hackett contributed to that have lasted well, so maybe he

shouldn't feel too bad about his lack of representation. Although what he was doing trying to get *Please Don't Touch* and *Hoping Love Will Last* on the album goodness knows – superior to most of the *Wind & Wuthering* material but not Genesis tracks, I suppose that's why he had to go.

The received wisdom at the time was that *A Trick Of The Tail* was a "safe, solid album" and *Wind & Wuthering* was now their first proper full prog effort after Peter Gabriel's departure. But *Trick* has fared better down the years and if they'd learned from it and dropped the silly farce type songs like *Robbery*, *Mouse* and the dirges like *Ripples* they might have become something different but still interesting. We all know what really happened next, with frustratingly just enough material of genuine interest occasionally surfacing to make you think what might have been.

Steve Whiteside

TWEET TALK

follow us on twitter.com/progmagazineUK

KAVUS TORABI
@Knifeworld
I've never had a naked lunch but I did once have a salad without any dressing.

DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN
@TDEP
Hey Australia have your shit together in October.



JAKKO M JAKSZYK
@JakkoJ
NY Sep 2013. Allan gave me a big hug & told those around how great I was. Compared to him, I said, I was but a beginner – with no strings!



LETTER

After reading Stephen Hughes' letter [Prog 76], as well as the letter from Alan Atkinson to which he refers [Prog 75], I felt compelled to write on the subject of audience and musical taste. Stephen assumes that, "The bulk of your readers would be in the more 'mature' age bracket," and, therefore, prefer that the magazine devote more column width to "older prog." Alan makes the same point: that, if you were to include more coverage of bands from the 70s and 80s, "Perhaps you would sell more copies, given the nature of your readership."

Firstly, in terms of audience, I have no idea how they've reached the conclusion that the majority your readers fall within their own age group. I don't, and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Secondly, why this false correlation between age and taste? Last month I went to see Haken with my Dad, who is 69 years young. He is as devoted a fan of Haken as I am.

His age has nothing to do with his taste in music.

Finally, in my opinion, one of the great qualities of Prog magazine is that it provides a vital platform for new talent. I have discovered so many fantastic contemporary prog bands thanks to the magazine, free CD and the much missed Prog Magazine Show. The features on new and up-and-coming bands are the reason why I have been a subscriber for the last five years.

Jerry and his team have worked hard to achieve a balance of the old and new, which would suggest they have an informed understanding of their audience, as opposed to making assumptions on age and bizarrely associated limits of taste.

Karen I, Kent

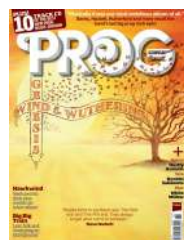
You'll be pleased to hear that the Prog Magazine Radio Show will be back in business very soon! — Dep Ed

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

HACKETT MEMORIES

Having just received the latest copy of your fine magazine, my eyes were drawn to the quote by Steve Hackett on the front cover: "People tend to say there was 'The Pete era' and 'The Phil era'. They always forget what came in between."

Four years ago my wife and I saw him on the Genesis Revisited tour, and were lucky enough to meet the great man himself before the show. I regaled/bored him with the fact that my wife and I had first met after a Genesis concert 40 years previously! He remembered that he and the band had all been a bit apprehensive, as the concert had been postponed due to electrical problems on the scheduled night, and wondered what sort of reception a possibly disgruntled Glasgow audience would give them. (They needn't have worried.)



Issue 76: Steve Hackett's cover quote didn't do the great man justice.

During the concert itself, my wife turned to me and said, "I see what you mean, now."

Me: "What are you talking about?"

Her: "You've always said that Genesis lost more when they lost Steve Hackett than when they lost Peter Gabriel."

Brian Johnston

TV CREAM

Sid Smith's little item on pre-internet prog discoveries brought back many memories. By far the most significant for me was the chance encounter of Yes on ITV's *Magpie* in 1968 (December 31 to be precise — many thanks IMDb). This was the one and only time I watched this programme. Yes played their innovative cover of *Something's Coming*, which was the first jaw-dropping musical moment for me. This pre-dated the release of the first album by many months. Although this album has been dismissed by some for its many covers, it is still an awesome debut which I wore thin at the time by repeated playing and still sounds fresh to this day. Yes' main TV boost came when *Top Of The Pops* started an LP slot, a brief reaction to LPs outselling singles during the early 70s. *The Yes Album* received a significant boost up the charts after Yes' appearance, as did bands such as, to dredge the depths of my memory, Osibisa and Groundhogs. They did not have quite the staying power of Yes. Ah, happy days.

Rob Tough



Yes: popping up on *Magpie* in 1968 forged a lifelong fan.

GILLES PETARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

CRAIG BLUNDELL

@craigblundell
A daily walk in a different place, today it was the beautiful Harrold-Odell Country Park and Heron Island #WeekOff #Geek #NonDrummingTweet



RICK WAKEMAN

@GrumpyOldRick
My grandkids call me Spider-Man. Not because I'm a superhero but because they say I can't get out the bath. I'm about to test their theory.

PROG

1-10 PRAED MEWS, LONDON W2 1QY

Email prog@futurenet.com

twitter.com/ProgMagazineUK

You can also find us on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/ProgMagazine) under Prog

EDITORIAL

Editor Jerry Ewing

Deputy Editor Hannah May Kilroy

Art Editor Russell Fairbrother

News Editor Natasha Scharf

Reviews Editor Jo Kendall

Lives Editor Malcolm Dome

Sub Editor Jayne Nelson

Designer John Woolford

CONTRIBUTORS

Joe Banks, Mike Barnes, Geoff Barton, Mark Blake, Chris Cope, Isere Lloyd-Davis, Stephen Dalton, Steve Davis, Daryl Easlea, Briony Edwards, Dave Everley, Ian Fortnam, Pete Fowler, Polly Glass, Paul Henderson, Iris Hidding, Rob Hughes, Stephen Humphries, Emma Johnston, David Keevill, Dom Lawson, Paul Lester, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Roger Lotring, Alex Lynham, Rachel Mann, Rhodri Marsden, Clay Marshall, Julian Marszalek, Giulia Mascheroni, Ben Myers, Greg Moffitt, Kris Needs, Kevin Nixon, Matt Parker, Steve Pilkington, Chris Roberts, Paul Sexton, Jonathan Selzer, Johnny Sharp, Nick Shilton, Sid Smith, Joseph Stannard, Rick Wakeman, Phil Weller, David West, Mark Wheatley, Philip Wilding, Rich Wilson, Sarah Worsley, Holly Wright

Cover Mark Wilkinson

ADVERTISING

Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove

clare.dove@futurenet.com

Advertising Director Helen Walledge

helen.walledge@futurenet.com

Advertising Manager Kate Colgan

kate.colgan@futurenet.com

Account Director Anastasia Meldrum

anastasia.meldrum@futurenet.com

Account Director Lee Mann

lee.mann@futurenet.com

MARKETING

Head of Brand and Trade Marketing Nada Khalil

Brand Manager Emma Clapp

Head of Subscriptions Sharon Todd

Circulation Director Darren Pearce

PRODUCTION

Production Controller Keely Miller

Production Manager Mark Constance

Printed in the UK by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future.

Distributed by Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU.

MANAGEMENT

Creative Director, Magazines Aaron Asadi

Finance and Operations Director, Magazines Marco Peroni

Editorial Director Paul Newman

Art and Design Director Ross Andrews

Editor-in-Chief Scott Rowley

Business Operations Manager Alex Burrows

LICENSING

Senior Licensing & Syndication Manager Matt Ellis

Matt.Ellis@futurenet.com

+44 (0)1225 442244

SUBSCRIPTIONS

+44(0)344 848 2852

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/PROG

All contents © 2017 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored, transmitted or used in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price and other details of products or services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any changes or updates to them.

If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.



Future is an award-winning international media group and leading digital business. We reach more than 57 million international consumers a month and create world-class content and advertising solutions for passionate consumers online, on tablet & smartphone and in print.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR). www.futureplc.com

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Chief financial officer Penny Ladkin-Brand

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

INTRO

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

Space Transmission:
Wilson on location at Chile's
Paranal Observatory.
Below: the new album.



NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH...

Three singles, a “pop” record and an almost major label deal? It’s a brave new world for Steven Wilson with upcoming album *To The Bone*..

► **Steven Wilson returns** with a new album, a new label and the announcement of a 2018 European tour. Titled *To The Bone*, Wilson’s fifth solo record will emerge on August 18 on Caroline Records — home to Peter Gabriel, Iggy Pop and Underworld — and although it’s not a concept record there is a theme: the era of post-truth.

“Looking around at the world today, it’s hard not to feel some sense of disenchantment at everything that’s going on,” Wilson tells *Prog*. “Not just politics, but the way people are with each other — very rude and aggressive, intolerant. It seems like something’s gone terribly wrong.

“*To The Bone* is the first song on the record and it seemed the right title,” he continues. “It’s about how truth



**“I’ve realised
that I do
have a strong
personality and
I don’t need to
hide it anymore.”**

is now a flexible notion. In the post-Trump era, truth can be twisted and used to support whatever argument you care to put across. *To The Bone* was a cry from the heart to say: 'Please can we get to the one truth, the reality here, because I can't tell anymore.'

Wilson began to write *To The Bone* in 2015 while on tour for *Hand.Cannot.Erase.*, amassing songs that were whittled to 11 and recorded and co-produced in December with Paul Stacey (Oasis, Black Crowes) at his studio in Clapham. The songs are more melodic than previous work and (relatively) upbeat, inspired by Wilson's favourite 80s pop records. "This isn't me being nostalgic," he says. "As I've gotten older, my listening diet has changed and I've gotten immersed in certain artists again after seeing them on things like old *Top Of The Pops* shows. In the last couple of years I've found myself listening to the progressive pop albums of the 80s: Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love*, Peter Dinklage's *So*, Tears For Fears' *Songs From The Big Chair* and *The Seeds Of Love*, and Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden*. People think the 80s were a shallow, superficial era, but those records were really smart.

"I've got nothing against the guy but we're living in the climate where Ed Sheeran is cutting edge," he continues. "Those prog pop records would never get on the radio now. However, there's still some great, clever, complex pop music out there. It's not a particularly optimistic prognosis for my record getting into the charts but, you know what, I'm going to do it anyway!"

Maybe new label Caroline can help. "I'd always been a little sceptical about being compromised by a major label," Wilson says. "I found out I had fans at Caroline and they're part of Universal so the potential to reach a bigger audience is there. We're thinking of doing three singles," he laughs, "that should give you an indication of the nature of the record – in the past that would have been unheard of!"

The artwork for the album is also a departure. In images art-directed by long-time collaborator Lasse Hoile, head and shoulders shots show Wilson shirtless, bombarded by multi-coloured paints and powders. "I'm really pleased with it," he says. "The first time I put myself on the front cover of an album I had a gas mask on my face. The second time I was a silhouette. For *Transience*, it was a stark black and white portrait. What I've come to realise is I do have strong personality and for a lot of my career I've hidden behind artwork. The time has come to not hide anymore. I also wanted to look a little more alien, so there's a little bit of Bowie in there."

The band line-up is also quite "intimate", he says, with Wilson leading on guitar. "People might be disappointed by that," he elaborates, "but as it was a different approach my guitar style was better suited." He also plays most bass parts, joined by regulars Adam Holzman on keys and drummer Craig Blundell alongside King Crimson drummer Jeremy Stacey – brother of co-producer Paul – and harmonica player Mark Feltham. Israeli vocalist Ninet Tayeb returns, and Swiss jazz singer Sophie Hunger guests on a track called *Song Of I*: "There's a very sexy, sinister vibe on that," Wilson says. Ex-Mansun frontman Paul Draper also appears on the title track, and he and Wilson have been working together on an as-yet untitled song. "We talked about making an EP together," Wilson says, "but let's see what happens, at the moment we're having fun and that's the main thing."

Steven Wilson's 2018 tour starts on January 31 in Lisbon, with a show at London's Royal Albert Hall on March 27. See www.stevenwilsonhq.com. **JK**

This month, Intro was compiled by

Isère Lloyd-Davis
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Rob Hughes
David Keever
Jo Kendall
Hannah May Kilroy
Rhodri Marsden
Giulia Mascheroni
John Mitchell
Natasha Scharf
Rick Wakeman
Phil Weller

PAUL DRAPER TO FINALLY RELEASE HIS SOLO ALBUM

Former Mansun frontman reveals *Spooky Action* sessions at Hugh Padgham's studio.



In A Wide Open Space: multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Paul Draper.

BEN MEADOWS

Paul Draper will release his long-awaited solo debut, *Spooky Action*, on August 11 through Kscope. The album plans were originally shelved following Mansun's split in 2003, but were dug out of the vaults after fans started an online petition.

"The original demos were recorded on DVDs and my studio assistant thought they were blanks. He tried to record *Match Of The Day* on them!" admits Draper.

Spooky Action was co-written with Catherine Anne Davies, aka The Anchoress, and follows on from last year's successful *EP One* and *EP Two*. It chronicles the story of Mansun's untimely demise. "That was the thing that was most prominent in my mind when I first started sketching the lyrics. They explore my emotional responses to the band splitting up and where I ended up afterwards," says Draper. "I can't help sounding like Mansun because I was the main songwriter and it has my voice on it. People knew us as a guitar band but on the albums, we were a little bit more synthesiser-infused, so I would describe this as an analogue synth-ed-up Mansun."

Part of the new album was tracked at Hugh Padgham's studios, which gave Draper and Davies the opportunity to make the most of the Genesis producer's vintage equipment. "It was incredible gear," he says. "We've got a lot of footage of us in the studio and we're going to turn it into a little documentary."

Draper will be embarking on his first solo tour this September. For more, visit: www.facebook.com/pauldraperofficial. **NRS**

KRAFTWERK: LIVE IN 3-D!

Krautrock pioneers announce documentary package.

Kraftwerk are to release *Kraftwerk: 3-D The Catalogue* this May via Parlophone. Billed as a documentary, it's available on Blu-ray, DVD, vinyl, CD and download, and features footage recorded between 2012 and 2016 during the band's 3-D World Tour. The film contains live art performances at venues such as London's Tate Modern, Akasaka Blitz in Tokyo and Sydney's Opera House, and gives fans the opportunity to experience the German band's "total work of art" in their own homes.

Deluxe packages with material from eight of the pioneers' classic albums, including 1974's ground-breaking *Autobahn* and 2003's *Tour De France Soundtracks*, are also available, along with double editions containing a selection of tracks. It's the band's second official live album and their first release since 2009's box set, *The Catalogue*.

Kraftwerk will be bringing their multimedia 3-D show to the UK and Ireland this June. For the full list of dates, visit: www.kraftwerk.com. **NRS**



ENSLAVED HEAD INTO THE STUDIO

Norwegian heavyweights to follow-up *In Times* with "adventurous" new recording.



Building With Noise:
Enslaved in the studio.

CHRISTIAN WISE

Enslaved are aiming to release their 14th album in October through Nuclear Blast, and they say they'll be pushing the boundaries of their musical approach.

"We're being very adventurous and taking some big risks, which is the way we like to work," says co-founder and guitarist/keyboard player Ivar Bjørnson. "For instance, we've got six different saxophone sounds in there, plus marching drums and tambourines on the percussion side."

The Norwegians are currently mixing the album and expect to have everything finished by mid-June. Mixing is being handled by Jens Bogren at Fascination Street Studios in Sweden; he's worked with Enslaved since 2010's *Axioma Ethica Odini*.

There will be a thematic concept running throughout the album, and this time it reflects the relationship between man and nature.

"We've had a concept of sorts on all our albums since *Ruun* [2006]. It's not linear, in that there's no storyline connecting the tracks. It's all down to atmosphere and mood. This time, it's more of a schematic concept, and therefore, it has a lot in common with, say, *Dark Side Of The Moon*. What we're doing is trying to create physically through our music a representation of the dynamic between human beings and the world around us."

The five-piece — also featuring vocalist/bassist Grutle Kjellson, guitarist Arve Isdal, keyboard player Hakon Vinje and drummer Cato Bekkevold — spent three weeks meticulously rehearsing before going into Duper and Solslottet Studios in Bergen to record all the basic tracks.

"We have always been very meticulous in getting the musical details worked out in advance of going into the studio. I suppose that comes from our metal roots. And those roots are still present on the new album, although we're a very different band now, mixing in lots of other genres."

As yet, the album has no confirmed title — "We have one in mind, and that will be the biggest surprise of all!" — but it will have six main tracks.

"What I can reveal is that two of the tracks will be *Storm's Son* and *The River's Mouth*... yes, water plays a big role in the concept. Right now, we haven't decided whether there will be musical interludes linking the songs. That's something we'll decide at the last minute.

"We've worked really hard on this album, and have been totally motivated to get the best out of ourselves." MD

For more, see: www.enslaved.no.

"It has a lot in common with *Dark Side Of The Moon*."

INTRO extras

CRUISE TO THE EDGE 2018 CONFIRMED

Marillion, Steve Hackett and Carl Palmer's ELP

Legacy have all been announced for next year's Cruise To The Edge. Now in its fifth year, the Yes-hosted five-night cruise leaves Tampa in Florida on February 3 and will be visiting new ports in Belize and Mexico before returning on February 8.

More than 20 artists have been confirmed to play and tickets are now on sale. For more, visit: www.cruisetothedge.com.



Andy Tillison's forgotten machinery sparks ideas!

NEW ALBUM FOR THE TANGENT

Andy Tillison's bold comeback carries commentary on the current state of the UK.

The Tangent will release *The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery* on July 21 via InsideOut. It's the band's first album since mainman Andy Tillison suffered a heart attack just after the release of 2015's *A Spark In The Aether*.

"After my illness, I lost my mojo and I couldn't get back into music," confesses Tillison. "I've never had writer's block, but I found that for about six months I wasn't really interested. I was noodling a bit on my synthesiser and suddenly, whoopee! There it went!"

Joining Tillison on the album are Theo Travis, Luke Machin, Jonas Reingold and Maschine's keyboard player Marie-Eve de Gaultier. *The Slow Rust...* also includes guest appearances from the electronic DJ Matt Farrow and Chumbawamba's Boff Whalley — the latter featuring on the 20-minute lead track *A Few Steps Down The Wrong Road*.

"There was something about the referendum that set things in motion for me; I needed to write about all the hatred," says Tillison of the track. "It didn't matter which side of the political fence I was on, I just hated to see this terrible hostility breaking out on both sides. There are people who don't think that politics and progressive music go together, but I disagree. Had it not been for politics, I don't think there would have been a record to write."

The Tangent will head out on the road this autumn, with a show already confirmed for Summer's End Festival. For the full list of dates, visit: www.thetangent.org. NRS

PERK UP FOR GONG EXPRESSO

New material from Gong and Oldfield alumni.

Former members of Gong have teamed up with jazz fusionists HRIII on their first album as Gong Expresso. *Decadence* will be released later this year — it's also available to pre-order via PledgeMusic — and features Francois Causse, Benoit Moerlen, Hansford Rowe and guitarist Julien Sandiford.

"It's Gong meets HRIII," confirms Rowe. "*Decadence* was originally intended as a second solo record for HRIII, but as I began to work on it, Julien and I decided that the best way to make the tunes happen would be to include my old colleagues from Pierre Moerlen's Gong: Francois Causse and Benoit

Moerlen, on percussion." Rowe and Moerlen have also played in Mike Oldfield's band.

Decadence was recorded in Paris in January and Rowe describes the eight instrumental tracks on it as "simple and honest". Gong Expresso will be taking these tracks on the road later this year. For more information and live dates, visit: www.facebook.com/gongexpresso. NRS



Once Upon A Gong: Hansford Rowe and Benoit Moerlen (below).



"The possible missing link between '70s-era Pink Floyd and My Bloody Valentine

MARK BLAKE - MOJO / Q

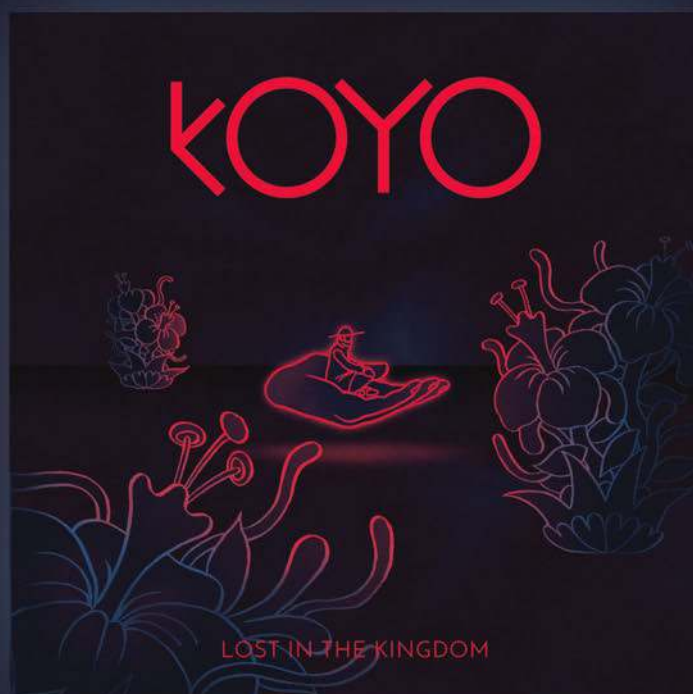
KOYO

LIVE IN JUNE

THURSDAY	1	MANCHESTER	THE CASTLE HOTEL
FRIDAY	2	NOTTINGHAM	TBC
TUESDAY	6	LONDON	BIRTHDAYS
THURSDAY	8	LEEDS	BELGRAVE

FREE ADMISSION

a **STRANGE PLACE** presentation



*""Resourceful, inventive
and thinking big - KOYO's
promise knows no bounds."*

**JOHNNY SHARP
PROG MAGAZINE**

New Single:
LOST IN THE KINGDOM
9 JUNE 2017



Making Hay While The Sun Shines: Cosmograf's Robin Armstrong.

COSMOGRAF TO GO VINTAGE ON SIXTH

A family tale leads to new vinyl release.

Cosmograf are to release *The Hay-Man Dreams* independently on July 10. It's the project's sixth album and, according to mainman Robin Armstrong, was inspired by research into his family tree.

"My great-great grandfather used to be a gamekeeper and a farmer, which started the whole idea for the album off," reveals Armstrong. "He died in mysterious circumstances, and I wove that aspect of story into the album. Although the concept is fictional, it's inspired by real events."

The collection of six new songs comes just one year after Cosmograf's cinematic sci-fi album, *The Unreasonable Silence*, but has a very different sound. Along with guitarist Matt Stevens (*The Fierce And The Dead*), singer Rachael Hawnt (*The Beautiful Secret*), drummer Kyle Fenton (*These Septic Stars*), and Big Big Train's violinist Rachel Hall, Armstrong has gone for a more vintage vibe.

"This is more of a folk tale so I wanted to give it a different musical style," he says. "It's very retrospective-sounding; all the instruments are what you would hear in the early 70s with Mellotrons, acoustic guitars and vintage-sounding keyboards."

In keeping with the analogue feel, *The Hay-Man Dreams* will also be Cosmograf's first vinyl release. "I've always wanted to release on vinyl, but the length of my previous albums has been an issue," he explains. "With this one, I deliberately kept it short enough to put on a single LP."

Armstrong's next project will be remastering 2011's album, *When Age Has Done Its Duty*. For more, visit the official website at: www.cosmograf.com. **NRS**

INTRO
extras

RADIOHEAD ANNOUNCE REISSUE

Radiohead are to release a remastered and expanded version of *OK Computer* through XL Recordings on June 23. The 23-track *OKNOTOK 1997 2017* coincides with the original album's 20th anniversary and has been extended with b-sides and three unreleased tracks. A limited edition vinyl box set will also be available in July, which contains a hardcover book with previously unseen artwork and other rare items.



Embracing The Darkness: Karnataka's Ian Jones and Agnieszka Swita.

KARNATAKA SHED LIGHT ON NEW PROJECT

Ian Jones confirms forthcoming dark prog album and announces a new live DVD.

Karnataka co-founder Ian Jones has revealed he's collaborating with Polish vocalist Agnieszka Swita (Clive Nolan's *Alchemy/Caamora*) on a new project called *Illuminae*. They'll be releasing their debut album, *Dark Horizons*, early next year.

"It's a bit darker, a bit more left field than Karnataka and going more towards some of Steven Wilson's sound," says Jones. "It's definitely rock-influenced, with a strong prog influence and symphonic elements. We're describing it as 'dark twisted symphonies to sweet lullabies.'"

Adds Swita, "I'm generally a very happy person, but every time I start writing lyrics they somehow end up being dark and twisted! I'm inspired by authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, and TV shows like *Grimm* and *Dexter* that explore the duality of the world. The light and shade. For example, there's a song on the album called *Heretics And Prophecy*, which is about killing in the name of God but how ridiculous that is. Another is called *Edge Of Darkness*, which is about a woman imagining that she's turning into a wolf. That was inspired by the Jack Nicholson film, *Wolf*."

Illuminae will be recording the album in the coming months. For more, visit: www.illuminae.net.

In the meantime, Jones is working on new material with Karnataka, and the band will also be releasing a live CD/DVD called, *Secrets Of Angels – Live In Concert* via Immrama this August. It contains footage filmed at their London show at the O2 Academy last year and features the previously unreleased track, *A Twist Of Fate*. **NRS**





BJØRN RIIS
FOREVER COMES TO AN END

Out May 19th on Karisma Records



MAGIC PIE
MOTIONS OF DESIRE (2005)



MAGIC PIE
CIRCUS OF LIFE (2007)



MAGIC PIE
THE SUFFERING JOY (2011)

**EXPECT A DARKER AND
MORE HARD HITTING
2ND ALBUM FROM AIRBAG
GUITARIST BJØRN RIIS**

Out Now

RE-RELEASES OF THE FIRST 3 ALBUMS FROM
MAGIC PIE. THESE CLASSIC ALBUMS ARE NOW
FINALLY AVAILABLE ON VINYL!

 **karisma**
RECORDS KARISMARECORDS.NO

 **iTunes**

 **Spotify**



DISTRIBUTED BY:
PLASTICHEAD.COM



"A beautifully written, arranged and played album"
Australian Music History

*"An absolutely stunning masterpiece *****"*
Australian Spectrum Radio

*'All In A Dream' is a Progressive
Symphonic Rock album from the
multi-instrumentalist Australian
composer **Franky Valentyn**.*

*Drawing inspiration from the early days
of progressive rock and featuring some of
Australia's finest vocalists, this much
lauded album is sure to engage any listener!*

'All In A Dream'
The Franky Valentyn Project

*Now online at iTunes, CD Baby,
Amazon etc. with CDs available from
all good music outlets.*

www.thefrankyvalentynproject.com.au

© SongTraks 2017
songtraks@tpg.com.au

FAD GADGETS

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

VINCI SMART HEADPHONES

Our relationship with voice-operated technology has been a bit rocky. It tends to be defined by frustrating exchanges that end with the gadget saying, "I didn't catch that" and you hurling it into a skip. However, Amazon's Alexa has become a global hit, and as a result we're more open to the idea of asking disembodied voices for music selections. Vinci is an attempt to ride that wave; it's an all-in-one headphone and smart assistant. Reviews indicate a few teething troubles, but it's a shape of things to come.

<http://en.vinci.im>



BEOSOUND SHAPE

Bang & Olufsen are known for combining high-end audio systems with sleek Scandinavian design, and their work may have reached an absurd pinnacle with the Beosound, a modular hexagonal speaker system which hangs on the wall. The speakers, amplifier, hub and acoustic dampers are each contained in a hexagon, which you arrange however you like, allowing you to recreate an eye-wateringly expensive version of *Blockbusters* in your living room.

www.bang-olufsen.com



PONS REVOLUTION

There are charlatans among us who believe that all guitars sound the same. The angular cool of the Jaguar, the distinctive lines of the Gibson SG, the faint absurdity of the Flying V, they all go 'twang', right? Well, in the case of Pons Revolution guitars, that's certainly true; the electrics stay the same, but you can snap on various shaped bodies. Guitar fetishists would call it a gimmick, but I'm open to such ridiculousness.

www.ponsguitars.com



IN A WORD (OR SEVERAL)

Rick ditches tact and diplomacy, and speaks his mind.

► We've all been in situations where someone says something and you just have to bite your tongue and reply politely. It happens to me a lot, so I'd like to share some of the things that have genuinely been said to me, along with my original replies and what I really wanted to say. All identifying features have been changed to protect the guilty.

The first came from a mum. "I just have to tell you that my son Terry is only 13, and he's been learning the piano for a year now," she said. "He can play every single one of your pieces better than you! Isn't that wonderful?"

My actual reply was, "You must be so proud. I'm sure he'll soon be headlining venues all around the world."

What I really wanted to say was, "You stupid cow! Has this spotty-faced son of yours got three hands, a bionic musical brain and 16 fingers? If he hasn't, then don't talk complete and utter bollocks, woman!"

Next, is a common example from the middle-aged guy who tends to hover at signings, waiting for a suitable moment to apprehend me. He'll usually come out with something along the lines of, "Unfortunately I had to give up playing the piano and keyboards when I was 14 years old, but I know if I'd been able to continue, I could have been where you are now. Count yourself lucky, Rick!"

My usual reply is, "It's such a shame when people have to give up something they love, but never mind, your loss is obviously my gain."

What I really want to say is, "Don't give me all that bollocks! You either weren't good enough, didn't practise enough, or had other interests you felt were far more important!"

Another common one is what I call the joint parental bombardment. It usually involves their so-called "highly talented" offspring who they're trying to get a record deal for. On this occasion I remember the mum told me, "Here's our son Walter's new CD for you to listen to. He made it

himself and has played every single instrument on it himself too. He's highly talented.

Everybody says so."

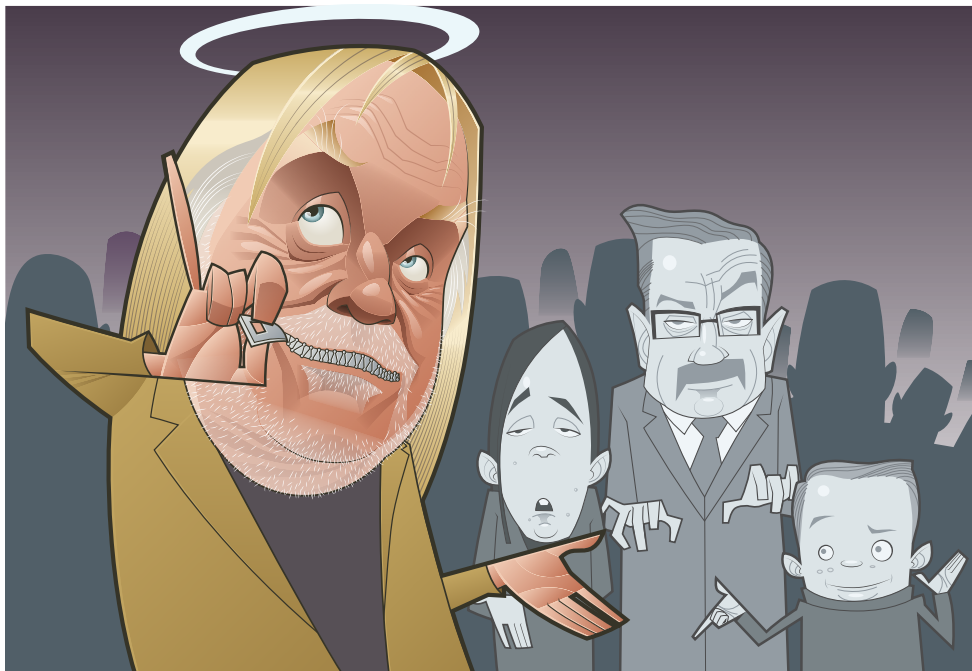
My original reply was, "That's wonderful!"

But I really meant, "What a prick!"

The dad then asked, "Can you introduce him to a record company? He's written more than 7,000 songs and he's only 14!"

I replied saying, "I'm afraid there's no short cut. He has to send his CD to as many different companies as he can find, and then wait to see what they say."

By which I actually meant, "Join the real world! By the way, does your Walter know a young piano player called Terry? They really should meet, you know..."



KEVIN FEBRUARY

L-R: Amy Birks,
Jess Kennedy,
Amanda Alvarez.

BEATRIX PLAYERS

Enchanting chamber pop trio making hauntingly beautiful sounds.

"THERE IS NO frontwoman in Beatrix Players," explains the band's vocalist, Amy Birks. "A crucial part of our sound is the layering of vocals, combined with mass instrumentation provided by the three of us and our instruments."

The three leading ladies — Australian pianist Jess Kennedy, Spanish-born cellist Amanda Alvarez and Birks, who hails from Staffordshire — formed powerful neo-classical folk prog band Beatrix Players in 2013.

"Our sound was a bit more rock before then. The boys in the band were trying to push us too far down the rock path and it didn't feel natural to us. We even had a heavy metal drummer at one stage," laughs Kennedy.

They initially formed a band with other members on guitars and drums, before realising that their true musical vocation would be a trio.

"Vocals, piano and cello are very natural together anyway, and once we eliminated all of the other elements, we really started to gel," adds Birks.

Citing Sigur Rós, Mazzy Star and Michael Nyman as influences, the trio share an eclectic musical taste. Through classical tones and baroque melodies, the songs' empowering femininity and emotional themes are reminiscent of the Mediaeval Baebs. Birks' singing emulates a Kate Bush vocal range, the cello acts as a bassline throughout as in cellist trio Rasputina, and the piano paves a haunting tune akin to iamthemorning.

"Beatrix is a name which is often associated with really cool women, from the Roman empress to Tarantino villains. It also means 'voyager', which fits because we want to take people on a journey with our music. The player side simply represents our theatrical and collaborative aspect," Birks says.

"I think that people don't really know what to expect when they see us arrive with a piano and a cello.

They don't expect to hear such a big booming sound coming from three little girls," adds Alvarez.

Their debut album *Magnified* contains the tracks *Lady Of The Lake*, a traditional folk ballad, and *Mole Hill*, a dark and beautiful refrain, both accompanied by music videos featuring eerie animation by Chloe Rodham.

"This is not a concept album, but it is a journey. There were no preconceived ideas of messages that needed to come through in the lyrics. We have all been through quite a lot over the last couple of years in our own lives, so this album is musical therapy," explains Kennedy.

A particularly significant song on the album is the ballad *Never Again*, featuring lyrical references to strong female personas Joan of Arc and the Bronte sisters:

'I cut my hair/Become courageous/For I will live to outdate this/Take a risk and find strength' conjures the sisters' strength.

"We are not necessarily a band that promotes woman power, but at the time when I wrote this song, I remember reading *Jane Eyre* and thinking, 'Crikey! These women went through a lot,'" reveals Birks.

The clever creative process of layering the various musical parts onto each other creates an intricate patchwork of soft melodies from the piano, progressively blossoming with the added cello chords and woven together by the lyrical chant.

"We complement each other musically," says Alvarez. "We are never fighting over each other. There is a place for each of the elements that we bring into our music. We want the intimacy of our arrangements to come through." **ILD**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Amy Birks (vocals, lyrics), **Jess Kennedy** (piano, vocals), **Amanda Alvarez** (cello)

SOUNDS LIKE

A Jane Austen novel featuring the Mediaeval Baebs, Kate Bush and Dario Marianelli

CURRENT RELEASE

Magnified is out now and is self-released

WEBSITE

www.beatrixplayers.co.uk



"Beatrix is a name which is often associated with really cool women, from the Roman empress to Tarantino villains."

SUPPER'S READY! HOW TO DINE IN 7/4 TIME

YOUR PROG CHEF:
**GREG SPAWTON,
BIG BIG TRAIN**

On the menu: Porklore



“I don’t cook much these days and have never cooked for the band – we normally go out for curries when we’re together. However, I do have a few ‘signature’ dishes. This recipe, which we’ve recently taken to calling Porklore, is adapted from a Nigel Slater book and has always been a family favourite. Both of my kids are at university so I tend to do this when they come home. It’s a proper sharing dish and needs to be served with bread for mopping up the sauce.”

Ingredients

(Serves two) A good loaf of bread, one garlic clove, olive oil, two pork escalopes or chops, one 150ml tub of double cream, Dijon mustard to taste, parsley garnish

Preparation

“This is simple cooking so the ingredients are the main thing. I’m not a vegetarian, but animal welfare is important to us so we aim for organic or free range meat and dairy whenever possible. And the quality of the bread that must be served with this dish is really important. We normally get ours from Bakehouse24, an artisan baker in the New Forest. So... let’s cook. Firstly, crush a garlic clove and heat it in some oil for a minute or two. Add pork escalopes, or chops, and brown on both sides (you should aim to get some crunchy bits stuck on the pan as this will add flavour to the sauce). Set the cooked pork aside on a hot plate and throw the garlic away. Add the double cream and a few spoons of Dijon mustard to the pan, to taste. Heat the sauce for two or three minutes, and scrape away at the pan with a wooden spoon to stir in any juices from the pork. Serve the sauce on the pork with some chopped parsley on top.

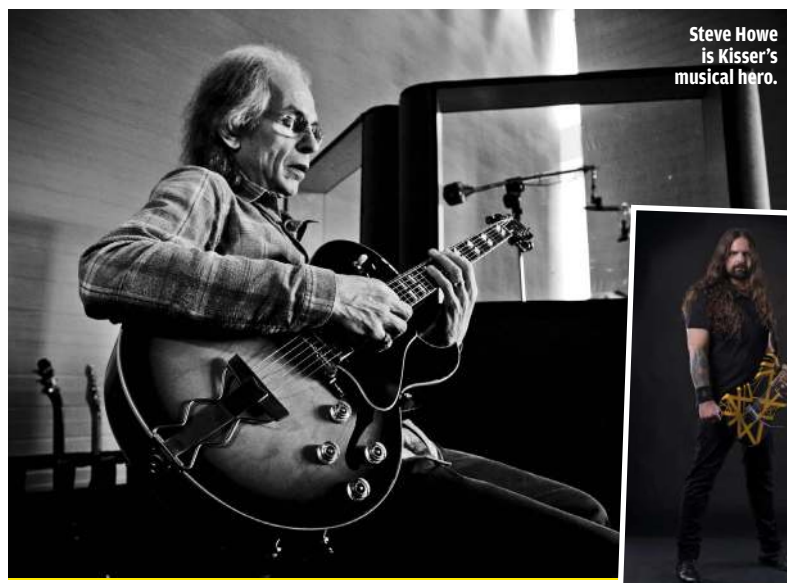
Asparagus goes well with it as a side.

For me, this dish is all about family and sharing so it will always have a place in my heart. When I serve it, the pan gets brought to the table and everybody dives in and dunks their bread in any remaining sauce. It’s messy and it’s wonderful.”



MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...



Steve Howe
is Kissers
musical hero.

ANDREAS KISSER

Sepultura’s guitarist is such a big **Yes** fan that his band’s new album is named in their honour!

“I got into progressive music through friends when I was maybe 17 or 18 years old. We didn’t have the chance to see any of the shows at the time because nobody came to play in Brazil, but we were listening to King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Emerson, Lake And Palmer... Yes were my favourites though, especially Steve Howe. I liked his style and technique; the way he brought in [elements of] classical guitar and folk guitar.

When I first started playing guitar, I didn’t know how to read music so I would play by ear and *Mood For A Day* was one of the songs I used to play. That made me realise that a lot of things I thought were impossible, were possible. Steve Howe showed me that through his music on songs like *Clap*, *Mood For A Day* and *Tales From Topographic Oceans* which has a lot of beautiful acoustic pieces. I love Steve’s solo material as well, but Yes were always a big influence in my life and they still are. Even now I find new things in their music, and Sepultura’s new album is called *Machine Messiah*, which is named after a song from *Drama*.

Yes are great teachers, not only musically but also lyrically. They talk about so many different things, and write beautiful poetry. My favourite album has to be *Close To The Edge*, but I like *Relayer* as well – Patrick Moraz did a great job. And I love Trevor Rabin too! I saw that line-up when they came to Rock In Rio in 1985 and I had the opportunity to see Chris Squire’s solo show when I lived in Phoenix in the 90s. He played in a very small venue with Alan White on the drums – it was fantastic! I saw them all play together again on the *Union Tour* and it was so inspiring to see that they could put whatever animosity to one side and just go on stage to play.

Sepultura actually played with Yes at the Sweden Rock Festival [in 2003] and we had the privilege of being on the same plane. I talked to Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman, and we took photos. They were

so nice. We were on different stages, but at least I can say we played with Yes!” NRS

Machine Messiah is out now through Nuclear Blast. For more, see: www.sepultura.com.



“At least
I can say
we played
with Yes!”

PROG IN BRIEF

Rick Wakeman is to release a limited edition deluxe box set of *Crimes Of Passion* via PledgeMusic on June 2. The soundtrack to Ken Russell’s 1984 thriller also includes performances from Oldfield guitarist Rick Fenn, as well as members of Strawbs.



Marillion’s (left) *Misplaced Childhood* will be reissued as a deluxe box set on July 21 via Parlophone. The 4CD/Blu-ray box contains the remastered album, previously unreleased material and a 5.1 mix by Steven Wilson. A 4LP set will also be available.

AKASHIC RECORDS PRESENTS

THE NEW PSYCH ROCK BAND OF REEF GUITARIST KENWYN HOUSE

GOLD RAY

TOUR DATES

ticketweb.co.uk • seetickets.com • allickets.com • gigantic.com

SAT MAY 6 - PLOUGH ARTS CENTER, DEVON
WED MAY 10 - THE BORDERLINE, LONDON
THU MAY 18 - B2, NORWICH
FRI JUNE 9 - GREEN DOOR STORE, BRIGHTON
THU JUNE 15 - FIBBERS, YORK
SAT JUNE 17 - THE BODEGA, NOTTINGHAM
SAT JULY 1 - THEKLA, BRISTOL
SAT JULY 8 - THE VICTORIA, BIRMINGHAM

NEW DATE
ADDED

"One of the most compelling releases of the early year.

Highly recommended." - *Classic Rock Magazine*

★★★★★★

"A sensory overload of smart riffs
and cool, dream-weaving vocals." - *PROG Magazine*

DEBUT ALBUM

RISING

OUT NOW

VINYL / CD / DIGITAL
FORMATS



EXCLUSIVELY AT
GOLDRAYBAND.COM

www.goldrayband.com | facebook.com/goldrayband | [@goldrayband](https://twitter.com/goldrayband)

TBL
Live

TRADING BOUNDARIES

- HOME TO ROGER DEAN -

VOTED
ONE OF THE
TOP THREE
VENUES IN
THE UK
PROG AWARDS
2016

ONE NIGHT... TWO GREAT ACTS



Friday 23 June

"A phenomenal fusion of sound" *Classic Rock*



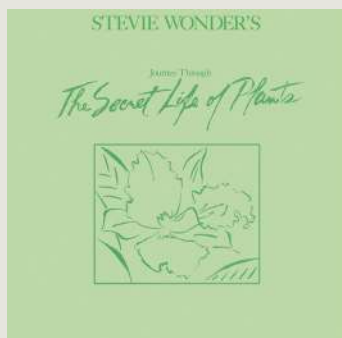
Prog magazine vocalist of the year twice, Anne-Marie Helder has been dubbed 'the finest frontwoman of her generation, with a soaring voice and mesmerising stage presence; and the whole band are world-class in their musicianship' – becoming leading lights in an exciting new era of British Prog Rock.

Saturday 1 July

WATCH YOUR FAVOURITE BANDS PERFORM IN A UNIQUE, INTIMATE, CANDLELIT SETTING.
EXPERIENCE WHAT EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT !

DINING & STANDING TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR ALL CONCERTS.

TRADING BOUNDARIES, SHEFFIELD GREEN, NR FLETCHING, EAST SUSSEX TN22 3RB
BOX OFFICE: 01825 790200 - WWW.TRADINGBOUNDARIES.COM



STEVIE WONDER

JOURNEY THROUGH THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS

(MOTOWN, 1979)

► Stevie Wonder in *Prog*? Has someone gone completely mad? In 1979, everyone thought the soul maestro was totally off his rocker when he released a double album with the odd title *Journey Through The Secret Life Of Plants*. It was far removed from his usual excursions into the sophisticated realms of commercially successful adult pop, and many thought this sounded the death knell for his near three-decade rule as a prince of soul music.

If you look at the facts, it's hard to argue with that much-held belief. Wonder had been a chart force for so long and, in 1976, had put out one of his most acclaimed albums, *Songs In The Key Of Life*. When he finally issued what was assumed to be the follow-up three years later, it caught everyone off guard.

For starters, the album was actually the soundtrack to a nature documentary called *The Secret Life Of Plants*. The film was directed by Walon Green and based on Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird's book of the same name, which explored controversial experiments proving plants are sentient. More important was the way that Wonder fully immersed himself in the subject matter and captured both the spirit and ambience of the documentary, which used striking time-lapse photography. The whole structure and flow of the visuals demanded a left-field approach to the music, and that was something the multi-instrumentalist embraced with fervour and passionate commitment.

The result was a supremely experimental album, one rightly described later as Stevie Wonder's *Dark Side Of The Moon*. It begins with the primordial yet controlled force of *Earth's Creation*, and from then on in, becomes surreal and challenging. *Venus' Flytrap And The Bug* has an eerie robotic vocal, while elsewhere Wonder unfurls Japanese poetry recital, harrowing children's cries and synth daubs, which were unusual for the time. He also dabbles in digital sampling, which was cutting edge back then.

Throughout, the music nods towards Krautrock, but is seemingly agitating and unsettling. Even when Wonder goes for a more obviously straightforward melody, such as on *Come Back As A Flower*, he does it with the type of progressive inclination that suggests there's an undercurrent of thinking out of the box.

When it was released, the album got a negative reaction from those who were used to something more straightforward from Stevie Wonder; they failed to appreciate that what he was doing was enlightening, and had much in common with Tangerine Dream. The man himself rates this as one of his favourite albums. With good reason.

MALCOLM DOME



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog

The Search Is Over!
Aswekeepsearching size
up potential gig spaces.



ASWEKEEPPSEARCHING

Uddipan Sarmah, frontman of the world's only Hindi post-rock band, talks about gig challenges.

► When *Prog* catches up with Uddipan Sarmah, singer-guitarist with aswekeepsearching, he's busy spreading the word about the band's new album, *Zia*. A hands-on marketing push has seen him travel to 16 cities across his native India, organising listening sessions for an increasingly devoted fanbase. As one of the very few bands operating at the post-rock edge of prog, aswekeepsearching are somewhat unique in their homeland. "Post-rock is still a very new genre for India," he explains. "The same goes for prog. Skyharbor are the only prog band that's doing good here. But being influenced by post-rock music has definitely helped us to connect with a niche genre. People have started accepting us because we're different."

Formed in Ahmedabad in 2013, aswekeepsearching take their cues from the likes of God Is An Astronaut, Explosions In The Sky and 65daysofstatic, but imbue their rolling soundscapes with tablas, Indian modal shifts and smatterings of Hindi lyrics. All of which makes for a fascinating musical dialogue between East and West. "We listen to a lot of metal, modern progressive music like Tesseract, some hip-hop and other

things," says Sarmah. "We've always been influenced by Western music – even the names of our songs are in English – but we like to stay close to our roots. Writing and singing in Hindi [has given] the band its USP."

Zia is their second album, following on from 2015's *Khwaab*. Derived from the Arabic word for 'light', *Zia* is, says Sarmah, "about our lives, our struggles as a band and the things that inspire us. It applies to lots of things, but we wanted to give it a name that was very common to us, because we always search for light. It's the brighter side of life that we're looking for."

The band's struggles have involved finding gigs outside of Ahmedabad (in the dry state of Gujarat, where there are next to no live venues) by knocking on doors from city to city. It's been an arduous slog, yet aswekeepsearching are now established as firm festival favourites at home. "Our prime market is definitely India," Sarmah adds. "At

the same time, we're signed to a Russian label, Flowers Blossom In The Space, and we're looking into international tours at the moment. We'd dearly love to play in the UK." **RH**

For more, visit the website: www.aswekeepsearching.in.



"Post-rock is still a very new genre for India."

PROG IN BRIEF

Crippled Black Phoenix (right) have announced eight European shows over the summer, including performances at Hellfest in France on June 18 and Germany's Night Of The Prog on July 14. They're also working on a new EP.



Laibach are to release *Also Sprach Zarathustra* via Mute on July 14. The new album has been updated from the soundtrack they composed for a modern theatrical reworking of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical novel of the same name.

KAPREKAR'S CONSTANT

These folk proggers deal in history, mathematics and Van der Graaf worship...

THE WORD "COLLECTIVE" conjures up an image of a free-wheeling community — the sort of place where you can buy some wicker sandals for a handful of shells and a back rub. But for Kaprekar's Constant, it's a term that has taken on a more practical tilt, with the group free to engage in other projects while still contributing to the "creative entity" that is the band.

"We're trying to work out what we are in a way," explains Al Nicholson, one of Kaprekar's Constant's founding members. "Most of us have got other projects or things that we do. We wanted them to continue to have the space and time to do that."

Kaprekar's Constant are a folk prog band that formed in Kent in 2015, and they have a touch of identity-hopping about them. Their name references an obscure mathematical discovery made in the 40s, but their seven-piece aesthetic and freeform musical style speak to more ethereal pursuits.

This sense of chaos and control is writ large across their debut album, *Fate Outsmarts Desire* — due in no small part to the playing of VdGG saxophonist David Jackson. "We are massive Van der Graaf Generator fans and fans of David's maverick sax playing he is famous for," says Nick Jefferson, the other founding member. "I said to Al that I'd see if David Jackson wanted to play on our track. After he stopped laughing long enough to say I was wasting my time, I sent [Jackson] *Hallsands*."

Jackson, as a former maths teacher, was drawn by the band's name and the outline of their initial songs. It was the thought of working with his daughter, who offers vocals across the LP, that really sealed the deal.

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Al Nicholson (acoustic guitar, electric guitar, classical guitar, mandolin, keyboards), **Nick Jefferson** (bass, fretless bass, electric guitar, keyboards), **Mike Westergaard** (keyboards, piano, backing vocals), **Dorie Jackson** (vocals), **Phil Gould** (drums), **Bill Jefferson** (vocals), **David Jackson** (saxophones, flutes, whistles and G# Bell)

SOUNDS LIKE

English Pastoral strapped to the back of an aircraft engine

CURRENT RELEASE

Fate Outsmarts Desire is out now on Uranium Club

WEBSITE

www.kaprekarconstant.com

"The best treat of all has been to work on a project with Dorie again," Jackson explains. "She is always my trusty sounding board, but working together is a special delight."

Underpinning the album's virtuoso musicianship — propelled by Jackson's sax — is a rich narrative based on Jefferson's own experiences. *Hallsands* is named after the ghostly Devon village that sits abandoned thanks to the overreaching dredging by Plymouth council in the early twentieth century. Jefferson expands: "That has needed writing for 20 years. It needed a vehicle. It stemmed from a family holiday where we stumbled across the ruins completely by chance on the way to somewhere else. It was just the image of my son walking through the ruin of Hallsands that wound up getting into the song."

This passion and attention to detail is also evident in the album's centrepiece *Bluebird*, Jefferson's celebration of Malcolm Campbell and the triumph and tragedy of early motor racing. "That period of motoring history was so outrageous — they basically just strapped themselves behind an aircraft engine. They thought, 'If we come back, all well and good, if not, that's the way it goes.'"

Nicholson laughs: "This sums us up as a band — we strap ourselves to David's engine. David said he imagined his car crashing down the sands while playing his double sax — sections that are pure Van der Graaf. "When we heard it back it was just outrageous." **DK**



"We're trying to work out who we are..."

The "free-wheeling community" that is Kaprekar's Constant.





PAUSE FOR QUIET REFLECTION

John Mitchell is no stranger to playing live. The Frost*/Lonely Robot mainman has a word to say about filming gigs...

■ I recall my first live concert experience like it was yesterday. Iron Maiden, *Seventh Son Tour*, Wembley Arena 1988.

I remember being distinctly terrified by the impending reality of being surrounded by lots of burly 'metallars' who may or may not have my weasly teenage guts for garters. I also remember naively trying to record the show on my small Sony Walkman. Within five minutes I had been spotted and told not to continue doing so, but strangely did not have my tape confiscated. The gig was immense and frankly unforgettable. On reflection and inspection of the tape once home, however, the recording was dire, best compared to

a fart in a windsock. I promptly wiped it, happy to commit the actual colourful experience to my memory banks for posterity. Fast forward to 2017. These days I play gigs myself on occasion with bands Frost* and my own solo project, Lonely Robot. These days, prevention of recording and filming gigs is largely unenforceable. Literally every concert goer turns up to a gig with a smartphone and the logistics of preventing people from using said phones to record or film the event are nigh on impossible. From my perspective alone, I have to ask... do I want my musical legacy reduced to a shakey and blurry lo-fi distorted fart and liberally sprinkled all over YouTube? No thank you. What actual purpose does it serve? It's not a flattering interpretation of what my music represents. Equally, do the people behind

the people gazing through smartphones want their own concert experience marginally impaired by a selfish twonk holding their device aloft? I very much doubt it: it's both distracting and irritating. You've all paid the same money to attend the gig, so what gives you the right to spoil it for someone else? Moreover, at a recent Frost* gig, some bloke in the front row was filming it with his phone torch pointing in my eyes - it felt like some onstage interrogation technique! What on earth goes through people's minds? On what planet is that remotely acceptable? *Pack it in!* Stop trying to capture the glorious Technicolor real time moment for shit YouTube posterity and watch the damn gig. Next time, front row phones are going to be confiscated! Live concerts are designed for human ears and not smartphone microphones. Gigs are fleeting moments in time, try to enjoy them and not obsessively catalogue them. That's what memories are for.

JOHN MITCHELL

Got an opinion on the matter that you'd like to share? Please email us at: prog@futurenet.com.



HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene's supporting crew



In At The Deep End!
Tom Palmieri poses
with Stick Men.

PROGSTOCK

Festival organiser **Tom Palmieri** wants to rip up the rule book and raise prog's profile.

■ "I'm more than just a fan," says ProgStock's Tom Palmieri.

"I want prog to survive, I want it to thrive, and I'm tired of it not being placed alongside what's called 'popular' music."

Palmieri has lived in New Jersey, USA, all his life, but his love affair with prog began when he was in his early teens. Since then, he's been a regular at events such as Cruise To The Edge, Moody Blues Cruise and RosFest, and has even spent the last few years managing US proggers Circuline. Yet his frustration over what he regards as "no understanding of what marketing is" within the world of prog events inspired him and 3RDegree's Robert Pashman to come up with their own music festival. The pair have a passionate team behind them for the inaugural ProgStock, which includes Andrew Colyer from Circuline, House Of Prog's Rob Rutz and Marty Dorfman, The Flower Kings cover artist Ed Unitsky, and Sven Henriksen, who Palmieri describes as a prog "superfan". The festival is due to be held at New Jersey's Union County Performing Arts Center between October 13-15, and the team are

taking a leap of faith by funding it almost exclusively via PledgeMusic. "This is our first year and it all hinges on the crowdfunding campaign," he says. "If we don't reach our target, we won't be able to pull it off."

Although the name hints at muddy fields, ProgStock will be held at a lavish 1300-seater former vaudeville theatre within the commuter town of Rahway. The full line-up has already been announced and includes live performances from Aisles, Francis Dunnery, Peter Jones, Karmakanic, and Glass Hammer. But the shows are just one aspect and there will also be prog-related stalls, organised meet and greets, and aftershow parties. "It's about going somewhere for three days, enjoying the festival experience and being among like-minded music fans," Palmieri adds. "We're not trying to take a piece of the pie; we want to help everyone build a bigger pie."

At the time of press, there's just over a month left to pledge your support, and Palmieri remains optimistic. "I still see this as an annual event, even if we don't succeed this year." NRS

Pre-order your pass at: www.progstock.com.



"If we don't reach our targets, we won't be able to pull it off."

PROG IN BRIEF

Arcane Roots' (right) new album will be out through Sony Entertainment on September 15. The as-yet untitled 10-track will also include a version of their new single *Matter*. The band will be touring the UK this autumn.



Schnauser's new album, *Irritant*, will be out via Bad Elephant Music on June 9. It's the follow-up to the psychedelic prog quintet's 2014 release, *Protein For Everyone*, and the first to include new saxophonist Dino Christodoulou.

The Contortionist have confirmed they're working on their fourth studio album, due out later this year via Longbranch. The US band are currently on tour in the UK, and will perform at Download Festival on June 9.

The Soundbyte are releasing *Solitary IV* via ToT Records on June 30. The project is influenced by Norwegian folk and ambient prog and post-rock. It's led by Trond Engum from the experimental band The 3rd And The Mortal.

CARLA MUNDT

30TH JUNE & 1ST JULY 2017 · POBLE ESPANYOL · BARCELONA

BE PROG! MY FRIEND

JETHRO TULL  MARILLION
THE BEST OF JETHRO TULL · FULL SHOW FULL SHOW

MIKE PORTNOY'S
SHATTERED FORTRESS
AN EXCLUSIVE EVENT IN SELECTED MARKETS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD IN 2017

DEVIN TOWNSEND PROJECT *ana_thema*
"OCEAN MACHINE: BIOMECH" LIVE IN ITS ENTIRETY

ULVER  ANIMALS  LEADERS
SHOW BY REQUEST

CALIGULA'S HORSE *Jardin de la Croix*

HOTEL DISCOUNT CODES FOR BARCELONA

AYRE HOTEL GRAN VÍA

+34 933 675 500 www.ayrehoteles.com/hotel-gran-via
Exclusive discount code for Be Prog!: **BEPROG2017**

HOTEL VILAMARI

+34 932 890 909 www.hotelvilamari.com
Exclusive discount code for Be Prog!: **BEPROG**

ACEVI VILLARROEL

+34 934 520 000 www.acevivillarroelbarcelona.com
Exclusive discount code for Be Prog!: **BPMF2017**

SOME BE PROG! MY FRIEND... REVIEWS

THE INDEPENDENT

'The leading festival for progressive music in Spain, showcased avant-garde music in a magnificent location'

CLASSIC ROCK MAGAZINE

'If nothing else, it proves that prog is alive and kicking. Especially in Catalonia'

PROG MAGAZINE

'And so Prog finds itself in love with Barcelona, the delightful weather and everything that Be Prog! My Friend has to offer'



MADNESS LIVE!  PROG
NORTHERN MUSIC CO.

TICKETS: RED TICKETMASTER (FNAC, CARREFOUR, HALCÓN VIAJES...) AND WWW.TICKETMASTER.ES

WWW.BEPROGMYFRIEND.COM



US, THEM & YOU

What got us all
grooving this month...

Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

April 2017

Compiled by Official
Charts Company

1	MIKE & THE MECHANICS Let Me Fly (BMG)
2	MASTODON Emperor Of Sand (REPRISE)
3	RICK WAKEMAN Piano Portraits (UMC)
4	WIRE Silver/Lead (PINK FLAG)
5	STEVE HACKETT The Night Siren (INSIDE OUT)
6	MIKE OLDFIELD Return To Ommadawn (MERCURY)
7	JETHRO TULL The String Quartets (BMG)
8	MARILLION F E A R (EAR MUSIC)
9	MOSTLY AUTUMN Sight Of Day (MOSTLY AUTUMN)
10	PROCOL HARUM Novum (EAGLE)
11	PALLBEARER Heartless (NUCLEAR BLAST)
12	FAIRPORT CONVENTION 50:50@50 (MATTY GROOVES)
13	FLAMING LIPS Onboard The International Space Station (BELLA UNION)
14	ULVER The Assassination Of Julius Caesar (HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY)
15	PINK FLOYD The Early Years 1965-1967 - Cambridge (RHINO)
16	PINK FLOYD The Early Years 1972 - Obfuscation (RHINO)
17	FLAMING LIPS Oczy Mlody (BELLA UNION)
18	BLACKFIELD V (KSCOPE)
19	SUNDOWNERS Cut The Master (SKELETON KEY)
20	PINK FLOYD The Early Years 1970 - Deviation (RHINO)
21	PINK FLOYD The Early Years 1969 - Dramatisation (RHINO)
22	PINK FLOYD The Early Years 1971 - Reverberation (RHINO)
23	PINK FLOYD The Early Years 1968 - Germination (RHINO)
24	MOON DUO Occult Architecture - Vol 1 (SACRED BONES)
25	BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST XII (CHERRY RED/ESOTERIC)
26	PERIPHERY Periphery III - Select Difficulty (CENTURY MEDIA)
27	VANGELIS Rosetta (DECCA)
28	MUTE GODS Tardigrades Will Inherit The Earth (INSIDE OUT)
29	OHHMS The Fool (HOLY ROAR)
30	PENDRAGON Masquerade 20 (METAL MIND)

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

WIN! BRAIN RECORDS BOX SET!



German record label Brain Records was founded in 1972 and is regarded as one of the most important label outfits of 1970s German rock. Now, for the first time, the story of the label is revisited in depth with *The Brain Box - Cerebral Sounds Of Brain Records 1972-1979*. We have one box set to give away to one lucky Prog reader.

The label was founded by Bruno Wendel and Günter Körber, and included the likes of Scorpions, Cluster, Grobschnitt, Os Mundi, Jane, Guru Guru, Thirsty Moon, Novalis, Klaus Schulze and Emergency. The box set contains eight CDs and a total of 83 songs. It's completed by a 76-page hardcover book with information, photographs and artworks, plus a Brain Records tote bag. It's out now on Universal.

For your chance to win, just answer the following question:

What label did Brain Records founders Wendel and Körber work for before they founded Brain?

- a) Parlophone
- b) Noise
- c) Ohr

Please email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject 'Brain box comp'.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from May 25 to June 30. Postal entries can be sent to: Prog, Future Publishing, 1-10 Praed Mews, London W2 1QY. By entering online you agree to our competition rules and you confirm you are happy to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing and carefully selected third parties. The winner will be drawn at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of Future Publishing 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.

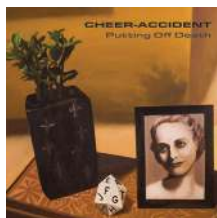
Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing



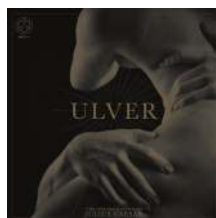
**PUBLIC SERVICE
BROADCASTING**
Every Valley
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



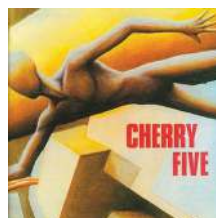
CHEER-ACCIDENT
Putting Off Death
CUNEIFORM

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



ULVER
**The Assassination Of
Julius Caesar**
HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY

The Musician
Andy Tillison



CHERRY FIVE
Cherry Five
CINEVOX

The Writer
Phil Weller



MASTODON
Emperor Of Sand
REPRISE

The Reader
Wendy Brooke



GRAPPLING
The Tea Club
SELF-RELEASED

Barock Project
mainman Luca Zabbini.



BAROCK PROJECT

Italians who relish the power of progression...

"I DON'T LIKE making the same thing twice," explains Luca Zabbini, singer and mastermind behind Barock Project. "The public automatically expect a new album to be just the sequel to the previous one. I think it should be the opposite."

This is the main idea behind the band's brand new album *Detachment*. Barock Project started in 2004, with the aim of melding the finest structures of classical music – keeping a focus on the baroque period – with the rock language and a pinch of jazz harmonies, all supported by a pop structure, with the final aim of revamping the 70s prog sound.

"During the years this initial idea has been shaping up towards a different direction, for several reasons: line-up changes [in 2016, two members who played on *Detachment* left the band], events and the flowing of time," says Zabbini. This is noticeable on many levels, from juxtaposing the covers of *Detachment* – a gothic portrait of a woman – and the previous work, *Skyline* – with artwork by Genesis and VdGG album cover designer Paul Whitehead – to the songwriting. "I'm also singing on this album, and I decided to build the songs up in order to embrace my voice. I wrote vocal parts with a rather compressed vocal range compared to previous work and I wanted to turn my composition style towards the song form, with less complex structures. Now I have much more fun singing rather than only playing my music: with this brand new motivation I can now express myself as best I can."

"The leitmotif behind this new work is the different phases of a detachment, as in a physical or an emotional one or just the farewell to a place, a person or an object. It's a painful experience that makes you ponder and then feel better once you accepted it. It's a unique, self-growing experience."

This theme intrigued Tiger Moth Tales mainman Peter Jones, as Zabbini explains: "All my demo material was ready and I sent it over to Peter, asking if he was keen on writing some lyrics. He accepted and wrote the lyrics for the album and actually decided to sing on two songs as well."

When asked about what he listens to everyday, Zabbini's answer is slightly vague: "I don't listen to prog rock specifically. I listen to a wide range of genres and styles, because what matters to me is discovering sounds. For example, I'm very into indie rock, but also bands like Coldplay. During the recordings of *Detachment* I was listening a lot to *Hand.Cannot.Erase.* by Steven Wilson."

Barock Project have been extremely well-received outside of Italy, especially in Japan and also at this year's Progdreams Festival in Holland, which was the perfect occasion to get their message across to more people. After a last minute cancellation of their UK tour last year, the band are looking forward to bringing their music across the Channel in 2017. **GMA**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Luca Zabbini (vocals, piano, keyboards, acoustic guitars), **Francesco Caliendo** (bass), **Alex Mari** (vocals), **Giacomo Anselmi** (guitar), **Andy Bartolucci** (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

PFM, New Trolls and Genesis meets The Tea Party. The Pineapple Thief and Steven Wilson

CURRENT RELEASE

Detachment is out now on Artalia

WEBSITE

www.barockproject.net



"I listen to a wide range of genres and styles, because what matters to me is discovering sounds."

EDENSONG

Metal and classical trains of thought collide to create musical theatre.

"I GUESS IF you put Jethro Tull, Dream Theater and *Final Fantasy* music into a blender, you'd get Edensong," ponders James Schoen, the New York born vocalist/guitarist who has, over the last 12 years, transformed his band of teenage Rush disciples into an orchestral prog rock monster. It's an evolution crowned by the band's second full length album *Years In The Garden Of Years*. It's a sprawling, evocative entanglement of gritty, time signature shifting prog metal, folksy flourishes and emotively driven film scores, and while the ripples this band have thus far made in the vast ocean of the music industry may be small, their mindset is very much the opposite. Here, they have rearranged a mosaic of familiar sounds to resemble something brimming with inventiveness.

"As a child I was exposed to orchestral music through my favourite films and video games," says Schoen. "I've always been drawn to those expansive, giant sounding symphonic works. By late high school I wanted to take the rock stuff we were doing and push it in a more orchestral direction."

The synopsis of this record sees time as its thematic umbrella, each song branching off into a different musing on the subject. Working within that template, Schoen explains, has been liberating, allowing the album's concept to guide their songwriting.

"I like to write stuff that I feel is visual. Much like how film scores support visuals, we want to create visuals inside the mind of the listener. It liberates us from more traditional song structures; we can explore different emotions and let each song progress linearly

as opposed to returning to a familiar hook. There are songs which think about time in a very personal way, following a person's progression from life to death. *Generations* and *Regenerations* then zoom out a little further and look at the rise and fall of humanity and the constant cycle of history repeating itself through the ages. Conceptually, we knew the emotions and storylines we wanted to convey before most melodies had been laid out."

Like Icarus however, their soaring ambitions were coupled with drawbacks. The album took five years to complete, with Schoen often pushing his own perfectionism to breaking point. It's a factor which he admits had to be tamed. Having written the majority of 2008's *The Fruit Fallen* alone, here a stronger sense of collaboration gave the songs more focus and personality.

"We learned to work to each other's strengths. I'm a conceptual thinker whereas Tony [Waldman, drums and vocals] is more melodically focused; most of the more memorable moments are from his brain. Barry [Seroff, flute] has a really unique voice on the flute and he plays so with so much versatility that it opened up a lot of possibilities for us."

From its first breath to its last, the record's far-reaching sounds never feel erratic or out of place. Played out with a perpetual forward motion, the longer you listen, the deeper into its depths you sink.

"Writing this album," Schoen concludes, "has been the best musical experience of my life." **PW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

James Byron Schoen (guitars, vocals), **Tony Waldman** (drums, percussion), **Stefan Paolini** (keyboards), **TD Towers** (bass), **Barry Seroff** (flute)

SOUNDS LIKE

If Dream Theater wrote the soundtrack for *Game Of Thrones*

CURRENT RELEASE

Years In The Garden Of Years is out now via The Laser's Edge

WEBSITE

www.edensongtheband.com



"I've always been drawn to those expansive, giant sounding symphonic works."

Edensong, with frontman James Byron Schoen (centre).



TOTAL FILM

THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE



THE ULTIMATE ^{FUTURE} FILM MOVIE PACK

4 + ALIEN: COVENANT + WONDER WOMAN

GIFT 1
6 STAR WARS TOPPS CARDS
40th anniversary classics

GIFT 2
36-PAGE MAGAZINE
100 must-see action movies

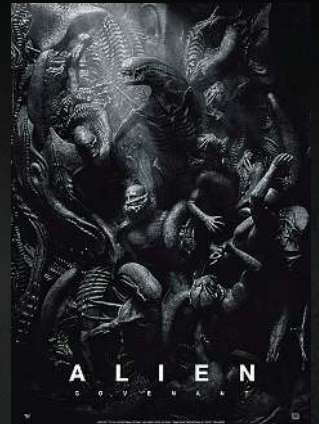
GIFT 3
A4 ALIEN ARTCARD
Covenant art to covet

GIFT 4
148-PAGE EBOOK
'80s movies special

TOTAL FILM
THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE!
THE MUMMY
CRUISE REANIMATES THE MONSTER MOVIE
"I TOOK IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

PLUS >>> BAYWATCH • TRANSFORMERS • TOMB RAIDER
STAR WARS • THE DARK TOWER • VALERIAN



Includes 4 great gifts!

6 Official Star Wars Topps cards, A4 Alien:Covenant art card,
Must-see action movies magazine, 148-page '80s movies Ebook.

ON SALE NOW



STEVEN MACKINTOSH

Obscurities and oddities abound in the record racks of the *Lock, Stock...*, *Luther* and *The Halcyon* actor, a self-confessed "rhythm nut" and hybrid obsessive with a passion for all things Gong.

Words: Jo Kendall **Portrait:** Will Ireland

“I love the idea of buried treasure. I have that collector's mentality of unearthing something rare that's a real gem. Experimentation is key but in varying degrees — there *has* to be melody or rhythm to hang on to.

I'm a rhythm nut [gestures to practice drum kit in the corner] and hearing that in **Gong** is where this all begins.

I grew up in Cambridge. I remember being about 14 and hanging out with mates and someone stuck a weird record on and I didn't know what it was and it blew my mind. That was *Floating Anarchy*, which is more punky for Gong, but I was intrigued by the electronic noises over it that I'd not really heard before, apart from on *Silver Machine* by Hawkwind. I did some investigating at Andy's Records and I nabbed *Angel's Egg*, which to this day I still think is absolutely brilliant. It's whimsical and difficult in places but well-judged and it's got groove to it. *Angel's Egg* has a special place for me but *You* is a work of genius. This is an original pressing; in the 90s I did a TV series called *The Buddha Of Suburbia* and the early part of it was set in the 70s. I played a guy that became a rock star, loosely based on Billy Idol or Bowie. There was a scene with the lead character Karim where I took him to my attic bedroom, they lie down and light up a spliff and away they go. The director said to me, 'What should they be listening to?' And I said, 'You.' The art department got a lovely first pressing and gave it to me. *You* started my deep love of the weird and led on to **Steve Hillage**. I was obsessed with him, his guitar style on *L* in particular and his groove. When he moved onto System 7 and the ravey stuff in the 90s, I followed.

Growing up, my friends and I all played instruments. I had a four-track recorder and made weird sounds, that was my universe. I was also really into punk and listened to my sister's disco and soul records — and there's some weird and wonderful space disco that I would seek out. My music taste became all about searching for hybrids, where very different things come together.

Blo are a classic example of a hybrid, an African band heavily influenced by psychedelic rock bands of the time. *Chapter One* has all the hallmarks of

rhythmic African music but with great guitar freak-outs. I read about them and knew I had to get it — I paid some silly money. But it's not the most expensive thing I've bought. That was Placebo's *Ball Of Eyes*, Belgian jazz funk from 1971. That cost a lot.

A lot of my more unusual collection I heard about through my friend Steve Brown, an amazing, encyclopaedic music guy. We became friends through being neighbours, he invited me over for a cup of tea and he had this room full of records. I was like, 'Oh my God!' as he kept pulling out all these brilliant things. A lot of my choices are down to him so I have to give him credit. One was **Fraser & Debolt** — a Canadian duo from the 60s/70s who look gentle and easy but play with vigour, forcefulness and are just plain weird. It's more a sound from 20 years later, indie and discordant. Quite an odd signing for Columbia, nothing commercial here at all: it's just out there.

Steve had some private press records which totally suits me. He got me into **Bobby Brown Live**. He's a Hawaiian hippie from the 70s and this is something recorded in his van on his own label Destiny. It's DIY but it's got this Polynesian flavour, with a drum box, harmonica and lap steel, overlaid with odd noises and long, extensive jams but it still hangs on to the melody. I feel like I'm in his van with him when I play it. I love the DIY idea that people are just sitting on their own using whatever's to hand. You find that a little with soul music — take Shuggie Otis, who also used electronics and made soul a bit more experimental.

I've got a thing about people who do weird stuff with guitars, like Hillage. **Michel Moulinié's** 1978 album *Chrysalide* is just that, cyclical stuff with double-tracked guitar and treated violin. It's got something I really go for, a cosmic, transcendental feel with a bit of Mike Oldfield in there too. I don't even drink these days, music does the transportation for me.

When you start discovering some bands you come at them from a weird angle but as it's your first encounter you love it. I came at **Frank Zappa** from the later stuff and I still love those records. The same goes for **Can**. In the 90s I read an article where John Lydon was talking about music and because he mentioned them I had to listen. Can perfectly marry both sides of my listening; there's the funkiest drummer in the world keeping the beat down and the improvisational experiments. I started with *Future Days* then I worked my way back through *Tago Mago* and *Ege Bamyasi*. I've picked *Unlimited Edition* because it's oddities but all brilliant — the buried treasure in effect! Can were having a revival at that time and another band I got into, **Tortoise**, were namechecking them, too. It was inevitable that they'd become a favourite, as have other Kraut-y things such as **Achim Reichel's** *Erholung* which is very much in the Can vein and guitar playing that's trancey and repetitive. When I started playing guitar I wanted to play an AC/DC riff, then a Pistols riff. Then I learned about echo pedals.

I'm a big fan of cinematic stuff and soundtracks. On a 60s tip there's **Beaver & Krause**, who appeared on the soundtrack to *Performance*. *Gandharva* is the score for a non-existent film and they really push the experimentalism. It's groovy, with Mike Bloomfield on bluesy-psychedelic guitar, but there's also synth drone and classical, then it ends in a gospel hymn. How many records do that? None. But then there's *Joyride* by **Friendsound** which freaks out one minute then does reflective soundtracky stuff the next. You've got seven minutes of kids in a playground, a lullaby, birdsong then some more freakout on side two. This is psychedelic rock at its most bonkers.

I've discovered loads of things from going into record shops and asking, 'What are you playing?' I love Rough Trade East and like to pop in for a chinwag with Nigel, see if he can recommend anything. **Sam Kidel's** *Disruptive Muzak* was playing in there one day and I had to snap it up. The story is he recorded an ambient experimental piece, then telephoned lots of call centres — like the Jobcentre — and played the piece when they answered the phone. He then recorded him playing the recording down the phone, and people's responses. You have to listen from start to finish. I find the effect of this record quite strange and bizarrely moving.

I'm going less for the 60s and 70s stuff these days and more for new things such as **Cavern Of Anti-Matter** and **Hauschka**. There's so much out there — the quest never stops!"



"The director said to me, 'What should they be listening to?' And I said, 'You.'"





GUY MANNING

After debuting at last year's Summer's End festival to great success, Damanek have now released their debut album *On Track*. Featuring members of Southern Empire and United Progressive Fraternity as well as various special guests, Damanek are an exciting progressive prospect. We speak to frontman Guy Manning to find out more...

Words: Dave Ling **Portrait:** Katja Ogrin

As a past member of Parallel Or 90 Degrees and The Tangent among others, and also leader of his own group Manning, singer/multi-instrumentalist Guy Manning sought something different with his new band Damanek, blending references to his co-conspirators – the letters 'DA' representing Maschine bassist Dan Mash, 'MA' signifying Manning and 'EK' for saxophonist Marek Arnold – into their name. It was afterwards that Sean Timms, keyboardist of Southern Empire and Unitopia, joined the project and that Guy learned Damanek is a real place in Kosovo. Regardless, he kept it.

On Track is a thought-provoking set that features a phalanx of guest players, including Maschine's Luke Machin, Southern Empire's Brody Thomas Green and Soul Secret's Antonio Vittozzi.

With personnel arriving from Australia and Germany, Damanek could well have been under-prepared at Summer's End, but the reaction was great!

Luckily, the pedigree of the band – myself excluded – is remarkably good. Everybody turned up very well-prepared and two days of rehearsal got us through. I was apprehensive because at Summer's End two years earlier with United Progressive Fraternity we were unprepared, but last year went as well as it could have done.

Prog's review of the show likened Damanek to "the funkier, jazz-fusion side of Toto".

Well, that's okay. Toto are a remarkably good band. If people consider Damanek catchy that pleases me. We're not Henry Cow. We're not even really that proggy. It's more like the progressive side of Tears For Fears.

Quirky-jerky time changes are thin on the ground, certainly.

I put in a few just to keep the brain cells active but

they're not clever-clever, "Here's a signature in 7/8." The idea was to combine melodic songs with a decent set of lyrics.

Those words tackle a variety of ecological and society-based issues. *Long Time, Shadow Falls*, for instance, paints an evocative picture of a black-maned lion standing on a Kalahari dune. Was that from first-hand experience?

It's from imagination, though I always do lots of research. With enough of that, you don't have to drop your guts onto the page – you can use little pieces to tell the story.

With extinction of so many species a real possibility, what would you do hunters of elephants, rhinos and hippos?

If they had ivory on them I can think of a couple of suggestions, but I'm not a violent man and the only way to stop hunting is a massive policing presence, which is impossible. And of course people who are struggling to live will kill animals to eat. But in 20 years from now the only African elephants we'll see will be in zoos.

Was it perhaps incongruous to match observations upon civilisation's decay with a soulful, funky and cheerful backdrop in *Believer* – *Redeemer*?

That's my Marvin Gaye moment, isn't it? Guy Manning's *What's Going On*? On my TV, I'm bombarded with images of rioting and overturned cars. I'm a past-60-year-old gentleman and my days of protesting are past. But I can write a song that tries to get everyone to realise the clock is ticking. The human race is wiping itself out.

You predict a "tipping point" – how far away are we?

That's tough to answer. In Skye, there's a long way to go, but in Brixton or on the streets of America we're nearly there. There can be a fight over taking someone's carrier bag in Sainsbury's. Social media over-amplifies that, and I find it disturbing.

Trump's election has poured gasoline upon the fire of issues such as global warming, which he doesn't believe exists. That's what epic album closer *Dark Sun* is about, right?

I've written about global warming for many years before Donald, but it's mainly about air pollution – a dystopian vision where the air is so thick with toxins that the sun is no longer visible. The song says that there is a solution, and it's time. It takes one first step, but having the solution doesn't mean that people will buy into it. The penny will drop but not until the problems are staring us in the face, by which time it will be too late.

There was some leftover material, and you're about to fly to Australia to write with Southern Empire's Sean Timms and Mark Trueack of United Progressive Fraternity. How soon could we hear a second Damanek album?

I wrote enough songs for three albums, but with everyone being so busy I expect to be sitting on [the remainder] for some time.

Will you encourage the others to contribute?

Yes, of course. Just because I have another eight pieces ready for Damanek II, there's no law that says I must write everything.

Damanek's site predicts a Southern Empire tour of the UK in the autumn. As Giant Electric Pea label-mates, could some co-headline dates be feasible?

It's a very interesting idea, but this year has mainly been put aside for Southern Empire, so I don't want to tread on anyone's toes. We'd like to tour but I know I've got to be patient.

Finally: please get some decent band photographs taken. You almost lost out on being featured in *Prog* for that very reason!

[Huffily] Oh, for goodness sake. When we played at Summer's End we didn't even have a record deal. Had I known the album would be out in May we'd have had some shots taken of us staring into the distance, but I'm afraid I don't own a crystal ball.

On Track is out now on GEP Records. See www.guymanning.com for more information.


"I can write a song that tries to get everyone to realise the clock is ticking. The human race is wiping itself out."



It's been 30 years since the final Fish-fronted **Marillion** album was released, and it was a tumultuous journey for all involved. From the influence of alcohol to incessant touring schedules and the final bitter split, *Prog* discovers the inside story behind *Clutching At Straws*.

Words: Dave Everley **Photos:** Steve Rothery

The Freilichtbühne Loreley is one of the world's great venues. Perched high on the Loreley, a 400-foot rock overlooking the Rhine Gorge in Western Germany, this open-air amphitheatre was originally built by the Nazis as a Thingplatz — a showcase venue for the Third Reich to stage displays of propaganda thinly disguised as drama.

Other, older myths surround the Loreley. According to local folklore, it was the home of a siren who would draw passing ships onto the rocks more

than 400 feet below. This macabre legend has been referenced in music by everyone from German composer Felix Mendelssohn to Wishbone Ash.

On July 18, 1987, Marillion arrived at the Loreley to play one of the biggest headlining shows of their career yet. It was two years since the release of 



THE LAST Straw



"The unity of the band seemed to have gone..."
Steve Rothery wasn't wrong. Fish (left) and Pete
Trewavas in 1988 as the band began to fall apart.

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable. The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

Fish

Misplaced Childhood, the album that turned this unfashionable prog band into the unlikely pop stars of the decade.

But success had brought unforeseen issues. The demands of constant touring were taking their toll, and the gang mentality that originally fuelled them was fracturing. This turbulence was captured on the band's most recent album, *Clutching At Straws*, a snapshot of a band struggling to keep their heads above water. In its central character, Torch, frontman Fish laid his own inner turmoil bare.

The 20,000 fans gathered at Loreley to see them might not have been aware, but Marillion were under a dark cloud. Behind the scenes, the band had split into two camps: Fish on one side, the rest of his bandmates on the other.

"Things were very miserable," says guitarist Steve Rothery today. "If you watch the *Live From Loreley* video, you can see the mood. The unity had gone. You can blame many things, you can point the finger at people who were hanging round and aggravating the problem, whispering in ears. But whatever the reason, it reached critical mass. There was something fundamentally wrong with how things were."

Their career wasn't dashed on the rocks at Loreley, but they were listing badly. Within 18 months, the Fish era had come crashing to an acrimonious end, leaving the wreckage of broken friendships in its wake. At the heart of it all was *Clutching At Straws* – Marillion's dark masterpiece.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album," says Fish. "I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go, 'Fucking hell...'"

"I feel less warm towards that album than I do *Misplaced Childhood*," says keyboard player Mark Kelly. "But I know some people really like it."

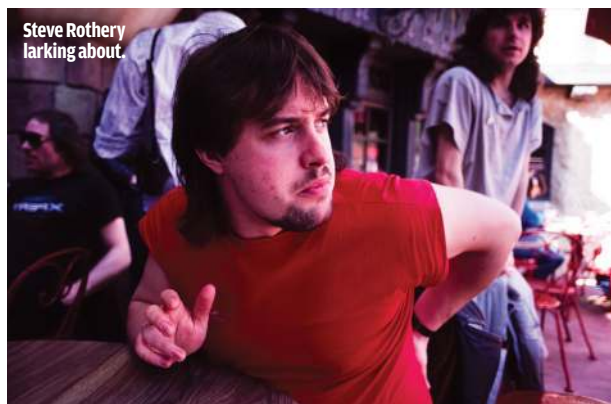
"It's a strange album, *Clutching*," says Rothery. "It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."

The retrospective view of their fourth album is one of the few things the men who made it disagree on – remarkable, given the circumstances that surrounded it and the eventual outcome. On most other points, they're in surprising accordance, albeit with markedly different individual perspectives. Certainly, all five members put the root of their problems down to the incessant touring schedule imposed on them by their manager, John Arnison.

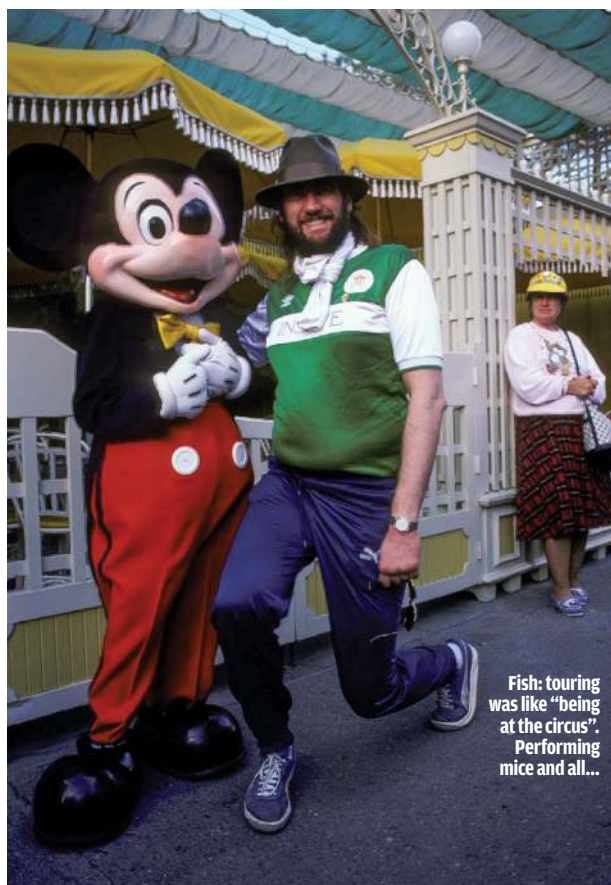
"Just when you thought it was coming to an end, there'd be another fucking series of gigs," says Fish. "We were squeezing the pips dry on *Misplaced*. It was like being at the



Warm Wet Circles: it wasn't all tough times...



Steve Rothery larking about.



Fish: touring was like "being at the circus". Performing mice and all...

circus. It's all fucking singing and dancing, but when you walk outside the tent, it's scabby animals and shite. I was physically and mentally exhausted a lot of the time."

"I think Fish probably felt the pressure more than anyone else," says bassist Peter Trewavas. "If you're the person everybody wants to talk to, then the demands on your time are so great. Maybe we could have been a bit more understanding about that. But when things are happening, it's like a fairground ride."

The singer admits that he was partying hard, partly as a release from the seemingly endless grind. His exploits were seized on with glee by the press, who liked their rock stars larger than life and, preferably, always ready with an open wallet.

"There were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer, let's be open and honest about it," says Fish. "People go out on tour, they get tired and worn down, they need something to pep them up for the show. Then suddenly you've finished the show and you're still getting pepped up. You're in an eternal overdraft of energy."

It was this hedonistic lifestyle that prompted the singer to create the character who sat at the centre of *Clutching At Straws*. Torch was supposedly a writer suffering from writer's block, an older, more disillusioned version of the Jester from Marillion's earlier album. At 29, he was the same age as the man who conceived him. It didn't take a psychologist to work out that Torch, like the Jester and the kid from *Misplaced Childhood*, was essentially Fish himself.

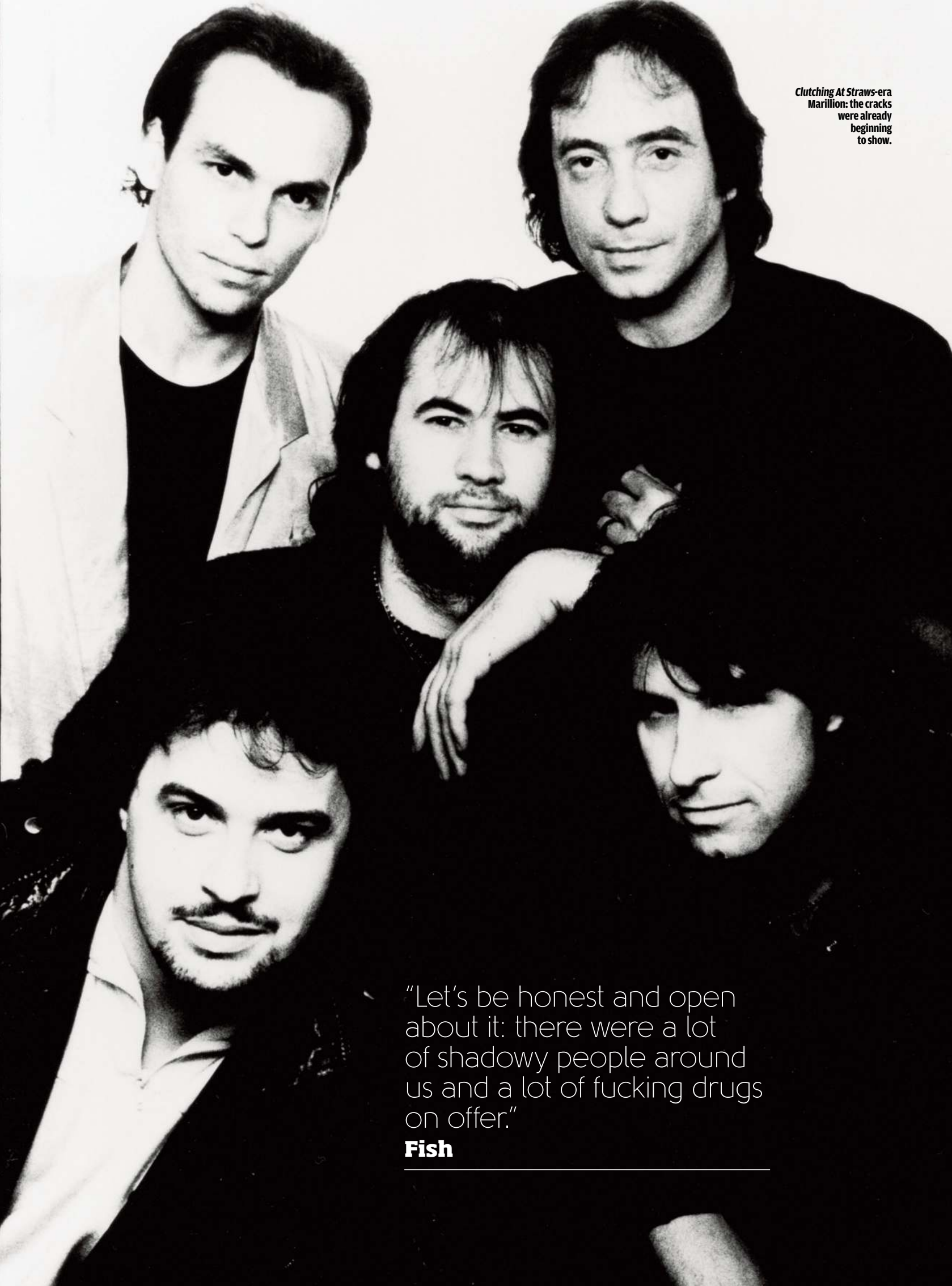
"I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego," he admits. "I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty."

The band needed a holiday, but the break that could have eased their situation and reset increasingly strained relationships never materialised. Instead, the band were bundled back into the studio to record a follow-up to *Misplaced Childhood*. EMI wanted another hit album in short order.

"The touring really did take it out of us," says drummer Ian Mosley. "Then reality hit us when it came down to writing another album. You've got a blank canvas in front of you and the record company is going, 'Is it ready yet?'"

"Now we were in the Premier League the label didn't want us to turn into fucking Leicester City," says Fish.

The band began sketching out rough ideas for their fourth album at Steve Rothery's house in Wendover. Peter Trewavas remembers sketching out



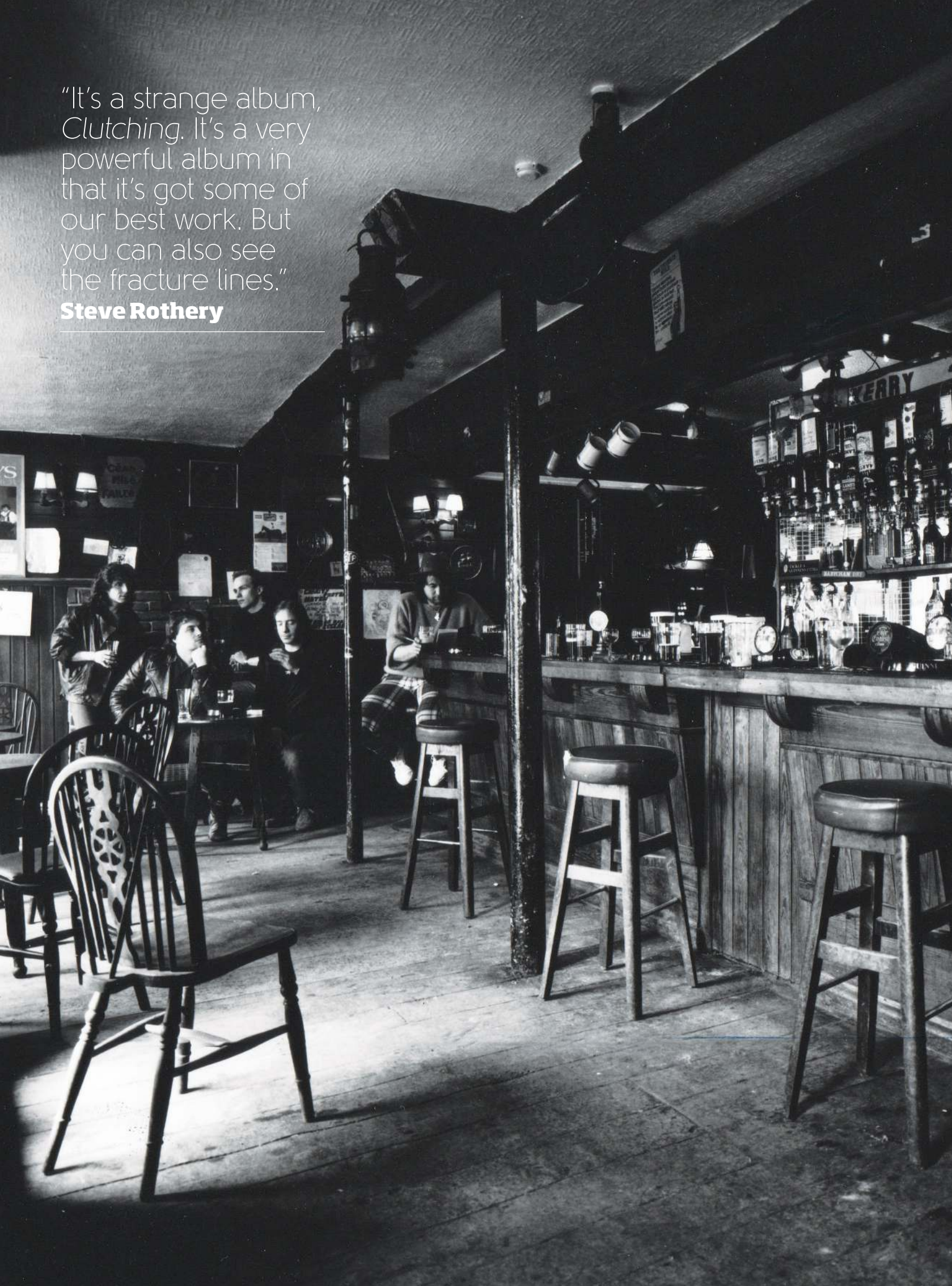
*Clutching At Straws-era
Marillion: the cracks
were already
beginning
to show.*

"Let's be honest and open about it: there were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer."

Fish

"It's a strange album, *Clutching*. It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."

Steve Rothery





The back cover of "drunken poet" album *Clutching At Straws*.



Bar Brawl: The photo template for the cover of the album, plus (below) Mark Wilkinson's initial artwork.



the beginnings of opening track *Hotel Hobbies* – “the soundscapey bit” he says – before the label paid for the band to decamp at a rehearsal studio between London and Brighton.

“They wanted to get us away from the clubs and bars and dark influences,” says Fish. “Everybody went down there, we were going to be good little boys and concentrate on writing an album. And it was just awful. People were getting tetchy.”

“I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego. I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty.”

Fish

Marillion’s traditional approach to songwriting involved building up segments of songs which they would then find a way of piecing together like a jigsaw. Or, in Fish’s words, “Trying to put them together with a hammer.”

“It was a bit like *Misplaced Childhood Part 2*,” agrees Steve Rothery. “We were trying to stick all these tracks together that didn’t really belong together. We had to step back a bit and re-evaluate what we were doing.”

This much became clear when Chris Kimsey, who had produced *Misplaced Childhood* and would work on the new album, arrived with the band’s A&R man, Hugh Stanley-Clarke, to hear what the band had written. The pair were unimpressed.

“They were, like, ‘Is that all you’ve managed to come up with?’” says Fish. “Chris said, ‘I don’t hear any fucking singles in there.’”

There was one song that did stand out. It had emerged from one of the band’s sporadic post-pub jam sessions and was powered by a catchy Mark Kelly keyboard riff (“What we called ‘The widdly-widdly synth stuff,’” he says). The song would eventually be titled *Incommunicado*. But, according to Fish, the rest of the band were dismissive of it.

“I always loved The Who, and I wanted to do more rocky stuff, but the band were not into the idea,” says Fish. “And they were not into *Incommunicado*. But we played it to Chris Kimsey and he said, ‘That’s it – that’s the single.’ I was really chuffed. I felt like I got a backing for what I wanted to do.”

This split in opinion over *Incommunicado* didn’t augur well for Marillion’s future. It wasn’t the only point of difference either. Steve Rothery had brought in a song he’d been working on that the band thought had a lot of potential. Fish supplied a set of vivid lyrics inspired by observations he’d had while drinking one night in a pub near his parents’ house in North Berwick. The song was titled *Warm Wet Circles*. But not everyone was impressed.

“I liked the music, but I hated the fact that it was called *Warm Wet Circles*,” says Mark Kelly. “We weren’t

chasing hit singles, but if you want to kill a song stone dead, call it *Warm Wet Circles*. Fish’s attitude was a bit like, ‘Fuck you, I’m going to do what I want.’”

Musically, Marillion had largely jettisoned the more traditional prog elements of their sound. The ornate musicality of *Grendel* and *The Web* was a distant memory, replaced by a more mature approach that wouldn’t upset the daytime radio listeners who had bought *Kayleigh* in their droves. But lyrically, *Clutching At Straws* disappeared down an altogether bleaker rabbit hole.

“It’s a lot less optimistic an album,” says guitarist Steve Rothery. “Some of it symbolises Fish’s disillusionment – he wanted success and he got success, but it didn’t bring him the personal happiness that I think he expected it to.”

Together Yet Apart:
it became Fish
versus Marillion.



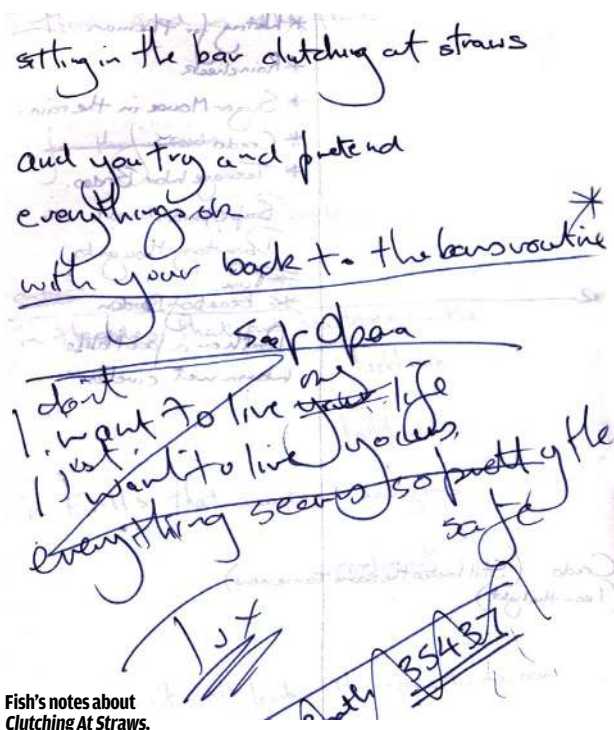
MARILLION PRES COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

"It's a 'drunken poet' album," says Fish. "That's why the cover featured Burns and Kerouac and Truman Capote. All those people were people who had a strong association with alcohol."

Booze soaked deep into the pores of *Clutching At Straws*, from the whisky-and-shattered-dreams anthem *Slainte Mhath* (a Scottish drinking toast) to *Torch Song*, in which a doctor solemnly intones that if the titular character doesn't stop drinking, he "won't reach 30". The latter referenced Beat author Jack Kerouac's famous quote: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

"It felt like, 'Oh, I've got an alcohol problem, I take too many drugs, look at me, I'm a rock star, I've got problems,'" says Kelly. "It was all a bit clichéd and childish. It was over-dramatic, that whole, 'Carry on like this, you won't reach 30' thing. He did carry on and he's still with us now."

The album's title certainly laid bare the record's over-arching themes, referencing both alcohol and cocaine use, as well as the fact that the band



Fish's notes about
Clutching At Straws.

were, in Fish's words, "Desperate to make a big album." The problem was that the band simply weren't getting on. One song, *That Time Of The Night*, found Fish's frustrations bubbling to the surface.

"It was my resignation statement: 'So if you ask me where do I go from here, my next destination even isn't really that clear,'" he says. "Somebody had brought some coke down to the studio and I ended up doing a couple of lines, and then suddenly I was in a bedroom, there was no alcohol, and I couldn't sleep. I actually wrote most of that lyric that night. I just felt really alienated."

"It seemed to be that the thing Fish used to love doing, he started to hate," says Rothery. "He was looking for people to blame."

The powderkeg finally exploded towards the end of the sessions. An argument flared up which ended with Fish throwing a whiskey tumbler at the guitarist.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album. I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go, 'Fucking hell...'"

Fish

"I stormed out and that was it," says Rothery, who says his relationship with the singer had been deteriorating since the time of *Misplaced Childhood*. "I was out of the band for 24 hours. But I wasn't really close to Fish at that point. It's unfortunate, because on a personal level we had an amazing chemistry together, but that friendship seemed to gradually dissolve."

After some hastily arranged talks to clear the air, the band pulled themselves back from the brink of self-destruction, at least temporarily, but the die had been cast.

If *Misplaced Childhood* has ended on a note of defiant positivity, by *Clutching At Straws* all that had gone. It was the hunched figure with red-rimmed eyes sat glowering in the corner of every pub, trying to drink off last night's hangover.

But it was a strangely romantic album too, one that wore its neurosis and self-pity like a badge. Occasionally, as on the chillingly prescient *White Russian* — inspired by the election of Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, despite rumours of Nazi involvement during World War II — it looked up from its half-empty glass and gazed outwards to the world at large, only to recoil at what it saw.

Musically, it was Marillion's most accomplished and mature album yet. The sharp edges of their first three albums had been smoothed away, replaced by a sound that ebbed and flowed between triumph and introspection. They may still have worked by hammering together jigsaw pieces, but the likes of *Warm Wet Circles* and the tender *Sugar Mice* — inspired, as the opening lines suggest, by a day stuck in a depressing Holiday Inn in Milwaukee while the rain poured down outside — pointed towards the band's post-Fish future.

Clutching At Straws was released in June 1987, and peaked at No.2 on the UK album charts — one place below *Misplaced Childhood*, which had reached the top spot. The champagne corks popped, though any celebrations were soured by the mood within the band.

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable," says Fish. "The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

Except it hadn't, not quite. The band was certainly fracturing, but on one side was the singer and on the other was everybody else.

"I remember avoiding Fish on tour," says Kelly. "He was in 24/7 party mode. He'd say, 'Come on, let's go out.' You'd go out, but he wouldn't want you to leave. He'd make you feel like a terrible bastard for wanting to go to bed at 3am."

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What Fish is up to next...



"I'm 60 next year — there are screenplays I want to write, books. And the music business has changed so much. It's a whole different circus."

In December 2017, Fish hits the road to mark the 30th anniversary of *Clutching At Straws*. As with 2005's *Return To Childhood* tour, which found him playing Marillion's *Misplaced Childhood* in full, the forthcoming tour will find him revisiting his swansong album with the band.

"It's gonna be interesting re-examining that material," he says. "You look at *White Russian* now, and it's so pertinent."

While the temptation might be to play the album from start to finish, Fish says he's considering mixing

things up. "I've been toying with the idea of putting relevant songs within it. Some of them will work well together. And I've got to look at *Tux On*, which was a fucking brilliant B-side from that era. It was basically just some drum programming that we jammed on — we're going to have to completely rewrite it."

The shows may also find Fish road-testing material from his as-yet-unwritten solo album, *Weltschmerz*. Despite originally planning to release the album this year, the singer decide to hold fire on it due to various personal issues.

"Last year was a fucking write-off as far as being in a creative frame of mind went," he says. "My father died last May, which really took it out of me, a lot more than I thought. It wiped me out for about three or four months. Then I had the back operation and then the shoulder operation, which is gonna take months to recover from."

"I decided that I wasn't going to rush to have *Weltschmerz* ready for September. I don't have to do that now. I don't have EMI saying, 'This has got to be released on this date.' I don't have a manager saying, 'This is when the tour is.' I decide what the fuck I'm going to do."

Instead, he says that he plans to write until the end of the year and drop new songs into the December shows. "We're going to do what we did with the *Feast Of Consequences* album, and basically take some of the material out and pay it. That way you get into finding the energies that are trapped inside the song and free them up, so when you go back to the studio it feels like you're performing them live."

Fish says the new material may well reflect his "darker" state of mind. "As far as what's been going on with world politics and everything else, I've picked up on that. There's a certain relativity between *Feast Of Consequences* and *Misplaced Childhood* — they're not the same album, but there's a certain feel you can identify in both. And I think it's the same in *Weltschmerz* and *Clutching At Straws* — a subconscious link. And it's 30 years since I left Marillion as well. There's a symmetry."

The plan is to finish writing the new album after the tour finishes, with a view to recording it in the spring of 2018. And once again, Fish promises that it will be his final solo studio album.

"I'm getting to the point where myself and the music business have come to the end of our relationship as it has been for the last 30 years," he says. "I'm 60 next year — there's screenplays I want to write, books. And the music business has changed so much. It's a whole different circus." **DEV**

From the outside, it looked like the band were flying. The first single from the album, *Incommunicado*, had reached the Top 10, while *Sugar Mice* and *Warm Wet Circles* reached the Top 40. They were playing arenas across Europe. But being a member of Marillion in 1987 through 1988 was a lonely place to be.

"I was going onstage every night and feeling like I was playing by myself," says Kelly. "I was up on this big riser away from everybody, and Ian was on this big riser across the stage. You become separated from everything. At one point, Pete said, 'I think I saw somebody up in the lighting truss during the show.'"

The manager said, 'Yeah, you've got 10 people up there, operating things.'"

"We were in a bit of a bubble," adds Trewavas. "We couldn't go anywhere without security. We had to check into hotels under pseudonyms. We couldn't just go and do a soundcheck. It had to be: 'So-and-so is going to pick you up at this time, then you're going to drive around to the back of the building, that's going to take about 40 minutes.' Everything was being over-thought."

"It was just fucking draining," says Fish. "We were playing these concrete halls in Italy with shite sound, and I'd just had enough. You've got to remember, I'm going out there every night singing about how shite it is being out on the road. There was a kind



of feedback loop going on. If I was singing fucking ABBA songs, it would have felt a lot better."

Everyone involved says that the problem could have been relieved if they'd been allowed to have a break from touring — and from each other. But their management was determined to keep them on the road, to the detriment of the band itself.

"These were people who had been great friends of mine," says Fish. "We were comrades. But we were so distant from each other. John Arnison should have said, 'Everybody, go away for a year — Fish, go and do some acting, Steve, go and write some soundtrack music.'"

In June 1988, a year after *Clutching At Straws* was released, Marillion played the Radrennbahn Weissensee cycling track in East Berlin in front of 95,000 people. It should have been a triumph, but things had reached the point of no return.

"The gig was incredible," says Ian Mosley. "But we came offstage and

people were saying, 'I didn't really enjoy that.' That's when alarm bells went off: 'If you didn't enjoy that, then something is very wrong...'"

A month later, the band headlined Fife Aid, a poorly attended charity gig at Craigtoun Country Park in St Andrews organised by TV naturalist David Bellamy. It was, Steve Rothery recalls, "A fairly dismal day all round." They didn't know it at the time — though they may have sensed it — but it would be Fish's last gig with Marillion.

"Things had started going properly wrong at the end of the *Clutching At*

Above: Fish was at his wits' end...

"Nowadays, we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends."

Fish

Straws tour," says Trewavas. "After that, there was a kind of reluctance to get together and work."

There was a last-ditch attempt to salvage things. The band began working on new material in Trewavas' garage, before eventually decamping to Dalnaglar Castle, a stately pile in Perthshire which was miles away from civilisation.

"That was a terrible mistake," says Kelly. "Not only were we not getting on, we didn't really want to be together, and we had nowhere to go."

"We went back to the same routine," says Fish. "It was the same bits going up on the fucking blackboard: this is the Joni Mitchell section, this is the Floyd section. There we were again, in the same shit."

A gulf had opened up between what the band wanted and what the singer wanted, and neither side were ready to compromise. "I don't know if he thought we weren't giving his ideas much of a try," says Trewavas. "But then some of his lyrics weren't quite what we wanted to work on, either."

The music the band recorded in Dalnaglar, and during an earlier session in Nettlebed, near Reading, wouldn't go to waste, with some of it ending up on the first two post-Fish albums *Season's End* and *Holidays In Eden*. Similarly, the singer's lyrics would re-appear on his own debut solo album, *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, and the title track of its follow-up, *Internal Exile*. But, as the bassist puts it: "Something had to give." They wouldn't have long to wait before it did.

Bob Ezrin had been scoped out to produce Marillion's next album. The American, who had worked on such landmark records Lou Reed's *Berlin*, Kiss' *Destroyer* and Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, flew to the UK to meet the band.

"Bob came down to meet the band in some studio in Surrey," says Fish. "He said, 'OK, play me what you've got.' And the band played all the bits and pieces they had. And Bob said, 'There are no songs here. These are just bits.' After Bob left, the band started going, 'Alright, let's try joining this bit onto this bit.' And I just went, 'This is a waste of fucking time. I can't deal with it.'"

The singer headed to his cousin's house in Wiltshire. "I drunk a 40-fluid-oz bottle of Jim Beam on my fucking own, and I was still standing, because I was so stressed and tense."

He woke up the next morning with a clear head and made a decision that would change his life and alter the course of the band. "I wrote a five-page letter, got it photocopied at a local office suppliers and paid for a taxi driver to deliver it to everybody else's house. I basically said, 'Either fundamental changes are made within the management and we get rid of John Arnison or I'm leaving.' The next thing, I get a phone call from management saying, 'The band have decided to accept your resignation.'"

"Fish said he wanted 50 per cent of all the publishing and all the writing," says Mosley. "That's when it got out of hand. Everybody said, 'This has gone too far.'"

This is where memories diverge. Mark Kelly says that Fish spoke to the band's manager a few days later, suggesting that he might have made a hasty decision, something Fish refutes. But whatever happened, the outcome was irrefutable: Fish was no longer a member of Marillion.

Speaking separately to the rest of the band today, they all use the same word to describe the emotions they went through in the aftermath of Fish's departure: relief.

"Because things had got so difficult," says Rothery. "Fish had never really had anything to do with the writing of the music. So we knew that our musical identity was still there. We had a lot of great ideas. Maybe, slightly naively, we thought it would be just a case of finding someone to replace him. As if it was ever going to be that easy."

"Fish's departure was, 'OK, this is part of the process,'" says Peter Trewavas. "Don't get me wrong — it was a big thing, and we had to fill a big hole. It took us a long time to do that."

The split was bitter and nasty. Barbs were exchanged in the press, and there was a debilitating court case between the two sides. It would be a decade before they began speaking again, by which time by Fish was deep into his solo career and Marillion had reinvented themselves with their new singer, Steve Hogarth.

HAPPY ENDING?

How Marillion found another frontman.

How do you replace a singer like Fish? That was the question facing Marillion following the big man's departure at the end of 1988. And it was a long and involved process that nearly drove them to distraction.

"Even though the mood in the band had lifted, we knew it wasn't going to be easy getting someone in who was right for the band," recalls Mark Kelly. "Fish was a unique frontman."

The process of finding a new singer would take months. Ian Mosley remembers the band being inundated with tapes from hopefuls.

"I used to drive to our rehearsal studio from my house, and I'd play these cassettes as I drove," he says. "And I'd be going, 'No,' and I'd chuck the tape in the back seat. There was a pile of them."

The band had all manner of applicants from across the musical spectrum, from heavy metal vocalists to Fish soundalikes. "That's one thing we absolutely didn't want," says Kelly. "We wanted to move forwards rather than backwards."

While the band understandably put live shows on the backburner

until they found a new frontman, they weren't completely gig-shy. In November 1988, they played a fan convention in Utrecht, Holland, where Peter Trewavas stepped up to the microphone.

"It wasn't so much singing as conducting the crowd," he said. "I mean, I love singing, but apart from anything else, if you're replacing a singer like Fish, you want to have a presence onstage, and I didn't think I was it. Somebody hiding behind an instrument wasn't going to have the effect that would be needed. So no, it was never going to be full time."

A month later the band played another fanclub gig, this time at the Royal Court Theatre in Liverpool. On this occasion, the vocalist was Dave Lloyd, formerly with Scouse rockers Nutz and Rage, whose late drummer John Mylett would be commemorated in the *Milo* section on *Misplaced Childhood*'s *Blind Curve*. "We knew the Marillion guys because Rage shared a manager, John Arnison," says Lloyd today. "We played with them a few times and got to know them well."

Lloyd sang six songs with the band: *Incommunicado*, *Kayleigh*,

Lavender, *Heart Of Lothian*, *Garden Party* and *Market Square Heroes*. While the prospect of a bluesy singer like Lloyd joining Marillion full time is certainly intriguing on paper, today he says that there was little chance of it happening.

"If they wanted me to sing with them, nobody told me," he says. "I was just helping them out. In all honesty, I don't think my voice would have suited what they were doing."

And so the search for a new singer continued. The band auditioned a number of people, but none of them fitted the bill. "There was a point where we thought, 'Will we ever find somebody?'" admits Kelly.

The tapes began piling dispiritingly up in the back of Mosley's car, until one day he popped a cassette in the deck. It was by a band called How We Live.

"It was this really striking voice," says the drummer. "Some guy named Steve Hogarth. I got to the studio and said, 'Guys, I think you might want to listen to this.' So we did, and we all know what happened next..." **DEV**



New Kid On The Block: Steve Hogarth (left) with Mark Kelly.



Above: the intimate band-on-tour photos in this feature are taken from Steve Rothery's *Postcards From The Road*. See www.marillion.com for more information and to order the book.

"We did go through a very public and very angry divorce," says Fish. "Nowadays, we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends. But to be blunt and honest about it, neither party has ever reached the commercial success we had in the 80s. But I don't miss it. I'm much happier with my lot these days."

Thirty years on, *Clutching At Straws* stands as a strangely fitting epitaph to Marillion's best-known 80s line-up in all its fractious, boozy glory. The great 'what ifs' that surround it — what if

Fish had stayed, what if they'd made another album together — are the source of many a drunken argument. But in the end it's all hypothetical. Like Kerouac's Roman candle, the Fish-era line-up of Marillion was always going to fizzle out. *Slàinte Mhath*, as they say north of the border. **P**

Fish will preform *Clutching In Straws* in full on his solo tour this December. See www.facebook.com/derek.dick for more information. For more on Marillion see www.marillion.com.

JUST FOR THE RECORD...

Mark Wilkinson discusses creating the artwork for *Clutching At Straws*, and how he reimagined it for this very cover of *Prog*...

Words: Dave Everley **Images:** Mark Wilkinson



Left: the initial sketch of Torch for the new cover and (right) Fish's original rejected album cover sketch.

"Clutching At Straws was not one of my best efforts back in the day, it has to be said. There were mitigating circumstances, mostly due to time. Far too much of it at the beginning, as the band were unsure about how this cover was to be approached or even if I would be doing it, and we all seemed to drift for ages. The enthusiasm at the meetings about previous album art was sadly absent. This was a dark album in all sorts of ways, everyone at the time could sense it. The cover needed to reflect that somehow. It certainly was my darkest hour as an artist!

Initially, Fish provided me with a doodle based on a cocktail glass with planet Earth skewered instead of a cherry. But I don't think the rest of the band went for it, so a meeting was set up at EMI to explore other ideas. We discussed featuring a bar. To accentuate the different stylistic approach to previous albums which was important to them, I suggested a collage, mixing photography and painting. The next time we met, I brought along Janus Van Helfteren, a photographer I knew. The basis of this cover art would be a black and white photo of a dingy, spit and

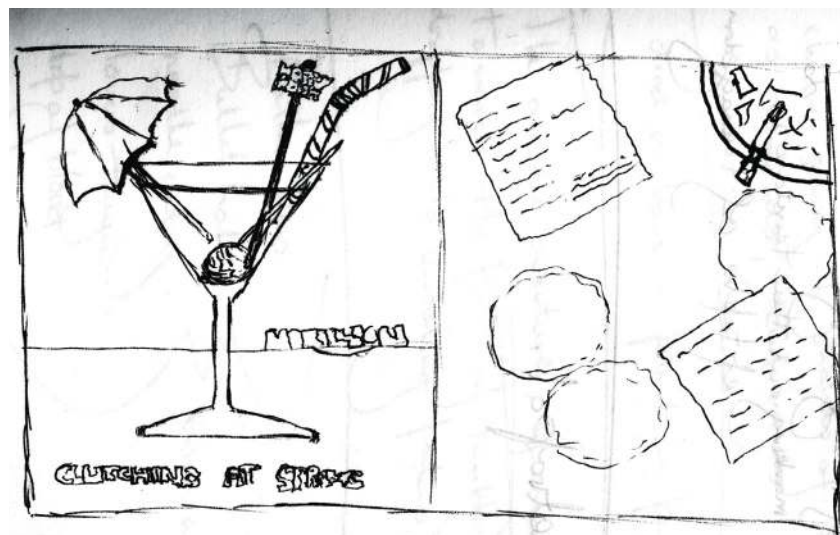
sawdust bar, which would certainly look different to the brightly coloured trilogy of album covers that preceded *Clutching*. I proposed having the drinkers airbrushed as realistically as possible on paper, then cut out and pasted on to this photo. I had got the idea from a book I really liked by artist Guy Peellaert who had airbrushed the cover for Bowie's *Diamond Dogs*. He had created mixed media collages with the rock elite painted on top very effectively for *Rock Dreams* – an illustrated history of the first 30 years or so of rock'n'roll.

Fish suggested a brotherhood of poets, artists, writers, comedians and rockers to populate the bar. Various names were put in the hat: John Lennon, Robert Burns, Truman Capote, Lenny Bruce, Dylan Thomas, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Tony Hancock and most importantly, Jack Kerouac. It was a quote from his seminal book *On The Road* that inspired Fish when he wrote this album: "...the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles..."

Later, while I was trying to piece all this together, the band's manager rang me with something else to consider: a black angel.

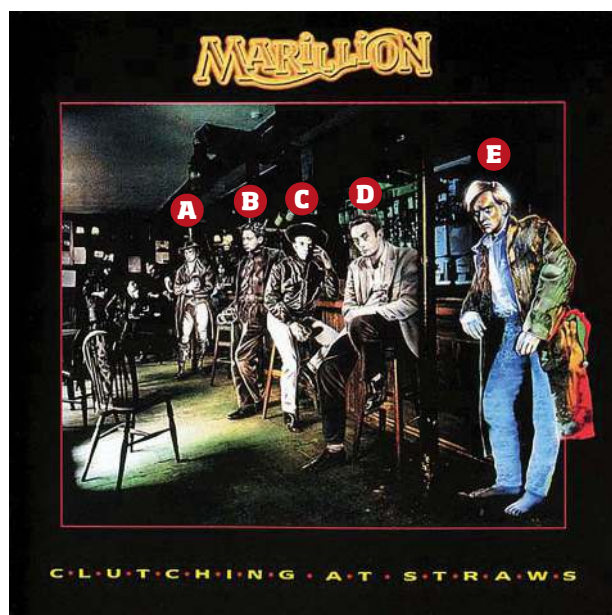
I saw in Torch, the silvery-haired guy at the end of the bar, a possibility – an antihero to embody some of the album's lyrical themes, like an alcoholic's guardian angel.

We set up a photo session in Colchester at The Bakers Arms, which was most definitely a pub of 'character', with afternoon lock-ins, one of which we took over, with some of the bemused local drinkers looking on. Trouble was, it was quite a small place, so plonking all those people on Fish's list inside would be... challenging. Janus and I sat the band at the back,



The Booze Brothers

Who's who on Mark Wilkinson's updated *Clutching At Straws* sleeve...



A – Robert Burns

Unofficial national poet of Scotland, died in the 18th century. Wrote the words to *Auld Lang Syne*.

B – Dylan Thomas

Welsh poet and professional hellraiser. Reportedly died after drinking 18 straight whiskeys.

C – Truman Capote

American author, playwright and wit. Died of liver disease in 1984.

D – Lenny Bruce

Trailblazing comedian. Died of a heroin overdose in 1966.

E – Torch

Central character of *Clutching At Straws* and Fish's alter ego.

F – Robert Burns

G – Lenny Bruce

H – Marianne Faithfull
60s wild-child and paramour of Mick Jagger. Still alive and active.

I – Truman Capote

J – John Lennon
Beatles star and music icon. Murdered at the age of 40 by assassin Mark Chapman.

K – Tony Hancock
Troubled 60s comic genius. Committed suicide in 1968.

L – Ernest Hemingway
American novelist and larger-than-life adventurer. Shot himself in 1961.

M – Janis Joplin

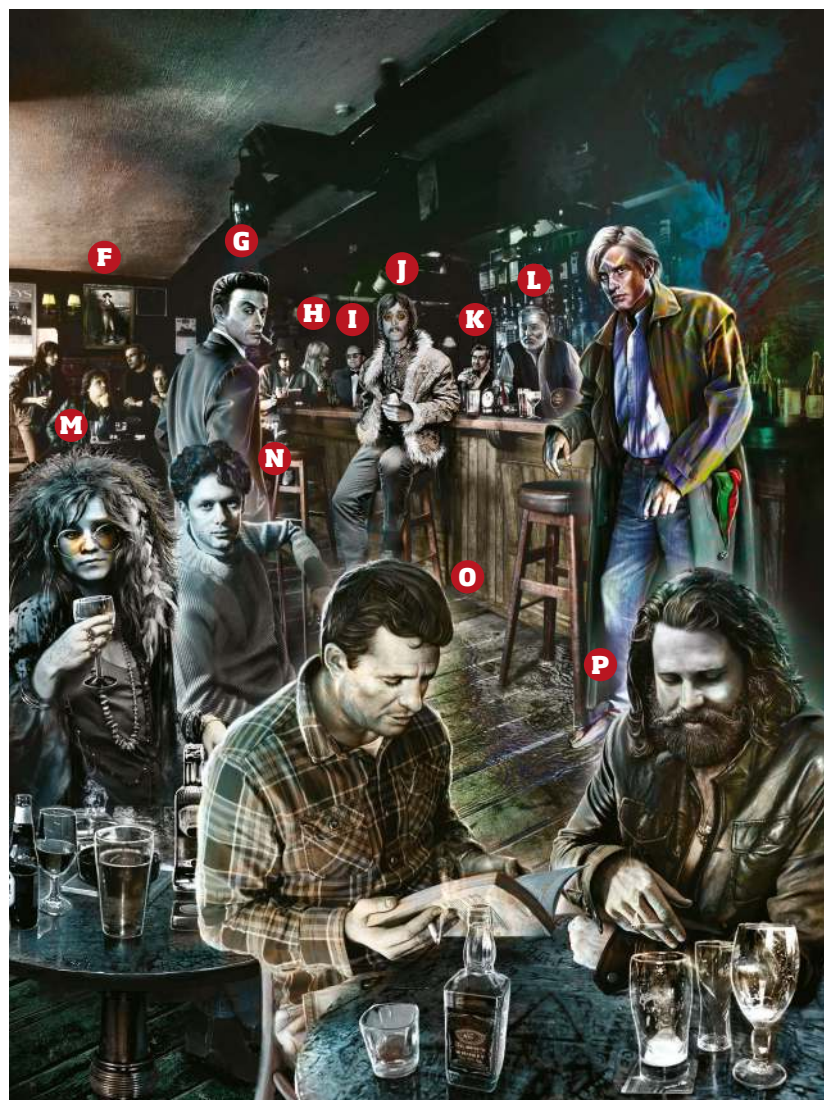
Leather-lunged blues singer who rocked Woodstock. Overdosed in 1970 at the age of 27.

N – Dylan Thomas

O – Jack Kerouac
Author of Beat classic *On The Road*. Drank himself to death at 47.

P – Jim Morrison

Late leather-trousered Doors singer and notorious drug-induced hellraiser.



leaving empty stools, chairs and tables dotted about for me to collage the drinkers in place later. That was my plan, and it was a good one. It should've been relatively simple.

The double whammy here was the complex nature of the brief escalating every week, with Torch changing from angel to being weirdly garbed, barefoot in a long coat with the jester's hat in his pocket as a nod to the past! More characters were suggested, more detail to consider yet the timing was drastically cut short to accommodate an upcoming tour to promote the album. I had the manager and record company calling me on a daily basis for a progress report, warning me that if I was late with delivery, the album would be put back, cocking up their schedule. It made for a very uncomfortable ride as we'd all taken far too long discussing what this cover should look like that I had run out of time to make it actually work! My frustration is all too evident in the finished album art.

Below: the initial sketch for the 'black angel'.



I used the futurist Russian poet and playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky as my model for Torch for no other reason than I liked his thousand-yard stare! I have no idea what was going on with that coat of his or the jeans; I think something was mentioned to me about having his clothes wet, appearing out of pools of water, and that his coat should reflect the outside world. In any event, Torch was rendered too quickly and looked awkward. I did my best with the limited time I had, but must accept responsibility for not project managing this far more effectively and saying no once in a while.

Prog asked me if I would consider reworking *Clutching At Straws* for the

30th anniversary, to finally make some sort of sense of it. What could possibly go wrong!? That forced perspective in the original bar photo was damned tricky then to overlay the figures, and that problem remains. I've had to play around with the laws of perspective a bit. I've knocked the three black pillars out of the bar, which in reality means the ceiling would cave in, but who cares? I've got all the characters in this time, plus a few others. Torch is better realised; I hated the crude way he was done before. It's closer in spirit to what I think this album was all about.

In my opinion the chapter of my time working with Marillion is now closed in a more satisfying way." 

"This was a magnificent but very dark album in all sorts of ways, everyone at the time could sense it."

Mark Wilkinson

It begins with the sound of a man staggering out of the sea and getting into a car. 'The Optimist' — ie our surrogate protagonist, and the title of Anathema's 11th album — then leads us through a powerful story of human experience, told with incendiary progressive rock, ending with a single guitar, a small child and... erm, a budgie. Is this the final stages of a drowned man's life, played out in reverse? Or a figment of his imagination? Or something else? Laden with gut-wrenching keys, driving guitars and drums and intriguing electronics,

The Optimist doesn't provide answers but it keeps you guessing in the best way possible.

And of course, it's not about 'The Optimist' at all; it's about the band, as all their albums are, but told in such a way that it remains shrouded in mystery, even when the music is so expansive. "A lot of it's left unsaid," says guitarist/keyboardist/backing vocalist Dan Cavanagh. "And most of the songs are about his thought processes, not his physical journeys. There are some things that indicate parts of his journeys, like *San Francisco*, but the lyrics are really his thought processes.

But these lyrics we wrote aren't actually based on this character at all, they're based on our experiences."

Right now, things are a little less mysterious. We're sitting outside at a café in Canary Wharf, London, where Dan has lived for the last three years. The shiny business district is an unlikely place for an artist's home, but imagine standing there at night listening to music — surrounded by skyscrapers after all the suits have gone home — and its inspirational side becomes clearer. Younger brother (and singer/guitarist) Vincent

Their latest album may be called *The Optimist*, but as **Anathema** explain, their 11th release was borne from very dark times. Brothers Vincent and Daniel Cavanagh discuss its creation...

Words: Polly Glass

Images: Caroline Traitler

Looking Outside Inside

resides in North London with his girlfriend, French sculptor/artist Sarah Derat, following several years in Paris.

"Ahh, *vin rouge*, French for 'red booze!'" he laughs as the waitress hands him a glass of red wine, obliterating any notion that his Parisian life left any pretentious marks. Dan, who quit drinking over a decade ago, chuckles and sips a latte with a side of honey. He'll drink about five more in the next couple of hours.

"You ain't gonna sleep tonight," Vincent suggests at one point, with a gentle hint of

'protective parent' tone under the flyaway hair and leather jacket.

"I don't care," Dan shakes his head. "I sleep late anyway."

Shorter than Vincent, his curly head hidden under a black hoodie, Dan is a quietly charged bundle of vulnerability, friendliness and brooding intensity. Following a breakdown after 2014 album *Distant Satellites*, he's emerged the other side of some troubled personal times. Today, however, he's on talkative form and bursting with fervour for his band's work. Vincent, his foremost

confidante, is calmer but just as impassioned as we discuss their music. And for all their shared seriousness, there's a lot of brotherly laughter and light.

"It's ironic, the title," Dan smiles wryly. "There's nothing wrong with writing uplifting music, we might do it again one day, but this album..." They look at each other and laugh.

From turbulent roots in working-class Liverpool, via an early stint as death doom renegades, Anathema (completed by Vincent's twin Jamie on bass, plus drummer John Douglas and sister Lee on vocals and



Anathema, L-R:
Vincent Cavanagh, Jamie
Cavanagh, John Douglas,
Lee Douglas, Daniel Cardoso,
Daniel Cavanagh.

"The more we're made to suffer,
the more we're made to care.
When you've suffered, and we did,
either you learn empathy or you
become a dickhead, and if you
learn empathy it teaches you
something fundamental."

Daniel Cavanagh

Daniel Cardoso on keyboards) have grown into one of the progressive scene's most commanding bands, with a compelling arsenal of albums. They've defied a lot of odds to get here. The Cavanaghs grew up in what Vincent has described as "a violent household", their mother died when they were still in their teens (their father has since passed away too), Dan has been through therapy and drummer Douglas endured serious drug problems. Progressive music, for them, is "a mindset, not a genre", allowing for a truly free, fearless approach to songwriting. With *The Optimist* they pick up thematically from where their sixth, 2001's *A Fine Day To Exit*, left off. Not that that was the original plan.

"I don't remember exactly how it came about," Dan says. "I just remember that I had an image for the title song in my head. I could imagine a journey trying to escape, in a car, at night, in the slow lane, in this kind of wilderness, and it always looked like America

"It clearly is a difficult album. The last two years weren't all that positive for me, it was very hard. I became very unhealthy mentally and physically. I pretty much took most of 2016 off just to start feeling normal again. So that's why most of my stuff on this album is dark and moody and slow. With *Springfield*, which says, 'How did I get here? I don't belong here,' in the story of our 'Optimist' surrogate he's in a strange place, but really it's just me wondering how the fuck this happened to me."

Things turned around in August when Dan started taking antidepressants for the first time, on the advice of his brother. They turned out to be a game-changing influence.

"Suddenly I was able to stand back and do stuff," Dan tells us. "It was hugely helpful. The album suddenly coalesced right in front of me, by itself."

Where 2014's *Distant Satellites* was, in some ways, an album of two parts — the soaring 'classic Anathema' part, and the weird

"The audience knew it didn't have an ending," nods Vincent. "They knew it before us! 'Lads, you might wanna put an ending on that one!'"

This trial-and-error process put them in an ideal position when it came to laying down the tracks — armed with songs that had already been finessed in front of audiences. Both brothers agree it was the most prepared for an album they'd been in years. Rehearsing and recording took place in Attica Studios in rural Ireland ("We were three of us in a cottage, it was like *Father Ted*," grins Vincent, "there were sheep outside walking up to your bedroom window"), following by production and final recording in Glasgow with Tony Doogan.

"Plus we know more about the technology now," adds Vincent. "We've learnt more over the last couple of years. It's in the composition really, but knowing the technology enables you to make it sound a bit more natural."

Besides the band themselves, however, the most instrumental figure in the album's success was producer Tony Doogan; the Scottish mastermind best known for his work with Mogwai. Following previous collaborations Anathema had with Steven Wilson and (Norwegian wunderkind) Christer-André Cederberg, working with Doogan proved to be something of a masterstroke. He and Vincent especially made an intensely focused team: leading the production process and putting in the longest hours.

"One of the greatest experiences I could draw from making this record was working with Tony," says Vincent. "Just watching him work was amazing. Next time I meet him there are a few things I want to ask him about how he did these mixes."

"If we work with him again I want to follow him round with a Dictaphone," adds Dan. "He comes up with pearls of wisdom almost every day, these profound little insights into recording and producing."

"Tony's got this method of mixing," Vincent continues. "It was a mix of automation and actual live mixing. It's like a performance. The best producers will know what I mean. We're really lucky to have worked over the past few years with Steven Wilson, Christer and now Tony; all three of them are absolute masters, and they're real artists as well."

For all the technical prowess of *The Optimist*, however, it's the poppier sensibilities that really hold it together. The Cavanagh's longheld affection for the likes of The Beatles and Queen translates into some of their strongest tunes in years.

"Your vocal melody, that's what pop music is," Vincent reasons. "It's like when you listen to the Beatles and their vocal melodies are extremely catchy and easy. Your vocal melody is probably the most important part of your composition. You get that right and everything else can be easy from thereon."

Equally, the impact of co-vocalist Lee Douglas — the quietly brilliant 'little sister' of the group — shouldn't be underestimated. Where previous records have seen her back or harmonise with Vincent, for *The Optimist* she sings lead parts to stunning effect.

Tangerine Dreaming

How the German prog synth legends inspired the new Anathema album.

TV show
Mr Robot and
Tangerine Dream:
a good match.

"I was writing heavy guitar music and listening to stuff that's not all heavy," Dan explains. "The *Mr Robot* soundtrack was listening to that a lot. There's a song by Tangerine Dream called *Love On A Real Train* that's been a key song for me in this process. I fell asleep in the studio one night and Vinnie was playing *Mr Robot* and saying, 'You've gotta see this show,' and I wake up and this scene is on where the song comes on. And it's just fucking magnificent."

For about two months Dan was convinced they had to cover the song on the record. It was Vinnie who suggested they attempt their own version, rather than a direct imitation.

"I said, 'Let's try something of our own,'" Vinnie adds, "so Danny said, 'Okay, give me a delay on my piano.' And he just jammed it, forgot about it, we came up with *San Francisco*... That's an example of how the aesthetic of this forward-moving train on *Love on A Real Train*."

"It's that idea of travelling forward all the time, permanent movement," Dan continues. "And I saw a YouTube video that same night which is filmed on the front of an overground train in Tokyo, it goes all the way through the city for eight minutes. I've watched it 25 times, I'm not kidding." **PG**

to me because most of my favourite films are American. So I had that title track, that visual image first. And Vinnie said it should be the title. It just started to come together."

"*A Fine Day To Exit* was kind of left unresolved as well," adds Vincent. "You didn't know how it ended, exactly, so we could pick up the story from there."

In the 16 years since that album's release, they've harnessed years of songwriting and technical experience. The result is their most moving, assured musical statement yet. It's also the most cohesive thing they've ever done, without sacrificing on difficult, highly personal themes. All three songwriters, the two Cavanaghs and Douglas, draw from their own feelings and experiences in a "semi-autobiographical" way. For Dan especially, these feelings resulted in some dark songs.

"So much of *The Optimist* is rooted in a dialogue about mental health," Dan explains.

experimental part — *The Optimist* seamlessly blends all their qualities. Electronic elements are clearly present from the beginning, but streamlined into the songs so smoothly that the whole record feels decidedly organic. The Cavanaghs put this immaculate balance of organic and electronic elements down to a couple of things: for starters, they gigged the songs prior to recording. Having demoed more extensively than for any previous album, the band toured for about two weeks in late 2016. It allowed them to recognise shortcomings in fledgling tunes, and amend them accordingly.

"A few things became apparent during the tour in the songs themselves," says Dan. "The title track wasn't complete but I only discovered it because we played it live. And then the end riff was written on the back of the bus. That song had a muted response live; we thought that was the best one, but everyone was going mad for *Springfield* instead."

"Lee is an absolutely world class singer. We did fewer double-lead vocals and layered harmonies this time; it was one lead vocalist on one song, another on another."

Daniel Cavanagh

In The Headlights: the
Cavanagh family and co.





John Douglas: Anathema's Hidden Gem?

Dan and Vincent on their drummer's special talents.

Dan remembers the time he saw Steve Wilson's "jaw hit the floor". The band were making 2010's *We're Here Because We're Here*, with Wilson at the mixing helm, and it was revealed that Douglas "the drummer" wrote the stellar *Universal*. Indeed, both Cavanaghs are quick to praise their sticksman's raw, untrained talent and songwriting input. Even if one demo did lead to the surprising budgie tweets and child's chatter at *The Optimist*'s close...

"Some of John's demos are funny," Vincent nods, grinning, "with his budgie and his kid in the background and him trying to sing or play guitar!"

"He's a fucking superb songwriter," Dan agrees. "But it is like nailing a cloud to a wall."

"Someone like Danny is really in tune with what's going on internally," Vincent reasons. "But John, for instance, could be going through the same thing but he'll never talk about it. He might put his thoughts in a song but he'll never talk about it. You might know more about John, deeper things about him, reading his lyrics than you ever will if you get to know him." **PG**



"Lee is an absolutely world class singer," Dan nods. "We did fewer double-lead vocals and layered harmonies this time; it was one lead vocalist on one song, another on another."

"I think that helps shape how catchy the songs are," muses Vincent. "Less information. Your brain's only processing a few things when you're listening to music anyway. Tony was saying [puts on broad Scottish accent] 'They've done tests! Them! Scientists!' Basically you're only listening to the vocal melody and the snare drum, chiefly, when you're listening to any kind of music."

For Vincent it was the first time he'd been able to attend the strings session, and it's stuck with him ever since. He's Anathema's electronic mastermind, but the rich power of organic orchestration clearly left a mark.

"All the musicians came in and they were fantastic, and just seeing Paul [Leonard Morgan, strings arranger] go, 'Okay, here we go...'" he smiles, still quite awestruck. "It was so gorgeous I couldn't believe it."

For a band whose music is so personal, Anathema have a significant global side. Over the years their international outreach has become increasingly potent; live shows have

taken them far off the Western rock spectrum, and passionate fan bases have grown in countries like Venezuela, Chile, Iran and even in the troubled reaches of Syria. The album title, *The Optimist*, was actually taken from a German documentary about a Syrian refugee, who Dan met with in Berlin last year.

"It's this lad who's travelled all the way from Syria," he tells us, "a lot of it on foot. He's had a gun pointed at his head telling him to go on a boat that's overloaded. He gets to Germany, and he's just a really nice, positive Syrian lad. He's trying to learn the language, he's trying to integrate and see the good in everything. And he says our music got him through the whole thing."

There are many other stories like this, of Anathema fans in tumultuous lands and eastern musicians whom the band have met. There's the Syrian engineer who fled Aleppo after speaking out against the Assad regime, and met with Vincent after mentioning Anathema on a BBC radio programme. Or Vincent's Iranian friend, a female singer in a metal band, who was told not to return home or risk death, after performing at a Turkish festival.



The band loom out
of the darkness with
The Optimist.

"We're brothers first. Everything me and Danny go through as brothers is way more important than what we do as a band."

Vincent Cavanagh

"I think John said it best in one of the lines on *Back To The Start*," Dan observes. "*The more we're made to suffer, the more we're made to care.*" When you've suffered, and we did, we went through a lot – it unbelievable what my mother went through, I've never got over it and never will..." His face suddenly clouds over a little. "She died fucking 20 years ago... But when you've been through something like that either you learn empathy or you become a dickhead, and if you learn empathy it teaches you something fundamental. You see it, you feel it in other people. Last year I was so devastated by what was going on it was affecting me personally."

This wider outlook isn't about to change. Besides an extensive UK schedule, tour plans for *The Optimist* include dates across South America, North America and Europe, with "many more to be announced". They lament that places like Syria and Iran will realistically remain out of bounds, but agree that music is still a universal thing because it's all human – whether it's interpreted by someone who's struggling in the UK, or someone in the Middle East. And that, in itself, makes it quietly powerful.

"They're people just like us, who love music the way we love music," Vincent says. "We're a bunch of lads from Liverpool who've been through a world of shit on their own terms and put something of themselves into this music..." He trails off, before concluding, decisively: "If somebody in Iran can pick up on that and put it to their own life, there's nothing more humbling than that. That's the best thing about what we do."

A band family, composed of two actual families, today Anathema are in a harmonious place. Difficult childhoods, loss and past tensions clearly haven't left them entirely – and probably never will – but through making music together they appear to have found a considerably brighter space.

"I think with each year that passes we feel a bit closer, or at least I do," Vincent says thoughtfully. "We're brothers first. Everything me and Danny go through as brothers is way more important than what we do as a band."

"He was the one who helped me the most when I was going through that tough time in 2016," Dan says. "He was the one who was there for me. And John just makes me laugh, I'm a different person when he's around."

"Because you're actually a dead funny person," Vincent says, brightly. "When John turns up you switch into funny mode!"

With that they descend gleefully into tales of rehearsal antics in London, watching football together at Vincent's place afterwards, and jokes about Dan's antidepressant medication. Perhaps it's because there's so much heaviness in their past – and because their lives have been linked for so long – that they've had to pull together so strongly. There's almost a sense of relief as the two brothers chatter easily about the past, about music, and about the album they've invested so much in.

"I *am* relieved it's done, and that it's good!" laughs Vincent. "But I'm ready for the next. I know four, possibly five songs off the next album."

"I'm not even gonna think about it for a year and a half," Dan shakes his head, smiling.

"I'm gonna move it along quicker," says Vincent. "I've got my plans in motion..." 

The Optimist is out June 9 on Kscope.
See www.facebook.com/anathemamusic for
more information.

Branching Out

Flower Power: Galley Beggar looking sharp.

Pastoral folk meets psychedelic rock in the cosmic sounds of **Galley Beggar**, who have managed to bewitch both prog fans and heavy metal heads alike with their mesmerising music. *Prog* gets to grips with the band and their fourth album *Heathen Hymns*.

Words: Paul Sexton
Images: Ester Segarra

Ever-rising British six-piece Galley Beggar are openly embracing the heavier end of the cosmic rock sound. The evolution is plain to hear on the band's new and admirable fourth album *Heathen Hymns*. But weren't this Kentish crew supposed to be a folk rock band?

It turns out there may have been some minor misfiling. A bit like a library book that was returned to the wrong section, Galley Beggar will still be found by those who knew them already, and will always tip the hat to such forebears as Fairport Convention and Trees, but now they're also being discovered by a different set of enquiring minds.

Mat Fowler, guitarist and mandolin man of the line-up and husband of lead vocalist Maria O'Donnell, says that their confidence to open the window to a more robust sound was encouraged by their record company. To emphasise the point and show how they're broadening their label's horizons as well as their own, *Heathen Hymns* is their second album for Rise Above, the label founded in the late 1980s by Lee Dorrian, then the vocalist with Napalm Death.

"The label's direction has allowed us to open up to that metal audience that we wouldn't have even thought about approaching or targeting," says Fowler. "And being a bit more cosmic, I suppose."

The album abounds with examples of how the supposedly incongruous disciplines of hard rock and

"But we're very careful to keep the sound and style that we've built up, that we ourselves have become so accustomed to playing, and secondly what people have said they liked. We want to be consistent, without going too mental." His and Maria's seven month old baby gurgles down the phone in approval.

Heathen Hymns has two traditional pieces that the band have turned to their distinct advantage. *The Girl I Left Behind Me* meanders for a mesmerising eight minutes with canyon-deep guitar textures reminiscent of the hugely underrated, Danny Kirwan and Bob Welch-driven Fleetwood Mac era of the early 70s. The much-renewed *Let No Man Steal Your Thyme*, meanwhile, jangles and rumbles with understated power and a guest vocal by Trees' Celia Drummond.

"It's like with *Geordie*, from the last album," says Fowler. "Again, *Let No Man Steal Your Thyme* is a very traditional track, everyone's done it. We didn't want to do just a straight cover. The melody is pretty consistent, from Pentangle to whoever else, but we just wanted to use the lyrical context and put our own music to it. The melody's similar, but it's trying to revitalise the song, I suppose."

"The other one, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, is a very old soldiers' marching tune from god knows how long ago. We heard it on *Sharpe*, Sean Bean's TV series, it was in the soundtrack to one of the episodes. It's just a twee, not very good tune, but we really liked the lyrical context, so

"This album, and performing it, made us realise we were kind of barking up the wrong tree in a way, with the folk scene that we've chased for so long. We were trying to appease one audience and it was probably never the right one for us in the first place."

Mat Fowler

traditional folk can be friends. The eloquent guitar lines of Fowler and David Ellis weave around O'Donnell's graceful vocals both on their own new songs and some time-steeped adaptations.

It is, says Fowler, an interpolation they were first inspired to attempt when they heard how Sandy Denny's voice dovetailed so memorably in a rock band format, on the *Led Zeppelin IV* highlight of 1971, *The Battle Of Evermore*.

"This album, and performing it, made us realise we were kind of barking up the wrong tree in a way, with the folk scene that we've chased for so long. We [were] trying to appease one audience and it was probably never the right one for us in the first place."

"We don't really see ourselves as a folk band, although we're pigeonholed into that," Fowler continues. "Obviously we take traditional songs and ideas and make music with them, but we listened to the Radio 2 Folk Awards recently and it was just a world apart from the stuff we do and have always wanted to do. Other bands that we love, that are doing similar things, don't get a mention in that arena."

But no existing Galley Beggar fan needs to worry that they're on some sort of death metal collision course. New pieces like *The Lake* and *Lorelei* retain the aged mysticism that was always part of their appeal, from their 2009 origins and the debut album that followed a year later, *Reformation House*.

"This album is where we always wanted to get to," he avows. "This is the first one where we've all thought, 'Right, there's not a weak one on there.' We all really like it."

we put some stuff down, and that's what came out."

For a band with day jobs, families and no pretensions, such is the natural way for Galley Beggar to be themselves, free of highfalutin, overarching concepts. "We don't really think of an album idea from start to finish," says the guitarist. "We have one song, then we do another one and another, and say, 'It's kind of an album's worth, do they mesh together?' If not, we'll add some more and take some away. It's nothing more intelligent than that."

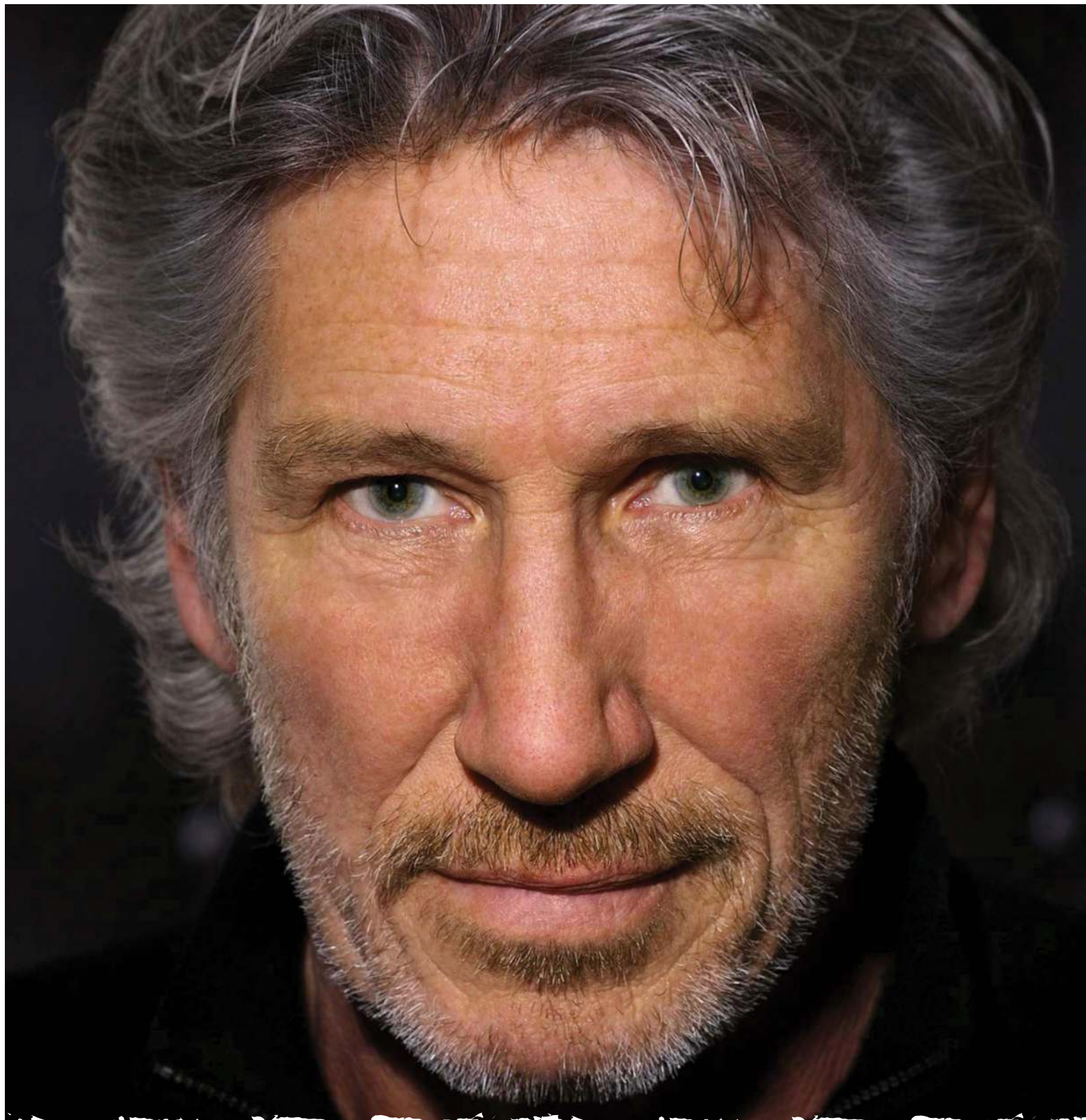
For all their responsibilities, the band have committed to play at least one gig per month this year to put more wood on the *Heathen Hymns* fire, and will do one in November, in their home town of Dartford, supporting Curved Air.

They enthuse about the influence of Fairport collectively and their ex-guitarists Richard Thompson and Jerry Donahue individually, but Galley Beggar's sound now has a personalised profundity to it that will only deepen.

"It's been incremental since we started," says Fowler. "It's been a long slog and we haven't made any huge jumps. Going from where we are to the next level is the hardest, or the biggest, leap."

"Back in 2008-9," he concludes, "We thought, 'No one else is doing this at the moment, and this music's great, so we might have found a gap in the market.' It grew from there. That's the long and the short of it, and we're still loving it and exploring it." 🎧

Heathen Hymns is out now on Rise Above. See www.galleybeggar.com for more information.



A Hole In The Wall

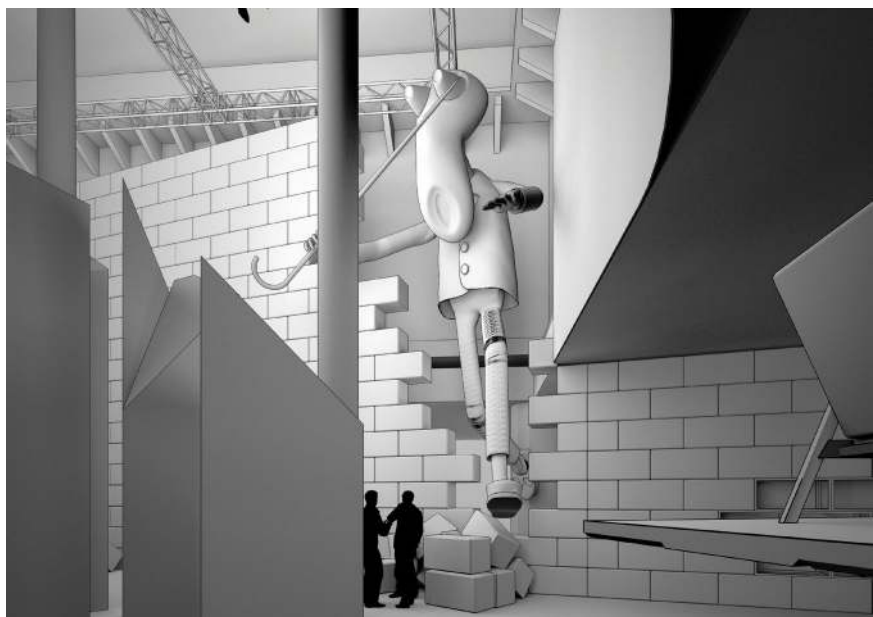
Roger Waters has moved on, mended broken bridges and is now looking to the future - but he's still worried at the state of the world. *Prog* gets him to open up about his new studio album on that very subject, *Is This The Life We Really Want?*

Words: Marcel Anders

It's been nearly a quarter of a century since Roger Waters released his last solo album proper [1992's *Amused To Death*]. In that time he's become the top-grossing touring solo artist with his immense *Wall* spectacular, and even reunited with his old Pink Floyd buddies/sparring partners for 2005's Live 8 concert in Hyde Park.

In 2010, when announcing *The Wall* shows, which began in arenas and ended up in the world's biggest stadia, he announced: "I'm not as young as I used to be... But I still have a fire in my belly and I have something to say." This is certainly true, seven years on, with *Is This The Life We Really Want?*, his fourth solo venture. As one might expect, Waters is still an angry man, railing over some fine Nigel Godrich-produced music at the world around him. Still exasperated at the injustice he sees on every level of life, if you dig Waters' themes, which let's face it, haven't really changed that much since his *Animals*-led tirade at humanity back in 1977, the current caustic state of the planet gives the 73-year old plenty to rage at.

Yet there's a sensitivity on the album that previously hadn't surfaced in his output, although journalists of late have often remarked at what a different man he seems to be from the one who'd tried to sue his old



One of the many exhibits at the V&A's Pink Floyd exhibition, *Their Mortal Remains*, which runs until October 1.

bandmates, incredulous they'd even consider carrying on without him. Of course if you scratch that particular wound he'll still bite, but as we saw at the launch of Pink Floyd's *Their Mortal Remains* exhibition currently taking place at London's V&A museum, it is now handled with a slightly exasperated sense of humour. And let's face it, the old "Will you ever...?" question is pretty wearisome these days when we all know what the answer is anyway.

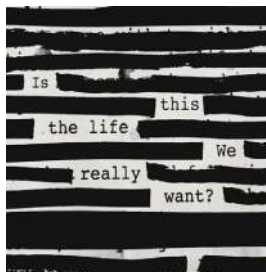
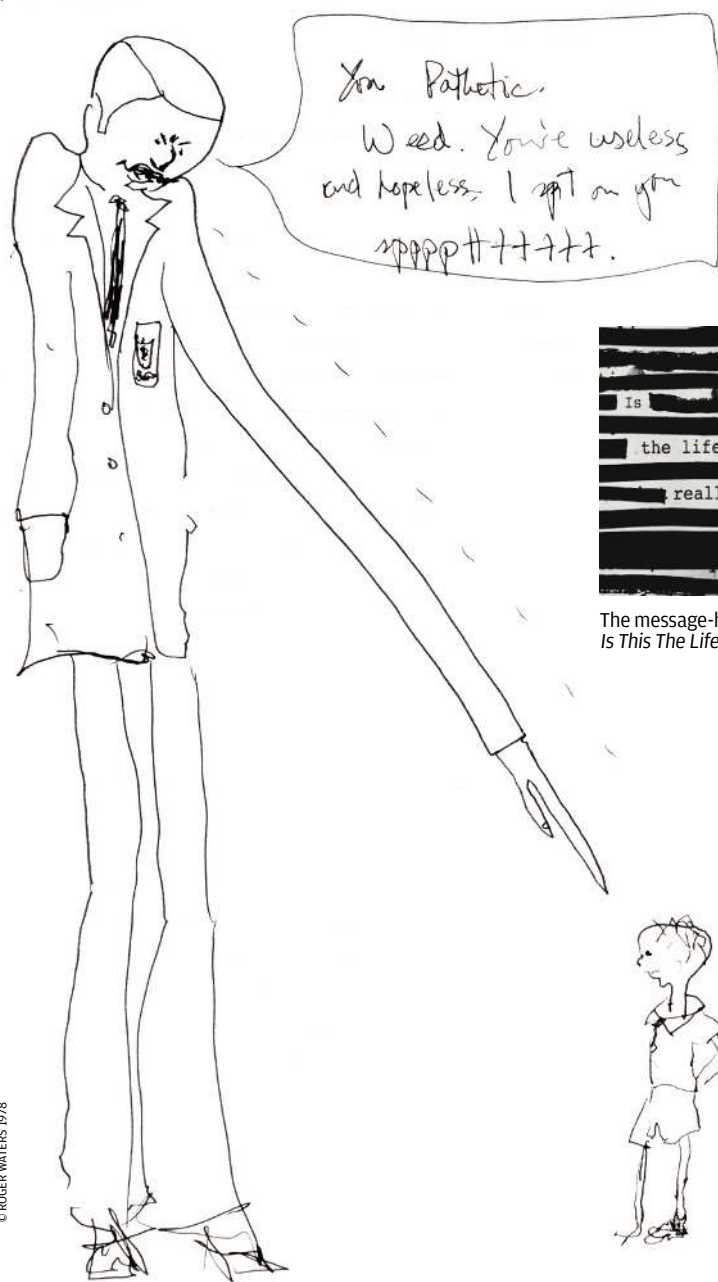
So has rock's greatest curmudgeon softened in his old age? Well, if you listen to the plaintive *Wait For Her* one might think so; it's a love song sat amongst the tirade against the world we've created for ourselves. Waters is a man who hardly needs poking with a stick to vent his spleen, and the current state of the world gives him more than enough ammunition.

Yet as we saw the night before we sat down to talk with him, at the TimesTalks evening at New York's Florence Gould Hall, ironically just around the corner from Trump Tower, he is in startlingly good form for what *Prog's* reviewer [see page 108] pretty accurately calls an "irascible genius".

"I think it's the question of giving myself my due," he muses. "You know that guy who asked me that question about the judge on the shoulder? And I gave him a perfectly reasonable and fairly eloquent answer, because I know exactly the feeling that we all carry this judge around and it's going: 'Nee, nee, nee, nee.'"

"And all through my career — particularly, though, in the aftermath of that Pink Floyd thing, which was hugely important. I was in that band for 20 years or whatever it was, but there was a lot of baggage, you know? It was a bit like driving away from a dodgy wedding with cans dragging behind the car rattling all the time."

EDUCATION



The message-heavy new album, *Is This The Life We Really Want?*

"When World War II was over, we could have picked over them broken bones, we could have been free, but we chose to adhere to abundance. We chose the American dream."



MIKE HUTSON/GETTY IMAGES

Did you feel you were made responsible for the break-up of Pink Floyd?

There was a huge amount of enmity, you know? And I will probably never be forgiven for all the work that I did, particularly by the other guys who were in the band. But we're all dying so who gives a fuck, really? It's whatever. It took me a while to get over that and stop worrying about trying to figure out what people had problems about stuff. All that crap about, "He wouldn't let us write." Fuck you! [Laughs] Nobody can stop you writing, dopey. Or whoever you are. It's ridiculous. I don't want to get into it because you can hear I feel quite jolly about it, but I'm just sick of it. I've left it behind me. I don't usually talk about it because... And I won't talk about it any more now. I'm done.

So you're in a different state of mind these days?

Well, I had no idea that I was going to be able to succeed. Because I had had the whole Pink Floyd audience turn their back on me in 1987 when they started to tour again. I was playing to tiny audiences and there was a lot of, you know... Bleurgh. [Laughingly makes a vomiting noise.]

People certainly seem to have changed their minds about you. They're certainly aware of who you are and what you do these days.

Yeah, they seem to have figured some of it out. And this record, I think, is helping them to figure it out, because people that have heard the record, the whole thing, are going "Wow!" [Chuckles]

You certainly make it clear on *Is This The Life We Really Want?*

Yeah.

Brothers In Arms: reunited at 2005's Live 8 show at Hyde Park. L-R: David Gilmour, Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Rick Wright.

Fresh-Faced: the band in 1971, long before the walls went up.

But you're also looking to the future, which is important.

It is, yes.

How many other musicians that are in their 70s are still making albums that make such salient and prudent points? You're not just doing an album of old blues covers.

I'm not. Or Sinatra covers [chuckles], like Bob. Bless him.

So why has it taken you almost 25 years to actually write and record a new studio album?

I don't know. Like I said last night, writing the song *Déjà Vu* was a catalyst, a starting point for some of that. And also, as I say, I derived encouragement from the work of certain documentary filmmakers. I mentioned Jeremy Scahill and his movie *Dirty Wars*. And also the extraordinary fortitude and courage of Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden and Ray McGovern and Daniel Ellsberg and all the other whistleblowers that have emerged from the ashes of the Vietnam War. I know that was a long time ago, but one takes courage from all of that. You see people behaving properly and you think: "Wow, I'd like to be part of the blowing of the whistle," even if it's only be writing a poem or writing a song or making a record or whatever it might be.

Originally there'd been talk about the song *Heartland* being released in 2008...

Yes.

You were already thinking about an album then?

Yep.

And some of these new songs date back to the 2008/2010 period?

Yes, they do. You know, there's still lines in a song that I wrote back then, which I've still never recorded. There's a line in it that sounds pretty cynical, but I kind of like it. There's a line at the end of the song that goes: '*And the man who sold his kids for meat to a broker in Bangkok and got a colour TV, and the keys to the executive washroom and a space in the company parking lot.*'

Like selling his soul for all that crap?

That's some nice writing, because it says a lot about commerce and how we become slaves to commerce, particularly in the US. But this, the idea of commerce being as important as it has become and spreading all over... the model, the American model. When World War II was over, we could have picked over them broken bones, we could have been free, but we chose to adhere to abundance. We chose the American dream, and that is the American dream. And if you have to sell your kids for meat to a broker in Bangkok, Trump would approve





Waters performing *The Wall* at Olympiastadion, Berlin, on September 4, 2013.

ADAM BERRY/GETTY IMAGES

of that. It's business. Or somebody else's kids. I mean, he might not sell his own kids, though you sense that they're like lumps of meat when you see them parading around. They're like prize cattle. They've sort of been plumped up. Those Trump boys, they look as if they've been injected with hormones every morning before breakfast to get them that pumped up and kind of dopey.

We don't know that they haven't been!

We don't know, no. We don't know.

You live in New York. What keeps you here in the Trump era with things so seemingly bad? Do you feel like the voice of opposition? Leading the resistance?

There's a lot of people resisting this bullshit, luckily. It's also convenience. I moved here because my youngest kid was here. And then I sort of stayed and I went through another marriage and stuff. And you gather the detritus of life around you and it's easy to get stuck. But I'm not unhappy here. And New York – you can walk a lot of places in New York. I've recently taken to using the subway a lot, because it's much faster than going anywhere in a car or a taxi. Actually, I like it on the subway. I like being kind of crushed – or not crushed. I often travel in the middle of the day, and it's nice when there's not many people there. But it's nice to sit there and look at the other people. You see who lives in this city and how diverse it is, how cosmopolitan it is.

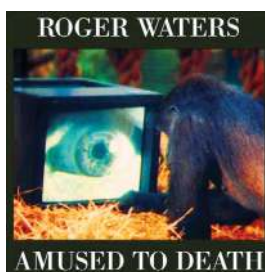
The new album, *Is This The Life We Really Want?*, is also about love, isn't it?

Yes.

At least two or three songs are. *Wait For Her* reads like a manual for a better relationship. Like: "This is what I've got to do, and you'd better not mess up"?

Actually it's very specific. It's a poem. It's based on a translation of a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, the famous Palestinian poet. And the poem, in its title, has the words 'Kama Sutra'. It is actually specifically about waiting for a woman to orgasm. That's what it's about. I had no idea when I first heard it and when I started writing this song, but that's what it is. And it's beautiful. He is great... I knew nothing about him and then I discovered him, and his poetry is extraordinary.

"I will never be forgiven for [Pink Floyd's demise in the 80s], particularly by the other guys who were in the band. But we're all dying so who gives a fuck, really?"



Waters' 1992 solo album, *Amused To Death*.

Then there's a song called *Broken Bones* where you're clearing your throat in the beginning.

I did clear my throat before when singing one day, and Nigel Godrich just left it in. One does clear one's throat from time to time when one's singing. [Laughs]

Godrich is an interesting choice for a producer. You had a production hand in your three previous solo albums. What made you pass this time round?

I might have been tempted. I don't really remember, but it feels good. I think he's done a great job, so I couldn't have made this album on my own. Well, I could have done, but it would've been completely different. So I'm really glad that I did relinquish control. I've never done it before. I may never do it again, but I'm glad I did it this once at least.

Last night you hinted that you're already thinking about your next album. Is that because you've written so many songs over the years?

I've got tonnes and tonnes of material, yeah. And when I next make a record, I don't know. I have to, at some point, release a recording of the other half of *Déjà Vu* which I recited a verse of last night: 'If I had been God, I would not have chosen anyone. I would've laid an even hand on all my children. Everyone would have been content to forgo Ramadan and time better spent in the company of friends, breaking bread and mending nets.' 🎵

Is This The Life We Really Want? is released on June 2 via Columbia. See www.rogerwaters.com. The Pink Floyd Exhibition: *Their Mortal Remains* is on now at the V&A until October 1. For more information see www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/pink-floyd.

Just as they began to cause serious waves outside their native Iceland and draw in fans of multiple musical genres with their mind-altering, expansive sounds, **Sólstafir** were nearly quashed by inter-band relationships. Frontman Aðalbjörn 'Addi' Tryggvason reflects on this difficult time and discusses what lies ahead...

Words: Dom Lawson

Images: Steinunn Lilja Draumland

"A band is a glacier. You come to the show or you buy the album and you get about 10% of the glacier... but deep down there's a lot of stuff that no one sees."

No one ever said that a career in progressive music was an easy option. For a band from the remote terrain of Iceland, the barriers to international recognition must appear to be more daunting than for most, and yet Sólstafir have taken a slow, steady course over the last 22 years, defying the odds along the way and proving that there is an audience for strange, windswept and often heroically epic music played by hirsute, snow-blasted cowboys from the land of geysers, volcanoes and Björk.

When the band released their fifth studio album *Ótta* in 2014, their transformation from abstruse black metal artisans to one of the most

Sólstafir, L-R: Svavar Austmann, Hallgrímur Jón Hallgrímsson, Sæþór Sæþórsson, Aðalbjörn Tryggvason.

RETURN OF THE BEARDY MEN

enthralled progressive bands of the 21st century seemed to be complete. Reviews were ecstatic, shows were sold out and Sólstafr looked to be unstoppable. But behind the scenes, as observant fans of the band will be aware, the quartet's wheels were coming off in the most spectacular and destructive fashion. Despite their outward appearance as a united front with nearly two decades of shared focus between them, founder members Aðalbjörn 'Addi' Tryggvason (vocals/guitar) and Guðmundur Óli Pálmason (drums) were reaching the tense zenith of a devastating personal fallout that had been gathering pace and intensity for some time.

"On a creative level, it still worked between us," Tryggvason tells *Prog*. "But even back when we were writing the *Svartir Sandar* album in 2010, it was not a fun album to write. There were good days in between, but overall it was a terrible writing experience. He would show up to rehearsals, saying that everything sucked and that he didn't want to use my ideas

because he was afraid they'd get compliments about something he hadn't written. It was basically ego stuff. I didn't give a shit about any of that. We were a *band*, and we shared the credit for everything equally."

Despite cracks beginning to show in the band's unified façade, Sólstafr ploughed forward for several years, their star very much in the ascendant and the eventual creative triumph of *Ótta* suggesting that big things were lurking on the near horizon. But, as Tryggvason wearily recalls, relations between three quarters of Sólstafr and what they perceived as their increasingly disruptive drummer reached a head as the band toured in support of their 2014 album.

"We couldn't even drink together because it always escalated into deep, personal arguments," he sighs. "We, as a band, tried to work it out, not for a month or two weeks, but for 18 months. Doing that on tour is not a great thing to do. People could hardly be around each other because it always turned into an argument or into violence, with vodka bottles being thrown at your head. It gets to you after a while. We finished the European part of the

thing to do, it was the *only* thing to do.

I completely understand that it was a shock. He didn't see it coming and I would say that that's a big part of the problem. You don't divorce someone because you had one bad weekend. If you're in a shitty marriage and suddenly your wife asks for a divorce and you're like, 'How the hell did that happen?', you're obviously not in touch with reality."

Two years on from their very public disintegration, Sólstafr have gamely clawed back some kind of equilibrium. Their erstwhile comrade did take legal action, pursuing a claim against the band as far as Reykjavík's Supreme Court, but the lawsuit was firmly dismissed, leaving Tryggvason to focus on the task of rebuilding his band and, hopefully, picking up where they left off before the shit hit the fan. Judging by new album *Berdreyminn*, Sólstafr have not only survived those turbulent years with their creativity and allure intact, they have also managed to evolve, resulting in some of their most mesmerising material to date.

"Time goes fast when you're not having fun," Tryggvason frowns, only half-joking. "I didn't write a riff for three years. But we have a new drummer now [Hallgrímur Jón Hallgrímsson] and we have a new chemistry there too. Don't get me wrong, the old chemistry was great. It worked well, we made some great music and we'd been together a long time. But you can't just exchange

“

It was a tough decision to make and tough decisions always bring a backlash. But we fired him from the band to save the band. It wasn't the right or wrong thing to do, it was the *only* thing to do.

”

tour and flew to New Jersey for a US tour, the four of us in a van. It was horrible. The atmosphere was this cancer-infested elephant and no one was admitting it was there. We were driving 12 or 15 hours a day. It was like being underwater. But then finally we got home and we could gasp some air."

Convinced that there was no way forward with Pálmason that wouldn't eventually lead to the calamitous demise of their band, Tryggvason and his band mates, bassist Svavar 'Svabbi' Austmann and guitarist Sæþór 'Þjúddi' Sæþórsson, finally bit the bullet and fired their drummer before embarking on the second leg of their European tour in 2015. As is routinely the case these days, the whole acrimonious debacle played out online, with Pálmason claiming that he had been "thrown out of his life's work" and making it plain that he was considering legal action. Nonetheless, Tryggvason insists that any other course of action would have spelled the end of Sólstafr.

"Since the three of us didn't have any issues and we wanted to carry on, either the band would die or we had to make some drastic changes," he shrugs. "It was a tough decision to make and tough decisions always bring a backlash. But we fired him from the band to save the band. It wasn't the right or wrong

a member from one chemistry to another, so we had to start from scratch. This chemistry is very young. To begin with we had no idea what was going to happen. Are we going to come up with brilliant stuff on day one or will it take four months to write two songs? In the first week, nothing came up and it was kind of weird, but in the last three weeks it started happening and we were tuning in to each other's frequencies."

Both reassuringly familiar and subtly unpredictable, the songs on *Berdreyminn* will surely delight anyone that fell in love with Sólstafr via *Ótta* or its epic predecessor, 2011's *Svartir Sandar*. Now entirely bereft of the extreme metal trimmings that informed their earliest recordings, the Icelanders confidently veer from the atmospheric bluster of opener *Silfur-Refur* to the effortlessly catchy *Isafold*, which nods squarely and unashamedly to a deep-rooted Fields Of The Nephilim influence, and on to the raw muscularity



of rugged deep cuts like *Naros* and *Ambatt*, every last note proclaiming that this band are once again entirely at ease with themselves and their artistic desires. But considering that they maintained the exact same line-up for 20 years, starting again with reconfigured personnel must have added an extra layer of pressure on the writing and recording process.

“At a certain point, of course, there is always pressure,” says Tryggvason. “You think that AC/DC felt pressure after Bon Scott died and they had to make another *Highway To Hell*? Of course. But we’ve never given a rat’s ass if people hate our music or not. We still don’t. We’ve made some stupid career moves, like having 20-minute openers, singing in Icelandic or having 10-minute instrumentals. It’s not like we’ve been producing radio hits. We didn’t give a fuck. It was just different. It’s weird, making an album but talking to lawyers all the time. I don’t recommend that to anyone! But we did tell ourselves that we wouldn’t let anything affect our creativity. We can only do our best. We can only write music that we think is great. That’s what we’ve always done. You have to trust your instincts.”

There is no direct English translation of the new Sólstafr album’s title, *Berdreyminn*. A fairly common word in Icelandic, its literal meaning is “naked dreamer”, meaning someone who experiences premonitory dreams, predicting future events and brushing up against some form of supernatural intuition. It’s a typically wistful and hazy title that fits perfectly with the extraordinarily evocative songs on the album, but, as Tryggvason explains, *Berdreyminn* also applies to his own experiences.

“When this title got brought up, our drummer came up with it and I could relate to it, so I instantly voted yes for it,” he grins. “As a teenager I would dream things. Let’s say I was working with you at a summer camp when we were 14, and I hadn’t seen you in eight years, and then in some dream we were drinking beer together or whatever... the next day, I would meet you on the street. That sort of stuff happened all the time when I was a younger man and it came to the point where I was thinking ‘What the fuck? You’re kidding me, not again. This can’t be real!’ It scared me. I told myself that it *couldn’t* be a coincidence, but that made me a little bit afraid, because if it *isn’t* a coincidence, then what is it? Is it *spiritual*? That’s something I’ve always been afraid of, admitting spirituality, because you can’t explain it. So for me the title has a deep meaning.”

Shrouded in those notions of clairvoyance and unsolicited telepathy, *Berdreyminn* is an album that noticeably expands Sólstafr’s emotional range. The windswept grandeur of past albums is fully in evidence, of course, and few would dispute that the majority of the album’s songs are rooted in dark and desolate territory. But more than on any previous record, *Berdreyminn* allows rays of light to burst through the pitch-black canopy of clouds that looms over the band’s music. Perhaps by going through such an emotionally gruelling and personally challenging period in their history, Tryggvason and his band mates have

learned an important lesson about embracing optimism and time’s healing properties.

“Imagine that you grow up in a village that you despise,” he muses. “You think it’s the worst place ever. It ruined your childhood and you’re never going to go back there. You *hate* it and you hate everyone from there. Then something happens in your life and it changes you. You go back to the village many years later and this place that you once despised is now the most beautiful and peaceful place on earth. That change occurs in your head. The return to that village is *hope*. There’s a lot of hope on this album, even though you may be standing in the darkness, blinded by inner demons, obsessed with self-destruction and blind to your own bad deeds.”

Three years ago, Sólstafr looked to be on the verge of a major breakthrough. The road to *Berdreyminn* has been a difficult and frustrating one for the band, and yet the new album possesses huge amounts of that same, mysterious magic that proved so insidious and

irresistible during the band’s incremental rise to prominence. Progressive to their bones but joyously, laudably unique in both perspective and delivery, Sólstafr are still defying the odds, reducing fans to a blubbing heap with songs sung in a language that very few of us understand.

“People have told us that they find Icelandic exotic. I’ve never understood that because I’m Icelandic!” Tryggvason laughs. “I guess it’s just the tone of the language and I think I get that. It reminds me of when I was watching the last *Lord Of The Rings* movie. When Aragorn is crowned king, he starts singing in some fictional language of Tolkien, and to me it was so exotic and amazing. I had no idea what he was singing, but I got fucking goosebumps. It’s just the tone of the voice. Maybe it’s ridiculous to get goosebumps listening to Viggo Mortensen in *Lord Of The Rings*, but it’s the same experience. I can be singing with this band somewhere and there will be people with tears in their eyes at the front, singing along, and they have *no idea* what I’m singing. There’s no greater compliment. That’s holy stuff and you can’t fuck with that.” ☺

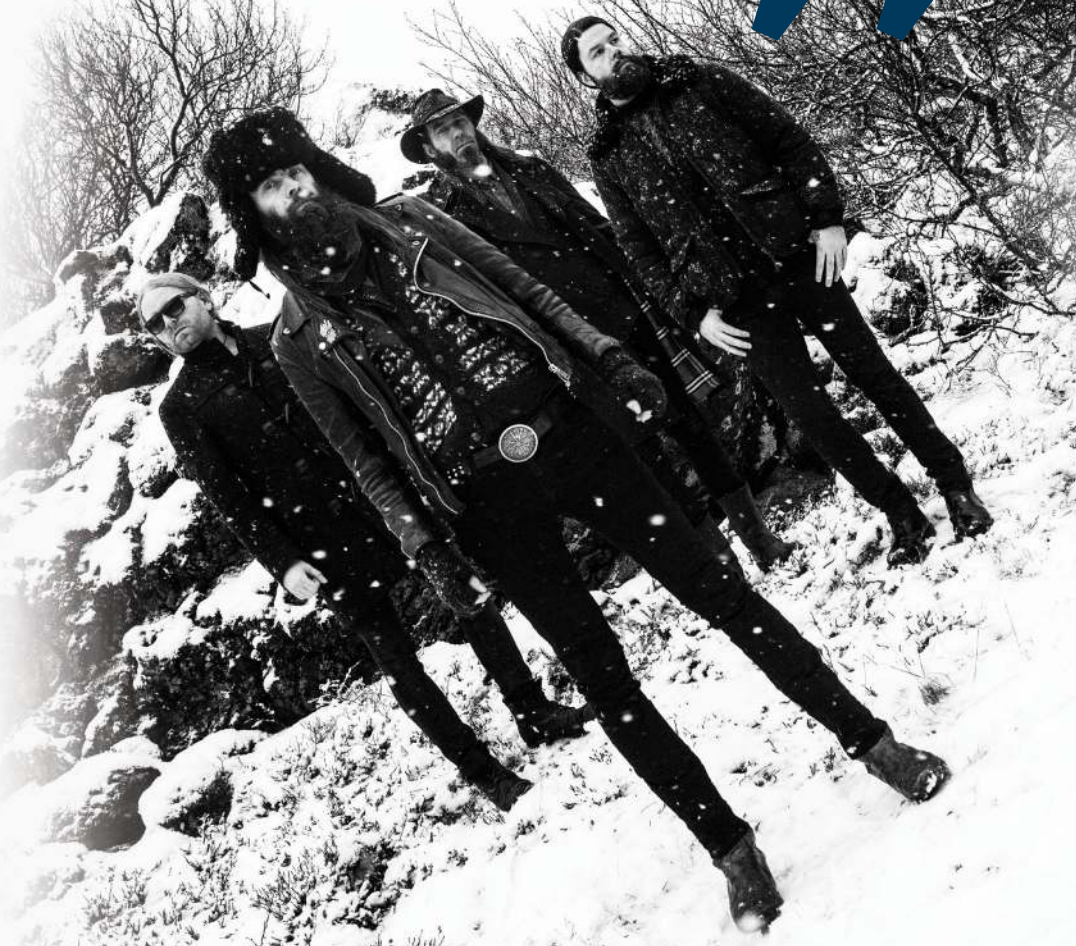
Berdreyminn is out May 26 on Season Of Mist. See www.solstafir.net for more information.

“

There’s a lot of hope on this album, even though you may be standing in the darkness, blinded by inner demons, obsessed with self-destruction and blind to your own bad deeds.

”

They Come From The Land Of The Ice And Snow: Sólstafr.



**ON
SALE
NOW!**



**TOTAL GEAR
TOTAL TECHNIQUE
TOTAL INSPIRATION**

**TOTAL
Guitar**
PLAY BETTER NOW!

Get the new look issue from myfavouritemagazines.co.uk



Coal King

Inspired by the history of the mining industry in Wales, **Public Service Broadcasting's** new concept album feels even more relevant given the UK's current political situation, and the band aren't afraid to immerse themselves in their art. *Prog* finds out more...

Words: Emma Johnston **Images:** Dan Kendall

It's three decades since the devastating miners' strike that plunged thousands of working class people in the United Kingdom into poverty, as they fought the Conservative government of the time for their livelihoods, but the scars in communities from Scotland to Northumbria, Yorkshire to Wales and beyond remain raw after all these years. Young men were left on the scrapheap and entire villages plunged into unemployment, as Margaret Thatcher played hardball in the name of global commerce.

Now, in 2017, Public Service Broadcasting are releasing *Every Valley*, an album that paints a vivid picture of the conflict using the words and memories of those directly affected in the Welsh mining community, although the album's subject matter extends beyond the strike to paint an historical picture of the mining community as whole. It's a stunning piece of work, weaving BFI documentary sound clips from the National Coal Board alongside the band's own meticulous research. Arriving just as Theresa May has announced an early general election in an attempt to further strengthen the Tories' grip on the UK, and in the wake of the big Brexit debacle, the

ever-escalating housing crisis and the horror of seeing the NHS dismantled before our very eyes, it all feels terrifyingly current.

"It's a very pertinent thing," says J Willgoose, Esq, the musical brains behind Public Service Broadcasting. "I think you can draw a number of lines. This was the last stand of the trade union movement in the UK. And I think you can draw a definite line from that to the lack of representation people have today, and zero-hours contracts and the gig economy. It's sort of a free marketeer's dream, the environment we're in now, even before you get into whatever the hell we're going to do with this supposed Brexit. And that definitely came from the mid-80s and the Tories' very deliberate strategy to do that. Even just that on its own, the attitude of the public in general to the unions has hardened, you don't find support for strikes, and it's interesting to come back to a time when there was real power in those movements. They used it to represent working people and get them better rights and better working conditions. Because no employer's going to give you those unless you ask for them and fight for them."

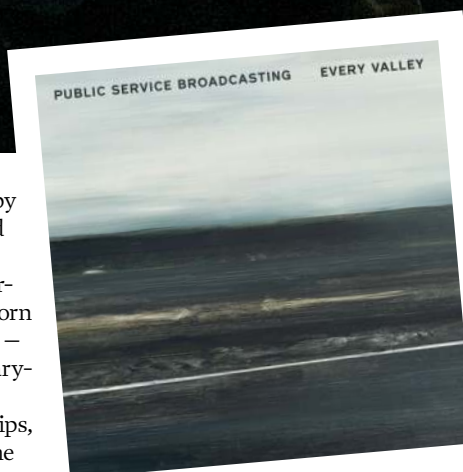
The miners' strike has been a constant source of inspiration to

PSB, L-R:
Wigglesworth,
J Willgoose, Esq,
JF Abraham.



“I remember hearing Bowie’s *Low* quite late on, I think I was 23 or something, and just thinking, ‘Jesus, what a record.’ And I still have that feeling every time I listen to it, it’s just one of the most audacious, brilliant pieces of music ever written.”





Above: PSB's new album *Every Valley*.

creative people since it happened, from artist Jeremy Deller's reenactment of *The Battle Of Orgreave* to the more mainstream-friendly likes of *The Full Monty* and *Pride*. And given that PSB's previous albums have tackled the enormity of the universe in *The Race For Space* and the horror of global conflict in *The War Room*, it's a chance for the band to hone in on a small area that went through big changes.

"As I was approaching the end of *The Race For Space*, I thought, 'What am I going to do now?'" says Willgoose. "I didn't want to move on to something equally epic and grandiose, I wanted to make it more focused. And the sort of geographical element that we brought into this record is definitely quite different. It's very tightly focused on one particular area and region, whereas you don't get much more broad strokes than space, and the same with World War II, they're very big subjects. It was quite a daunting thing to take on at first, but it's just working your way through it a bit at a time."

The band — completed by drummer, keyboardist and electronica-wrangler Wrigglesworth and former-live-now-full-time bass, horn and keys man JF Abraham — take an almost documentary-making approach to their work. Alongside the BFI clips, Willgoose spent time at the South Wales Miners' Library, where he was provided with interviews with miners and their families recorded by Dr Hywel Francis, as well as an independent film called *The Welsh Miner*.

"I was met with a very warm welcome wherever I went," he says. "I was slightly worried that I would be this suspicious outsider coming in and hoovering up all their stories in a vampiric way, and dashing off into the sunset and misrepresenting people left, right and centre. From the people I spoke to, all I had was encouragement and positivity, and that was a very important part of it. Just because there

isn't any personal tie doesn't mean you don't have the right to make this record and tell this story. And in a way we're really just re-telling this story anyway, using the people involved's own words — we haven't put too much of our own slant on it."

To get a further sense of the place they were

representing, rather than recording in plush Welsh studios such as Rockfield or Monnow Valley, they transformed the Ebbw Vale Institute in the heart of the Valleys — more used to hosting community events and gigs by covers bands — into a recording space. As a thank you to their temporary home, they're returning to launch the album there with a live show.

"I didn't want to be an impostor and just write it remotely," says Willgoose. "Not that what we do is a hard job anyway, but it felt important to put the shifts in and go there. It was quite a lot of work transforming the room into an



actual studio, it had quite a DIY ethic to it, which felt right for this kind of album. I wanted to find somewhere in the heart of the Valleys, somewhere we could at least get a flavour of what life is like at the moment, not just to be stuck away on a farm in the middle of nowhere."

The location also had the added bonus of being perfectly situated for a stream of guests to walk through the doors, from the male voice choir who have the last, spine-tingling word on the record, to the brass players, to special guests that include Camera Obscura's Tracyanne Campbell and the Manic Street Preachers frontman James Dean Bradfield, who Public Service Broadcasting met when they supported the Manics in Swansea on their 20th anniversary tour of *Everything Must Go*. The resulting track, *Turn No More*, is a stunning centrepiece for the album, turning to Idris Davies' poem *Gwalia Deserta* for its lyrics.

"I stumbled across in the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, in their library," says Willgoose. "It's something that [James] knew so well. For people of a certain ilk and generation up there, it's a very famous

that made 2015's *The Race For Space* such a surprise hit, its vision of intrepid astronauts stretching the limits of what humans can achieve striking a nerve wildly enough to take them to No.11 in the UK charts and No.1 in the indies. It certainly spoke to the progressive community, who embraced the band and saw them named the breakthrough act at that year's Prog Awards.

"This is a nice surprise," says Willgoose, modestly. "[Prog's] not something that I necessarily think our music is. I'm aware that we don't have sole right to say what our music is or is not though. I can see a number of threads that do tie us together; the theatrical live shows, the conceptual albums. I don't necessarily think the music is that proggy. I'm not really a good enough musician to write that kind of music, so I don't think that's really the case. But obviously there's something there that appeals to people that like that kind of music, so it's a nice surprise."

And while people constantly cite Kraftwerk as a forerunner to their work, Willgoose says the likes of Radiohead and David Bowie actually had a bigger influence on PSB.

hand he was given there. But I've had people getting in touch, a lot of the Apollo community are certainly aware of the album. I've got a photo of [NASA astronaut who was instrumental in saving the crew of Apollo 13] Gene Kranz holding the album, giving the thumbs-up, and I've got a signed photo to us from him. I think he was greatly tickled by the idea of the echoes that this kind of thing that he did has down the generations. I think a lot of people were just happy that it was still being talked about, that for another generation, even if it's only five or 10 young people that listen to us and become inspired by that then that's great, that's absolutely fantastic."

From floating in the stars, to tunnelling under the earth and standing up to the government to protect your livelihood, Public Service Broadcasting's major skill is finding the human stories behind history's biggest headlines and letting the original voices be heard. And while a Welsh mine and the working class fight for survival is as far as you can get from flying to the moon, it oddly fits in with a recurring theme throughout the band's career so far: heroism. Or at the very least, drive, the fight to

"I was met with a very warm welcome wherever I went. I was slightly worried that I would be this suspicious outsider coming in and hoovering up all their stories in a vampiric way, and dashing off into the sunset and misrepresenting people left, right and centre. From the people I spoke to, all I had was encouragement and positivity, and that was a very important part of it."

poem. It kind of persuaded me of the value of coming to something like this as a bit of an outsider because you kind of have a naïve audacity, you don't necessarily know all the connotations of working with a piece like that. It's such a powerful poem. Even though it was written in the 30s, there are so many echoes to both the time we were talking about then, which was the mid-80s, and even to today, so it was just great to use it. And the line that it ends with, they're among the most lingering on the record: *'Though blighted be the valleys/ Where man meets man with pain/ The things by boyhood cherished/ Stand firm, and shall remain.'* That's the spirit that we want to get through. Life does go on even though these things happen."

Every Valley could never have happened with a band less fiercely protective of their independence. It's a work of art: it's thought-provoking and, musically, takes cinematic post-rock to whole new levels. And it's this eagerness to plough their own furrow

"I remember hearing [Bowie's] *Low* quite late on, I think I was 23 or something, and just thinking, 'Jesus, what a record.' And I still have that feeling every time I listen to it, it's just one of the most audacious, brilliant pieces of music ever written. So he's always there. I guess *Blackstar* did hang over the album in quite a sad way. It's such a great album, but it's so hard to listen to and keep a dry eye. Especially the last song, it's tough. What a way to go, he was just one step ahead of everyone the whole way, even to the extent that his own death became this piece of theatre. What an audacious bugger!"

But it's Major Tim, not Major Tom, who's been listening back to PSB.

"I think Tim Peake was heavily leant on by the European Space Agency, who were fans and wanted to encourage him to listen," Willgoose says with a laugh, of the British astronaut's endorsement of the band. "So I think it ended up in one of his top 10 tracks for space, but I'm not sure how much of a guiding

succeed against the odds.

"I think it's resolve really," says Willgoose. "It's finding strength in adversity, that kind of runs through the whole thing, through our body of work. And I think here it's a more sad defiance, it's slightly more bittersweet on this record, but it's definitely still there. The track *You + Me* is very much about how, in the face of terrible events, it's looking to each other for strength. That's just the way this record went."

Who knows what's going to happen in the next year and beyond. Certainly it feels like there are dark days ahead. But you can bet that, if there are people out there fighting for what's right, pushing the boundaries and creating history, Public Service Broadcasting will be on the trail, just waiting to make their stories into impeccable work of art. 

Every Valley is out July 7 on PIAS. See www.publicservicebroadcasting.net for more information.

READERS: THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR PROG MAGAZINE. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ADJUST THE PICTURES OR THE WORDS. WE ARE CONTROLLING WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ...



Temples

They're the small town psych rockers who want to create a sound without borders and their new album was influenced by Peter Hammill. **So we have to ask: how prog are Temples?**

Words: Paul Lester

Sometimes it seems as though the whole world's going prog. There's all the glorious prog from history that we know and love, and there are today's legions of prog bands. Then there are the bands that are 'going prog'. It's happening a lot in indie. First there was The Coral, celebrated in these pages for their 2016 album *Distance Inbetween* and its prog-tastic mashup of Krautrock and biker boogie. Rumour has it that Alt-J, winners of 2012's Mercury Prize, have, on their forthcoming third album *Relaxer*, 'gone prog'. And now here are Temples, the Kettering four-piece whose 2014 debut album *Sun Structures* paid homage to psych so irresistibly and infectiously it reached the UK Top 10 and drew praise from Johnny Marr and Noel Gallagher (who had his own prog moment when he worked with far-sighted production duo Amorphous Androgynous). For their follow-up, *Volcano*, they've largely ditched the swirly Byrds/Beatles/Zombies influences and gone for an intricate, keyboards-heavy sound that chimes with the recent work of Tame Impala, MGMT, Flaming Lips and

ELO albums like *On The Third Day* were a big influence, The Alan Parsons Project, Todd Rundgren's *Utopia*, Genesis, the stuff Bob Ezrin produced for Peter Gabriel.
Tom Walmsley



Above: Temples' new album *Volcano*.

Below: Walmsley with Temples' 2014 debut, *Sun Structures*.

Mercury Rev, with nods further back to everyone from Jethro Tull and Yes to Pink Floyd and Mike Oldfield.

In fact, bassist and founder member Tom Walmsley is so full of the joys of prog that he interrupts Temples' tour of the States – where the band are something of a hot ticket, with appearances on high-profile platforms such as *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* – to discuss music in general (he's just discovered late-70s power pop cult heroes Shoes, and dark angel of New York's tenements Laura Nyro), and prog in particular.

"In terms of songwriting," he says of the artists they tuned into during the recording of *Volcano*, "we listened to a lot of later prog, from beyond the golden era: Paul Roland, Martin Newell, Julian Cope, Bill Nelson, Peter Hammill, Sparks." He pauses for breath to admire the Nevada City scenery, then continues. "ELO albums like *On The Third Day* were a big influence, The Alan Parsons Project, Todd Rundgren's *Utopia*, Genesis, the stuff Bob Ezrin produced for Peter Gabriel – that kind of deconstructed, less-is-more approach [circa 1977's *Car*]. I've also been listening to [Gabriel's] *Scratch and Melt* a lot. The sound is incredible."

When Prog ventures that a track from *Volcano*, *Open Air*, sounds like a depressed ELO or suicidal *Martha My Dear* (by The Beatles), he is delighted. "That's made my day," he says, audibly beaming. There's a great attention to detail on *Volcano* – the "fa fa fa fa"s on *Roman Godlike Man*, the swarm of bees at the start of *Born Into Sunset* – but it's more than the sum of its snappy snippets.

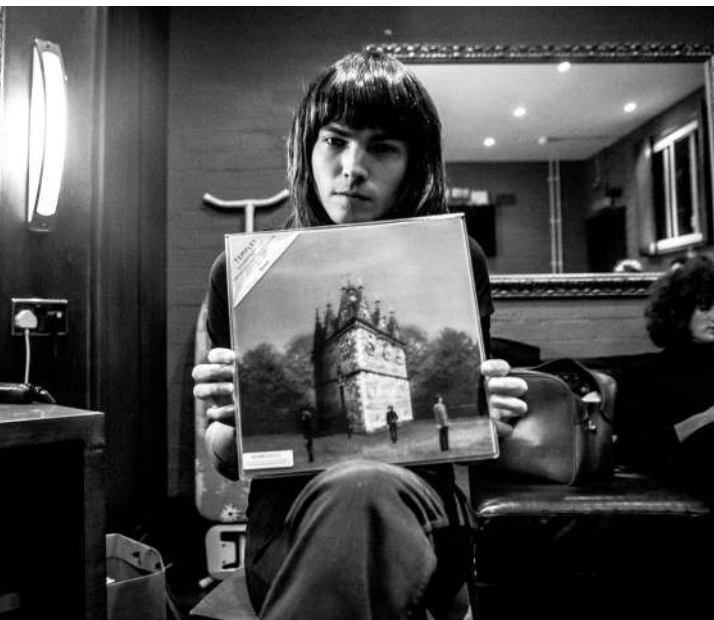
"We wanted to progress our songwriting," he explains. "*Sun Structures* wasn't a concept album but we wanted to capture a whole sound across the album. This time we wanted to do away with anything that felt like that and focus on each individual song."

Sun Structures was criticised in some quarters for ostensibly dabbling in psych while not fully immersing itself in the culture's properties: one reviewer decided they weren't taking enough hallucinogenics.

"I don't really know what that means," Walmsley says now. "I don't think they literally meant we weren't taking enough drugs. I think they meant it metaphorically; that maybe there wasn't enough depth..."

"As with most music fans," he continues, rather elusively, "we've all dabbled in various things, but most people know that if there's any complexity to your music... Basically, recording and recreational drug use are fairly well-known for not always resulting in something substantial."

Ah, the old Wayne Coyne argument: that the last things you need to make druggy music are drugs. Indeed, Coyne would argue, they impede the creative process. Still, Walmsley concedes that *Sun Structures* was stymied somewhat by an over-reliance on period signifiers. The benefit of prog, unlike its close cousin psych, is that it's less time-specific than timeless.



SIMON SARIN/GETTY

LEAD: SIMON SARIN/PHOTOSHOT



Temples, L-R:
Samuel Toms, Tom
Walmsley, Adam
Smith, James Bagshaw.





"All the songs [on *Sun Structures*] had a similar sound and approach," he muses. "With *Volcano* there is a greater contrast between the songs. I don't think it's trying to sound 'hazy' and 'hallucinogenic' this time. We've focused more on lyrics and wanted to be more direct and instantaneous."

Talking of the lyrics... What did he mean by 'the future is a dying game' from *All Join In*?

"It's a statement," he laughs, "a questionably bleak one, which the album develops."

There is even a track on the album entitled *How Would You Like To Go?* What's that all about, then?

"It's blatant — there's no hidden message there," he replies. "We certainly didn't address death on the first album, but we have this time, in a very British, tongue-in-cheek way. It's more theatrical, with the influence from, I guess, Peter Hammill's approach to lyric writing, with the high, soaring vocals and theatrical style of [Hammill's 1975 album] *Nadir's Big Chance*. We've replicated that to some degree."

"If you have any darker subject matter in your songs, it's hard to know how to get that across to listeners without being completely morbid," he adds, attempting to conjure in words the air of exultant melancholia on *Volcano*, which was very nearly called *Celebration*. "On *Volcano* we're not mood-boarding nice words over psychedelic music, nor do we fall into complete despair. There's a balance. But we are hitting a bit harder and asking questions from a progressive rock tradition: the idea of music as borderless. We've tried to bring a progressive spirit to the record."

For all Walmsley's talk of self-realisation and self-determination (hence, he says, the image of the key on the front cover of *Volcano*), his explanation that "lots of the songs [on the album] are pillars of different human emotions" and references to the arcane likes of Bill Nelson, one gets the impression Temples, far from a marginal, esoteric concern, have it in them to be *Very Big Indeed*. Something about Marr's and especially Gallagher's patronage makes you think that, were this 20 or so years ago, they'd have been a likely support act for Oasis at Knebworth. They have the requisite cute swagger about them. But are they living that sort of rock life, living it large on the road, or are they really more of a studio unit?



SIMON SARIN/PHOTOSHOT



Above: *Sun Structures* was praised by Johnny Marr and Noel Gallagher.

"The best way to describe us," offers Walmsley, ever ready to keep his allusions prog-friendly, "is to paraphrase Steve Hackett: we're all legends in our own bedrooms."

"We're just four people from Kettering," he goes on. "It just so happens that we're on a bus in the middle of California. It's a little bit like, 'How did we end up here?' I think being from the same small town helps you, really. Of course we're very polite. Are we laddish? Not really, no. We're far too afraid of our own shadow to be like that."

"You do get thrown into the pigeonhole of being a British guitar band," he continues, "but we're studio-ridden technophiles, really. We like technology and reading books and playing chess rather than swaggering about."

Are Temples less a displaced Britpop band than a displaced prog one? Where would they have been more comfortable: Knebworth 1996 or Canterbury 1972? He doesn't hesitate before replying.

"Infinitely the latter, absolutely," he says. When asked who he would choose if he could be pals with any musician from history, he decides, "Richard Sinclair from Caravan. Or to have even a brief conversation with Daavid Allen [of Gong] would have been incredible."

Temples get lots of veteran proggers coming to their gigs, comparing them favourably to bands past. "We definitely get people who are fanatical record collectors who are perhaps older than some of the younger kids who come along, and it's always a real honour to speak to them, because for



SIMON SARIN/GETTY

“Are we laddish? Not really, no. We like technology and reading books and playing chess rather than swaggering about.”
Tom Walmsley

them to give you the seal of approval... They tell us they haven't heard anything like us for a while and it's incredibly flattering.”

Is it a help or a hindrance that they're so good looking? They could almost be a prog boy band.

“Weren't Pink Floyd a prog boy band?” he fires back, and he's got a point. “There are a lot of good looking bands from that era.”

Go on, then. Name the Top 10 best looking prog frontmen, ever.

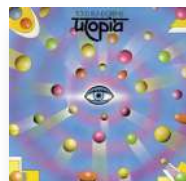
“Oh God,” he laughs. “And women, of course.”

Of course. Although Stacia would be No 1, right?

“She'd be numbers one, two, three and four...”

“Okay, well,” he continues, gamely, “It's tricky to know where to start.

I don't want to just pick bass players but obviously Greg Lake, God rest his soul, he had a good few years where he was looking at the top of his game. Then there's Chris Squire, mainly



Above: Todd Rundgren's *Utopia* and Peter Gabriel have influenced Temples.

because he dressed well. Kevin Ayers, of course; butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, I'm sure. Peter Gabriel before he shaved his head. Todd in the 70s, when he out-androgenised Bowie. Gilli Smyth from Gong. Giles, Giles and Fripp,” he finishes the rundown, cheating a bit.

Is image important to Temples? “Well, no more than any other artist,” he says. “Bob Dylan always thought about how he looked. Even if he didn't want to look particularly well-dressed he carefully made sure that he didn't look well-dressed. It's synonymous with music; something people pick up on.”

At the time of writing *Volcano* has just entered the album charts, the band's second success in a row. Now that is a good look. But where does it position them in prog historical terms? What's the blueprint, the paradigm, on which their trajectory is modelled? Ever the prog student, Walmsley has the answer.

“We've jumped straight from our Nursery Cryme to our *Trick Of The Tail* meets Peter Gabriel's *Scratch*. Three years is a long time between records and we had to do some catch-up. We'd love to have done our *Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, but then that may have resulted in one of us leaving, so luckily we skipped that phase.”

Dance On A Volcano, or something. One question remains: how would he like to go?

“Um, quickly,” he says, preparing to — ever so politely, natch — assail an audience of Californian prog fans. “But not now. And more importantly than anything, I'd like to leave something of value behind.

“Meanwhile, I'd like us to keep changing and developing over future records. I'd like us, just as everything starts to become too much, to move somewhere else.”

How very prog. ☺

Volcano is out now on Heavenly. See www.templestheband.com for more info.



YOUR SHOUT!

Their past may be steeped in psych, but with all this talk of ELO, Alan Parsons, Caravan and Chris Squire, the question needs to be asked: Just how prog are Temples?

“I guess they're more psychedelic than prog but whatever they are, they're bloody brilliant. Saw them play Latitude Festival once and they rocked.”

Rick Lennox

“Prog in a sense: interesting, sound more psychedelic though. Great band!”

Danny Mayo

“They are a great psych band. The thing I love about Prog magazine is that it covers both prog and psych! Thanks guys!”

Allison Blue-Sky

“The epic re-working of *Sun Structures* into one 42-minute piece is prog-tastic!”

Ed Lindsay

“Quite pleasant and easy to listen to but leaning a little more towards synth pop and not unlike a lot of bands from the 80s/90s. Not quite adventurous enough to pick up on my prog tendrils.”

Kevin Braithwaite

“The laws of physics dictate that it is categorically impossible to be classed as prog if you come from Kettering...”

Andrew Buckley

“My definition is broad, so prog enough, but a bit disappointed with album two.”

Steve Kenny

“More psych than prog - and great with it.”

David Miller

“They were interesting. The last album is pop rubbish. *Sun Structures* is more psych. The new album is a Tame Impala, MGMT wannabe.”

Franco Soria

“Just heard the song *Certainty*. It's good.”

Arpan Das

“Very progressive if you're still living in 1966.”

Steve Harrison

“Love Temples: their first album was like listening to another volume of *Nuggets*. They could be defined as revisiting the sound of early prog bands.”

Stuart Harris

“For a newish group they fit in wonderfully well with all the bands from that all-too-brief moment of bliss when 60s pop psych began to mutate to prog. Certainly deserve coverage in this magazine.”

Chris Bembridge

“Temples are more psychedelic than progressive in my opinion. Their use of synthesisers are the only reason I can think of that make them quite proggy. They seem quite experimental or avant-garde with their odd use of vocals, lyrics and sudden style shift. I feel. I enjoy them a lot regardless...”

Callum Greenhow

“Far too obsessed with sixties production values for my tastes...”

Daryl Anthony



SIMON SARIN/PHOTO SHOT

John Mitchell's **Lonely Robot** continue their space-themed exploration of sonic sounds with stunning second album *The Big Dream*. The musician and producer chats to *Prog* about meeting his heroes, dealing with low self-esteem and his love for film soundtracks.

Words: Grant Moon

Images: Tom Barnes & Lee Blackmore

Inner Space

Born in Shannon, County Clare in 1973, John Mitchell was adopted and raised in the idyllic village of Hambleden, Berkshire. As a boy, he'd run around a nearby wood with his mates playing guns, and for a while he was plagued by recurring nightmares. One would inspire the cover for *The Big Dream*, his terrific second outing as Lonely Robot.

"I'd be running through this wood," he tells *Prog*, "and I'd be set upon by these terrifying people with animals' heads. Some people have seen the cover

and asked if it's a homage to Genesis' *Foxtrot*, but I don't really listen to Genesis, so I didn't make that association. It's about that dream."

Three decades on he found himself hauling a wrought iron hospital bed up a long, tall hill to a glade in that very same wood, to be photographed in his pyjamas as friends loomed over him in jodhpurs, clerical collars, space suits and bestial masks. Passing rambblers were freaked out.

John Mitchell has had some happier if equally surreal moments of late. In March he met his all-time guitar hero, Trevor Rabin, at ARW's show in Birmingham. "It was an absolute high point in my life. We had a long chat in the hotel bar and put the world to rights. They say don't meet your heroes, but I got lucky there — he's a gentleman." He also recently received his first royalty statement for Lonely Robot's debut album, 2015's *Please Come Home*, and it made his jaw drop. "It's the first time I've earned mechanical

royalties from a record. I felt like cracking the champagne! Normally you get the advance and that's it, but it sold a remarkable amount. I'm so pleased."

This success is a validation for one of prog's journeymen. In 2004 he formed his first proper band, the short-lived Kino, with It Bites' John Beck and Bob Dalton, Marillion's Pete Trewavas and ex-Porcupine Tree drummer Chris Maitland. He has sealed his reputation as a highly gifted guitarist — for Clive Nolan's Arena and Jem Godfrey's wonderful outfit Frost* — and also as a frontman, fearlessly assuming Francis Dunnery's place for It Bites' all-too-brief renaissance.

His commitments to these bands work in series rather than in parallel. Most of the time he's holed up at Outhouse Studios, his recording facility set in a beautifully appointed, 300-year-old Victorian coaching inn, where he produces records for the likes of Enter Shikari, Architects and You Me At Six. As we speak he's furiously trying to finish up Kim Seviour's

The Big Dream's artwork is a nightmarish recreation of an actual nightmare.

"If I wanted to write an album, then it should encompass my love of film soundtracks, detuned metal guitar, and have proggy moments. *The Big Dream* is an amalgamation of literally everything I love."

debut solo album. It's also Mission Control for Lonely Robot.

It was InsideOut label head Thomas Waber who convinced him to produce his solo work under a band name, the wisdom being that band albums sell better than artists' eponymous ones. Waber also suggested it would be worth hitting his Rolodex for a few guest appearances on the debut record. Steve Hogarth, Heather Findlay, Nik Kershaw and others duly obliged. "Of course it's handy from a marketing perspective," says Mitchell now, "but if you're a Marillion fan and Steve plays a bit of piano on my album, there's no evidence you'll then listen to it. I got him in for the right reasons – he's a great pianist, and a very good friend of mine. It's not like I rang someone from, I dunno, Slayer to do a solo to appeal to Slayer's fans! I'm extremely proud of what everyone brought to the table for *Please Come Home*."

The Big Dream was all but completed last October and set for release in winter, but Mitchell contracted a nasty bronchial tract infection and was unable to sing for three months, missing his window. "Then I went through a period of asking myself if the album was just a load of old rubbish, if I should abandon it. I do have low self-esteem at the best of times, so I go through these periods of wondering if what I've put together is any good."

Having recuperated, he returned to the album and realised it was anything but rubbish, and finished it with renewed vigour. Lonely Robot's second release is Mitchell's most distilled, personal album to date, and his most compelling. Second time round, the only guests are Frost* drummer Craig Blundell and ex-Creatures Of Love singer Bonita McKinney, whose strong backing vocals complement Mitchell's husky tones, notably on *Hello World Goodbye*. But the first voice you hear on *The Big Dream* belongs to a man who died the year Mitchell was born.

Author of books including 1957's *The Way To Zen*, hippie philosopher Alan Watts played a major part in introducing Buddhist thought to the West, and the album's interspersed with archive audio of Watts discussing the nature of existence and consciousness, and chiming with Mitchell's own themes. "Alan had a very calming voice," says the guitarist. "So in between getting battered with 7/8 you've got that to look forward to. He was a great advocate of this idea of 'the solipsistic haze' – that are we all a part of somebody else's imagining, that life is a great conspiracy, a grand design, a dream. On the last album I explored the disconnect between humans and the Earth, that perhaps we weren't originally from this planet. This time I thought it'd be fun to get

into the idea of that solipsistic haze. Listening to Watts' lectures, a lot of his philosophies point towards it, and I found great comfort in that."

Musically, *The Big Dream* is less a departure from *Please Come Home* than a confident expansion of it. When he's not writing or producing, Mitchell only really listens to movie soundtracks, be it Hans Zimmer's for *Interstellar*, Clint Mansell's for *Moon*, or Alan Silvestri's for *Contact*. This Jodie Foster film keeps cropping up in our conversation: when bemoaning the modern-day reliance on social media, he quotes Matthew McConaughey's character, who reckons we've become a 'synthesised society'. ("That resonates more than ever now. People don't truly know how to communicate with each other".) In the film, the SETI radar array picks up an otherworldly, rhythmic radio signal sent by an alien intelligence, and that short sound effect actually appears on the album's title track – distorted, pitch-shifted, it's used almost as a metronome for Craig Blundell's imperious drumming.

Indeed, much of the album's musical texture is drawn from the sci-fi realm, from such very precise sound design details to the grand harmonic language of the songs they imbue. *Prologue (Deep Sleep)* comes in on subtle strings, a dual flute motif echoing through space, and electronic blips and blops. It evokes the eerie opening of *Alien*, when Ripley and crew are woken out of their cryogenic sleep by the *Nostromo*'s computer, as all hell awaits them. "That's exactly what you're supposed



Lonely Robot, L-R: Steve Vantsis, Craig Blundell, John, Liam Holmes.

to think," says Mitchell, pleased. "There's a little atonal thing that's a nod to that." His Astronaut character thus wakes into 'reality' (you can imagine Watts air-quoting the word). *Awakenings* has a downtuned guitar riff, a huge chorus, and one of Mitchell's beautifully lyrical guitar solos is prefaced by a Mellotron choir. "It's that old, dark string sound used on the *Alien* soundtrack," says the man who reckons he can count the prog bands he likes on one hand. "That's my reference, not *Larks' Tongues In Aspic!*" With its huge, infectious refrain, *Sigma* is an odd pop song contending



that humans don't learn from history ('Now the writing on the wall can never bury you/All along the signs were there staring straight back at you'). Lead track *Everglow* has what he calls an anti-chorus: it sounds like a positive message; it's actually invective.

"The everglow is the feeling people get when they vent on a social media platform. You say, 'This is wrong, that's wrong' and all your mates online go, 'Yeah!' But if you've got a problem with somebody, fucking well tell them, don't vindicate yourself through this keyboard warrior mentality! I've been guilty of it in the past myself. I know people who can really hold forth on Facebook but can't actually answer a phone call. It's disconcerting."

The album's powerful effect is cumulative. A dozen listens in you're still spotting interesting details – a digital glitch on the heartbreaking vocal of *In Floral Green*; the near sub-sonic bass drop and tranquil lapping of waves that ends the Celtic, *Blade Runner*-referencing *Epilogue (Sea Beams)*. "I've got a little sailing boat moored off Mylor, in Cornwall," Mitchell says with a longing laugh. "The calmest I could ever be is just off the Cornwall coast with the engine off and the sails up. I'm so glad I ended the album with that sound."

Once, as a producer, he was asked to conjure up the sound of purple falling into mercury. He does see music in colours, and for this album he sought a 'green' sound, one that chimed with that pastoral cover shot, and ran counter to the grey we're surrounded

"If you've got a problem with somebody, fucking well tell them, don't vindicate yourself through this keyboard warrior mentality! I know people who can really hold forth on Facebook but can't actually answer a phone call. It's disconcerting."

by in our daily lives – the concrete. "Part of the human psyche misses the biological aspect of the colour green," he says. "I don't think people are aware of what they're missing."

With its shimmering, Muse-like synth hook, *False Lights* has a verse in 5/4 and a chorus in 6/8, with shifts so smooth you could almost dance to it. *Symbolic* comes with a whistling, *X-Files*-like line and one of the most nuanced, explosive guitar solos he's ever recorded. And maybe he doesn't listen to Genesis, but the piano-led anthem *The Divine Art Of Being* evokes *Take Me Home* and Peter Gabriel's *Red Rain* too. It's all the more stirring for it.

Then we leave the Astronaut to his cryogenic sleep; his *Matrix*-age, human battery-cell life. "That's where he ends up," says Mitchell, before quoting late comedian Bill Hicks. "'Go back to bed, America! Your government is in control. Here's *American Gladiators*. Watch this, shut up!' The whole album's a strange meeting of everything I've ever wanted to do musically. I haven't thought of it before this moment, but if I wanted to write an album, then it should encompass my love of film soundtracks, detuned

metal guitar and have proggy moments. *The Big Dream* is an amalgamation of literally everything I love."

His early experience with Kino taught him that writing by committee was not for him. As he puts it: "Somebody always has to be Napoleon! Kino never ended up being quite what I wanted it to be, but there's a line from there to here, because I wanted to have a band as a vehicle for my songwriting. Lonely Robot is me writing music, a bit more focused and more clued up than I was back then."

"I've come to the conclusion that I'm a hermit, and a complete, benevolent dictator. I did co-write with Jem on the last Frost* album though [2016's brilliant *Falling Satellites*]. We're like-minded, but I like to have the basic structure of a song quickly, to bash the fence up then cover it in glitter later. Jem likes to look at the details from the start. John Beck says I'm halfway between himself and Francis Dunnery. Even I'm not as impatient as Francis,

whereas John's ethos is that slow and easy always wins the race."

But fronting his Lonely Robot band is different, there's more of him in it, and he was uncharacteristically nervous ahead of the launch show, at Reading club Sub89. The day after he opened for Marillion at their Weekend at De Montfort Hall, and on May 27 he'll headline the Prog-sponsored all-star charity event Trinity 2 at the Assembly in Leamington Spa.

Live, Lonely Robot band is Mitchell, Blundell, keyboardist Liam Holmes and bassist Steve Vantsis. Back when he was playing guitar in John Wetton's band, Mitchell asked the man if he wanted the solos – such as Allan Holdsworth's on UK's *In The Dead Of Night* – played exactly as on the record. "John said, 'No, I didn't get you in the band to copy other people. I want you to do your own thing.' I never forgot that. I don't expect the band to copy my parts, I want them to embellish them."

A complete, benevolent dictator then. But not a total control freak. 🎸

The Big Dream is out now on InsideOut. See www.facebook.com/johnchristianmitchell for more information.

The 50th anniversary of their debut may be approaching, but **Procol Harum** aren't slowing down. Instead, they're still touring and have just released their 12th album.

Prog catches up with frontman **Gary Brooker** and new lyricist **Pete Brown** (who formerly worked with Cream and Jack Bruce) to find out more...

Words: Paul Sexton **Images:** Alex Asprey

When Gary Brooker reappeared for the second half of Procol Harum's recent Royal Festival Hall show, bandaged but unbowed after a bad stumble, it was almost a metaphor for the defiant way in which the frontman will not let the band's legacy fade gently into the night.

Barely referring to his injuries beyond a characteristically jokey, absent-minded "got a bit of a broken hand and a broken head", Brooker proceeded to lead the group to the show's invigorating completion. Now, as the latter-day line-up of this always-undervalued institution releases the excellent *Novum*, the first Procol album for 14 years, the soon-to-be-72-year-old knows it's a record fit to refresh a noble legacy.

"The only reason I would go on stage with Procol Harum, or make a record as Procol Harum, is because I think we've always had — I don't know what the right expression is — a bit of dignity in there; certain standards of music," Brooker tells me when we meet before the mishap. "I think with this new one, we've really focused quite well on the fact that it's a band *playing*, which is what it is."

Novum makes its striking entrance as the famous Procol marque approaches the 50th anniversary of its unforgettable debut, when *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* shone like the very sun illuminating 1967's summer of love. That was immediately followed by their first, self-titled album, our full introduction to the group's unique synthesis of art rock invention, classical rigour, R&B schooling and sheer pop dexterity. The new release is a skilled refurbishment of that framework, down to a glance at the original sleeve in Julia Brown's cover art.

"Life's a lot different when you've got a new product out," says Brooker. "We've got a good repertoire, which we rely on, and we move it all around and change things, but to have some new stuff... We've been very pleased with the way it came out, because we've not actually made a record with this line-up. Suddenly we thought, or I thought, 'If we've been going 50 years, it's time to make some sort of effort.'"

In this true collective, *Novum* has the bandleader co-writing at times with Hammond organ and Yamaha Montage keyboard marvel Josh Phillips and longtime guitar totem Geoff Whitehorn. Matt Pegg's bass and Geoff Dunn's drums stylishly underpin the entire construction. What's absent, for the first time, is the singular imagery of lyricist, and time-honoured "non-playing member", Keith Reid, but that's where Procol's new secret weapon is deployed.

All but two of the 11 new songs have words by Pete Brown, the treasured penman, poet and musician forever best-known as the lyrical foil for the late Jack Bruce, both in Cream and over the ensuing 45 years. As second marriages go, this one was simply meant to be.

Remarking simply that Reid "kind of came to some crossroads and went a different way", Brooker explains of Brown: "I bumped into him on different occasions, made a record he produced once [as a tribute album to] John Lee Hooker, saw him at Jack [Bruce's] funeral, of course, and a couple of other occasions. We just got to talking. But that was about two or three years ago."

Brown takes up the story. "It was via Dennis Weinreich, the [album's] producer, who was friends with Chris Cooke, Procol's manager," he says. "Between the two of them, after Keith was out of the scene, they plotted to get me involved in it."

"I've always had a lot of respect for Gary, I think he's one of the great singers and he's got that archetypal British R&B feel, which I love. It's a weird thing, I'm not really a songwriter for hire, that's not my thing. I will get involved in projects which interest me creatively or musically in some way, that's what I do."

"I don't like a whole lot of lyricists," Brown continues. "It just so happens that I always did like what Keith did. Songs like *Homburg* are very fine pieces of work."

There was a fleeting work connection between the two wordsmiths, when Bruce made 1982's *Truce* album with Robin Trower, for which Reid and Brown each wrote half of the lyrics.

Procol Harum, L-R: Matt Pegg, Geoff Dunn, Gary Brooker, Josh Phillips, Geoff Whitehorn.



"I've always had a lot of respect for Gary, I think he's one of the great singers and he's got that archetypal British R&B feel, which I love."

Pete Brown

Going Beyond Again

"That was a nice experience, not to say that I got to meet Keith that much," he goes on. "But I was aware of his work and I'm very respectful of it. I suppose it was a daunting prospect in a way, stepping into those shoes, but my methods are completely different. Keith would send stuff to Gary, and that would be it, he was like Bernie Taupin."

Brooker is as droll as ever in recalling the relationship with Reid. "I didn't usually change anything, but I didn't know what he was on about anyway," he deadpans. "But I could make it believable. There was always an atmosphere there, and some nice lines."

"I never questioned it at all, and I never found it odd, like some other people did, even with *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*. 'What's that's about?' 'Well, don't you know? Just imagine and think, listen to the lines.' A lot of Reid's ones ended up [where] you could think whatever you want, *A Salty Dog* or whatever. He had humour. You can imagine it's at sea, at least."

While Procol were setting sail, Cream were defining the power trio, often with the essential adornment of Brown's unforgettable words.

Homburg was even in its top 10 singles run in the very week that *Disraeli Gears* arrived in the UK album bestsellers. In that less competitive era, such groups were friends and neighbours.

"I met Gary a few times," says Brown of those days, "and I went to the first Procol Harum gig at UFO, which I remember

"Suddenly we thought, or I thought, 'If we've been going 50 years it's time to make some sort of effort.'"

Gary Brooker

Gary Brooker: "Always trying to do something different, forward-thinking."

being pretty good, actually. Because it was a smaller scene, it had elements of community. People went to each other's gigs a lot, people were interested to see what was going on, and it wasn't rivalry or jealousy, no one was trying to cut anyone."

The recent Festival Hall one-off, which precedes Procol's May UK tour, was all the more of an occasion because of its arrangements of their catalogue staples for orchestra and choir. It's a device that, as Brooker is proud to point out, they've used longer than anyone, and the history includes another example of that old school inquisitiveness Brown refers to.

"It's always been something we're very capable of," he says of the orchestral dimension, "and the music we play lends itself to that. It's never been a battle of rock and classics, it's something that works together."

I think we were the first, I know this by fact. We did it in 1969, probably the early summer, in Stratford, Ontario.

"This is before the Edmonton album, as it's known [the 1972 release featuring the magnificent orchestration of the group's early song *Conquistador*].

It was at the Stratford

Shakespeare Festival, we used their orchestra and all of their actors were in the choir. We didn't do very much, we did *In Held 'Twas In I*, *A Salty Dog*, I think that was almost it. That led to getting to play at Edmonton.

"But when I came home from that, I saw that Deep Purple were on at the Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic, so I thought, 'I'll go and check this out.' So we in fact played before they did. Theirs was very much a battle between heavy rock and an orchestra."

Musing on the significance of their fusion, and Procol's place in the musical food chain, he goes on: "That was a progressive thought, of course, but the word didn't exist then. Well, it did, but not in regard to music. Of course you were always trying to write and record things which seemed to be progressive, rather than... what's the opposite? Retro, I suppose. Always trying to do something different, forward-thinking."

It's always exhilarating to see a venerable band with new momentum, and 50 years on, Procol Harum's momentum is palpable.

"Not that that seems a long time," says Brooker, "but to keep a standard going that amount of time — which, although a lot of British people don't know it, we have done — is an achievement in itself. I think the new album crowns that, [so that] they can play something other than *Whiter Shade Of Pale*. Which still sounds good!"

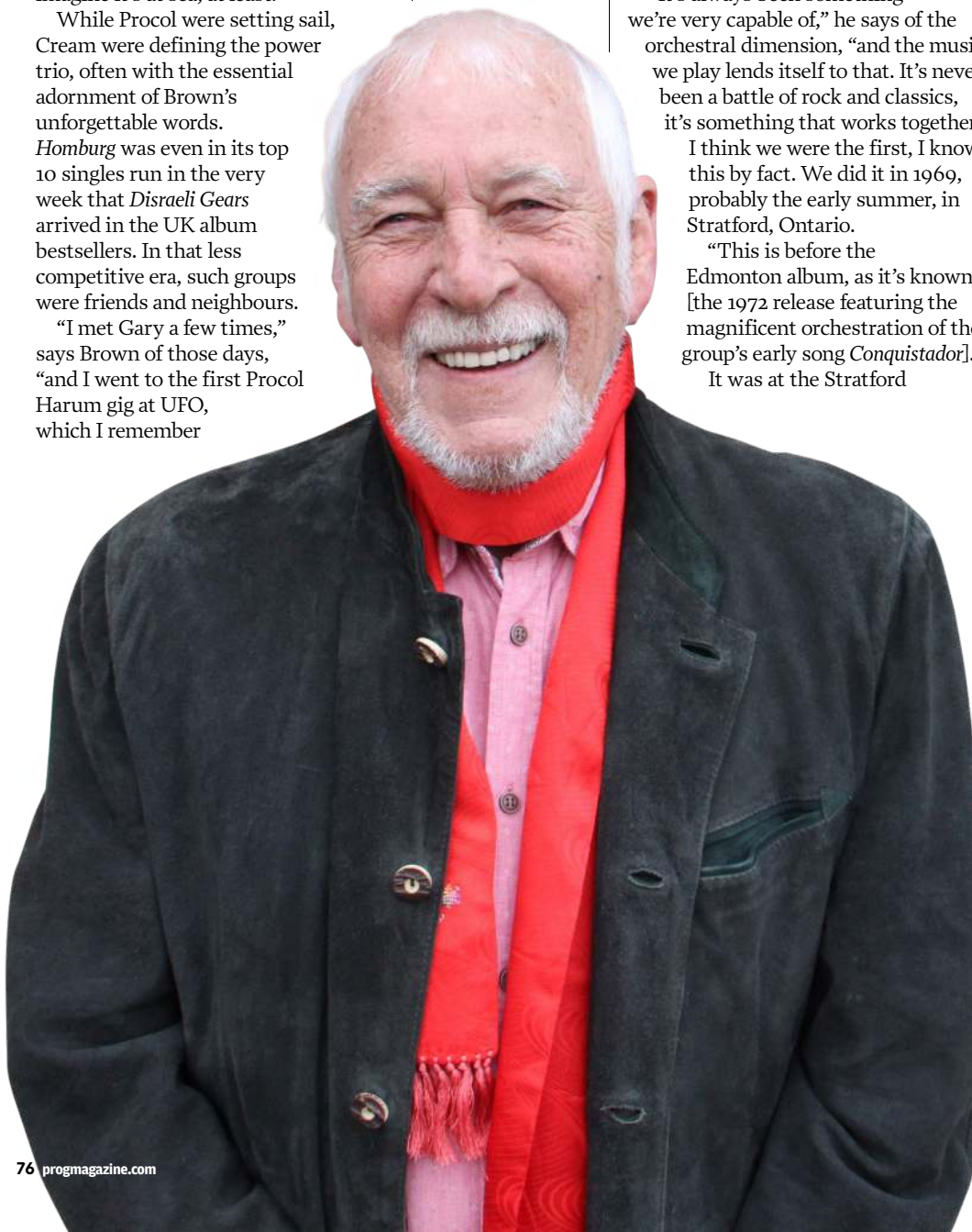
Even better for both loyal devotees and newcomers, they're already thinking about the next one.

"I think the thing is, you've got to get into the rhythm of it, not lie around for five years now," Brooker muses.

"I know we can come up with ideas between us, so there's no reason, once we've got the dates out of the way this year, [not to] go in and do some more. Why not? You're fresh off the road, you've all been working together and it should flow smoothly on. You might need a rest in between."

"This new one," he concludes, "is the one where every one's worth a listen, and it'll be your favourite in 10 years' time. Be a bit old by then..." 

Novum is out now on Eagle Rock. See www.procolharum.co.uk for more information.





TEAMROCK+

TRY IT FOR FREE AT TEAMROCK.COM

Rock

HAMMER

PROG

JOIN US AT TEAMROCK.COM/TRYFORFREE

TRY 30 DAYS FOR FREE

AND ACCESS ALL THIS

Online access to all the content from our latest magazine issues before they hit stores.

Totally Ad Free

2 years worth of back issue content

Over 3,000 in-depth features

Over 4,000 reviews

Flying High: ELP
back in 1978.

CHUCK FISHMAN/GETTY IMAGES



THE RETURN OF THE MANTIC EPRE (AGAIN)

The latest batch of **Emerson, Lake & Palmer** reissues drops this month, so we spoke to the band's sole surviving member, **Carl Palmer**, to discover the stories behind the releases...

Words: Dom Lawson

Both the six-legged embodiment of progressive rock's restless creative spirit *and* the ultimate benchmark for the genre's most preposterous excesses, Emerson Lake & Palmer have been in our thoughts more than ever over the last 12 months. On the one hand, the band's illustrious catalogue has been steadily repackaged and remastered anew, with deluxe versions of *Trilogy*, *Brain Salad Surgery* and *Tarkus* (the latter given a new stereo mix by Steven Wilson) emerging in 2016. On the flipside, of course, we have mourned the deaths of two thirds of ELP: both colossal losses to the prog world that bring extra

poignancy to any fulsome reassessment of the music the trio made together.

Prog's interview with Carl Palmer takes place at the end of 2016, eight months after the tragic death of keyboard maestro Keith Emerson but less than 48 hours before the news broke that bassist and frontman Greg Lake had also passed away, leaving the drummer as ELP's only surviving member and the man now charged with the preservation of their monumental legacy. The purpose of our chat is to discuss the latest batch of reissues, which include *Works I* and *II* and 1978's much-maligned *Love Beach*. The latter, of course, is an album that only the most devoted fans will

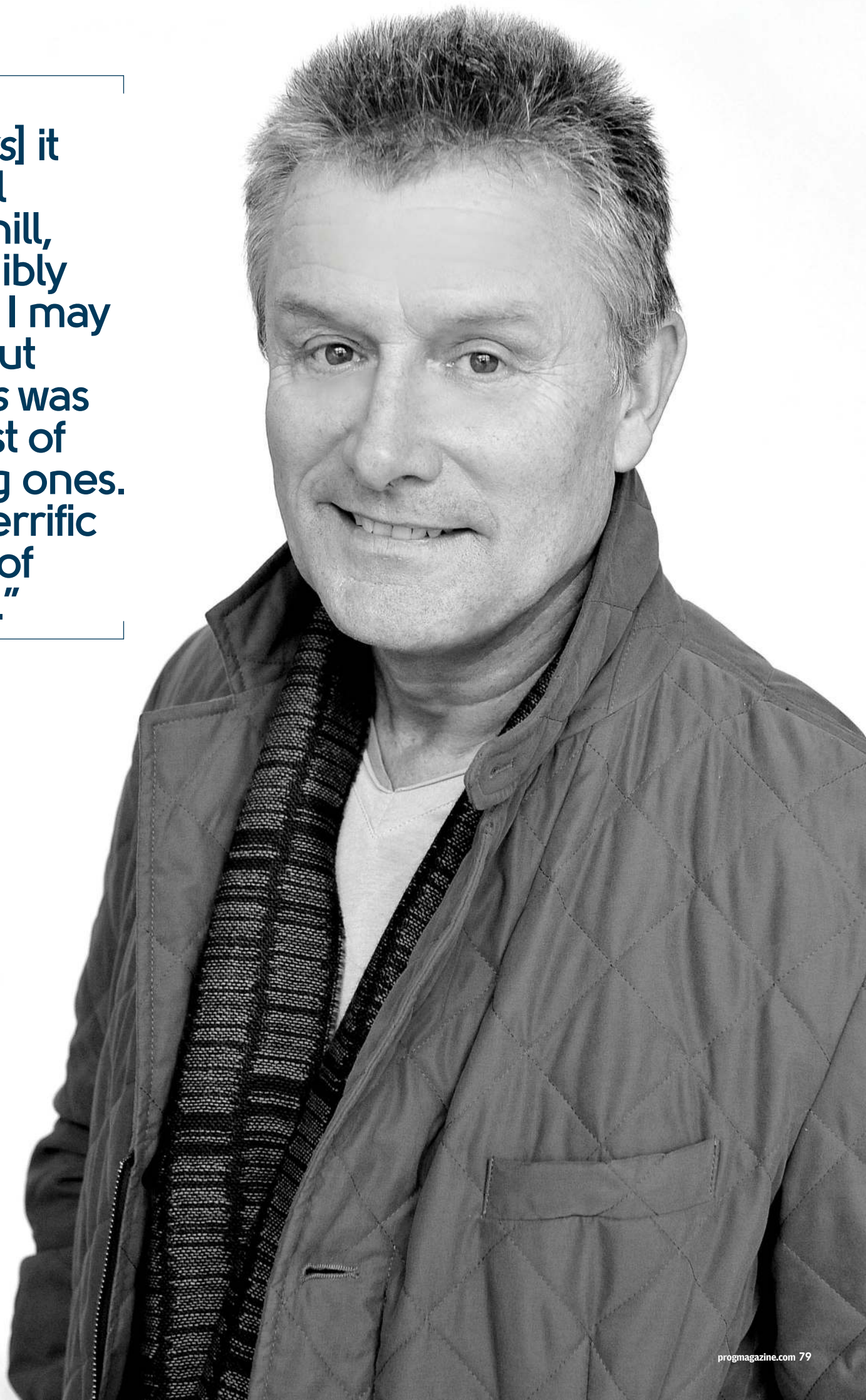
happily purchase anew, but much of the material on the *Works* albums has retained the power to startle and certainly deserves to be reassessed via the benefits of enhanced sound. In particular, Carl Palmer's solo contributions to *Works I* remain an object lesson in youthful precocity married to mind-bending skill, with the drummer's esoteric tastes revealed in all their quirky glory.

"My stuff on *Works* was quite eclectic, I must confess," he says. "I'm still like that, if you came to my house and looked through my record collection. It's pretty weird, if I'm honest. It's hard to listen to one genre of music for too long. Last night I was listening to Buddy Guy, a new album of his called *Sweet Tea*, and I've never been a Buddy Guy fan but I heard one track and it was just fantastic. It's just whatever gets me at the time. I've always listened to all kinds of different music."

There are few more explosive moments in the ELP catalogue than Palmer's



"After [Works] it was all downhill, incredibly slowly I may add, but *Pirates* was the last of the big ones. It's a terrific piece of music."



extraordinary reworking of Prokofiev's *The Enemy God Dances With The Black Spirits*. Even taking the band's long-established mastery of classical adaptations into consideration, it sounds like a particularly audacious moment of virtuoso bravado from the then 26-year-old drummer.

"Keith and I had this thing, that we *really* enjoyed classical music," Palmer recalls. "I come from a really classical background, with my father being a professor of music and so on, and so Keith and I always used to rib each other, 'Have you heard *this*?' and 'Have you heard *that*?' We'd be talking about various pieces of music and something would come up, and I'd say, 'I used to listen to that at home with my grandfather!' [Laughs] So there was a bit of synergy going on there straight away.

"I'd not heard *The Enemy God* before, but I had a friend who suggested it, saying, 'If you want something with a lot of bumping and grinding in it, it would definitely transfer to a contemporary kind of band...'. That was it. I heard it and loved it, so we recorded it, without Keith knowing about it, and then I played it to him and of course he loved it too. At this point I haven't played it for about five years, but it used to go down incredibly well. It's an extremely tough piece of music."

Tucked away at the very end of *Works I*, *Pirates* is arguably the other truly classic ELP moment lurking within this latest batch of reissues. With lyrics written by Pete Sinfield and a near-chewable sense of the band's fractious chemistry firing properly for one last blowout, it's one of the great overlooked prog

epics and one that Palmer recalls as a significant challenge for everyone involved.

"Yes, that was us giving the last of our real creativity, I would say," he states. "After that it was all downhill, incredibly slowly I may add, but *Pirates* was the last of the big ones. It's a terrific piece of music. Pete Sinfield, who was absolutely exceptional, came up with the idea, the whole concept, and I thought it all married up exceptionally well. It was recorded in Switzerland, Montreux, in Mountain Studios right on Lake Lucerne. I can't remember much of the recording, but it was all analogue so it was done in segments and there was probably a lot of editing. We could never play that stuff straight off. If you look at the master tape for *Tarkus*, for instance, it's got 17 edits on it, all cut with a razorblade."

In stark contrast to the *Works* records' many highs, *Love Beach* is widely regarded as ELP's enfeebled last gasp. It certainly doesn't help that it boasts one of the most excruciatingly misjudged album covers of all time, but aesthetic calamities aside, *Love Beach* simply didn't match up to the band's best work. Best viewed as an endearing curio, it's not an album that any of the musicians involved have defended with any great enthusiasm, Carl Palmer included.

"It's funny, I've been saying that I don't like it, but people have been playing it and it's still on the radio in America!" he declares with a chuckle. "Listen, there *are* some good things on it. I just find it hard [to believe] that we

called a prog album *Love Beach*, that's number one! Number two is that I find it difficult that the three of us were standing on the beach, looking like the Bee Gees. That's a prog cover!? [Laughs] I find that difficult, when you've come from *Brain Salad Surgery* and *Tarkus*. America had got to us, obviously!

"To write a prog album, you've got to sit in traffic jams and go through a lot of shit before you get to the studio, and *then* you come up with the goods. When you're living in the Bahamas and you've got the beach and the sea and you've all got boats, what are you going to get? You're going to get *Love Beach*."

"But I will say that it does have *Canario* by [Spanish composer Joaquín] Rodrigo, which was an idea of Keith's, and that's a *fantastic* piece of music."

Recorded at Compass Point Studios in Nassau, in the summer of '78, *Love Beach* is undeniably the band's creative nadir [*Worse than 1994's In The Hot Seat? — Ed*], but the circumstances surrounding its creation suggest that it was always doomed to be an anticlimactic clanger.

"I don't mind telling you this now... the band had actually broken up when *Love Beach* was being recorded," Palmer reveals. "Ahmet Ertegun [legendary Atlantic Records co-founder] came along and asked if we'd give it one more go. We said, 'Okay, but we've been touring for the last seven or eight years and we're fried!' People wanted to take time off, but we ended up in the Bahamas. Keith had

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

"One of the most excruciatingly misjudged album covers of all time"? The infamous *Love Beach* cover shoot.



bought a house there and Greg had bought one in conjunction with our manager at the time. I didn't own anything there, I just had a speedboat, which I eventually sold of course! [Laughs] But I remember being there and Ahmet saying, 'Guys, chill out down here and I'll set up the studio.' That's how we dealt with it really. It was very laid-back. If you wanted one more album out of us at that point, the business people probably thought that it was the only way it was going to happen. I'm surprised it's not more reggae-sounding, because that could easily have happened!"

With this latest trio of reissues now unveiled, ELP fans may be feeling a profound sense of relief that their wallets may finally stop taking a regular beating. However, it's worth noting that the band have always maintained high standards and managed to ensure that each successive revisit to an old record boasts some kind of renewed perspective or unexpected bonus. As Palmer explains, it's a simple matter of keeping the crown jewels glittering.

"At this point there isn't any more stuff [in the ELP vaults]. We've owned our own catalogue for many years, probably 40 years, so when our contract comes up and we go with another company, they want to remaster them or revisit the artwork, just to keep the standards high. We want to keep the standards high, because it's *ours* and you can make those demands when you own everything. You can keep on refreshing it. I think it's a healthy situation, to be honest. I'm sure some people will grumble but it's all

done with the right spirit, and it's about keeping the music alive."

With that in mind, the new reissues will also be available on vinyl, but on 140gsm vinyl rather than on the more standard 180gsm. In June 2016, Greg Lake posted a brief explanation of the move to thinner vinyl, stating that, "The best audio quality is actually achieved using the lighter 140gsm weight. I am honestly not sure why this trend of using heavyweight vinyl came about? Probably because of the 'more equals better' in the world we live in. However, in the interests of delivering the best quality audio to our fans we have decided to go for quality rather than quantity."

"Yeah, I've played a couple [of the new vinyl reissues] here and I'm quite happy with what's gone on," Palmer shrugs. "The pressing today, even on thinner vinyl, is much better than it used to be, and it's more sophisticated. But to quote an Asia song, only time will tell!"

Vinyl has made a big comeback recently, so is that good news for ELP and other bands from the golden era of prog, particularly given that those classic albums were all recorded with vinyl in mind?

"Well, when we moved to BMG, I went to the company that we'd just left, Razor & Tie in NYC, and I bought *all* of the vinyl that they had left over. I bought maybe 400 or 450 units, from across the catalogue, and they're all picture discs. Within eight months of touring with my own band I think most of them had gone. So there's definitely a resurgence in collecting. People want all that stuff. This time, I thought it was okay putting the album cover on one side of the vinyl, but

I said to BMG, 'Why don't you put a great picture of the band from that period on the other side?' That didn't seem to go down that well and I was never contacted again after that! If you do repackage things, you need to inject new ideas. I thought my idea was a cool way to do it, but it didn't happen."

As ELP's sole representative, Carl Palmer must now feel the weight of responsibility on his shoulders, particularly when it comes to ensuring that the ELP catalogue is monitored, refreshed and made relevant for new generations. But when it comes to keeping the band's extraordinary music alive, he has been laudably dedicated in recent times anyway, not least with his ongoing live project Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy. While we may never see the likes of ELP again, the trio's virtuoso beating heart is still pounding away and flying the flag for the most prog of all prog bands.

"The legacy is important, and I've looked after it in what I think is the most honest way, I'm out there playing the music," he concludes. "In my band, I didn't want to replace Greg or Keith and I didn't even want a keyboard player, but we can reproduce the sound quite closely. It shows you a different flavour and the versatility of ELP's music. It's the way to go for me and I'm enjoying it. I like the musical depth I have with my own band."

"It's really uplifting to play some of the ELP stuff, like *Pictures* and *Tarkus*. It's all rewarding and I do feel that someone has to keep it going, so here I am." 

The Works Volume 1, Works Volume 2 and Love Beach remastered reissues are available on May 26 on BMG. See www.bmg.com for more information.

Slogging through the snow during rehearsals for the *Works* tour at the Olympic Stadium, Montreal, 1977.

"I find it hard to believe that we called a prog album *Love Beach*, that's number one! Number two is that I find it difficult that the three of us were standing on the beach, looking like the Bee Gees. That's a prog cover!?"

Cosmic Drama

With **Voivod**'s early groundbreaking Noise Records albums recently reissued on BMG, we speak to drummer **Away** about the band's path from naïve young noiseniks to prog metal pioneers who have toured alongside the likes of Rush...

Words: Malcolm Dome

Voivod drummer Michel 'Away' Langevin has a confession: "Van der Graaf Generator are my favourite progressive band."

The secret's out now. The man who has helped to steer one of the pioneering prog metal bands has a passion for Peter Hammill and his cohorts. But then again, as Away explains, it's not surprising that he loves prog.

"I am from Quebec, and when I was growing up, there was such a thriving prog scene," he explains. "We had a load of excellent local bands around, and thankfully a lot of the albums they recorded have been made available again. There was a time when the only way I could get records done by any Quebec bands was in Japan. Now, they're easier to buy, and there was some incredible music done in those days. I am talking about the 1970s."

Away first got into prog by listening to it on the radio.

"I heard the usual bands like Genesis, Supertramp and Pink Floyd. Then I discovered Gentle Giant, King Crimson and, especially, Van der Graaf Generator. It opened up a whole new world for me."

However, the area of prog to make the biggest impression on the young drummer was Krautrock. He was introduced to this style by late Voivod guitarist Denis 'Piggy' D'Amour.

"He had a big collection of vinyl from these sort of bands," says Away. "And it really amazed me. I loved the way they combined contemporary classical

music influences with an experimental rock approach. I have to say that was a big inspiration for what we went on to do in Voivod."

If you listen to the band's debut album, 1984's *War And Pain*, you would never have believed that later that decade this band would come up with a sound that was challenging and adventurous. *War And Pain* is a raw, primitive record with little of the progressive aspects that later became their motif.

"That's because, with the exception of Piggy, who was already a really good guitarist, none of the rest of us [bassist Jean-Yves 'Blacky' Thériault and vocalist Denis 'Snake' Bélanger] were good enough to play anything even remotely complex," Away explains. "All we could do was follow a much more punk, hardcore and metal approach. The New Wave Of British Heavy Metal

From top: *Rrröööaaarr*, *Killing Technology* and *Dimension Hatröss*.



Then And Now:
Dimension Hatröss
era-Voivod and
the band today
(below) with
Away second right.





"The New Wave Of British Heavy Metal gave us the inspiration to go out and make our own music. But we never forgot about the prog bands who we had grown up listening to. It's just that back then, there was no way we could attempt anything like that."



Above: Killing Technology-era Voivod. L-R: Michel 'Away' Langevin, Jean-Yves 'Blacky' Theriault, Denis 'Piggy' D'Amour and Denis 'Snake' Belanger.

gave us the inspiration to go out and make our own music. But we never forgot about the prog bands who we had grown up listening to. It's just that back then, there was no way we could attempt anything like that."

While there was definitely some forward movement on second album *Rrröööaaarr* (1986), there was still little sign of what was to come.

"We were in the process of finding our feet musically, and getting to grips with what we were doing. I wouldn't say there was a real leap forward for us artistically until our third album."

That was 1987's *Killing Technology*, by which time Voivod were confident in what they were doing. They began to take creative risks, exploring territory that was alien to almost every other young underground metal act with whom they were compared.

"We always understood we were different to most of them," muses Away. "The problem was that we were always touring with these guys. And therefore were regarded as part of the thrash scene. But while this was fine for others, to us this was narrowing. When we were in the studio for *Killing Technology*, we started to develop ideas which were going off in different directions. All four of us were no longer prepared to be in a straight metal band. Harris Johns, our producer, encouraged us to be a little more psychedelic, and we enjoyed what

happened. This was the band stepping up and proving we were now good enough as musicians to be a lot more bold, and follow our own beliefs."

However, one thing Away is determined to highlight is that Voivod never had a grand blueprint for the way they wanted to create a legacy.

"We never sat down and mapped out the path down which our career should go. We didn't say, 'Right, let's make the first album very hardcore and punk, then become more metal and thrashy on the second one, and move towards psychedelia on the third.' We weren't

no point can you isolate anything they were doing and claim it was directly connected to any one artist.

"I think a lot of that came from the fact that we grew up in a remote part of Quebec [Jonquière]," says Away. "So to a large extent we were cut off from the mainstream rock culture. We had nobody local to emulate or follow, and felt we had to come up with our own style. No one told us what to do, or how to do it. We were allowed to become a band who had instincts, and were never under pressure to limit anything we tried. So, when we got to

"As we became a better band, it seemed logical for us to go back to our prog roots, and start to get a lot more of those influences into the music."

clever enough to think ahead in that way. What happened was natural and unforced. It was just that, as we became a better band, it seemed logical for us to go back to our progressive roots, and start to get a lot more of those influences into the music we knew we were now capable of making."

Voivod sounded unlike any other band of the period. While you can hear various inspirations, especially the off-kilter manner of Van der Graaf, at

Rrröööaaarr and were now able to think of trying different time signatures and generally more interesting musical stuff, our background gave us the boost just to go ahead and see what happened. Had we lived in a big city, it's possible we would never have been daring enough to try something like this. Being on our own did have that advantage. And we have never lost the desire to keep on improvising and improving."

In those formative times, the band were signed to Noise Records, a German label renowned for a roster of underground metal. Did they ever try to curb Voivod's more prog excesses?

"No, we were very lucky with them. They signed the band, and then left us to get on with what we wanted to do. At no time did they interfere musically. Nor did they try to change the artwork we wanted on the album covers [Away is also the artist for Voivod's album sleeves]. They seemed almost proud that we were different to anything else on the label. I assume our sales were good enough for them to believe we had the right idea. Why alter what was clearly working in their favour?"

Voivod, however, were touring in the 80s with a lot of bands who were clearly unsuited to them.

"We were going out on the road with other bands on the Noise label. But many of them were just not even close musically to us," Away remembers. "On the surface, we had much in common. But while we always had some metal in our music, as time went on we were moving more and more away from that type of thing, whereas these bands were very much at the centre of the whole scene."

"It did create some problems for Voivod. Audiences didn't know what to make of us at all. Some fans would get what we were doing, and loved it. But there were times when we were jeered at during a set by those who wanted to hear straight-ahead metal. All they'd like us to have done is to play what we did on *War And Pain*, and nothing else."

In an effort to get around this problem, Voivod began to organise their own festivals in Canada.

"What we would do is get a vast array of bands from all genres that seemed to be connected to us to play on the bill. This worked quite well. At least we could then oversee the types of artists we were sharing the stage with. But the trouble was that we still felt a little like outsiders. Because while we liked these bands, and in some cases had been inspired by them, none of them reflected the way we thought about our music."

Things were shifting for the band, something that was brought home in 1988, when they released *Dimension Hatröss*, their final album for Noise.

"When I look back, that's the album I see as being the true leap forward for us," says Away. "Up until then, we had made small steps forward. But with this one we were finally ready for the big leap artistically. A lot of this was driven by Piggy, who was such a fine guitarist. But Blacky was also part of the reason. We were all so much better as musicians than we had ever been before, so were ready in our minds to take a more progressive approach. For

me, this was the album that told everyone who we wanted to be. I don't discount anything we'd done before – I am proud of it all – but this was such an important album for us. And soon afterwards, we began to get offers to tour with different types of bands, not just the metal ones. I suppose of all of those, the one that sticks in my mind would be touring with Rush. I would like to think that, like them, we are a band who are individual and musically do whatever we want to do."

Voivod have often been claimed as one of the most crucial bands when it comes to the development of progressive metal. That's an accolade Away is delighted to accept.

"Because we began to do it when hardly anyone else could be described in that way, I feel we did help to bring this genre to life. But back when we were creating this approach, we never thought of ourselves as pioneers."

Since *Dimension Hatröss*, Voivod have continued to retain a uniqueness and a flexible attitude to their art.

"I feel we grew up musically in a parallel universe to a lot of our peers. And once we had done ...*Hatröss*, we were really off and flying. *Nothingface* in 1989 took it all a little further, and we have gone from there. You listen to all the albums we have done since then, and each is separate to any other. You can hear it's us, but we have never repeated anything, which I suppose is a good definition of being progressive."

Away is also delighted that the band's audience has changed over the decades.

"I like to think a lot of our fans from the early days are still here. But the number of people who are into what we do has definitely grown. We now attract more of those who like prog, which is fantastic. Our next album is going to be conceptual, and have lot more adventurous music than anything we have done before. Half of it is written, and recording will start in August. I can assure everyone there will be some epic tracks included."

Looking back at those first four albums, Away is quite surprised at the manner in which the band did react to their growing experience.

"I've listened to tracks from these albums, and it amazes me how much progress we made in a short period. I never realised before the progressive journey we were on. As I said, this was never thought through, but just happened. If I was to sum up what we did back then, and still carry on doing, I'd say we were capturing the spirit of Van der Graaf Generator!" 🎧

The remastered reissues of Rrröööaaarr, Killing Technology and Dimension Hatröss are out now on BMG. See www.voivod.net for more information.

THE OUTER LIMITS

Our pick of Voivod's proggiest offerings.



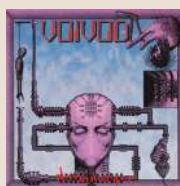
Ravenous Medicine (from *Killing Technology*, 1987)

This is where you can hear the beginnings of the band's progressive march. Heavy, but a little off-kilter.



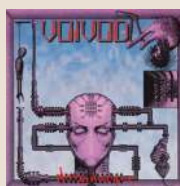
Experiment (from *Dimension Hatröss*, 1988)

Bold, stark and ambient, this is deeply imbued with a concussive psychedelic heartbeat.



The Unknown Knows (from *Nothingface*, 1989)

A progressive metal track that betrays the band's fascination with Van der Graaf Generator, but has its own energy.



Astronomy Dominé (from *Nothingface*, 1989)

A cover of the Pink Floyd classic that's done in the band's own inimitable style, but still respectful of the original.



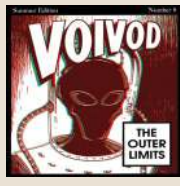
Clouds In My House (from *Angel Rat*, 1991)

Produced by Terry Brown, it has the skilful manipulation of 80s Rush, but also a monochrome surrealism that's very Voivod.



Nuage Fractal (from *Angel Rat*, 1991)

This is a nightmarish dreamscape full of deviant rhythms and surprising twists. Acid rock for the 90s.



Jack Luminous (from *The Outer Limits*, 1994)

A 17-minute epic that fully embraces Voivod's progressive side. It leaps through tribal and jazz inclinations, as well as more straightforward passages.



Rebel Robot (from *Voivod*, 2003)

After going towards an industrial groove for a couple of albums, this sees the band going on a more Krautrock route, shot through with a seismic groove.



Volcano (from *Infini*, 2009)

If King Crimson took on a more metallic pulse, then this is what we might expect. Propulsive, disciplined, yet always on the edge of letting instincts run riot.



Mechanical Mind (from *Target Earth*, 2013)

The band's first album with no contributions from late guitarist Denis 'Piggy' D'Amour. But this is almost an homage to his spidery, imaginative style. Breathless, breathtaking and compellingly intuitive.

With **Voyager** on album number six, it feels like the melodic prog metallers are now truly finding their feet in the prog world. The Aussies open up about their impressive new effort *Ghost Mile*...

Words: Chris Cope **Images:** Joseph Varley

Voyager are in a pretty darn good mood. As the Australian prog metallers speak down the phone from their home city Perth, you can hear guitarist Simone Dow's infectious, bellowing belly laugh from the other side of the world as it picks up like gusts of wind, setting off her bandmates, too.

They have every right to be feeling jolly. They're on the cusp of releasing the best album of their career, *Ghost Mile*. It seems, after six records and a slew of line-up changes, the band have finally found their groove.

"With each album it's definitely been more and more of a band writing exercise, whereas it never used to be like that," Dow says. "We're writing in the jam room now, all five of us together. We've got the same line-up again, and it's very cohesive."

The only mainstay in Voyager since their inception in 1999 has been singer and keyboard player Daniel Estrin. "I used to be the youngest member of the band, but now I'm the oldest," he quips.

Take a listen to the eye-wateringly compelling and catchy *Ghost Mile* and you can

tell that Voyager have grown up. It's focused and firm, leaning towards contemporary tech riffs for its gruffer moments, but still slathering itself with all the luminescent melody in the world.

Stomping lead track *Ascension* sounds defiantly massive as it juxtaposes snarly, pointed riffs with Estrin's lofty, wouldn't-sound-out-of-place-in-the-80s vocals, while *What A Wonderful Day* is an intriguing cocktail of electronic flourishes that exemplifies how Voyager aren't ones to shy away from more typical song structures. *Disconnected*, meanwhile, explodes with snarling machine gun guitar work that actually wouldn't sound out of place on a Meshuggah record.

Voyager's line-up — completed by Scott Kay on guitar, drummer Ashley Doodkorte and bassist Alex Canion — has remained in place



Going The

since their last album *V*, and you can tell, with their sound evolving organically after the record's release in 2014.

The tech crew who worked on that album remained on board too, and the sound is truly fit for mainstream consumption, with its hues crisp and clear, booming and bright. It's clinical without feeling colourless.

"I think it's a natural progression from where we left off, and we seem to have been doing that with our last few albums," Estrin says. "Just taking the main elements

"We are progressive in many ways - we're constantly evolving musically and we do have a lot of complexity in our songs."
Daniel Estrin

and building on that, and I'd say this is probably our most modern one to date. I think in terms of some of the things we're trying, it's also probably our most daring one. There are some pretty different things on there."

"I don't think it's really a forced change, it just happened naturally, from what we'd been listening to," Kay adds. "We'd been listening to a lot less of just heavy music in general, and as a group, listening to all kinds of other stuff. I think that's kind of seeped its way into what we're doing. It's less of a strictly

metal record — there's all these different elements to it."

Some of the influences swirling in the buzzing minds of Voyager during the writing of *Ghost Mile* included the likes of the djent-leaning Periphery and Tesseract, but there was ambient and indie too.

It's a contrast to Voyager's earliest material, which erred on the side of power metal, while later releases promoted a modern-day theatricality linked more with the likes of arena mainstays Avenged Sevenfold. Largely gone, too, is the gothic look which permeated some old promotional photos.

"I compare it to Pantera, because they started as a power metal band and went into a completely different direction," Estrin says. "There are some similarities. Voyager started very much out of a genesis of power metal and progressive metal, and I think it's come



Voyager: falling under many headings.

Extra Mile

a long way from there. That wasn't a conscious thing, it was a natural progression. It's become what it has today.

"You can tell, even on the first few albums, there are some elements of what we're doing now. But one thing that will never change is the catchy choruses, the big anthemic poppy top that Voyager is used to. We've combined that more with the heavy grooves and complex riffage underneath, to appease the prog fans and to make it more fun to play because otherwise you'd just be playing boring pop songs, and who wants to do that?"

The band quickly gained traction worldwide despite hailing from Australia, as they landed slots at the likes of the ProgPower festivals and were snapped up by Dutch label DVS.

musicians to explore new revenue streams, they launched a successful PledgeMusic campaign to offer fans pre-orders alongside unique items, such as signed gig banners and handwritten lyrics.

"I don't see it as being too different to what the old funding model was, it's just that we're doing this without a label fronting money for pressing and everything like that," Kay says.

"I don't think labels front money anymore these days," Estrin adds. "I think it's very rare. It definitely changes the band's need to approach things. But also, it's a huge new world of opportunities that we didn't have before the internet. I think gone are the days of Bon Jovi and the private jets of the 80s and massive record deals. I think it's a completely

do have a lot of complexity in our songs. It's kind of like ABBA. They write amazing pop songs, but when you dissect them, they're extremely complex inside. They have their complexity, to make their songs interesting, but also have that catchy pop element. If that's progressive, I don't know? Are ABBA a prog band? Possibly..."

"I guess what makes us experimental, if you want to call us that, is our willingness to try things and just be open-minded with ideas and see where they go," adds Kay.

"I wouldn't say there's any conscious effort to be deliberately experimental or different. It just seems to be a matter of the sum of our parts coming together and producing whatever it is that comes out."



L-R: Alex Kanion, Scott Kay, Simone Dow, Daniel Estrin and Ashley Doodkorte.

They had to cut their teeth, though, playing local gigs alongside acts from genres like grindcore and death metal because of the compact size of the country's scene at the time.

"It was almost a struggle to make an impact in Australia," Estrin reflects. "Being an Australian band in the early days was really to our advantage, and we had a bit of a cult status I guess all over the world. The scene in Australia was really small back in the day. I guess we were sort of pioneers in starting it, and making melodic and progressive music that little bit more accessible. Now, I wouldn't say it's mainstream, but it's a very healthy scene."

This time around, Voyager are self-releasing their album, and perhaps highlighting how today's industry is forcing

different paradigm, a completely different framework in which we're working."

Despite the band hurtling down a more adventurous path in the last few years, Estrin knows that some naysayers still argue against Voyager being called prog. While he admits that might be because "we don't have 17/8 time signatures going through the whole thing", the Aussies have plenty going for them in the thinking-outside-the-box stakes.

It's left-leaning music which isn't afraid to take twists or turns, despite often tunnelling down the well-trodden, melody-ridden route of 'verse, chorus, verse'.

"I don't mind the progressive label," the vocalist adds. "We are progressive in many ways — we're constantly evolving musically and we

There is much to be optimistic about in the Voyager camp right now. They've been promoting their record on Australia's live circuit alongside wacky electronic prog metallers The Algorithm, and you would expect a full global assault to follow.

It's likely that those attending the *Ghost Mile* shows will leave high on life, heart lifted. And, most tellingly, stuck with Voyager songs rattling around their head for days.

"You want a hook," Dow says. "That's what grabs you when you listen to a band, either a catchy vocal hook or guitar lick. Then you've got bands like Meshuggah... they're fantastic, but there's not anything that's hooky that's going on. There's a lot of fantastic bands that are like tech death, but I can't listen to that all the time, because it's just riff after riff after riff."

"I think what we've got special is the music that we write. It gets stuck in your head. Maybe that's annoying to some people, but I think it's a good trait to have." 

"I guess what makes us experimental is our willingness to try things and just be open-minded with ideas and see where they go."
Scott Kay

Ghost Mile is out now on LAV Records. See www.voyager-australia.com for more information.

"IT WAS TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY, SGT. PEPPER TAUGHT THE BAND TO PLAY"

Celebrate 50 years of The Beatles' iconic album with this commemorative bookazine. Featuring hundreds of amazing quotes and photos, this is the story of the band, and the record, that changed the world.



Future

Ordering is easy. Go online at:

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

BE PROG! MY FRIEND

Viva La Prog, Amigo!

British festivals, with an ever-looming fear of rain, can be a drag. Luckily the sun-kissed city of Barcelona offers **Be Prog! My Friend**, a unique festival with a backdrop of stunning architecture that will take place from June 30 - July 1. Prog talks to the bands about what to expect from this year's event... **Words:** Phil Weller

FRIDAY NIGHT



MARILLION

Pete Trewavas:

"Over 30 years we've been to Spain a lot and they're always a really great audience, they do love their prog. We really love our new album, so we want to show that off to people. It's a dark album that is extra poignant now after Brexit happened and Donald Trump got into power, but we'll have to pick and choose what to play on the night as we don't want to end up playing for longer than Bruce Springsteen. We're all getting too old for that!"

"We don't want to end up playing for longer than Bruce Springsteen. We're all getting too old for that!"

Pete Trewavas, Marillion



MIKE PORTNOY'S SHATTERED FORTRESS

Mike Portnoy: "I'll be presenting the *Twelve Step Suite* live in its entirety for the first time with Haken and Eric Gillette [Neal Morse Band] as my band. Writing it was an eight-year process, over five albums, and it's been a 16-year wait to put the pieces of the puzzle together. It's a one-off event that I think the fans are gonna really appreciate."

ALSO PLAYING

ANIMALS AS LEADERS

Lead by 21st-century guitar hero and innovator Tosin Abasi, their instrumental genre-bending is as expressive as it is algebraic. A sight to behold.

CALIGULA'S HORSE

Like a cross between Karnivool and a more tranquil Dream Theater, this Brisbane band has the charm to match their talent.



ULVER

The Norwegian experimentalists, whose performance at Be Prog! will be a Spanish exclusive, were the first act to be announced for this year's bill. Described by the festival as "a fresh triumph of modern music, music that catches your heart and soul", expect their epic, ethereal soundscapes to sail atop the evening breeze at Poble Espanyol.

SATURDAY NIGHT



JETHRO TULL

Ian Anderson: "This will be a brief outing to a festival which is new for us. It will be a 'best of' Tull show with an emphasis on our 70s material, but with a few elements from more recent years, too. Lots of fine bands have all contributed in their different ways to this adventurous and esoteric genre over the years, which Be Prog! celebrates, so it is nice for us to be able to contribute."



DEVIN TOWNSEND PROJECT

Devin Townsend: "Be Prog! is in such a beautiful, dramatic environment and that played into our performance in 2015. Playing *Ocean Machine* in full will be a special show and I'm glad to do it there. It's been an emotionally draining record to revisit in many ways. I believe that it has allowed some creative and personal growth. It's a very strong record that plays well in a live environment."



ANATHEMA

Daniel Cavanagh: "We played Be Prog! three years ago and it was a really special, affirming moment for us so we're humbled to be asked back. We weren't the most confident band in the world going into that gig but everybody was really invested in our performance and we came off the stage feeling a little bit better about our place in the world. If it's anything like that again, we'll be delighted."

ALSO PLAYING

LEPROUS

These eccentric Norwegians have taken off in recent years and it's no wonder why. They play extravagant and powerful prog rock with fire in their bellies. A dazzling live act.

JARDÍN DE LA CROIX

Be Prog! always showcases homegrown talent and this Madrid-based instrumental math rock group create some humongous, jittery sounds. Well worth your time.

BE PROG! MY FRIEND

The Essential Info

Everything else you need to know about this year's event

FRIDAY JUNE 30

17:15 - 18:00 Caligula's Horse
18:30 - 19:40 Animals As Leaders
20:10 - 21:50 Mike Portnoy's Shattered Fortress
22:20 - 00:20 Marillion
00:50 - 02:00 Ulver

SATURDAY JULY 1

17:15 - 18:00 Jardín de la Croix
18:30 - 20:00 Devin Townsend Project
20:30 - 22:00 Anathema
22:30 - 00:10 Jethro Tull
00:40 - 2:00 Leprous

TICKETS: Day tickets for Saturday cost 130€ advance or 140€ on the door. All ticket holders receive free entry to Friday's bands as well. There are discounted tickets for the under 13s while kids under five go free.

LOCATION: The festival takes place in the central courtyard of Poble Espanyol, Av Francesc Ferrer I Guardia, 13, 08038, Barcelona Spain. It's about 30 minutes on foot from the tree-lined street of Las Ramblas and has easy access via public transport.

DISABLED ACCESS: There's a disabled viewing area at the event, with un-obscured views of the stage.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS: The festival site opens late in the afternoon so you can soak up the city before enjoying the live bands. You'll be able to buy food and drink, including vegetarian options, in the variety of surrounding bars and restaurants.

ACCOMMODATION: Although Be Prog! is an open-air event, it's not a camping festival. Instead, try local hotels, Airbnb or Hostelworld for an affordable and comfy bed to rest your head on after a day of whirling prog. A list of nearby hotels can be found on the festival website at www.beprogmyfriend.com.

ABOUT THE LOCATION: Poble Espanyol was built in 1929 and is designed to look like a traditional Spanish village with replicas of buildings from different regions. Almost like Barcelona's answer to Portmeirion, it plays host to craft workshops, bars and restaurants. Its art gallery, however, will be closed during the festival.

DON'T FORGET TO PACK: Suncream, water, ear protectors and some merchandise spends.

Disclaimer: All details are correct at time of press. Visit www.beprogmyfriend.com for more information.



THE PROG INTERVIEW

ALLAN HOLDSWORTH

The *Prog* Interview is just that: every month, we're going to get inside the minds of some of the biggest names in music. This issue, it's the late **Allan Holdsworth**. A groundbreaking figure in prog and one of the most innovative musicians of the past 40 years, Allan sadly passed away aged 70, on April 15. In this penultimate interview before he died, he spoke to *Prog* about his life and career.

Words: Bill Kopp

Allan Holdsworth was a towering figure in the world of progressive music. With his trademark legato style, he influenced a generation of musicians who would follow in his wake. And like many innovators, he watched as many of his admirers achieved greater commercial success than he would find. But those kinds of considerations were never central to Holdsworth's approach to music.

The early days of the Bradford, England-born guitarist's career saw him working in the Canterbury scene, as well as

taking part in some work (sadly undocumented) with percussionist Jamie Muir, later a key member of Larks' Tongues In Aspic-era King Crimson.

Holdsworth stayed busy and honed his craft playing guitar for Pierre Moerlen's Gong, Tony Williams' Lifetime, Soft Machine, Jean-Luc Ponty and others who explored the previously uncharted spaces in which jazz and rock intersected. Once his solo career got underway, he left England and settled in California. There he spent less time lending his talents to outside projects,

though he found time to play on albums by Stanley Clarke, Chad Wackerman, and take part in nearly a half dozen collaborative album projects. He also wrote three books on guitar technique.

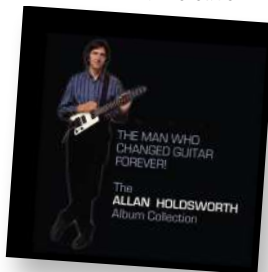
The notoriously fastidious Holdsworth didn't consider the unauthorised 1976 LP *Velvet Darkness* part of his catalogue, and preferred not to discuss it with us. But between 1982 and 2002, Holdsworth did record and release 12 solo albums (though

1983's *Road Games* is technically an EP) for nearly as many labels. Though he continued to tour, 2001's *Flat Tire: Music For A Non-Existent Movie* was his most recent collection of material intended as an album. But now in 2017, Los Angeles-

based independent label Manifesto Records collected Holdsworth's entire body of solo work into a box set with the rather presumptuous title, *The Man Who Changed Guitar Forever!*

As one might expect, Holdsworth *hated* that title.

Your early influences were the ambitious end of classical music:



“ Bill and I were on one side of the fence, and Eddie and John were on the other. It wasn't a personality thing, at least not for me; I liked all those guys. I just found UK a little bit too restrictive.”

Stravinsky, Bartok and the like. When you were young, did pop music filter its way into your musical sensibility?

My dad was a piano player, a really good pianist, in fact. He had lots of records around: they were mostly jazz records. But you don't wake up one day and sound like Django Reinhardt, so I decided to learn to play some of the pop music that I *could* play. And once I could, my interest in that music faded away. So pop music was just a starting point, although I still listen to all kinds of music.

Throughout the 1970s, you played with an impressive list of artists, each of whom was quite unique. Did you feel empowered to express your own musical ideas within the context of others' work?

UK performing in Central Park, New York, in 1978. L-R: Eddie Jobson, Bill Bruford, John Wetton and Holdsworth.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

PREES/LEIGHTONMEDIA/GLEN LAERMAN

Allan Holdsworth: he
changed guitar, but didn't
want to shout about it.



Allan in his Enigma Records days with his trusty SynthAxe.

PROMOARCHIVE.COM/PHOTOFEATURES

“

I've decided I wasn't going to be doing any touring – or very limited touring – because I'm too old. I don't enjoy it anymore. I like playing, but I don't like the travelling part; I don't like airplanes, and I don't like going through security.

”

When I played with Tony Williams, he would never direct as to which way he wanted the music to go; he would kind of leave it up to me. Tony'd just say, "Okay, there's the music; do your thing." So it was relatively easy for me to find a way to inject my own personality into some of the music, even though it was composed by someone else. And I found that almost everybody treated me the same way.

Was it your time with Jean-Luc Ponty that sparked your interest in playing the violin?

Oh no, no, it was just curiosity. I messed around with a lot of instruments; I played clarinet for a while. I had borrowed saxophones from bandmates in the past, just to get a feeling of how they work and the challenges of each; and it was like that with the violin. I got a violin, and then after that I did buy a viola. But the viola got lost in the shuffle when I moved; I don't really know what happened to it.

It's hard to lose a viola!
I *did*, though.

In the years that you worked with Ponty – because he was essentially the lead instrumentalist – did you have to ease back on some of what you were doing to leave space for him?

Jean-Luc was great to work for: he left me alone pretty much as well. He didn't give me any instructions. I liked the music, and I totally enjoyed playing with him.

But that wasn't the case when you played with UK...

Not as much. There was less improvisation than I would have liked. It was more structured, not that there's anything wrong with that. It was just that Bill [Bruford] and I were on one side of the fence, and Eddie [Jobson] and John [Wetton] were on the other. It wasn't a personality thing, at least not for me. I liked all those guys. I just found UK a little bit too restrictive; I wasn't making enough progress. It wasn't assisting me to make progress in my own playing.

Right: Holdsworth's first 'official' solo album.



TONY RUSSELL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Soft Machine. Standing: Roy Babbington and Mike Ratledge. Seated, L-R: Karl Jenkins, Holdsworth, John Marshall.



GILLES PETARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

The Tony Williams Lifetime, 1976. L-R: Tony Newton, Alan Pasqua, Tony Williams, Holdsworth.

You didn't make your solo debut I.O.U. until you were in your mid-30s. What spurred you to finally do it?

UK disbanded at that time, and I was still playing in Bill's band. I'd just met drummer Gary Husband; we played together a little bit, and then I just kind of decided – the switch went on in my mind – "You know what? I'm just going to try this!" I wanted to make the jump to play my own music. I had a reasonable amount of music written.

One of the unifying qualities of this new box set collection of 12 albums is the timeless nature of the music. For the

most part, there's nothing about, say I.O.U. that suggests that it was made nearly 20 years before Flat Tire. When you're making an album, do you seek to avoid sonic textures or production techniques that might make the record sound dated down the line?

No, it's not a conscious effort. Some of it comes from the musicians who I played with, and their translation – or their interpretation – of my music. Some of those guys just had that quality; they didn't necessarily have a sound [associated with] a specific point in time.

But at the same time, generally speaking, the newer the album the more I like it. For me, the box

would be three times the volume of mine! Stuff like that.

Early on in your solo career, you became very closely associated with the SynthAxe. What piqued your initial interest in that instrument?

It went back really far into my childhood, actually. Because I always wanted to play a horn or a violin or something where you could shape a note, as opposed to the guitar which is basically a percussion instrument. And I always tried to get the guitar to sound like it wasn't a percussion instrument.

When the SynthAxe came along, it opened the door to not only different textures and

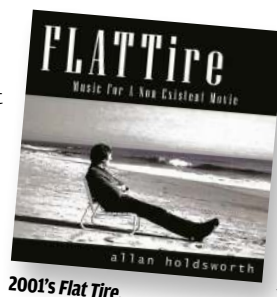
set is just a look back over time. There were bootlegs, and some albums had been discontinued for years, so we decided we wanted to put out my whole back catalogue.

In the past, you've made a list of a half dozen or so albums called: "Stuff I recorded but wish I did not." Why did you choose to characterise them that way?

It would depend on the particular instance, but I remember a couple of them that involved other guitar players. It was just a mixing thing: the other guitars

sounds that were unavailable on the guitar, but with the use of the breath control, I could do all the things that I wanted to do if I had been a horn player of some sort. I learned a lot from just playing that instrument. I still use it a lot in the studio; for the stuff I'm working on now, it has probably ended up on every track.

You've explored other technological innovations, and you're involved with some development yourself. Have you played any newer things, like the Moog guitar?



2001's Flat Tire.

Allan Holdsworth, i.o.u.

Briefly, but it was a few years ago. But it was like a step backwards for me; if I have to go from the SynthAxe, the thing is going to have to be absolutely, incredibly remarkable for me to want to make a jump.

In recent years you've also been performing and recording with a baritone guitar. From your point of view, what is its appeal?

became popular. And with a few notable exceptions, progressive music receded from the mainstream view. Why do you think that happened?

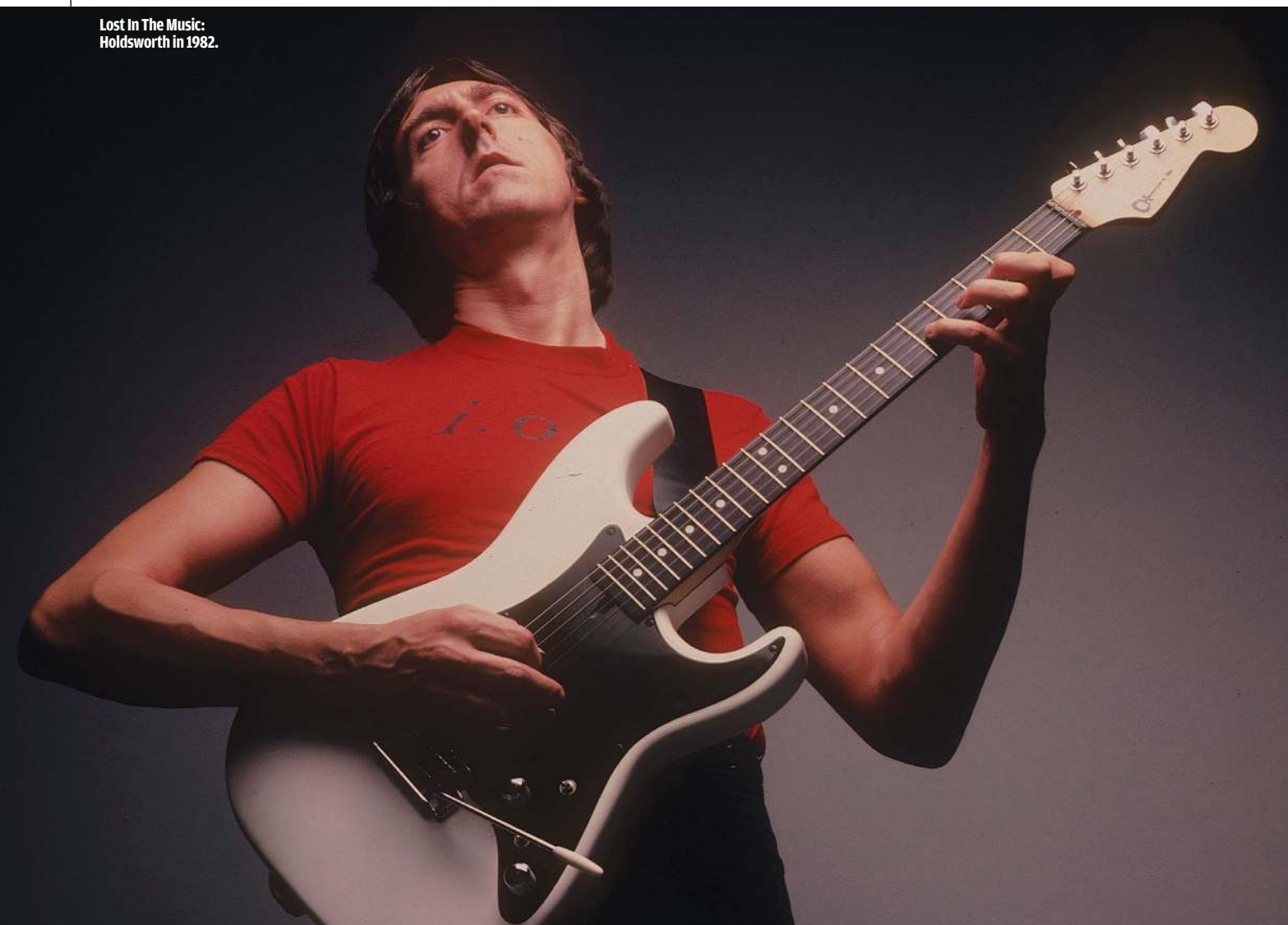
I don't know why it happened, actually. I really don't. I suppose it had to do with record companies and radio stations... specifically radio stations. I could never get a radio station to play my music; it was extremely rare

who ran the company when I was working with Enigma; he was a very, very clever guy, and he was also very open-minded. He would never say, "We want you to do this," or "Can't you do this?" He'd just leave me alone.

I think that the people who were in charge of the label were a key factor, because I didn't get pressure about anything. Bill would never pressure me because

how difficult it might be to play solos over, or anything like that. I just let the composition go where I think it should go. And then I leave sections open for the soloist or whomever, to give them some space to play. I never wrote a composition that was just specifically for improvisation alone. Or if I did, I don't remember what it was! I like the music to be dense harmony-wise,

Lost In The Music:
Holdsworth in 1982.



When I was playing violin, I used to love the sound of the viola. There was just something about that, just having a little bit lower range. That different sound appealed to me. It's the same as the difference between an oboe and English horn, or an alto clarinet to a regular clarinet; it's in a different register.

After a period of real innovation in jazz and progressive music, especially fusion, those genres went into commercial decline in the 1980s. "Smooth jazz"

to find or to hear anything that I'd done on the radio. Whereas you could turn on a jazz station and listen to music that's not really jazz. To me it's muzak.

When you were making solo albums, did you find yourself being subject to lots of commercial pressures?

Sometimes, but that was mainly due to the labels. For example, Warner Brothers [who released *Road Games*] was a nightmare, and I was glad when that was over. But Bill Hein was the guy

I was late with a record, which I always was. I never did a record on time. But it didn't worry me if it didn't worry them, because for me, it's done when it's done. If I don't like it, it doesn't appear.

To what degree is the music on your studio albums the product of careful composition and arrangement, and to what extent is it the product of improvisation giving way to creation?

When I write a piece of music, I start with just the composition itself. And I don't worry about

and then transformed. It works for me, anyway.

Some artists will put out an album that's simply the latest issue of what they're doing, as opposed to a cohesive work. Generally speaking, when you're making an album, is there a kind of unifying concept at work?

The way it's worked out for me is that I tend to write tunes around the personality of the band that I'm working with currently. For example, when I was playing with Dave Carpenter and Gary Novak,

that band was considerably softer than, say, *Hard Hat Area*, which was more aggressive.

But that was intended by the players. On one of the new albums I'm working on now, I recorded the same song twice, just so people could hear how much the music changed being played by different people. I did a tune with Gary Husband and Jimmy Johnson, and then I did the

“

Enigma Records would never pressure me because I was late with a record, which I always was. I never did a record on time. But it didn't worry me if it didn't worry them, because for me, it's done when it's done. If I don't like it, it doesn't appear.

”

same exact piece of music with Ernest Tibbs and Joel Taylor. And aside from the melody, you wouldn't even know it was the same tune! It's quite remarkable how it changes.

They're free to interpret it in their own way, and that's always worked for me. Each member of the band can enjoy himself a little bit more, and get a little bit more of what it is that they do into the project. That's what I learned from Tony Williams: leave people alone, unless it's something specific in a certain section that you really want to hear.

What's the status of the crowdfunding project for *Tales From The Vault*?

Tales From The Vault turned into a bit of a disaster, actually. There were some older tracks that I'd done before with Ernest and Joel but I never finished; I was going to finish them for the pledge campaign, but basically the money ran out. Compared to other people I don't produce albums very quickly. So I ended up not using some of those tunes; it wasn't financially possible for me to do it.

Tell us about the new album you have in the works.

For the very newest album with Virgil Donati, Jimmy Haslip and Jimmy Johnson, I basically did it on the computer. And I had a hard time with that, because I'm not very savvy with computers. I use the computer in a very limited manner. I use it like an old fashioned tape machine: play, forward, fast-forward and rewind. That's about as much as I know!

The record is for Steve Vai's Favored Nations label. It's been very energetic, and I've been inspired to write tunes for the band. It will get finished before the end of this year, because I've decided I wasn't going to be doing any touring – or very limited touring – because I'm too old. I don't enjoy it anymore. I like playing, but I don't like the travelling part; I don't like airplanes, and I don't like going through security.

Part of the reason it was so long between records is that I've moved three or four times in that period. And each time we had to pull the studio apart and rebuild it somewhere else. So I didn't have anywhere to work, really. Combine that with being on the road, and I never seemed to have the time to do it. That's why I decided to take some time off to work on these recordings. The downside of that is trying to survive: when I'm working on a record, I'm not making any money.

Other than using computers, how would you say that your approach to making albums has changed over the years?

It's basically changed by default, just by the way people do things. Before – in the old days – people would rent a really nice studio for a few days, and we could play



Thumbs Up, Sir: Allan in January 2017 at the NAMM Show, Anaheim.

JESSE GRANT/GETTY IMAGES FOR NAMM

everything more or less together. If we had to overdub something, that was fine. Then we'd spend a few days or a week or so mixing it, and then Bob's your uncle. But now people just send files over the internet, and more often than not, you're not in the same room, or at least not at the same time. The technology forced a change; that's why so many studios went out of business.

Do you think something's been lost with the demise of the old way of doing things?

Yeah, you always lose something. But you gain things, too. It's possible to make very high quality digital recordings if you use very high sample frequencies like 96kHz or above.

Still, anybody who's worked on a really great analogue two-inch tape machine in a studio knows that you can't do that on a little digital recorder. It's blatantly obvious, but nobody cares. They're all playing it over their iPhone!

We have to ask about the box set's title. It doesn't sound like something that you would call it.

I was absolutely *horrified* when I saw the box set. I never saw the actual cover until it was already in production. I went ballistic: "You can't say that on the front, 'The Man Who Changed Guitar Forever!'" I was like, "Explain to your readers that I didn't know about that."

The guys know me; they know my personality. You know, it's not

something I'd say: "Here I come, king of men." I heard it was just going to be called *The Allan Holdsworth Album Collection*. It was too late to shake the tree. Some of the material suffered from the amount of time since the masters were made, and I know that the record company had spent a lot of money on remastering. In the end, I just said, "Well, it's my own fault; I should have asked them to show me exactly what they were doing." It was just unexpected.

They did a great job on everything else. It's a limited edition: the box will go away, and eventually there will just be individual albums.

You've been a musician most of your life, and a recording artist for nearly 50 years. Was there a point in your career when you thought: "I've made it"?

No, I never thought of it like that. Like a lot of musicians, I was just trying to survive, but survive doing something that I enjoyed as opposed to it turning into a day job. I got the pleasure from that, and I could continue to learn.

And that never stops. I'll never really know very much about music, no matter how long I live. That's just how it is: when you get over one milestone, there's another, bigger one. ☺

The Man Who Changed Guitar Forever is out now on Manifesto. See www.manifesto.com/allan-holdsworth for more information.

New spins...

ANATHEMA

Once it was *A Fine Day To Exit*. Now it seems an even lovelier day to be welcomed back in, as Anathema shake off the past and return with a spring in their step.

Words: Jerry Ewing **Illustration:** Danny Allison

There is a moment on *Back To The Start*, the epic 11-minute closing track on *The Optimist*, all grandiose vocals and sweeping, *Hey Jude*-like strings so stridently catchy you feel like they could go on forever, that Anathema really drop the bomb. Instead of carrying on in gloriously uplifting style, about halfway through the sound devolves into a disturbing miasma of noises, voices and what seems like backwards masking, followed by several minutes of silence before you're left with the sound of a jaunty John Douglas home demo recording, his daughter and pet budgie echoing in the background before a climactic 'Tara' brings things to a sudden halt. And suddenly you wonder if the little buggers haven't played you from the start.

On the face of it, *The Optimist* is a continuation of the band's 2001 album *A Fine Day To Exit*, the tale of a man looking for a way out, the album cover featuring a car, on a beach, clothes strewn, Reggie Perrin-style. That album came to no definite conclusion, so the natural assumption, given 32.63n 117.14w that opens this album is the exact coordinates of the beach on the original cover, an atmospheric piece awash with breaking waves and what sounds like a man getting back into a car, is that here we find out what happened to the protagonist; the titular *Optimist*.

Or do we? As Douglas's daughter squeals and his budgie chirrups, you're struck with the possibility that instead of a follow-up, the Liverpoolian sextet have merely played out the original tale in reverse. Anathema, of course, aren't telling, leaving you to ponder whether indeed it might all even have been a dream, messing with your mind as their music, at times melancholic, at others warm and bright, always nothing less than utterly beautiful, hopelessly sucks you in.

It's a compelling, haunting and sometimes disturbing listen, not least with the realisation

The Optimist

KSCOPE



Compelling, haunting and sometimes disturbing yet constantly enthralling.

that the lyrics in reality come from a deeply personal and very dark space from within, yet they are constantly enthralling, drawing you back time and again.

It's certainly Anathema's most cohesive album. Each song carries such a strong sense of depth and identity, they clearly represent the very apex of Vincent and Danny Cavanagh and John Douglas' songwriting to date. Add fellow band mates Lee Douglas, Jamie Cavanagh and Daniel Cardoso into the mix and it's a surefire winner from the off. And where *Distant Satellites* appeared as a slightly schizophrenic album of two halves – the band's natural sweeping melancholic melodic progressive rock giving way to their new-found sense of electronic adventure, on *The*

Optimist they seamlessly meld the two styles, something that goes a long way to establishing the album's sheer strength.

Talking of characters, *The Optimist* of course, is nothing of the sort, rather, as previously mentioned, a convenient mask behind which Anathema hide as they give vent to their own trials and tribulations over recent years. And yet instead of detracting from the perceived story at hand, it merely further connects the listener to the music.

And what music it is. Some of the finest the band have ever recorded. Of course there are those wonderfully harmonious and grandiloquent, majestically progressive tunes such as *Endless Ways*, driven by the most delightful Lee Douglas vocal wondering if this is '...the dream I created...' and the title track, as Vincent's melancholic vocal will delight those who fell in love with the band over *We're Here Because We're Here* and *Weather Systems*. Yet elsewhere Anathema are at their poppiest on the Beatles-inflected *Leaving It Behind* and the uplifting *Can't Let Go*, possibly Cavanagh's shining moment; his emphatic vocal tailor made to make the hearts of every female fan listening in swoon.

Douglas again shines on the enigmatic *Springfield*, almost unnerving the listener with the sole 'I don't belong here/How did I get here' lyric, and is at her sultry, jazzy best on *Close Your Eyes* and the Talk Talk-esque lo-fi of *Ghosts*, while Danny's beautiful piano playing on *San Francisco* really tugs at the heart strings as the song forms the ideal centre point to the album, effortlessly blending the strains of prog and electronica that flow throughout the record.

Anathema may have shrouded this album in a cloak of conceptuality, but in boldly wearing their hearts on their sleeves and writing from their own personal experiences, the band have delivered the album of their career thus far. A delightfully conceived, emotional yet uplifting masterpiece.

A

32.63N

DAMANEK

On Track GEP

Friends united for Guy Manning's new project.



Guy Manning has become something of a latter-day prog legend. As 'Manning' he managed to serve up an album every year for the best part of 15 years, including stand-outs like *Anser's Tree* and *Margaret's Children*. His early association with The Tangent earned him significant props during a period when prog was genuinely out-of-fashion. His combination of Al Stewart-influenced storytelling and complex arrangements has already ensured an honoured place in the pantheon. His new project Damanek deserves to push him into wider exposure.



What's outstanding is its combination of confidence and skill.



Damanek is, in many the respects, the fruit of friendship. Its name derives from the band members who've worked on and off with each other over many years: Toxic Smile's Marek Arnold, Maschine's Dan Mash and Manning. Thus, Damanek: DAn, MANning and MarEK. Sean Timms of Southern Empire completes the line-up.

The simplicity of concept ends there. *On Track* tackles bold themes, railing, by turns, about the state of the world, delving into mythologies, as well as crafting the occasional delicate piece of storytelling. Opener *Nanabohzo And The Rainbow* explores the story of a Native American trickster god and combines Manning's uncanny gift for both groove and catchy refrains. The sweeping keys of Arnold and Timms take it stratospheric. Songs like *Long Time Shadow Falls* deal with the impact of humanity on the environment, while *Big Parade* doesn't hold back in its critique of warmongering politicians. If *Madison Blue* is classic Manning territory – telling the story of a fictional girl in search of herself – *On Track* finishes with a 14-minute epic about pollution, *Dark Sun*.

This level of ambition might make *On Track* unfocused and overblown. However, Damanek are too skilled to let that happen. Certainly, *Big Parade* – with its oompah-march feel – is closer to silliness rather than satire, but what is outstanding about *On Track* is its combination of confidence and skill. Manning has never sounded more himself. On early albums, he occasionally channelled mid-era Ian Anderson. No more. The bolder production and the unifying presence of Mash, Arnold and Timms seems to have liberated him. Manning comes across as a man at peace with himself and his voice.

It helps, of course, when you have guest talents as extravagant as Luke Machin spraying pyro guitar over the tunage. However, without a presiding intelligence, individuals often add up to less than the sum of the parts. Manning supplies that and some. This album is rich, disciplined and damn catchy. Rather than being depressing, its handling of dark themes makes it a stirring call to arms.

RACHEL MANN

A FORMAL HORSE

Made In Chelsea SELF-RELEASED

A thoroughbred winner from Brit avant-rock combo.

The third release from Southampton's Horse finds them in a typically idiosyncratic and sonically adventurous mood on this five-track EP. Underpinned by the energetic power trio of Benjamin Short (guitar), Russell Mann (bass) and Mike Stringfellow (drums), new vocalist Hayley McDonnell's cut-glass diction is a serene still point amid tunes that are knotty and fractious yet also revel in an ebullience that's almost carefree. Possessing an appealingly quirky logic that thinks nothing of leaping between barbed, bulldozing riffs to delicate introspection, there are moments occasionally evoking the melodicism of



classic-era Yes or some of Crimson's more feverishly angular episodes. However such comparisons are but fleeting signposts, as AFH are very much their own beast. Though the galloping guitar lines that effortlessly traverse shifting meters might well bear all the expected hallmarks of an avant-rock sensibility, they also possess the wit and capacity to perform vibrant, uplifting tunes. When, during *Made In Chelsea* (*Apocalypse in 15/8*) McDonnell's voice, with a slightly manic edge, implores 'Adore me' through tempestuous forces generated by the band, it's a command that's impossible to resist. **SS**

ANUBIS

The Second Hand ANUBISMUSIC.COM

Newspaper owner in existential crisis shocker!

These Aussie "cinematic symphonic progressive rockers" have taken on an ambitious project for their fifth album and, given current preoccupations with fake news and alternative facts, a tale about a mendacious media magnate named Fox and reflections on his life while apparently comatose is quite timely. Musically, while "symphonic rock" certainly fits, the album draws in elements from across the contemporary prog scene. Mainman Robert James Moulding's versatile and engaging voice is ideal for this type of storytelling and there are catchy hooks galore across the album, from the 'time ticking away' refrain of the



title track opener through the gentle Beatles-esque harmonies of ballad *These Changing Seasons* I to the downbeat *Blackout*. The band can wig-out a bit too, as they prove towards the end of *Fool's Gold* and *The Making Of Me*, in the explosive choruses of the otherwise jazzy, Floydian *While Rome Burns*, and throughout the metal-tinged, grandiloquent *Pages Of Stone*. Arguably, the impact and immediacy of some songs is lessened by the band stretching them beyond their required length – a perennial issue with concept narratives. No broken boundaries, then, but there's a thought-provoking, fan-pleasing epic. **GMM**

ARCADEA

Arcadea RELAPSE

Brann Dailor and co explore the final frontier.

Writing for *Prog*, one encounters high-concept mission statements daily, but even these be-caped brows were raised by Arcadea's pronouncement as "the last surviving space wizards since the final extinction". The collective brainchild of Mastodon's drum warlock Brann Dailor, plus Core Atoms (Zruda, Gaylord) and Raheem Amlani (Withered, Scarab), Arcadea's lune-y, synth-heavy prog metal meltdown has, for our money, more to offer than hyped Masto-project Giraffe Tongue Orchestra. Picture a Frankenstein'd Claudio Simonetti monster raised on a diet of Hawkwind and High On Fire and



you're in Arcadea's ball park. Though Dailor's vocals have increasingly been given a dusting in his day job, here he runs the gamut from guttural wail to freaky falsetto in a manner reminiscent of Josh Homme – proving just how much he's been holding back. All the while that typically awe-inspiring drum base and Atoms' and Amlani's sizeable six-string and synth combos offer inventive and muscular backing. At 11 tracks in 40 minutes, it's a gut-punch of a record, but not above giving you short intakes of breath. A mind-expanding comic book space safari set five billion years in the future? Wizard. **MP**

ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGE

The Observer SELF-RELEASED

Impressive first offering from California prog metal crew.

For a debut album, Artificial Language have just about got it very, very right. The prog scene, often rooted in the bygone decades of yore, needs a steady stream of fresh faces to ensure it stays relevant, and if this California sextet are a sign of how contemporary prog is coming along, then we can all breathe a little more easily. Artificial Language's sound playfully juggles the intensity and virtuosity of prog metal with a joyful, melodic topping; think Haken, Leprous and Thank You Scientist having a giddy foursome with the best bits of Panic At The Disco. Title track opener *Observer* and its ascending and descending keys is



a dead-ringer for Between The Buried And Me too, but the band have enough attributes in their arsenal to forge their own personality. *The Grand Skeptic*, for instance, melts together flurries of neo-classical lead guitar chops with contagious vocals from Shay Lewis. Most tracks here are around the four-minute mark, so proggers should relish the twice-as-long closer *Turn Off The Pictures*, which flits between spooky keyboard and musical-meets-metal theatrics before ending on heart-tugging guitar strums. If this is what Artificial Language can conjure up at their first attempt, the future is exceedingly bright. **CC**

GEOFF BARROW AND BEN SALISBURY

Free Fire OST INVADA

'Pub prog' soundtrack is no mere scribbles on a beer mat.

Far, far away from the party mix soundtracks of *Guardians Of The Galaxy* lies old school underscores such as this. Always destined for the OST realm with his atmospheric collective Portishead, Geoff Barrow and composer Ben Salisbury initially created *Drokk*, a backdrop to 2012 film *Dredd* that never made it to celluloid; the visuals and music just didn't gel. Their next project however, for sci-fi thriller *Ex Machina*, hit the mark with a strident Carpenter-esque synth score (and snagged an Ivor Novello too). The duo return for Ben Wheatley's 70s shoot-'em-up *Free Fire*, dialling down their initial bombastic visions to subtly



underline visual action cues – hence much tension-building percussion and restrained string-tapping longside cast dialogue and tracks by The Real Kids, John Denver and Creedence. What's of most interest here – apart from finding out the film was shot round the back of Argos in Brighton – is the 'pub prog' band formed for *Sledghammer Cracks Nut*, *The Phone Rings* and *Justine's Theme*. Here classical guitar meets B3 arpeggios, *Clockwork Orange* moodiness and avant-jazz rock that'd do *Old Grey Whistle Test*-ers proud. The wild card, though, is the one-minute *Free Firing Gunshot Solo* from sound design ace Martin Pavey. It's bang on. **JK**

BJØRN RIIS

Forever Comes To An End KARISMA

Airbag guitarist's second solo output steals the show.

Just as Steven Wilson nurturing his own career sort of killed Porcupine Tree, will Bjørn Riis' solo ventures put the future of Airbag in jeopardy? While the Norwegians' last album *Disconnected* failed to capitalise on their growing success, *Forever Comes To An End* almost steals their thunder. Common DNA is hardly a surprise as, in both cases, Riis sings, plays guitar and takes care of all the songwriting and the producing. He's even recruited two of his fellow Airbag comrades to assist him, blurring the difference between the two entities even more. Yet, *Forever's* sense of urgency and bravado are what the too-



safe *Disconnected* lacked. Airbag's ideas have pretty much been the same ever since 2009's *Identity* and its follow-up *All Rights Removed*; epic yet laid-back prog with more than a nod towards Anathema and Radiohead, including moments of pure ambient bliss and subtle Gilmour-like solos. But while that's what we expect to hear, the galloping title track, *The Waves* – a ballad whose desperate chorus perfectly reflects the overall darker tone ('I try to breathe, I try to scream but I'm too far down') – or *The Getaway's* subtle krauty beat are the best stuff that Riis has come up with in a long time. **OZB**

FAUST

Fresh Air BUREAU B

Still bringing the noise, a US tour becomes a live album.



While lolling on a bean bag at Virgin's flagship Notting Hill store, the section marked 'Krautrock' seemed to embody the exotic new possibilities of the psychedelic rock being crafted in laboratories and castles all over Germany. When the first Faust album appeared on transparent wax branded with an X-rayed hand in 1971, it raised the bar for aural anarchy in music, igniting a fanbase that lapped up '72's all-black second album *So Far*, then swelled to thousands when Virgin's new label signed them and released a collection of archival segments in 1973 for 48p.



An air of unpredictable mischief and chaos that's likely to erupt any moment.



Formed in rural Wumme by Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier, Jean-Herve Peron, Hans Joachim Irmeler and cohorts, the original band split in 1975 after two more albums. Then, after years of obscurity, the core trio returned as Faust in the early 1990s. In 2005, while Irmeler continued under the same name with another line-up, Diermaier and Peron formed a new Faust, most recently releasing 2014's *Just Us*. This latest missive, created during the new outfit's March-April 2016 US tour, shows astonishingly how little Faust's basic sound and ethos has changed since that first album 46 years ago. Although lyrically reflecting the ever-changing world around them, in this case its disastrous ecological decline, there's still that air of unpredictable mischief and unfettered chaos likely to erupt any moment, along with an undimmed single-mindedness when it comes to that relentless motorik groove.

The 17-minute title track starts the work with a poem by a French schoolfriend of Heron's recited in Polish over Ysanne Spevack's Third Ear Band viola reflections before abrasive guitar and Zappi's metronomic drums steer the rising maelstrom to a surging peak, over which Peron rants and bellows the title like a man possessed. Anarchic mood established, the set meanders through field recordings and guitar-lathered psychedelia before *Chlorophyl* sees Zappi's hoodoo rumble overlaid by braying saxophone, Barbara Manning's animated spoken-sung declarations and Die Krupps' Jurgen Engler's overdubbed electronics.

By the heads-down motorik of *Lights Flicker* (like vintage Can with Manning intoning and castrated wildebeest sax) and Heron testifying at the waters' edge on *Fish*, it's dawned that Faust's wild spirit remains untamed as ever and, with the plight of our beleaguered planet now providing a major impetus, they have embarked on a new lease of life devoted to making most other bands sound puny and obedient; just like they were doing in the early 1970s.

KRIS NEEDS



RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP

Burials In Several Earths ROOM 13

Synth soundtrack pioneers return, tearing up the script.



Since the Radiophonic Workshop's sound-splicing soundtracks were part of (most of) our childhoods, the announcement of their first new commercial release together for over 30 years was always going to be enthusiastically received.



A bold approach to a new venture.



And hats off to them for taking a bold approach to this new venture: with no TV script or clear narrative arc to follow, they've built five new musical suites from improvisations with what they proudly describe as "minimal editing".

They said recently, "It was liberating to work in such a formless, freeing and immediate way." Therein, no doubt, lies its beauty for the Workshop boffins themselves. But for the listener? Quite a formidable obstacle. With such a freeform structure to the 80 or so minutes of squawks, squiggles, glitches, half-riffs and ripples herein, it's hard to find anything for your ears to grip onto, and when they do hear something that would bear repeating, the 'story' has already moved on.

Opening track *Burials In Several Earths* plunges us straight into a forbiddingly austere, dystopian climate of sparse, echoing industria. It's as evocative as ever, and your brain can almost picture a struggling hero, kidnapped and waking up in some sort of desolate open-plan space prison, wandering dazed across the barren landscape wondering where all his friends went. Hopefully not for the full 19 minutes this track lasts, but we can at least allow them a certain amount of indulgence. The odd plonk of a piano key, a warped bass note and the distant chime of a discordant synth only add to the desolation. Imagine the opening passages of Pink Floyd's *Welcome To The Machine* stretched out infinitely via distinctly retro-sounding, knob-twiddling experimentation, and you're not far off.

Yet elsewhere they benefit from having pre-programmed visuals into our heads. If the giant shard of sound stabbing through your speakers makes you imagine an alien spaceship landing, followed by laser fire blasting at your eyeballs, then that's probably because these guys made the sound for just such sci-fi scenarios back in the day, and we instantly make the same visualisation now. If it all gets a little too bleak even for the *Blake's 7* fan convention you had planned, the mood does ease up now and then, with the softly wistful, undulating piano that introduces *Things Buried In Water*, and the mesmeric synth bed underpinning final track *The Strangers' House*.

On the whole though, as an album to sit and listen to in isolation, *BISE* represents forbiddingly thin gruel. As evocative aural wallpaper, however, ideally accompanied by some recreational intoxicants, it's as head-swimming and other-worldly as you could want.

JOHNNY SHARP

DORIS BRENDL & LEE DUNHAM

Eclectica SKY ROCKET RECORDS

The title says it all... delightfully eclectic.

Jazz to folk. Rock to funk - plus hints of classical. Yes, it's all here on an impressively sweeping album. Doris Brendel has always refused to stand still and get pigeonholed. Now she and longtime musical partner Lee Dunham have come up with an album where every track is different, but the overall impact is focused and charismatic. From the opening folk-tinged shards of *The One*, through the haunting *Losing It* and into the funk psychedelia of *Animal*, this is a well-constructed, thoughtfully evocative musical expanse. Laced with humour and vulnerability, it invites you in but also keeps you at a safe distance.



Musicianship commands throughout, but it's never allowed to overshadow the commitment to creating an artistry that's tuneful and accessible. There are quirky moments, such as the quasi-reggae *One World*, however this adds to the individuality the pair always propagate so confidently. This album appeals to all who love intelligent, emotional music that also does the unexpected. Dunham's production approach is enlightened and dynamic, allowing Brendel's passionate vocal style to come to fruition. The songs are beautifully written with a balanced style, while the performances are inspired. **MD**

NEV COTTEE

Broken Flowers WONDERFUL SOUND

Psych folk minimalism from northern England.

Manchester's Nev Cotee has prior form in several local bands, most notably Proud Mary, whose first album was issued on Noel Gallagher's Sour Mash label in 2001. He's also recorded a couple of recent collaborative efforts with Colorama's Carwyn Ellis, who also co-produced his 2013 solo debut, *Stations*. This time around, Cotee has hooked up with producer Mason Neely to shape a low-key batch of songs that draw their power from an admirable use of restraint. Cotee's voice is the central element on *Broken Flowers*, very rarely rising above a soft growl and reminiscent of Lee Hazlewood's



downbeat early 70s work on *Requiem For An Almost Lady*. Songs like *Asunder* and *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* are set to stark piano, while the sadcore balladry of *The House Where I Live* is so forlorn that it makes Leonard Cohen sound like a prankster at a pool party. Things get more animated with *Be On Your Way* and *Nobody's Fool*, both of which feature raspy guitar, drums and discreet synths, nudging Cotee's music into raw psychedelic territory. The centrepiece is the epic *Tired Of Love*, an ambient beauty that marries his voice to classical strings and sleepy progtronica. **RH**

CRYSTAL JACQUELINE

Await The Queen MEGA DODO

Wistful Wiltshire yarn-spinner comes to court.

If you have a burning desire to own a sprawling double album full of arcane acid folk musings then this regal offering delivers not only in spades but also in trowels, pitchforks and all manner of Spear & Jackson-related implements. Crystal Jacqueline and her muse, producer/songwriter/guitarist Icarus Peel, have conjured up a mysterious and seductive box of tricks that at its very best recalls the Incredible String Band at their very best. Highlights are many. On *Someone Ms Jacqueline's* vocals are both ghostly and commanding, Peel contributing a beautiful guitar solo that can only be described as David Gilmour



meets Michael Schenker. *Crumble* (sadly not of the apple variety) has a distinct *Love/Forever Changes* vibe. *Yesterlove* is a forlorn ballad, its semi-narrative format cut from the same cloth as *The Windmills Of Your Mind*. *Faerie Tears* is 100 per cent otherworldly, as befits its magickal (sic) moniker. *One White Day* is decidedly Jefferson Airplane-esque, although bizarrely Peel's six-string emulates the riff to Bon Jovi's *Wanted Dead Or Alive*. And so it goes on. The one drawback is that, on the more straightforward tracks, Crystal Jacqueline's singing can sound a little am-dram at times. **GB**

EIVØR

Slør A&G-

Experimental musings from *Game Of Thrones*-related Faroese musician.

You might not have heard of Eivør Pálsdóttir before, but you've probably heard her distinctive vocals on the opening credits of the Viking TV drama *The Last Kingdom*, or on trailers for *Game Of Thrones*. After a successful career in the Nordics, the classically-trained violinist turned solo artist is now seeking to conquer English-speaking audiences with a translated version of 2015's electro-orientated *Slør*. Pálsdóttir has embraced folk, pop and trip hop, but her latest release is an album of two halves. Experimental, but accessible, *Slør*'s dark electronic beats bring to mind artists such as Portishead, Massive Attack



and Depeche Mode, but its spine-tingling vocals are more reminiscent of Kate Bush. Poppy opener *Surrender* holds a mere whisper of the frosty tracks that follow, each evoking memories of Pálsdóttir's childhood on the rugged Faroe Islands with lyrics drawn from the Nordic myths she grew up on. There are spiky beats on *Broken*, stormy waters on *Salt* and haunting atmospheres on *Into The Mist and Fog Banks*. Stunning closer *Tröllabundin* proves she's far more than just a pop singer; this is intelligent and thoughtful music with just enough mystery to set her apart from her more populist peers. **NRS**

FISH ON FRIDAY

Quiet Life ESOTERIC ANTENNA

FOF squad seek some seclusion.

International prog outfit Fish On Friday are, if you'll forgive the laboured metaphor, a bit like one of those minor Premier League teams that get a cash injection and suddenly add world class names to their roster. Ahead of last album *Godspeed* they announced the signing of bassist extraordinaire Nick Beggs, while this time they'll be hoping to shift some shirts after picking up Alan Parsons on loan. The progressive great is one of the key influences on the band's Belgian lynchpins Frank van Bogaert and William Beckers, and here he both produces and performs guest vocals on penultimate track *In The Key Of Silence*.



The song, recorded at Abbey Road no less, is one of the record's most diverting, channelling a little Eagles-esque soft rock in the dual vocals of van Bogaert and Parsons over some almost upstoppingly pleasant chiming arpeggios from guitarist Marty Townsend. The

familiar Pink Floyd pacing on opener *Unreal* sets the tone for a record that is a soft, comfortable listen. Essentially, this is progressive chill-out and neo-prog noggins will feel immediately soothed in its surroundings, if rarely challenged or surprised. We're left hoping for some flashier plays, then, but it's a solid performance from the team. **MP**

HARVESTMAN

Music For Megaliths NEUROT

Pagan drone from Neurosis man channels ancient powers.

With his intense gaze and woodsman's beard, Steve Von Till, vocalist/guitarist from Neurosis, looks like he spends a lot of time communing with nature. *Music For Megaliths*, the fourth album from his solo project Harvestman, brings this contemplation to artistic life. It's a pagan kosmische meditation on the primal energies of the Earth and at its best, weaves a powerful, senses-gripping spell. *The Forest Is Our Temple* pits the keening skirl of pipes against the throb of electricity, evoking images of a ghostly procession marching through the trees. The excellently-titled *Oak Drone* is a swirl



of manipulated loops with brooding blues licks on top, like MBV collaborating with Neil Young. *Levitation* is the nearest thing here to a 'regular' song, a soupy space rock riff with live drums, echoing vocals and fat globules of synth, essentially Hawkwind at

16rpm. What Von Till clearly understands is the idea of music as creative magic, its ability to transform the listener's sense of place and time. On the folksy, epiphanic last track *White Horse*, he eulogises the standing stones of the title as 'a gateway to the mysteries and pathway to my ancestors', but he could just as easily be describing this album. **JB**

JAZZ PROG

Sid Smith rounds up the best releases from prog's jazzier reaches.



Indonesian guitarist **Tohpati**'s *Mata Hati* (Moonjune) continues a remarkably strong run of releases in recent years. His supple yet stinging solos are housed in sleek, nimble tunes that co-opt traditional melodies and muscular Western-style fusion. Without a second of empty noodling, the focus is on tightly-packed tunes bristling with harmonic and rhythmic content. Snarky Puppy fans wouldn't feel out of place grooving to some of its smoother content.



Animals (Jazzland) from Trondheim's **Meglodon Collective** has an almost reckless quality to the manner in which they bolt together elements of free jazz, funk, abrasive soloing and blistering industrial sonics. The showboating is occasionally overwhelming but the combination, though bracing, is impressive.



Known/Unknown (Challenge Records), the fifth album from Australia's **Trichotomy** provides smartly interlocking piano, bass and drums with some synth-extended sonics broadening the timbre. Occasionally echoes of the Esbjörn Svensson Trio resonate but there's a lively invention at work here that makes it worth getting to know this group a little better.



The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane (Turiyasangitananda) (Luaka Bop) occupies



a haunting point between spiritual and ambient drift. Originally released via private label cassette in the 80s and 90s they feature choirs garnered from her Ashram community blended with synths, harp and slow-burn trance grooves. Oddly compelling and captivating, **Alice Coltrane**'s visionary work continues to dazzle.

Trumpeter **Cuong Vu**'s *Ballet: The Music Of Mike Gibbs* (Rarenoise) features guitarist Bill Frisell, alongside drums and bass. There's a restrained but intense quality to these frequently sublime renditions of Gibbs' attractive compositions. With Vu's notes drifting smokily through Frisell's shimmering chords, the quartet move seamlessly between vague abstractions into intricate detail. It's a blessing for the ears.



Arve Henriksen's *Towards Language* (Rune Grammofon) takes the trumpet into a different kind of territory. His method of half-singing/



playing notes gives the instrument a plaintive expressiveness that sits somewhere between folk-like playfulness and yearning melancholia. Set in a sea of pulsating electronica via Jan Bang and the blooming soundscapes of guitarist Eivind Aarset, Henriksen's lyrical work continues to beguile.

Brass player **Yazz Ahmed**'s *La Saboteuse* (Naim) proffers a vibrant set that sways and shimmies with Middle Eastern atmospherics and some stunning performances from Shabaka Hutchings' caustic bass clarinet and Isildurs Bane guitarist, Samuel Hållkvist scurrying runs. Ahmed's work has graced luminaries such as Radiohead, and her second solo album has the feel of a consummate composer ready to make space for others while leading all the way. It's a neat trick which Ahmed succeeds at brilliantly with her sinuous playing. Naadia Sheriff's sprightly electric piano work throughout also provides additional uplift.



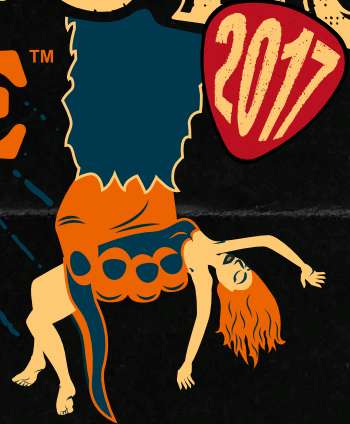
THE 15th ANNUAL

METAL HAMMER GOLDEN GODS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

ORANGETM
AMPLIFICATION

AWARDS
HOSTED BY
CHRIS
JERICO



WITH

MASTODON
CLUTCH AVATAR

ORANGE GOBLIN

PERFORMING LIVE
AT LONDON'S

indigo₂

ON JUNE 12, 2017

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS AND MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED

FOR VOTING AND TICKET INFO HEAD TO

2017.GOLDENGODS.TEAMROCK.COM

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY

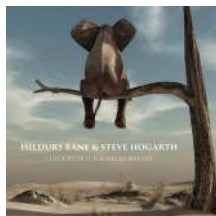


ISILDURS BANE AND STEVE HOGARTH

Colours Not Found In Nature ATARAXIA

Bold collaboration between veteran Swedes and Marillion's H pays off handsomely.

Although Marillion's Steve Hogarth needs no introduction to *Prog* readers, Sweden's Isildurs Bane may be less well known. Formed in the mid-70s and with numerous line-up changes over the decades across multiple releases, they're led by keyboardist and principal composer, Mats Johansson. In the last 10 years they've focused primarily on an annual IB Expo concert where invited musicians, such as Hogarth, collaborate with the group. The six pieces here were premiered at 2016's event and the 14-piece chamber rock ensemble provides an abundance of orchestral detail to lyrics Hogarth composed largely while on the



road with Marillion. Lightning-fast rivulets of guitar and keyboards course between razor-sharp arrangements that bring both grace and force to H's up-close and near-breathless tales of addiction, love, loss and metaphysics. When he's not striking a bargain with

God during *Diamonds And Amnesia's* meditative hymnal, he's assuming his own megalomaniacal omnipotence declaiming 'Bring the Earth to me now!' during the titanic clashes of *Incandescent*. Emotional catharsis and resolution comes through the touching yet troubled ballad, *Peripheral Vision*, new material boding well for IB's international return. **SS**

STEVE JANSEN

The Extinct Suite STEVE JANSEN PRODUCTIONS

Rarefied atmospheres from ex-Japan man.

When the multi-instrumentalist released the album *Tender Extinction* a year ago, he successfully married his love of ambient, suggestive abstraction with propulsive, song-based material: both elements delighted fans of his former work with Japan, Rain Tree Crow and Nine Horses. Now he reinterprets that work with radical restlessness. The more orchestral flavours are extracted and threaded together with fresh themes to create a wholly new instrumental. It's structured as one track, which lasts - get this, prog lightweights - 55 minutes. Like his frequent collaborator Richard Barbieri, Jansen seems now more



intrigued by the possibilities of atmosphere than melody, filling the room with implicit and gently evocative moods, shades and hints. While some of us were overjoyed to hear the emotional pull of the tunes and voices on the source album, this

reimagining gets under your skin gradually. Like David Sylvian's latter-day work, it's devoutly minimal, yielding up crackles and flickers over near-subliminal drones, and more like an Enoesque gallery installation than anything so crowd-pleasing as popular music. Yet there are phases where strings flow over the sound design with Gorecki guile, lacing the art with real heart. **CR**

NO SIN EVADES HIS GAZE

Endless Disconnect RECORD UNION

Experimental djent-lemon.

The problem with most subgenres is that the flow of inspiration slows when it becomes stodgy with mediocre mimics and a paucity of fresh ideas. NSEHG could easily have been tech metal also-rans: the futuristic djent-isms of debut album *Age Of Sedation* slotted comfortably into a scene-friendly pigeonhole, and yet there has always been something a little sharper and classier than average about this virtuoso four-piece. Their second album doesn't exactly obliterate that earlier, safer formula, but these songs are manifestly more memorable and sophisticated than their predecessors. Vocalist James Denton



does frequently switch to a guttural bark and it's undeniable that this will appeal mostly to fans coming to prog from metal, rather than vice versa, as a result. But where NSEHG buck the trend is in the underlying grandeur and lightly-worn intricacy of everything here:

If Only To Fall, an obvious highlight, is a thrilling blur of melodic extremity, Dream Theater pomp and post-hardcore bellowing, all glued together by a huge, radio-friendly chorus. One or two brief retreats into sugary metalcore territory aside, *Endless Disconnect* is an assured and substantial stride forward for one of UK prog metal's brightest hopes. **DL**

TODD RUNDGREN

White Knight CLEOPATRA

Mainstream scene too dull? Rundgren (and son) to the rescue!



Todd Rundgren is one of the most determinedly eclectic - not to say eccentric - musicians of our times. He can write and record the perfect pop song (shimmering 1972 smash *I Saw The Light*); produce a billion-selling album (Meat Loaf's enduringly monstrous *Bat Out Of Hell*); singlehandedly invent the sci-fi-prog genre (remember his intergalactic supergroup, Utopia?); hell, he even composed the music for TV series *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. All accomplished with the ease of Lionel Richie singing *Easy* while reclining in an easy chair.

A mesmerising mish-mash, spanning generations and genres.

That estimable publication *The New Yorker* got it bang on the button when it described Rundgren as "a restless presence, never willing to settle". But even wayward geniuses make missteps, particularly when it comes to titling their offspring. So following in the footsteps of Zowie Bowie, Rolan Bolan, Moon Unit and Dweezil Zappa, allow us to introduce you to... Rebop Rundgren. (Rumour has it his middle names are Bopshep and Ramalamadingdong, although this couldn't be confirmed at press time.) The reason we mention Rebop is that he is one of a host of special guests on his father's latest offering *White Knight*, a mesmerising mish-mash of an album that spans generations and genres with the ease of... well, see above. A wizard, a true star - with an array of guest stars. What's not to like?

Well, a word of warning. Of the 15 tracks here, several are collaborations with artists that are not from the world we know as 'rock'. So let us skip the likes of Robyn, Bettye LaVette and John Boutte and go straight to the jugular with the album's standout track *This Is Not A Drill* (with Joe Satriani, Prairie Prince and former Utopia man Kasim Sulton): a frantic, propulsive, all-out muso-fest that at just a shade over three minutes long is frustratingly brief. Other top stuff includes *Tin Foil Hat* (with Donald Fagan), a prime-time Steely Dan grooveathon; *Deaf Ears* (with Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross), which can only be described as Kraftwerk with crooning; and *Sleep* (with Joe Walsh), a lilting, lighthearted lullaby punctuated by Joe's trademark stuttering guitar style. Oh, and the song featuring son Rebop is also a delight, straying as it does into trippy CSN&Y territory. Disappointing that there are no leading lights from the prog scene featured as guests but maybe that's an idea for a future project. Can you imagine Todd tussling with the likes of Peter Gabriel, Steven Wilson or - wishful thinking, here - even a Pink Floyd alumnus? A mad, mouthwatering prospect for sure.

GEOFF BARTON

NAD SYLVAN

The Bride Said No INSIDEOUT

More matrimonial machinations from the Swedish Vampirate.



Never give up on your dreams... even slightly flamboyant and bizarre ones involving vampires. Coming to prominence with fellow Scandinavian proggers Agents Of Mercy, it wasn't until Nad Sylvan, already a Steve Hackett touring veteran, was writing for his last album in 2015 that he gave up his day job... at the age of 56. This follow-up to 2015's *Courting The Widow* draws on varied musical threads, while deliberately eschewing some of the retro prog vibe of that release. Existing fans are unlikely to be disappointed though – Sylvan's classic textures and keyboard sounds proliferate, and we're still occasionally transported to the late 70s with *Wind & Wuthering* playing somewhere in the background – but this is a more contemporary sounding and immediate collection.

Classic textures proliferate but sound more contemporary.

Like the soundtrack to some macabre Tim Burton animation, short instrumental opener *Bridesmaids* is a vaguely menacing cloud of metallic synths and voices, introducing a reoccurring leitmotif. *The Quartermaster's* swaggering hard-rocking intro and chorus brings to mind latter-day Spock's Beard with Tull-like sections made all the more redolent on this track by Sylvan's Anderson-esque delivery, and a very similar contrast crops up in the heavy hitting of *The White Crown*. However, the fact that Sylvan is steeped in both pop and rock worlds comes out too – *When The Music Dies* is a mid-tempo tune that evokes Simply Red in the gentle, soulful verses, and Robbie Williams (no, really) at his most audience friendly and expansive in the powerful choruses. Elsewhere there are the driving strings and tempered urgency of *Crime Of Passion*, and the great pop infused *French Kiss In An Italian Restaurant*.

The quality of guest contributors here is enviable – both Tony Levin and Jonas Reingold supply Chapman stick and bass parts, Nick D'Virgilio and long-time Jethro Tull drummer Doane Perry get behind the kit, and fellow Agents Of Mercy member, the Flower King himself, Roine Stolt throws in some guitar. The very special solo section tour de force on the rock ballad *What Have You Done* has a double guitar exploration from fusion virtuoso Guthrie Govan and the legend that is Steve Hackett.

The album proper wraps up with the lengthy multifaceted title track, with Sylvan joined by one of the album's three impressive featured female vocalists, Tania Doko, turning in a bravura performance. Tender, reflective sections rub shoulders with heavy keyboard stabs and Sylvan runs the vocal gamut from tired resignation to channelling an angry Phil Collins. An album of terrific tunes, great hooks and melodies, and exciting playing, *The Bride Said No* further cements Sylvan's unquestionably deserved profile.

GARY MACKENZIE

ORDER OF VOICES

Constancy ORDER OF VOICES

Leaving prog country, journeying through Sheffield via Seattle in the 90s.

Six years on from their debut, Sheffield's Order Of Voices belatedly return with the oft-delayed *Constancy*. Where the first album tapped into the grungy riffage of Alice In Chains with a dash of Tool's progressive instincts, *Constancy* plants both feet squarely in the alternative rock camp and waves to prog as it passes on the other side of the road. Frontman Leigh Oates sounds uncannily like Layne Staley, a sense that's reinforced by the production, which favours multi-tracked vocals and layer upon layer of guitars. Much like AIC, Order Of Voices are most comfortable in the mid-tempo range, never slowing to



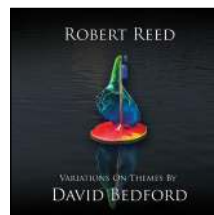
doom's funereal heaviness nor revving up to rock out with abandon. The band dabble in the occasional odd-time signature, *Diametric* is bookended by sections in 7/8 and *Affirmation* strays into 9/8, although alt rockers like Soundgarden were not averse to exploring beyond the boundaries of 4/4, so it's not necessarily a badge of belonging to the prog-hood. Oates possesses impressive range and power, and the songwriting is polished if short on surprises. If you're restless for the Seattle grunge kings to finish the follow-up to *The Devil Put Dinosaurs Here*, this should plug that hole very comfortably. **DW**

ROB REED

Variations On Themes By David Bedford TIGERMOTH

Luminous EP from one multi-functional composer to another.

Mike Oldfield has long been a musical touchstone for Magenta mastermind Rob Reed. This latest release arrives on the back of the multi-instrumentalist's live *Sanctuary* project that he conceived as an Oldfield homage. The late David Bedford knew Oldfield well too, lining up alongside him in Kevin Ayers' Whole World band and orchestrating both *Tubular Bells* and *Hergest Ridge*. Composer in residence at Queen's College London, a role he juggled with a solo career and studio work for Roy Harper, Camel, Edgar Broughton and various others, Bedford was also an extraordinary



talent in his own right. Reed marks what would've been Bedford's 80th birthday by covering three songs, padded out with variants, that showcase both men's diversity. Beautifully sung by Angharad Brinn, *Rio Grande* is a wistful seafaring ballad that's carried away by Reed's tremulous guitar notes. *King Aeolus* is a masterclass in eddying electronica, with Terry Oldfield (Mike's brother) on flute, while the symphonic *Nurses Song With Elephants* features another Oldfield hand, Les Penning. *Tubular Bells* producer Tom Newman plays bodhrán and remixes these songs with a grandeur that's suitably Oldfield-esque. **RH**

SCHNAUSER

Irritant BAD ELEPHANT

Frisky sixth from Bristolian oddcakes.

Possessing a similar attention span to that of Cardiacs, Schnauser refuse to stay in one place for any length of time, musically speaking. *Irritant* is fit to bursting with the kind of abrupt chord changes, wonky tempos and lyric impishness that have sustained them since their formation in 2005, singer-guitarist Alan Strawbridge leading the quintet through a thicket of songs at breathless pace. Strains of Soft Machine, XTC, Frank Zappa and Field Music are all present here, the band as liable to hurl themselves into a prog jazz jam as they are a psych pop interlude. And kudos, particularly from those of us who still



remember it, for incorporating snippets of the mad theme tune from kids TV show *Roobarb* in the suitably weird *Re-Mortgaging The Nest Of Hairs*. Duncan Gammon's keyboards and the restive sax motifs of Dino Christodoulou dominate, from the antic *A New*

Atmosphere to Chinese Brainworm (Taenia Solium), which takes its queasy title from a very real tapeworm found in undercooked pork. Schnauser also know their way around a decent melody. *Fail Better* is the most pertinent example, dialling down the foolery and offering some pastoral serenity with a vocal that owes much to Robert Wyatt. **RH**

SIKTH

The Future In Whose Eyes?

MILLENNIUM NIGHT

Brit trailblazers return with trademark off-kilter exuberance.

When you pressed play on Sikth's debut album back in 2003, it felt like being swept away by a technicolour magic carpet bound for unknown realms. The scattergun riffs and wacky, unhinged vocals grabbed a tired metal genre by the collar and thrust it in a fresh direction; it was circus yet wholly composed, musically feral but with enough melody to capture casual listeners. It paved the way for the ensuing onslaught of djent, and while the Watford conglomerate lost their way a little over time, their third album and first in over 10 years, *The Future In Whose Eyes?*, manages to relight the



fire. This time they've added second vocalist Joe Rosser – a bandmate of Sikth guitarist Pin in Aliases – who helps to conjure up a more transatlantic-friendly sheen. Opener *Vivid* juggles the typically turbulent riffola with all-consuming choruses, while

Cracks Of Light manages to grab a feature from Periphery frontman Spencer Sotelo. *Riddles Of Humanity*, meanwhile, enjoys Red Bull on an intravenous drip, such is the non-stop nature of its whiteknuckle aural assault. Sikth may not blazing their own trail anymore, but sometimes the original is often the best. Enjoy the ride. **CC**

STEVEN SEVERIN

23 Wounds Of Caesar

STEVENSEVERIN.COM

The evil Banshees do... Severin's ambient doomscape.

You'd be forgiven for thinking Severin's spent his last two post-Banshee decades ensconced in some distant gothic castle, occasionally indulging in a little light masochism and obsessively researching catalepsy. Life after Sioux has been significantly less Prince Prospero than one might imagine for the bassist formerly known as Spunker. In fact, in the intervening years since his '89 solo debut (music for Nigel Wingrove's controversial *Visions Of Ecstasy*), he's forged a reputation as a respected composer of powerful avant-garde soundtracks. And he's nothing if not prolific. 2017 sees a glut of releases



(all via his website), preceded by *23 Wounds Of Caesar*, a 23-minute ambient work as challenging and effecting as anything you'll hear this year. First, a word of warning, *23 Wounds* is to Hong Kong Garden what Fripp and Eno's *Swastika Girls* was to *Virginia Plain*.

We're not in Bromley now, Toto. So, as Caesar might have put it, caveat emptor. Against a backdrop drone that's half gaping maw of Hell and half air-con unit, Antony's 'Friends, Romans' speech from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* plays out before commanding beats kick in oppressively. It's a bit Coil, it's a bit cool. Investigate. **IF**

THE BOB LAZAR STORY

Baritonia

BAD ELEPHANT

Whirlwind tour of prog history from New Zealand-based duo.

The Bob Lazar Story is the brainchild of multi-instrumentalist Matt Deacon, originally from Liverpool, but now residing in Christchurch, New Zealand. Describing himself as a "purveyor of tritonal wankery", it seems reasonable to fear the worst. Yet the way that *Baritonia* skips nimbly from one idea to another demonstrates an impressive level of control over pointless plank spanking. Fittingly, given the name, it often sounds like aliens from the distant future attempting to reverse engineer the entire history of prog. The title track alone hints at King Crimson, Cardiacs, Camel and ELP, but rather than play spot the reference,



it's better to relax and marvel at the rapid turnover of micro riffs and melodic motifs. *LOL*, *Defiantly* contrasts neo prog keys against crunching guitars, while *YNWA*, *LR* mixes acoustic medieval balladry with space age synthedelia. This Zappa-esque refusal to

play things straight occasionally smacks of musical ADHD, but the freewheeling confidence of the execution usually carries the day. A key factor is the fluid drumming of Chris Jago, who ensures that the songs pivot and flow. It's this sense of organic evolution that saves *Baritonia* from being just a grandstanding exercise in technicality. **JB**

ART ROCK

Chris Roberts samples the new releases on the prog/rock boundary.

Robyn Hitchcock may have run out of album titles but his 21st, which he describes as "an ecstatic work of negativity", confirms that he's still the Archduke of art rock. *Robyn Hitchcock* (Yep Roc) is a typical (for him) yet surreal (for anyone else) buffet of psychedelia, folk and country, its sharp, serrated songs exploring science fiction, Sylvia Plath, extinction and empathy. There's a reflection on his late father on *Raymond And The Wires* which displays that Hitchcockian twist of pulling emotion and epiphany from the jaws of weirdness. A four-decade career from The Soft Boys onwards has yielded countless great moments, and this Nashville-recorded nugget is shiny with more.



Thurston Moore has of late decided that more is more, and since the "hiatus" of Sonic Youth played with everyone from The Can Project to Sparks. His most regular band

features long-time drummer Steve Shelley and My Bloody Valentine bassist Deb Googe. They brought their *Rock n Roll Consciousness* (Caroline) to the mean streets of Crouch End, where, implausibly, Adele producer Paul Epworth helmed this sprawling, expansive fusion of chaos and charm.

Wildly exploratory, mysteriously spiritual and rather like a detuned Television resurrecting No Wave, it's held together – and aloft – by the players' fluid confidence.



Canadian award-magnet Feist returns after six years' absence with her fourth foray, *Pleasure* (Polydor). The arrangements are raw and sparse beneath keening vocals: she lets you hear each guitar string vibrate. Not every song soars but there's an intimate immediacy redolent of PJ Harvey's early work. Jarvis Cocker provides a spoken-word cameo on *Century*, equal parts Gainsbourg and Betjeman.



Honouring an even more durable British institution, Jah Wobble & The Invaders Of The Heart's *The Usual Suspects* (3Ms) sees the musically well-travelled former PIL bassist recording fresh versions of highlights from his unorthodox career. As well as essentials like Public Image, there are artful takes on the movie magic of *Midnight Cowboy* and *Get Carter*. Any doubts as to the validity of the project are scotched by his band's insanely fine feel.

You'll remember 80s ceiling-dwelling synth pop stars Blancmange. Frontman Neil Arthur links with John Foxx/Wrangler electronica whizz Benge as *Fader*, whose *First Light* (Blanc Check) evokes the darker moods of what's reductively represented as a happy clappy musical decade. Songs like *I Prefer Solitude* and *Laundrette* channel neglected acts like The Sound and Comsat Angels while very stylishly

dressed in today's sonic garb.

Conversely, hysteria infuses *Sleep Party People's* *Lingering* (Joyful Noise), where members of Air and Antlers guest with Danish all-rounder Brian Batz. The relentless, manic euphoria disorients. One imagines it's meant to.



ROGER WATERS

Is This The Life We Really Want? COLUMBIA

Cranky romance from a slightly softening Waters.



Roger Waters sounds like a man in love. He's 73 now, and, sure, *Is This The Life We Really Want?* is freighted with his trademark invective and bilious anger at this messed-up world of ours; timely references to nincompoops becoming president, children drowning in the sea, drone strikes and fat cat bankers are all present and correct. But while *A Part Of Me Dies* is an acid catalogue of Mankind's ills, it's written in the context of a surprisingly beautiful love song. And this from the man who earlier makes the claim that 'If I were God, I could've done a better job.' The old softie...

Embrace him as an irascible genius and thrill at him venting that lucrative spleen.

Much of what you'll take from the man's fourth solo album (not counting his rather flat opera, *Ça Ira*) will depend on what you bring to it. Is Waters a difficult man, grumpy, outspoken, a control freak with a pretty one-dimensional set list of hang-ups and fetishes? Maybe, but he has his faults too. If you embrace him as an irascible genius, and thrill at the sound of him venting that lucrative spleen through his favoured musical tropes, then this is the album you really want.

Familiar clocks tick in on the opener, *When We Were Young*, and from here on in you could almost play Roger Waters Bingo, marking your card as you hear the shipping news, telephone operators, old time TV presenters. The lilting acoustic guitar of *Déjà Vu* is in the long-favoured key that gave us *Mother, Pigs On The Wing (Part One)* and *Wish You Were Here* (there's even a throat-clearing cough at the start of *Broken Bones*). *Picture That* has lovely ostinato moments ('Picture a shithouse with no fucking drains/Picture a leader with no fucking brains'); *Smell The Roses* is *Have A Cigar*-funky, and as a drone tears from left speaker to right in *Déjà Vu*, you're reminded of the terrifying end of *Late Home Tonight, Pt.1* from his last solo album, *Amused To Death*.

While sharing its dark mood and sentiment, *Is This The Life We Really Want?* doesn't quite have the widescreen scale of that 1992 album. The production fabric here is almost — gasp — hip. A fresh broom for an antique room, producer Nigel Godrich brings some of the clean, modern lines of his work with Radiohead and Beck to bear. The band includes drum great Joey Waronker and ever-brilliant guitarist Jonathan Wilson, and the album sounds fantastic.

Together *Wait For Her*, *Oceans Apart* and *A Part Of Me Died* offer a cranky, romantic close to a highly satisfying Roger Waters album. It's so him.

GRANT MOON

THE DANDELION SET

A Thousand Strands 1975-2015 BURIED TREASURE

Alan Moore-approved Northampton underground weirdness straddling 40 years.

With cover notes by legendary British graphic novelist Alan Moore, this album captures 40 years of creative starbursts and experiments conducted by Northampton duo Glyn Bush and PK Chown and realised by four unlikely-named multi-instrumentalists. "Their music was a ghostly wireless transmission from the future," declares Moore, each track constructing its own surreal jigsaw, paying homage to early 70s Zappa-Soft Machine jazz rock on *Don't Let Me Die In Black And White* (flailing horns by one Cornelius Flybody), the guitar reveries of idiosyncratic US guitar legend John Fahey on *The Black*



Spider Memo and twisting acid house riffs on *Nine Regal*. *Tone Garden* affectionately parodies 60s children's TV and *Bottom Rung* mangles its vocals over lo-fi electronica. Moore contributes lyrics to the cockney John Cooper Clark-like reading of *Judy Switched*

Off The TV and *Dark Doorway Launderette*, a highlight that achieves its claustrophobically trippy atmosphere by wrapping its unison male-female vocals in swirling psychedelic organ. There are 12 such bold broadcasts from this timeless but prescient world of the culprits' own making; each one different but united in classic English eccentricity. **KN**

TUSMØRKE

Hinsides SVART

Fourth album from medievally-fixated Norwegian folk proggers.

The traditional career arc for most bands is to tirelessly churn out material in their early years and then leave tax-exiled decades before later releases. Somehow this Oslo-based lot have done the reverse. They took 18 years to release their debut album after forming in 1994, but *Hinsides* follows barely a year after their third album, *Fort Bak Lyset*, a wonderfully idiosyncratic, pagan-themed folk rock affair that was nominated for a Norwegian Grammy. They're evidently enjoying a creative purple patch, donning their best medieval threads to fit with the themes of this record — the final track, for instance, commemorates 666 years since



the Black Death was at its height in Norway. Its 23-minute song-cycle, punctuated with urgent percussion, portentous church bells, ancient instrumentation, spritely flute and the odd rock wig-out represents a powerful final act, but the most

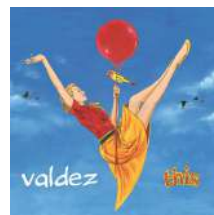
instantly likeable moments here are the almost cartoonish ebullience of *Hjemsokte Hjem's* opener, and the insistent, riff-driven Tullish folk rock of *I Feel Like Midnight*. The sole English-sung track, their mixture of native tongue and the language of rock'n'roll feels quite exotic — and who would have understood a word uttered 666 years ago anyway? **JS**

VALDEZ

This BAD ELEPHANT

Tinyfish chap Simon Godfrey presents the prog soundtrack to a summer's day.

Former Tinyfish frontman Simon Godfrey returns to the land of prog with the Philadelphia-based Valdez, bringing with him Joe Cardillo from Cold Blue Electric on keys, Echolyn's bassist Tom Hyatt, and drummer Scott Miller. There's a strong and sunny 70s vibe to the music, with the infectious and jaunty lilt of *Thirteen* suggesting Jackson Browne's *Doctor My Eyes* while the keys in the rather gorgeous *No Stone Unturned* point towards vintage Supertramp. It's not all flares and feathered haircuts — *Sally Won't Remember* recalls Tears For Fears without Roland Orzabal's occasionally smothering



production. The quartet never gets as heavy as Tinyfish could in their more unbridled moments and Godfrey has a good voice, although he's no belter. Fortunately, the quartet build enough dynamics into the arrangements that even if Godfrey can't lift them to

the heavens vocally, they still achieve lift-off in the crescendos of *Spite House* and *This*. *Colorado - Smile For The Camera* is the magnum opus of the album, a 17-minute road trip on a cloudless day with the top down and the radio tuned to a station playing deep album cuts. *This* invites you to tune in and chill way out. Don't fight it. **DW**

VALERIAN SWING

Nights SMALL POND

Bold third from Italian math proggers.

Making their name with their effervescent second *Aurora*, Valerian Swing are back and pulling no punches with their third record *Nights*, a blistering yet complex development of their already dynamic sound. Though there were electronics on *Aurora*, this time they're impossible to ignore. From the huge, bombastic synths at the climax of *A Leaf* to the harmonised, pitch-garbled vocals on *Five Walls* and *Seven Cliffs*, this record finds Valerian Swing embracing that element of their sound more fully than ever before. There's more of a post-metal influence too; on *Seven Cliffs* there's a discernible shade of



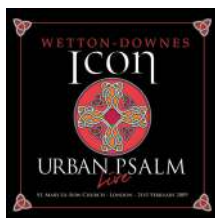
Russian Circles, albeit presented in major-key clothes. *Six Feet* meanwhile has something of a Japanese math rock vibe to it at times, and one wonders if a LITE influence perhaps can account for both that and the more frequent use of synthesisers on the record in general. Whether or not there are more vocals overall, it certainly feels like they're more prominent, and though they're usually positively laden with effects, it's still a welcome addition. As a rule, the math and post scenes eschew vocals a bit too readily, and for this reason if nothing else it helps Valerian Swing stand out. **AL**

WETTON-DOWNES ICON

Urban Psalm EPICON

Wetton and Downes in their live pomp.

Low-key yet absorbing, this is a fine live representation of the magic that acted as a long-time bond between John Wetton and Geoff Downes. It was filmed at St Mary-Le-Bow church in London during February, 2009, and offers a beautifully balanced set between Icon songs and selections from the Asia catalogue - there's even a startlingly effective rendition of King Crimson's *Starless*. With a highly creative band that includes Dave Kilminster on guitar, Hugh McDowell on cello and Anne-Marie Helder on vocals/flute, the music allows every note to breathe, each nuance to linger. Highlights are liberally



spread, with *To Catch A Thief*, an affectionate duet between Wetton and Helder, being mesmerising. But then, so is an acoustic walk-through of *Heat Of The Moment* and a sparkling *Rubicon*. There's also the high energy, pulsing fervour of *Days Like These* and *Rock*

And *Roll Dream* to show this is more than merely a cloyingly reverential set. Wetton and Downes really revel in the whole spectrum of their music here and not only do you get the full performance on DVD (this has been available in a limited sense before), but there are also two CDs with the audio, giving the package real value. **MD**

WHITE HILLS

Stop Mute Defeat THRILL JOCKEY

Big Apple experimentalists take a walk on the dark psych.

Wherein Brooklyn 'duo' White Hills willfully pitch themselves yet deeper into the heart of darkness. Obviously, there's always been a side order of sinister served alongside everything from them thar Hills, but whereas 2015's *Walks For Motorists* boasted a Krispy Kremer production job from David Wrench, *Stop Mute Defeat* sees a prevailing MO muddled ever more avant-gardwards by a band in obvious thrall to NYC art rock tradition. And we use the word muddled advisedly here, as guitarist Dave W and vocalising bassist Ego Sensation have recruited ex-Sonic Youth/Eno producer Martin Bisi to bring a little of



the no-wave dissonance of TriBeCa's late, lamented Mudd Club to the mix. The Burroughs-esque cut-up audio of the rhythm loops only serves to accentuate the underlying harshness of a double-barrelled vocal assault that persistently nags into the psyche; there's vintage Cabs here, a fetid whiff of TG. All regular means of melodious seduction are set aside in favour of the sound of disturbance, as an industrial edge renders White Hills singular psychedelia monochrome, monotone, monolithic. Speaking paradoxically, an assured step deeper underground that only ever sounds like a step upward. **IF**



AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon rounds up some of the many other records passing under the Prog portcullis.

A cult band in the late 90s, Hefner's warped anthems proved that linchpin **Darren Hayman** wasn't just another indie-shm indie clone. *Thankful Villages*



Volume 2 (Rivertones) is his second aural sojourn through the English countryside. 'Thankful villages' are those that lost no men in The Great War, and the tracks borrow their charming names from places such as Cundall, Norton Le Clay and Maplebeck. Hayman's sparse, laconic folk melodies are overlaid with evocative wild tracks of nature, kids playing, locals

telling their stories, and the ever under-heard Judy Dyble pops up on *Upper Slaughter*. It's one highlight on a curate's egg of an album that's like Ray Davies, Roger Waters and Belle And Sebastian messing about on the river.

Maximo Park's Lukas Wooller and The Rakes' Matthew Swinnerton have joined forces as **Karras**, a project that allows them to vent their love of 'Krautrock, post-rock and kitsch'. *Municipal Dances* (Trestle) is a set of 10 hooky nuggets of alternative synth/guitar-pop with hints of shared favourites Tortoise, Air and Roedelius. There's a hip, retro feel throughout, and their spacey treatment of the Dead Kennedys' *Holiday In Cambodia* is sophisticated, cheeky fun.



Much more earnest are Manchester's **Alive In Theory**.

Their debut album *Abandon* (Ultraviolet) is an assured work of dark, crunchy synth pop that showcases singer Kirsty Mac's dramatic approach to performance. There are echoes of Kate Bush, Evanescence, even Seviour-era Touchstone here; Goldfrapp goes goth, if you will.



On the more experimental end of the spectrum, **Partikel** return with a new electric guitarist, flautist and sound designer in tow on latest album

Counteraction (Whirlwind). There's a whiff of Canterbury, Zappa, even Knifeworld here (notably on *Moving Fields*) on an album that's rich in ideas, atmosphere and jazzy textures. It'll reward broader minds.

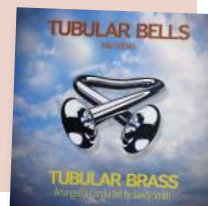


More conventionally proggy (and winner of our occasional 'Pun Of The Month' gong), **Mancunian Candidate** is singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Matt Swindells, ex of Moth Vellum and Matt Bissonette's band, Raising



Lazarus. Bissonette offers bass on the Candidate's self-titled, self-released album, which is a bit of a find, especially for fans of 80s Yes and Rush. With a voice somewhere between Jon Anderson and Sting, Swindells has a real way with a pop prog melody and a firm handle on the genre's symphonic language.

And if you ever wondered what *Tubular Bells* would sound like played by a 28-piece brass ensemble then try **Tubular Brass'** version of the album, out now on Static Caravan. It's a novelty perhaps, but high-minded: Sandy Smith's orchestration gives new lustre to Oldfield's magnum opus. And kudos to the players for getting their lips around that fiddly introduction without exorcising their own tonsils in the process...



ELP

Works I & II/Love Beach BMG

All filler, no killer? Reissues series arrives at the downturn...



Latest in the lavish reissues series, the relatively under-loved trio of *Works 1* and *2* – plus the evergreen square peg *Love Beach* – is described as an ‘important’ phase of the group’s career. There’s little to argue with there, except perhaps the interpretation of the word ‘important’.



There’s a very good album in here somewhere...



Returning after a three-year hiatus off the back of the one-two high-spots of *Brain Salad Surgery* and *Welcome Back...*, expectations were high. No strangers to a critical shoeing – some writers chose to view *Volume 1* as an implied threat – the allocation of one (vinyl) side to each member with the fourth containing a mere two tracks from the reunited trio, edged the chutzpah into the bracket marked ‘bold indeed’. Predictably patchy in terms of cohesion and quality, there’s a very good album in here somewhere, half-buried in layers of hubris and peacocking. Keith Emerson’s *Piano Concerto No. 1* is a virtuosic, three-movement barnstormer, his interaction with the LPO nuanced and furious, while Greg Lake’s side veers close to well-crafted musical theatre, albeit short of anything truly memorable. Carl Palmer’s contributions, as rhythmically dextrous and technically dazzling as you’d expect, are so wildly disparate they’re hard to get a handle on. The extended version of Aaron Copland’s *Fanfare...* shines as brightly as the single edit, though equally illustrates the merits of a judicious trim, leaving the standout closer *Pirates*: compacting all the band’s flair and strengths into 13-and-a-half minutes of near-perfection, begging the question: why not earlier?

The same year’s (1977) *Volume 2*, though even more divergent than its predecessor, is by far the most interesting of the three. The psychotic jazz wig-out *Bullfrog* channels Mahavishnu Orchestra and The Mothers Of Invention, and Emerson’s arrangement of Scott Joplin’s *Maple Leaf Rag*, replete with orchestra, audaciously fuses ragtime with strings. A skeletal version of Lake’s seasonal smash *I Believe In Father Christmas* shows workings, and the addition of the *Works Live* set (Montreal, 1977) packs the remaining running time.

Which brings us to *Love Beach*. Heaped with derision on release, at least partly due to the palm tree/sunset-y yacht-rock sleeve (The Bee Gees meets Eddy Grant) and the title, not to mention an ill-advised reach towards the concurrent pop-ish conversions of Genesis and Yes, at least the incongruous shiny-synth stylings of the title track and career nadir *The Gambler* are leavened by the classic-era-informed *Memoirs Of An Officer And A Gentleman*. Of course, an alternative point of view could be it represents nothing less than another raised middle finger to the naysayers: a commendable trait which underpinned their entire career.

TIM BATCUP

CAN

The Singles MUTE/SPOON

Career-spanning ‘hits’ compilation from Krautrock pioneers.



Can were so far ahead of the curve that it often feels like we’re still catching up with them. Their contemporaries in the Anglo-American rock and progressive scenes may have incorporated jazz and classical into their music, but Can drew on an even broader range of influences, as this compilation of the band’s A and B-sides – collected together for the first time – amply demonstrates. The irony of Can being held up as one of the key proponents of Krautrock is also apparent, because much of the music here is as far from the riff-driven, 4/4 model of ‘rock’ as you can get.

Instead, it’s informed by the likes of the Velvet Underground, James Brown, Fela Kuti and Karlheinz Stockhausen, avant-pop meets militant funk, with songs emerging from both improvisation and studio-based alchemy. *Soul Desert*, Can’s first single, has an insistent head-nodding groove, but it’s as though every last vestige of the blues is being squeezed out of it. Key elements of their sound are already in

place – the hypnotic repetition, the stripped back instrumentation, the feverish vocals. But it’s Jaki Liebezit’s polyrhythmic drum breaks that would come to define Can, from the joyous clatter of *Turtles Have Short Legs* to the darkly propulsive *Vitamin C*.

What’s striking is the way that a dream logic seems to guide these songs’ arrangements, with order created from often chaotic elements. Quite unexpectedly, they even scored a modest UK hit in 1976 with the Kraftwerk-meets-Eno disco of *I Want More*. Yet at the time, it condemned them to the status of European novelty act, which follow-up singles such as their charming if slight version of *Silent Night* and an ill-advised interpretation of the *Can-Can* did little to dispel.

These days of course, Can are fêted by both critics and hipsters alike, with every other psychedelic or experimental band proclaiming them as an influence. But the manic, magical inventiveness of these German pioneers is a quality that’s nigh-on impossible to imitate. **JB**

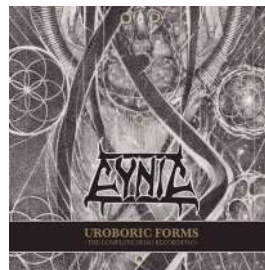
CYNIC

Uroboric Forms - The Complete Demo Recordings CENTURY MEDIA

Floridian prog metal diamonds in the rough.

It wasn’t until Cynic’s long overdue reunion in 2006 that they convincingly morphed into the progressive rock renegades their much revered debut album *Focus* had noisily hinted at. In fairness, even the most primitive of the demos on this comprehensive collection of the Floridians’ earliest efforts showcases a band with no shortage of technical dexterity. Even as teenagers, guitarist Paul Masvidal and drummer Sean Reinert were consummate musicians with a self-evident instinct for using complexity for their own groundbreaking ends. Of course, back in the late 80s, Cynic were very much part of the fledgling death metal scene, their technicality and muso flair setting them apart from their more thuggish peers and, as *Focus* would later confirm, marking them out as true progressives in a scene that generally favoured aggression and speed over depth and subtlety.

The first four tracks here were recorded in 1991, not long before Cynic hit the studio to conjure their debut, and



while the full, kaleidoscopic splendour of later songs like *Veil Of Maya* and *Textures* – both of which, incidentally, have become band names for Cynic’s 21st century offspring – is not quite at boiling point amid the churning atonalities and jazz inflections of *Lifeless*

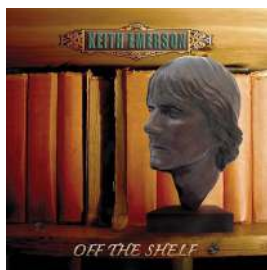
Irony and *The Eagle Nature*, it’s not hard to imagine the short leap of faith it took to blossom into the epoch-shattering oddballs we know and love. Admittedly, there is no guarantee that anyone bewitched by recent Cynic albums like *Traced In Air* and *Kindly Bent To Free Us* will be similarly enthralled by what is, in essence, a raw and unrelenting collection of death metal demos. Something like *Dwellers Of The Threshold*, from the band’s very first demo in 1988, will make perfect sense to metalheads with a penchant for Rush and Voivod, but the dream pop and art rock vibes of *Traced In Air* are conspicuous by their absence. And presumably that’s the point here. Bang your head or shake it wearily, this is where it all began. **DL**

KEITH EMERSON

Off The Shelf ESOTERIC

Curios from Emo's personal archive.

When a musician passes away it's an obvious and rational response to celebrate their life and times by seeking solace in the music they made. With Keith Emerson's tragic passing still uncomfortably raw for many, it's of some comfort at least to know that he left us an extensive legacy by which to remember his contribution to pop and rock. This remastered reissue of a collection of pieces chosen by the man himself was originally released in 2006, and as the title suggests it's comprised of scraps and offcuts that didn't quite fit anywhere else at the time of their making. It's therefore understandable when the variable quality of some of the content makes listening to the album from the beginning to the end a slightly awkward experience. Surely none but the most hardcore of Emerson fans would ever want to play the execrable theme tune to comedian Jim Davidson's 80s sitcom *Up The Elephant And Round The Castle* more than once. Given Emo's love of jazz, his arrangement of Thelonious Monks' sprightly bebop



classic, *Rhythm-a-ning*, recast in a leaden funk setting seems rather baffling. He's far more successful in his experiments in that field with a couple of superb scorching tracks alongside the London Jazz Orchestra, featuring Soft Machine bassist Roy Babbington and

Colosseum's Jon Hiseman on drums. Also welcome is a grainy radio session of The Nice performing Zappa's *Lumpy Gravy* and a stirring orchestral rendition of ELP's *Abaddon's Bolero*, bringing gusto to this already bombastic overture. However, the real gem is the beautiful *And Then January*. Initially conceived as a solo piano piece with added sampled orchestration, he allows his more emotional, lyrical abilities as a composer to surface, demonstrating his eloquent grasp of harmonic light and shade as the melody dazzles. Completists will snap this one up but its appearance is also a reminder that when the time is right, a more considered appraisal of Emerson's solo work would be a welcome addition to his discography. **SS**

ANDY PARTRIDGE

Powers APE HOUSE

XTC alumnus gets starry-eyed.

If it's quintessential sci-fi art you're after, it doesn't get much better than the illustrations of Richard M Powers. The American's work, a knowing blend of futurist schlock and pulpy surrealism, graced the covers of countless publications in the 50s, a time when the notion of space travel was freighted with the paranoia wrought by the Cold War. At home in deepest Swindon, the young Andy Partridge became enamoured of these cosmic vistas, studying borrowed books from the library and imagining himself exploring the alien terrain that Powers had created.

First issued in 2010 in a limited run of 500 (all of which sold out immediately, so good luck tracking one down), *Powers* is Partridge's attempt to translate this experience into musical form. You won't find any trademark melodic turns here. Much less any baroque pop or, while we're about it, any vocals. He has instead concocted a series of sound pieces whose antecedents lie in the musique concrète of Steve Reich, Terry Riley and Pierre Henry. Avant-garde, experimental



and strangely alluring, *Powers* is "a child's logic spun of star spit and robot dreams", as Partridge puts it.

The absence of guitars means that most of these sonic sculptures are built around either synthetic noodles or clever use of orchestral samples.

Sounds are distorted beyond easy recognition, bent and stretched onto new horizons via ring modulators and echo. Partridge has form in this kind of area, through his collaborations with Harold Budd and Peter Dinklage, but there's little in his back catalogue that feels quite as dissonant or sparse.

In fact, *Powers* is as much to do with stripping back as it is building up. Weird planetary bleeps push through the choral ambience of *Third Power*, aka *Outpost*. Sinister distress calls punctuate *Fifth Power (Transmitter)* like moaning Martians made flesh. And it's fascinating to follow the trajectory of *Sixth Power (Hothouse)* as it shifts from busy to becalmed, floating into the darkness like particles in zero-gravity. An odd, rewarding trip. **RH**

VARIOUS

The Brain Box - Cerebral Sounds Of Brain Records 1972-1979 UNIVERSAL

Retrospective of a classic German label - plus free tote bag!



Labels such as Island, Harvest, Charisma, Vertigo and others that flowered in late 60s UK weren't merely stylistic barometers. Through their adventurous signings they shaped the musical weather of the day. Such was their centrality to the scene, their imprimatur bestowed status upon those artists lucky enough to be picked up. That respected benchmark of quality certainly applied to Germany's Brain Records. Founded after Bruno Wendel and Günter Körber quit as A&R men in 1971 at the equally influential Ohr label, Brain quickly established itself as a clearing house for an impressive cast that included Scorpions, Cluster, Grobschnitt, Os Mundi, Jane, Guru Guru, Thirsty Moon, Novalis and Emergency, and this eight-disc celebration brings together some of the most important players in that now culturally dubious catch-all known as Krautrock. With all 83 tracks remastered by Grobschnitt's Joachim Heinz Ehrig, the box set boasts upgraded sonics and a 76-page hardcover book of essays and biographical thumbnails of the runners and riders therein — a very useful one-stop guide to an important imprint.



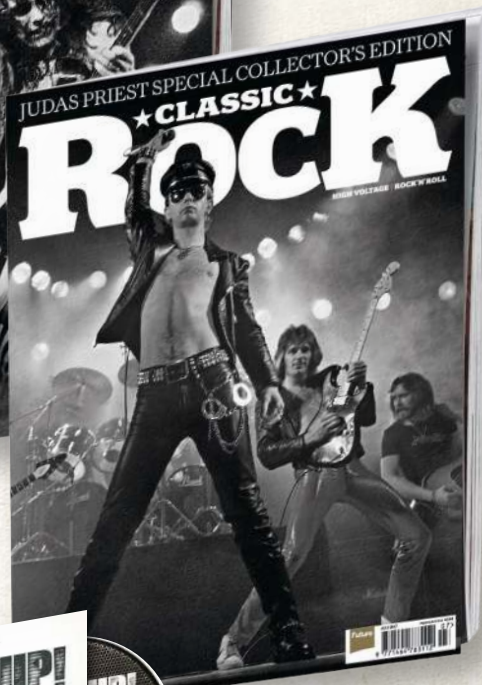
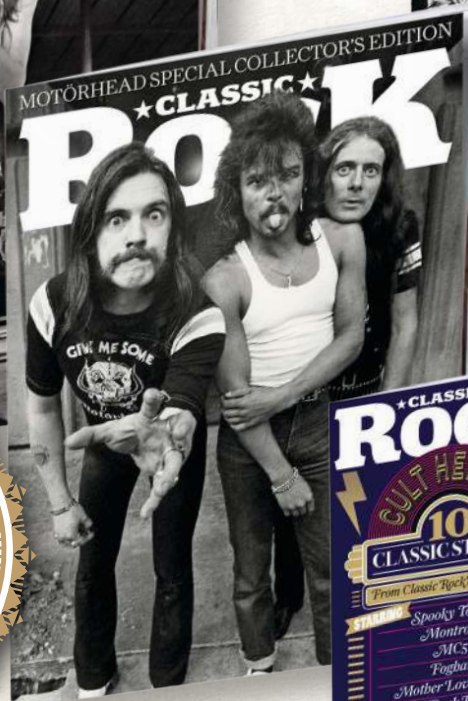
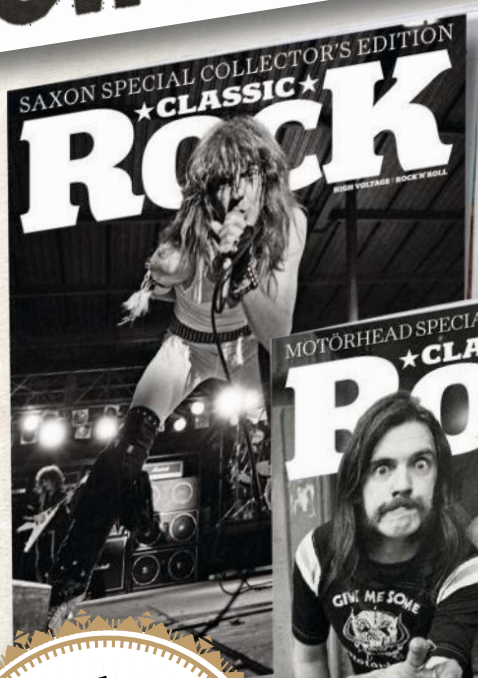
A very useful one-stop guide to an important imprint.



Brain licensed international groups such as Atomic Rooster, Tasavallan Presidentti, Gryphon and others represented in this collection but it's their eye for domestic acts for which the label's reputation rightly resides. Many exert a period charm that's often heavy on cathartic percussion that's more to do with participation than precision. Such extended boogie and freak-out sessions, heavily daubed with the primary colours of rhythm, volume, distortion, have an almost shamanic resonance to them. Kicking back against the political and cultural pressures of the times, there's a wilder, unfettered expressiveness that's quite different to whatever else was fuelling the musical revolution unfurling in Europe at the time. Despite that propensity for rocking out, Brain housed a diverse roster. As well as embracing a jazz rock aesthetic they enabled the likes of Tangerine Dream and Popul Vuh, acts who radiate a force that's oblique but never less than compelling. Though Schicke, Führs & Fröhling were similarly invested in 70s-era synth modernity, their sound has contrasting folkloric connections. The putative dance culture throbbing within Cluster's loops is also clearly discernible, though potential buyers of this set should note that Neu!, arguably Brain's most influential export, are absent due to contractual wrangles. Distilling the work of such a broad-ranging label is never easy but the striking creativity corralled into this box remains powerful and worth spending time exploring. Oh, and how about that cool Brain-branded tote bag for added collectibility!

SID SMITH

PRIEST! SAXON! MOTÖRHEAD! MAIDEN!
& THE RISE OF THE
NWOBHM
HOW BRITAIN GOT HEAVY AGAIN



4
COLLECTOR'S
COVERS

**CD &
BOOK!**

+ FREE
ON SALE NOW

PRINCIPLE EDWARDS MAGIC THEATRE

The Works 1969-1971 ESOTERIC

John Peel's favourite hippie multimedia big band's total output.

Principal Edwards Magic Theatre could only have happened in heady 1967, when it didn't seem too extraordinary that a large gaggle of Exeter University students hatching a theatrical music and dance spectacle could find themselves supporting Fairport Convention and Free at their first gig and become championed by John Peel. MCing at gigs he helped secure, then signing the 17-piece troupe to his new Dandelion label in early 1969, Peel released beguiling age gap ditty *Ballad (Of The Big Girl Now And A Mere Boy)* as a first single, followed by *Soundtrack*.

Thankfully the album justified some of Peel's hype. Heard for the first time 48 years later, it's remarkable how its potent ever-changing kaleidoscope of subtly sexual female vocals, psychedelic guitar thrills, dramatic set pieces and folky chorales have stood the test of time and the band now sound wise beyond their years. The best of its six lengthy tracks are the tumultuously prog-presaging *Sacrifice* and epic *Pinky: A Mystery Cycle*, sounding darker and more mysterious



than at that time when bands could find their feet in public.

Once on the rock treadmill, PEMT relocated to a farmhouse in Kettering and enticed Pink Floyd's Nick Mason to produce 1971's proggy *The Asmotto Running Show*. Displaying a tighter band and focus,

it lacked the debut's druggy ethereality and sexual awakenings but did include the society-lambasting *The Kettering Song*. Financial pressures effectively led to PEMT splitting shortly afterwards (returning as the more streamlined Principal Edwards in 1974).

Esoteric do an excellent job presenting both albums and single along with bonus disc of live-recorded songs that would have formed a third album, demos and Peel sessions that poignantly retain his introductions, such as dedicating *Pinky* to his mum. All told, an engaging, if occasionally twee, slice of English whimsy and post-psych self-discovery that, at this time of summer of love nostalgia, stands as one of the era's more intriguing, even fearless, indulgences. Obviously, Peel devotees will salivate too. **KN**

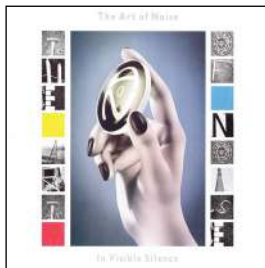
THE ART OF NOISE

In Visible Silence WARNERS

Once state-of-the-art noise is remastered, with (literally) bells on.

It seems fantastical now that in the mid-80s it was unexceptional for a pop record to incorporate sound collages, swathes of cinematic grandeur and casual references to writers and philosophers. Yet in the corner of the charts blasted open by label ZTT, such genius – or pretension, depending on your stance – was de rigueur. By 1986 *The Art Of Noise* had already split from ZTT, Trevor Horn and Paul Morley, and consisted now of Anne Dudley, Clive Langan and JJ Jeczalik. Those departed hissed dismissively of their avant-garde anti-group “going off to have novelty hits with Tom Jones” but this, the second full album, remains exploratory and eccentric. The factions later kissed and made up, though just the trio who made this album will perform it this summer.

It was the age of the Fairlight sampler, which they'd first meddled with during the sessions for *Yes' 90125*. Here, the three residual Arties had the gumption to retain Morley's penchant for dropping in sampled quotes and



spoken word, but pushed further into a pristine, clinical notion of dance grooves. These underscored the bleeps, bicycle bells, whistles and echoes the new technology offered them. The joy they took in their oh-so-modern playground might come across as naïve now, and

they do over-egg the pudding in parts. Yet they hit on an odd knack for accessibility: the album sold a million, and fluked hit singles in *Peter Gunn* (featuring its originator Duane Eddy), which won a Grammy, and *Paranoia*, on which CGI character Max Headroom guested, saying things like, ‘Poetry? Doesn't even rhyme.’ *Legs*, too, was a hit, tapping into the beatbox craze. For US critics, this is where AoN found their stride; Brits were divided as to whether they were selling out or trading up.

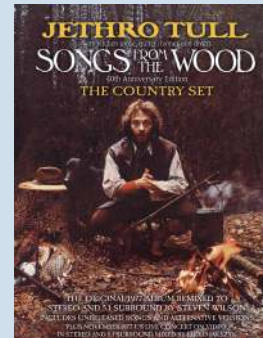
The album's a head-spinning time capsule in itself, but this two-disc deluxe reissue adds singles, a wealth of *The Making Of* out-takes and multiple 12-inch mixes.

Now retro-electro, this was once the dazzling future. **CR**

JETHRO TULL

Songs From The Wood: 40th Anniversary Edition - The Country Set PAROLPHONE

Country life never sounded so vibrant: a reissue to rejoice in.



The greatest turbo-charged, progged-up folk album ever? If the term “folk” to you conjures up images of cheesecloth-clad Morris dancers with fingers in their ears shaking bells and singing fol-de-riddle-o in Sidmouth, set aside such prejudices and give this a blast. It's never going to sound better than it does now, with a Steven Wilson remix, and it sounded preposterously great before. It's also Jethro Tull at their most concise: no 20-minute suites here, but plenty of short, catchy songs. Yet with dazzling musicality they cram more ideas into these aural rural songs than many bands manage in years. Rousing, energised stuff, its ‘kitchen prose and gutter rhymes’ will make you feel much better.



Tull at their most concise... Rousing, energised stuff.



Tull's tenth album, it came about in 1977 after Ian Anderson had responded to the advent of punk with the misunderstood *Too Old To Rock 'n' Roll: Too Young To Die!* He'd been mixing with the folk rock scene (producing Steeleye Span), got married and bought a country home, and wanted to commit to “English” culture. So the band's sound mutated, with keyboardist David Palmer bringing in classical shades and Martin Barre's guitars eschewing solos to deploy incisive precision. Anderson wrote verse inspired by medieval Britain and said it was nothing to do with folk music, which may just have been a shrewd thing to say as the punk wars raged.

It's the melodies and harmonies which first attract. The title song, in which countless adrenalised things happen at once, is a jewel, the vocals poised between urgent and celebratory. *Cup Of Wonder* and *Jack-In-The-Green* likewise locate the interface of acoustic whimsy and electric drive, and quasi-folk songs regarding Solstice and whistling emerge playfully and purposefully. It's an album juiced up with joy.

Forty years on, Wilson appreciates this, aware that it's unique among the Tull canon, and the 21st-century separation in his polishing respects the original freshness. The first disc here adds unreleased contemporaneous tracks like the substantial find *Old Aces Die Hard* (recently retitled by Anderson in honour of Lemmy) and *Working John*, *Working Joe*. The next two CDs compile two previously unheard US live shows from '77, remixed by Jakko Jakszyk, with a setlist – tight, intricate – blending old and then-new. Then there are two DVDs: one audio of hi-res mixes, one of a two-hour show in Maryland, November '77. Add to this a 96-page book (with Anderson, looking weirdly like Coldplay's Chris Martin in the candid/funny photos, giving a track-by-track) and you'll never want to be out of the woods. A Beltane belter.

CHRIS ROBERTS

Discover Classic Guitars

Every issue, Guitarist brings you the best gear, features, tuition and interviews to fuel your passion for guitar



Guitarist magazine is also available on
Newsstand for iPhone, iPad & iPod touch

Also available to order online at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

FEARLESS: THE MAKING OF POST-ROCK

by Jeanette Leech JAWBONE

Solving the equation that came up with one of today's most influential genres.

Credit to anybody that can untangle the mess of what 'post-rock' was and is, but that's the tall order that Jeanette Leech attempts to fulfil. *Fearless* is a formidable piece of work, worth reading for the 'proto' section alone; a great amount of research and thought has gone into tracing the connections between post-rock, avant-garde and progressive rock. What's also interesting is just how closely the scene Leech paints of the early post-rock years - up to about 1994 - resembles that of the trailblazing psych, prog and punk scenes that previously tore up the rock rulebook. Another highlight is the brilliant section on second wave bands such as Mogwai,



which should be essential reading material for fans or curious newcomers. Though there's a cracking piece on Sigur Rós, and the influence of both Radiohead and US math-emo on third wave post-rock, much of the 2000s is glossed over. Post-rock is now commercially more relevant than ever with even festivals devoted to it. Artistically, third-wave bands such as Oceansize, Russian Circles and 65days have achieved a more complete blending of the electronic, dance and drone sides of the genre, not to mention myriad metal and prog crossovers. A small gripe, though, on what is a comprehensive and passionate work on a deep and complicated genre family. **AL**

CULT OF LUNA

Years In A Day INDIE RECORDINGS

One night in Paris with the experimental Swedes. Drone. Scream. Repeat.

Post-metal. On the evidence of this live set from Sweden's Cult Of Luna, it's basically metal without the fun bits. Filmed in La Gaîté Lyrique, Paris, last year, the Swedes begin with *The Sweep* followed by *Light Chaser* from 2013's *Vertikal II* which demonstrates the band's approach and shortcomings in a nutshell. It's a single musical phrase repeated ad nauseam for almost seven minutes. Growling is a well-established death metal technique, but vocalist Fredrik Kihlberg is completely unintelligible and there's no link between his atonal screaming and the music either in terms of pitch or rhythm. The



band play every track from 2006's *Somewhere Along The Highway*. And *With Her Came The Birds* provides a merciful respite from the sonic pummelling, while *I: The Weapon*, from *Vertikal*, has a dynamic range running from loud to a bit louder. The light show is impressively flashy, although the musicians show no inclination towards showmanship. The DVD is accompanied by two CDs capturing the band at Roadburn Festival in 2013 and 2016. If you love a good, long drone, this is the mother lode. But if you want to watch a band actually develop their musical ideas, try Meshuggah's *The Ophidian Trek* instead. **DW**

SCARRED FOR LIFE: VOLUME ONE, THE 1970S

Stephen Brotherstone and Dave Lawrence LONELY WATER BOOKS

A nostalgic deep dive into the dark side of the 70s.

If you ever pored over the gaudy pages of *Misty* and *Action* comics, if you'd never miss a chance to admire Joanna Lumley's acting skills on *Sapphire And Steel*, if you'd Clunk Click Every Trip and Think Once, Think Twice, Think Bike, then you'll find much you forgot you'd forgotten here. In their weighty, text-heavy tome, Brotherstone and Lawrence pick the 70s-shaped scab off your memory, with their highly personal but well-informed perspectives on the grittier cultural stuff of the era, including TV (*Survivors* or *On The Buses*, the dance skills of Legs And Co. and a terrifying plethora of Public



Information Films) to pulp literature (the tawdry gonzo-lit of the New English Library, *The Night Of The Crabs*, 2000AD et al). The authors, who were both aged in single digits at the time, have curated a fascinating child's-eye compendium of hundreds of similar artefacts. On the music side, there's a piece on the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and their 'Top 10 UFO Songs Of The 70s' features Zappa, Styx, Yes and Steve Hillage. A labour of love, this 740-page Proustian rush reminds you that the golden era of prog (and disco, and punk at that) offered welcome musical counterpoint to a pretty bleak decade. **GRM**

VINYL. ALBUM. COVER. ART. THE COMPLETE HIPGNOSIS CATALOGUE

Aubrey Powell THAMES & HUDSON

An evocative must-have time capsule.



“Good design would always create interest – whether or not it had anything to do with the lyrics, the band image or the music,” observes Aubrey Powell in this absorbing account of his time with Storm Thorgerson, and later Peter Christopherson, who as Hipgnosis reigned as the album cover design agency from the late 60s to the early 80s and the arrival of the CD age. Lavishly illustrated, Powell's wry commentary provides an insightful account of their foundations built largely upon finding themselves being in the right place at the right time. Very much in the spirit of naive gentlemen adventurers he describes the somewhat haphazard process of making up their distinctive visual vocabulary as they improvised from one job to the next. Mixing technical detail and the benefit of hindsight, while clearly affectionate and often impressed, he's also unflinchingly critical of some of the creative choices their younger selves made.



They were the spirit of naive gentlemen adventurers.



He describes a time when the art of marketing seamlessly developed into the marketing of art, when money and imagination were enthusiastic bedfellows rather than the recriminatory ex-lovers they'd later become. As confidence and budgets grew, nobody thought twice about jetting off to the Sahara or Monument Valley for an afternoon's shoot. The epic scale of the sleeve to The Nice's *Elegy*, with 120 red beach balls dotted towards the disappearing horizon of African sand dunes appears now like some exotic, fabulous relic of the days before the world was shrunk to a mouse click in Photoshop.

To their credit, 'the Hipgnosis vibe' isn't restricted to high-rollers such as the Zeps, Floyds, and McCartneys. Their intense, capacious imaginings grace the covers of lesser mortals. Po convincingly makes the argument that they were at their best when left to get on with things themselves rather than executing the back-of-a-fag-packet designs dreamed up by some of their more famous clients.

Having the covers collected into one place is akin to an alternative family photo album; you can't help but recall where you were and who you were with when you first heard or bought one of the record sleeves featured. And there's always the occasional awkward and ill-fitting fashion item or dodgy uncle that's best forgotten: Bunk Dogger's 1978 release, *First Offence* anyone? 'Iconic' is undoubtedly one of the most over-used words in any kind of assessment of popular culture. Yet when it comes to evaluating the work of Hipgnosis it's the only one that gets close to describing the scale of their achievement.

SID SMITH

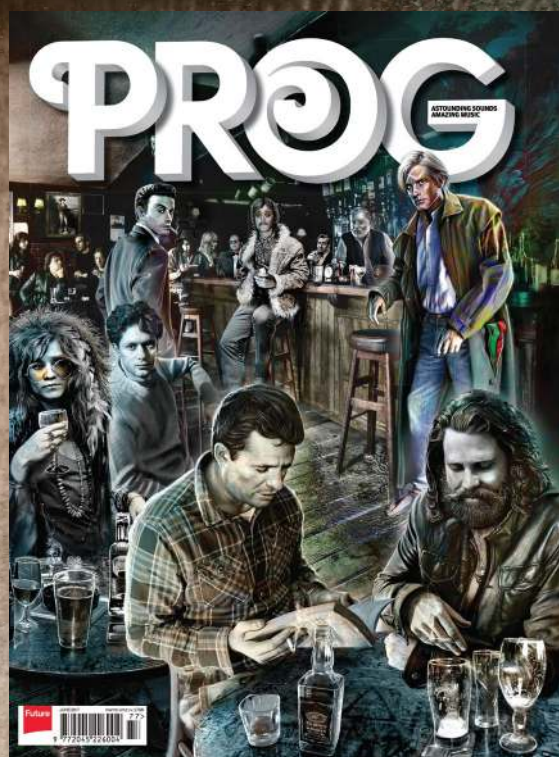
SUBSCRIBE TO PROG



PROG

SUBSCRIPTIONS CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE...

 **PRINT**



Every issue delivered to your door with CD

FROM JUST £12
EVERY 3 MONTHS

 **DIGITAL**



Instant digital access on your iPad, iPhone
and Android device

FROM JUST £5.25
EVERY 3 MONTHS

PRINT + DIGITAL **Get the complete package!**

Free CD with every issue

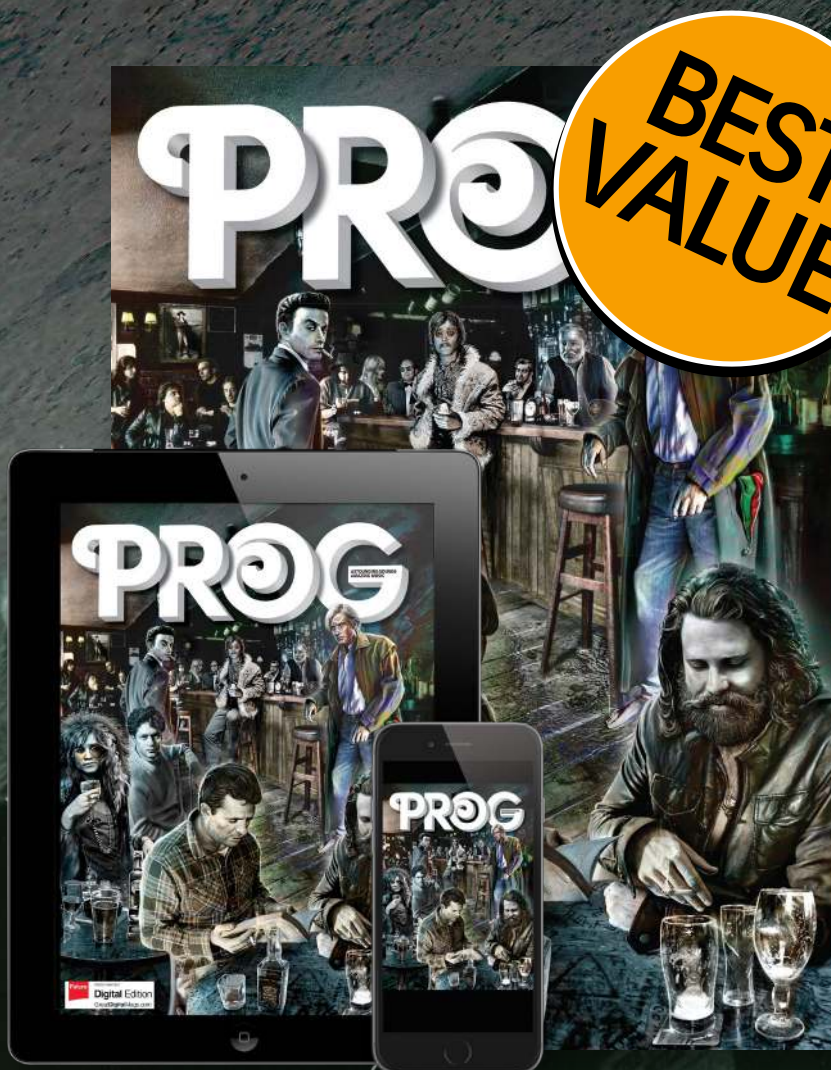
Every new issue in print,
and on your iPad, iPhone
and Android device

Huge savings, the best
value for money

Instant digital access when
you subscribe today

FROM JUST £17
EVERY 3 MONTHS!

SAVE
38%



SUBSCRIBE TODAY...

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/PROG
or call **0344 848 2852**

TERMS & CONDITIONS Prices and savings quoted are compared to buying full priced UK print and digital issues. You will receive 10 issues in a year. If you are dissatisfied in any way you can write to us to cancel your subscription at any time, and we will refund you for all unmailed issues. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions please visit: <http://bit.ly/magtandc>. Offer ends 30/06/2017

Take a bow

DREAM THEATER

VENUE EVENTIM APOLLO, HAMMERSMITH
DATE 23/04/2017

Dream Theater have always been pretty forward about looking backwards. Back in 2004, when the band played this venue on the second date of the *Train Of Thought* world tour, the evening's entertainment opened with a short film briefly celebrating their previous releases. As each album flashed up onscreen, a roar of recognition and unfettered approval went up from an audience that were already giddy with excitement.

Tonight it's slightly different, but the past is still acclaimed: it's the 25th anniversary of the landmark *Images And Words* album, and the devoted hordes have descended once again, to worship at the feet of a band whose music is celebrated almost as much through their ability to play it. And as the intro tape — Two Steps From Hell's dramatic march *The Colonel* — echoes around the hall, it's clear this is serious business. It's the kind of music rugby league teams use to usher themselves onto the field of play in order to ramp up the atmosphere and steel themselves for battle.

Things settle down a little after this triumphant introduction. Jordan Rudess looks relaxed at his keyboard — which pivots and tilts and swings around in circles — piloting his instrument with all the unconcerned assurance of a Trent Bridge groundsman steering the heavy roller on the first morning of a Test. But not all is well. The mix

is initially muddy, and James LaBrie's voice sounds shrill and almost aggressively flat. This remains an issue throughout, but the overall sound gradually improves as the band kick off the entertainment with something of a greatest hits set. *The Dark Eternal Night*, *The Bigger Picture*, *Hell's Kitchen*, *The Gift Of Music* and *Our New World* all pass by in a whirl of bewildering dexterity. When Malcolm Gladwell espoused his 10,000 hours theory, it's this kind of end result he had in mind: hours of tortured practice leading to levels of skill simply not available to other, less driven mortals. And when James Myung and John Petrucci are locked together in ferocious bass/guitar unison, perfectly mirroring each other's playing, it's almost worth the price of admission by itself. Myung ups the ante further by playing a precision-tooled version of Jaco Pastorius' harmonic-driven masterpiece *Portrait Of Tracy* as a tribute to the dear, departed virtuoso.

So far, so well-oiled. For all the complexity on show, the experience is akin to visiting a bakery to inspect a brilliantly designed, mind-bogglingly clever machine that pumps out perfectly formed yet somewhat bland biscuits. The evening needs an emotional lift, and it's provided by a rousing *As I Am*, its thudding riff segueing into a short cover of Metallica's *Enter Sandman*, and for the first time the audience feel like participants rather than rubbernecks.

The second half, devoted to tracks from *Images And Words*, is much more inspired. It all starts

delights of the hefty posterior, *Baby Got Back* (*I Like Big Butts*). This collage serves the purpose of showing exactly how unlikely Dream Theater's own college hit was, and that song — the beseeching epic *Pull Me Under* — starts the second half proper, and moves the show into another gear. A soaring *Another Day* maintains the momentum, before LaBrie picks out journalist Derek Oliver in the audience, humbly thanking him for his role in the band's early success (Oliver played a key role in getting them their record deal with Atco).

The band are flying now, and *Another Day*, *Take The Time* and *Metropolis Pt. 1: The Miracle And The Sleeper* offer Rudess, Petrucci and drummer Mike Mangini the chance to shine individually. LaBrie spends so long offstage during these extended instrumental passages that one return actually prompts *Prog* to briefly wonder if the singer has done something with his hair while away. He hasn't. But he does tell a good story about a rice cooker and toasting the band's early success with champagne provided by Mike Portnoy's dad.

Learning To Live provides an effervescent finish, before the band return with a 23-minute romp through the seven movements that make up *A Change Of Seasons*, a piece originally slated for inclusion on *Images And Words* but eventually released in its own right.

It's everything that Dream Theater are: overblown, ridiculous, ambitious, confounding, exultant, stunningly skilled and utterly, utterly unique.

FRASER LEWRY



"The evening needs an emotional lift, and it's provided by a rousing *As I Am*, its thudding riff segueing into a short cover of Metallica's *Enter Sandman*."

with the sound of a radio scanning across the frequencies as if in 1992, picking out short highlights of popular radio hits from the year: Pearl Jam's *Even Flow* and *Alive*, The Cure's *Friday I'm In Love*, Nirvana's *Come As You Are*, the Red Hot Chili Peppers' *Under The Bridge*, and Sir Mix-A-Lot's ode to the

John Petrucci launches tonight's theatre of dreams.



Jordan Rudess and his amazing swinging keyboard.





James LaBrie:
suffering from
sound issues.



James Myung
[left] emerges
from the
shadows...



Dream Theater
entrance the
Hammersmith crowd.



It's just Another Day
for the band.

STEVE HACKETT

VENUE ST DAVID'S HALL, CARDIFF
DATE 28/04/2017

Steve Hackett leads his band through a rocking rendition of *In The Skeleton Gallery*, from his eclectic current album *The Night Siren*. The three-part harmonies between himself, bassist Nick Beggs and drummer Gary O'Toole are delicious; in one fun section Hackett swaps his Les Paul for a blues harp and indulges in a musical duel with sax player Rob Townsend, and the song's rhythms are as captivating as they are tricky.

After the applause dies down, Hackett banters mischievously with the sold-out room about Brexit, then announces that, "We'll shortly proceed with the nostalgia part of the show, which I sense is what you might be happiest with." Some cheer in the affirmative, but there are slightly disgruntled noises off. Does he think we're all here just for the golden oldies? That we resent him playing his newer material? From the back of the room comes a polite but indignant shout: "You'd be surprised!" Those of us who feel a little harshly judged clap by way of agreement, and Hackett smiles, feigns falling over with joyful surprise. "Thank you sir. It's great to have a

voice for modernity!" And, as if reassured, he launches into *Behind The Smoke*, *The Night Siren*'s exotically-charged song about refugees.

While there's an appetite for such material, Hackett's resurgence is admittedly underpinned by his old band's achievements; his whole tour is billed as *Genesis Revisited With Classic Hackett*. If anything, the latter is under-represented in tonight's set (a monumental *Shadow Of The Hierophant* sees Beggs cross-legged on the floor, playing his bass pedals by hand, and *Slogans* kickstarts the encore).

The evening opens with the new album's *Every Day*, *El Niño* and *The Steppes*. Still to come are the gorgeous *Serpentine Song* – inspired by his artist father selling his paintings on the railings of London's Hyde Park – and *Rise Again*. Completed by his regular collaborator, keyboardist Roger King, Hackett's band are extraordinary throughout, and his own fingers elicit blizzards of notes and tasteful feedback; a touch of his whammy bar adds articulation; a flick of the foot pedal takes notes soaring into the heavens. His masterful guitar playing just seems to get stronger.

That promised nostalgia comes after an intermission, with the pleasingly eccentric (and uncannily Collins-like) Nad Sylvan joining the ranks on vocals. His is a tricky role in this set-up, but he pitches it right,



Rob Townsend ups sticks.



Nad Sylvan lights up the stage.

EDDIE JOBSON AND MARC BONILLA

VENUE UNDER THE BRIDGE, LONDON
DATE 22/04/17

There's a slightly bemused feel when Eddie Jobson takes to the stage before an appreciative, if hardly packed, crowd in the capital. On the one hand, people don't

really know what they're going to get on stage tonight. On the other, some more proactive promotion for the gig might not have gone amiss.

Jobson appears first, seating himself behind his keyboards, and chatting with the audience in a matter-of-fact fashion. He admits there's no real set precedent tonight, and he thought he'd start by

chatting with the audience and telling stories of his recently fallen comrades, before playing some of their music.

Jobson's mix of native north east via Los Angeles accent seems to settle everyone, a few eager punters diving straight in with 'the trainspotter question' about what's left in the archives. His heartfelt reminiscences of John Wetton,

and tributes to Keith Emerson, Greg Lake and Allan Holdsworth, are touching.

The last time that this writer saw Jobson at this fine venue, he was with John Wetton as they performed a set largely made up of UK numbers. Tonight however, proceedings are, as pre-gig information suggested, very different.



Nick Beggs doubles up!



Gary O'Toole dresses up for the occasion.

performing the songs enthusiastically while mindful of whose stage this is. In this anniversary year of *Wind & Wuthering*, the six tackle *Eleventh Earl Of Mar*, *One For The Vine* brilliantly. A frisson hits the room as Hackett sits with a classical guitar in his lap, his exquisite improvisation morphing into *Blood On The Rooftops*, as sanguine light drenches the stage. O'Toole takes the vocal here — what an asset he is. As is Townsend, whose alto sax doubles Hackett's lead lines on a thrilling *In That Quiet Earth*.

The guitarist pays tribute to Phil Collins' contribution to *Inside And Out*, and laments that this 'Cinderella song' never made *Wind*

& *Wuthering*, illustrating his point with a lovely read. Roger King delivers its synth flurries well, Beggs shares its early, plangent arpeggios on guitar. The bassist really shakes his mane on the rapturously received *Dance On A Volcano*, while *Firth Of Fifth* gets the biggest cheer of the night, the crowd clapping along before being treated to another highly expressive guitar solo.

The lights waltz along to *The Musical Box*, and the gig closes with a standing ovation. Then an imperious *Los Endos* leads to another at the encore, as fans clamour at the stage to shake talented hands. Think such joy is more about nostalgia than witnessing sheer brilliance? You'd be surprised.

GRANT MOON



Steve Hackett and his cast of characters.



"Hackett's band are extraordinary throughout, and his own fingers elicit blizzards of notes and tasteful feedback."

ELP's *Trilogy*, performed by a solo Jobson, kicks off the musical part of the evening. The sound emanating from just one man on stage is terrific, before Bonilla joins, taking the vocal lead on Crimson's *Starless And Bible Black*. Three UK numbers follow: *Rendezvous 6:02*, *In The Dead Of The Night* and *By The Light Of Day*, before a short break,

after which Jobson's violin finally appears after his own *Nostalgia* for a strident solo.

Then it's on with the show, for ELP's *Bitches Crystal* and Crimson's *Fallen Angel*, before Bonilla helms the Keith Emerson Band's *A Place To Hide*. All of this is handled with honour and respect, before *From The Beginning* and UK's

Carrying No Cross lead to an encore of *Lucky Man*, a respectful blast of Jobson keys rounding things off.

You have to admire both musicians for even daring to put on such a show at short notice. And applaud them for the stylish manner in which they perform. A special night.

JERRY EWING

RICHARD BARBIERI

VENUE	HOXTON HALL, LONDON
DATE	28/03/2017

First built in 1863, this recently restored listed building is innately atmospheric, its iron rails and columns suggesting gravitas and grandeur. It's a canny choice of venue for this show, wherein Richard Barbieri proves again his vision and versatility, conjuring an array of cinematic sounds and surprises from his bank of keyboards, synthesisers and laptops. His easy-going humour prevents it being a chin-stroking boffin masterclass, while Swedish collaborator Lisen Rylander Löve, joining him onstage, brings an ocean of singular flavours. Dipping into most phases of his career, this is a celebration of electronica, of the exploratory urge in music and of this relatively unsung hero himself.

The rare live performance is in support of Barbieri's new album *Planets + Persona*, which has won ecumenical plaudits. Ambient avant-garde jazz? Progressive space rock? It's all about duality, multivalence and unpredictability. Few albums this year will reveal their glories so subtly. While tonight its peaks are climbed, there are enough nods within the setlist to Barbieri's previous pinnacles — whether with Japan or Porcupine Tree — to please long-term converts to his alchemy.

Night Of The Hunter (*Innocence Lost*) and *Solar Sea* draw us in, these new pieces restrained but gathering momentum as Rylander Löve adds saxophone, percussion and treated vocals. She's a real discovery, her smart improvisations dovetailing beautifully with Barbieri's treasure-chest of textures. She leaves awhile, our man quipping that, "It's not every night you share the stage with a genius. And tonight, for Lisen, that night came." Our chuckles are filed away as, lo and behold, we realise he's serving up a radical reimagining of Japan's poignant *Ghosts*. Shorn of vocals, it retains the broodiness but brings in beats and strings which move and thrill. Barbieri seems startled by the rapturous applause, though it's a safe bet that's the favourite-ever song of half this audience. That he can deconstruct it so un sentimentally yet keep our approval is another sign of his inspired musical instincts.

There's the Tangerine Dream-like techno of *Medication Time*, then Barbieri plays his 1980 Japan b-side *The Experience Of Swimming*, sprinkling in shades of *Nightporter*. Löve returns for *Unholy*, the new album's dark horse (as Barbieri berates religion, as opposed to spirituality), and *New Found Land*. As an encore, the Porcupine Tree track *Idiot Prayer* is reworked, booming like Steve Hillage-era Simple Minds. There's a standing ovation, for a long-standing pioneer.

CHRIS ROBERTS

MAGENTA

VENUE BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON **DATE** 08/04/2017
SUPPORT ALAN REED AND THE DAUGHTERS OF EXPEDIENCY

After several years building a reputation as a solo artist with acoustic support slots, Alan Reed is back fronting a full electric band.

Kingdom Of The Blind is a tentative opener, but *My Sunlit Room* and *Razor* from new album *Honey On The Razor's Edge* see the Glaswegian throwing rockstar shapes like a born performer. His energy is infectious too, as guitarist Mark Spencer joins in on the act brandishing his instrument like a claymore.

Reed is relishing the power and volume behind him, and matching them with an impassioned vocal performance of the Holocaust memorial *Sanctuary* from his Pallas days. Another new song, *Used To Be Someone*, changes the energy in the room from rock bombast to a more reflective mood. It's no less excellent for that. Plaintive e-bow lines cry and bass pedals underpin Reed's version of a power ballad.

The Pallas epic *Crown Of Thorns* sees Alan fist-pumping and posing to phone cameras. It's great to see a band enjoying themselves this much, and that energy is returned by the room, showing appreciation for a hugely entertaining set.

A new-look Magenta grace the stage tonight. The core trio of Christina Booth, Rob Reed and



Alan Reed: an infectious performance.

Chris Fry is augmented by touring stalwart Dan Nelson on bass and new drummer Jon 'Jiffy' Griffiths.

The symphonic intro to *Trojan* from new album *We Are Legend* is a classy statement of intent. Recalling the cinematic aural vistas of Vangelis' *Blade Runner* score, it soon explodes with long sustained guitar notes and a jump-along riff that is sure to become a mainstay of future shows. Tonight we get only an excerpt from the 25-minute-plus behemoth, but opening with 10 minutes of previously unheard music is a bold move, and the receptive fans are rewarded with a string of tried-and-tested favourites.

Speechless and the cha-cha-cha of *Gluttony* breed an air of familiarity. Griffiths slots in admirably to his role as timekeeper, while Fry, meanwhile, flits moth-like between electric and acoustic guitars, bringing *Gluttony* home with some searing slide work.

The Janis Joplin tribute *Pearl* and a paean to Vincent Van Gogh in new track *Colours* give singer

Christina Booth a superb chance to shine, injecting soul and genuine emotion into these tales of artistic tragedy. Fry's fiery blues leads are a perfect foil to Booth's heartfelt elegies, and they reach new heights on the Robert Johnson-inspired epic *The Devil At The Crossroads*.

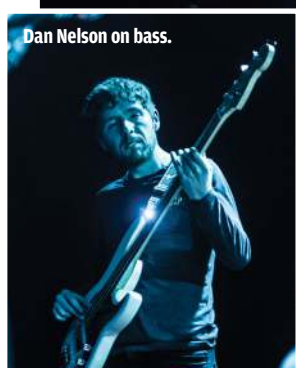
The obligatory energy-giving banana ritual (don't ask) leads into an encore of *The Lizard King* and *Pride*. Songs old and new rubbed shoulders tonight. Judging by their reception, Magenta's latest offerings are set to become the stuff of legend.

CHRIS MCGAREL



Christina Booth: sings it like she means it.

"The symphonic intro to *Trojan* from new album *We Are Legend* is a classy statement of intent."



Dan Nelson on bass.



In The Zone: Chris Fry.



Christina has "soul and genuine emotion".



Jiffy having a whale of a time.



Magenta showcase new work and win over new fans.

RUSSIAN CIRCLES

VENUE	GORILLA, MANCHESTER
DATE	20/03/2017
SUPPORT	CLOAKROOM

Shoegazers Cloakroom are on fine form as they open the evening's proceedings with a set of scuzzy, fuzzy rock tunes in thrall to the 90s golden years of the genre. Sonically closest perhaps to labelmates Nothing, their set has its moments, particularly when hook-laden guitar leads counterpoint grooving bass parts.

While they definitely have their own thing going, a criticism would be that playing so strongly to genre stereotypes as to bury the guitars and vocals does them a disservice, as there are licks and melodies that deserve a more forthright presentation to the listener.

Before long, a squall of noise washes Russian Circles onto the stage, and the lights dim, revealing the musicians backlit in silhouette. Starting on the one-two punch of *Asa* and *Vorel* from new album *Guidance*, the band come screaming out of the gate, with guitarist Mike Sullivan and bassist Brian Cook forming a solid chugging wall of noise over Dave Turncrantz's monolithic drums.

Without any let-up, the band segue straight into *Deficit*, the dark and powerful second track from their none-more-black album *Memorial*. Live, the track is, if anything, even more impactful than on record, with Sullivan's ice cool tremolo-picked leads gliding over the top of the dominating groove ridden by the rhythm section.

What's interesting to see throughout the set is just how much Cook does to round out Circles' sound. To add counter-melodies or riffs under lead parts, he often swaps the bass for a baritone, sometimes mid-song. When extra oomph is called for, he uses a foot controller to play keyboard notes and samples, and somehow manages a note-perfect performance on his main instrument at the same time.

309 from *Empros* follows, concluding a relentless first half to the set. When discussing their new album, the band confessed to some apprehension about playing more major key material, and maybe this can explain why three tracks from the darkest end of Circles' discography immediately precede the uplifting *Afrika*, another *Guidance* cut, and a highlight of tonight's set. After a back-catalogue dive to take in *Harper Lewis* from *Station*, the gauzy 1777 and riff-driven *Mota* follow, before the soaring, transcendent *Mlâdek* finally closes the main set.

After a short break, the band return to play fan favourite *Youngblood* from *Station*. Interestingly, no tracks from their debut *Enter* are played, which is a shame as *Death Rides A Horse* would also make for a stunning encore number. Nevertheless, it's a small complaint. Russian Circles are on world-beating form on this tour, playing new material that's as righteous live as anything else they've done to date.

ALEX LYNHAM

10CC

VENUE	PALLADIUM, LONDON
DATE	13/04/2017

The *Greatest Hits And More* tour from 10cc climaxes at a venue whose history is almost as rich as their own. Among the faultless choices of non-hits is *Old Wild Men*, a forlorn ballad from 1974's *Sheet Music*. They introduce it with a wry smile: the song's a melancholy musing on a band who won't pack it in, no matter how aged they get. "They'll play and play to pass the time..." Yet with art rock royalty 10cc there's always a witty self-awareness involved, and their energy and verve makes a mockery of mortality. To hear this brilliant, boisterous set list is to be filled to the brim with jumping jacks and joie de vivre.

Of course there's the debate of how truly this qualifies as 10cc, without Eric Stewart, Kevin Godley and Lol Creme. Graham Gouldman has toured this line-up for several years now, gradually winning approval with the quality and attention to detail of the shows. We'll always wish the original quartet could reunite, but with historic feuds and factions that make Yes look uncomplicated, that's not happening. If you accept that and just embrace the music, there are few more enjoyable shows around.

Gouldman, a well-preserved septuagenarian, is at the centre, playing bass, guitar and (some) vocals. The band are superb, with Rick Fenn's guitar (a feature since '76) and all-rounder Mick Wilson's falsetto stealing highlights. Wilson can be a bit West End musical, but he sure can sing. After the tripartite prog epic *Feel The Benefit*, Gouldman confides that he first heard the title phrase from his mum, "Who's now 98. And here tonight." We applaud, as we do when Fenn

"The evening blasts open with a salvo of some of the greatest art pop this planet has produced."



Talking Heads: Kevin Godley there in spirit.

hails master craftsman and writer Gouldman as "the guv'nor. The grand fromage".

The evening blasts open with a salvo of some of the greatest art pop this planet has produced: *The Wall Street Shuffle*, *Art For Art's Sake*, *Life Is A Minestrone*. With impeccable multi-part harmonies and tempo changes which turn on

a sixpence, there's romance with a twist in *I'm Mandy Fly Me* and *I'm Not In Love*, while the hall is bathed in a wave of pirouetting white lights. These songs and productions startled us with avant-garde innovation back then, and they're as timeless as they are transcendent.

If the rock-out of *Rubber Bullets* or cod-reggae of *Dreadlock Holiday* are sops to populism, the melodrama of *Somewhere In Hollywood* – featuring Godley singing via video – is a contrapuntal canvas of literacy and pathos. There's also a scorching

Silly Love and an a capella *Donna*.

If 10cc always had too many ideas to be easily pinned, still their legend grows, and Gouldman's warm fanning of its flame does it no harm at all. This music fancies living forever.

CHRIS ROBERTS

In Full Flow: Gouldman (second left) and co.



THE HEATHER FINDLAY TRIO

VENUE ACES & EIGHTS, LONDON
DATE 14/04/2017

Down in the basement of Aces & Eights, where the lights are low and the ceiling lower, Heather Findlay is weaving spells. The room could generously be described as cosy but the singer is in high spirits, greeting the tightly packed crowd with a cheery, "Good evening Wembley!" Joining her tonight are guitarist Martin Ledger and harpist Sarah Dean. It's an unfamiliar configuration that occasionally seems to be pulling in different directions. There's Findlay on acoustic guitar and Dean on harp and recorder channelling a strong folk spirit. Then there's Ledger on electric guitar, who clearly feels most at home when he's flexing some muscle. As a result, two-thirds of the band are playing acoustic folk, while the other corner

of the triangle keeps tugging them away towards rock.

Whenever Ledger steps on his distortion pedal he drowns out Dean's dulcet harp in one fell swoop, and in those mercifully few moments the trio appear to be suffering from a disconcerting case of split personality disorder. The band play two sets with a short break. The first set draws heavily on Mantra Vega's 2016 release *The Illusion's Reckoning*. Findlay sounds terrific from the outset on *Island* and *Veil Of Ghosts*, the latter of which sees Ledger performing an elegant bluesy solo, while the riff of *Mountain Spring* sounds like something from the Gallagher brothers without the sneering attitude.

Day Thirteen: Sign has a stumbling start, but is beautifully melancholic once underway, and tonight's performance is much closer to the folksy one on Findlay's *I Am Snow* album, rather than the more bombastic original on Ayreon's *The Human Equation*. The first set wraps with Findlay nailing the high notes of *I Am Snow*, with lovely playing from Dean.

The second set sees Findlay dipping into the Mostly Autumn archives with *The Eyes Of The Forest*, *Bitterness Burnt* and *Caught In A Fold*. Fleetwood Mac's *Rhiannon* is warmly received, and the trio briefly become a quartet when opening act Boss Caine (aka Daniel Lucas) joins them for Nick Caves and Kylie Minogue's murder ballad *Where The Wild Roses Grow*. "I apologise if the first verse was your favourite, because I forgot to sing it," laughs Findlay, but the sense of flying by the seat of their pants lends the performance an invigorating frisson.

The drama of *Unoriginal Sin* cries out for a full band to realise its potential, before the night concludes with *Evergreen*, with Findlay throwing in a dash of Zeppelin's *Ramble On*. The trio might be an unfamiliar format for the vocalist, but whenever they stumble tonight they quickly right the apple cart, and Findlay's humour, warmth and passion for storytelling easily smooth over any bumps on this road.

DAVID WEST



"The first set wraps with Findlay nailing the high notes of *I Am Snow*, with lovely playing from harpist Sarah Dean."

Leading Lady: Heather Findlay lights up Aces & Eights.

SOEN

VENUE ISLINGTON ACADEMY 2, LONDON
DATE 01/04/2017
SUPPORT Madder Mortem

A satisfying 'sold out' is stamped across the poster for tonight's gig. This is only Soen's second UK show and their first as headliners - they previously supported Amaranthe in 2012 - so selling out is still quite an achievement.

Opening for the Swedish five-piece are the quirky Madder Mortem. A few sound issues mean the Norwegians' captivating songs don't quite realise

their full potential, but singer Agnete M Kirkevaag's vocal gymnastics stretch out regardless. The audience go as wild for older tracks, like the melancholic *Desiderata*, as they do for new material from last year's ferocious *Red In Tooth And Claw*, such as closer *Underdogs*.

The smell of frankincense fills the air and the drums shift into a more central position in preparation for Soen. Huge applause fills the venue once Martin Lopez steps behind the kit and starts creating the off-kilter beat that brings opener *Canvas* to life. From here on, the band have the audience's full attention and yells of appreciation intersperse a

set that's split between 2014's *Tellurian* and new album *Lykaia*, with a nod to their Tool-like 2012 debut *Cognitive*.

Joel Ekelöf sings from the heart and his melodic vocals on songs like *Sectarian* cast wolverine magic over the evening. The clean-shaven frontman takes a more static approach to his headbanging, Viking-like bandmates, creating the perfect on-stage balance. Without fancy lighting or video screens, Soen rely purely on their slick sound and solid performance, shining on this compact stage without any distractions.

But the biggest sign of what they've achieved comes during the *Schism-*

esque *Fraccions*. As the song draws to a close, Ekelöf hands his microphone over to the crowd who finish it perfectly. Such a show of dedication clearly takes the band by surprise. It's Thor-like keyboard player Lars Åhlund who steps up to the mic and tells us, "You're fucking fantastic!" before he and his bandmates exit with the biggest smiles.

"One more song!" chant the audience, and Soen oblige with an encore of their melodic single *Tabula Rasa* and the mellow *Lucidity* from *Lykaia*. There are yells of, "Come back again!" and based on tonight's show, Prog hopes they will.

NATASHA SCHARF

ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY

VENUE	AATMA, MANCHESTER
DATE	27/04/2017
SUPPORT	VALERIAN SWING, GUG

Though they've only played a handful of live dates, Gug have already earned an enviable reputation. Partly that's due to their members – Tom Peters from Alpha Male Tea Party on drums, Dan Beesley, formerly of Cleft on baritone, and Ben Forrester from local grunge rockers Bad Grammar on vocals – but partly because their live shows have been so incendiary. Tonight's set is no different, and at their best, they're as powerful as any of the bands that the members have been in. There's some of the same progressive rock elements that were found in Cleft's music, but also a straightforward power that strips back some of the complexity and math rock tendencies to focus on laser-cut melodies.

Valerian Swing's music is dense and cinematic, recalling the sweeping, electronic post-rock of third-wave bands such as Maybeshewill or 65daysofstatic. Playing extensively from their excellent new album *Nights*, the songs don't necessarily translate as well live as on record. Though there's a grandiose feel to the music, the size of venue and sound system is somewhat limiting in terms of clarity. That said, tracks like *Five Walls* and the vertiginous riffs at the end of *Four Horses* prove highlights of the night.

With long-awaited new album *Health* on the way, Alpha Male Tea Party are looking to build upon the cult success won with their last album *Droids*. A leaner, tighter, and arguably heavier sound is what's on offer with the new tracks, blending in elements of technical and progressive metal into passages of much lighter in tone riff-heavy instrumental rock. If that sounds dizzying, then surprisingly it isn't; the band's knack has always been making the inaccessible palatable, and their new songs are no exception. *Nobody Had The Heart To Tell Him He Was On Fire* and *I Still Live At Home* are both a strangely emotive blend of their trademark elastic, legato riffs and groovier, metallic passages.

After that there's a diversion into the back catalogue. The audience reaction to the first chords of *You Eat Houdmous, Of Course You Listen To Genesis* is nothing short of ecstatic, and deservedly so; its soaring chorus marks surely one of the best instrumental guitar moments of the last 10 years. After several days on tour, the band look relaxed and any nerves that they could have had around playing the new songs seem to have been banished. They're charismatic performers, and although there's a glass ceiling in instrumental rock, Alpha Male Tea Party are surely one of the few bands with the songs, the presence and the attitude to try and break it.

ALEX LYNHAM

LONELY ROBOT

VENUE	SUB 89, READING
DATE	27/04/2017

Were an unsuspecting inhabitant of downtown Reading to have wandered randomly from an uninspiring suburban high street into Sub 89 on this mild Thursday evening, they'd surely wonder what lunacy they'd stumbled upon. On the venue's stage, a middle-aged man is wearing a replica NASA space suit, the audience rapt as he flits between thinly veiled metaphorical comment upon isolation and humanity's pre-programming within today's society and blasting out searing guitar solos.

Well fear not, Concerned of Berkshire, for this is no alien invasion, nor clandestine David Icke-esque public gathering of lizard worshippers. John Mitchell of Frost*, It Bites and Arena fame is here to launch a second album recorded in the guise of his sci-fi alter ego the Lonely Robot.

Given that said disc, *The Big Dream*, will be heard for the first time 24 hours later, Mitchell is wise in sticking largely to the songs from its star-studded and extremely well received 2015 predecessor *Please Come Home*. Mitchell's musicianly reputation and gregarious nature have drawn along several famous friends in the crowd, including John Beck from It Bites and Headspace's Damian Wilson. Peter Cox, the Go West frontman who voiced the first album's *The Boy In The Radio*, is here but remains in the shadows, though former Touchstone vocalist Kim Seviour opts to join in with a sublime *Oubliette*. However, in keeping with the new album's more



"Mitchell's musicianly reputation and gregarious nature have drawn along several famous friends in the crowd."

stripped-down direction, additional guests are conspicuous by their absence.

Sporting that eBay-acquired interplanetary apparel of his, our local lad is the undoubted star of the show tonight, but my... what a backing band he has. This early in the campaign there are some furtive nods as prompts to solos and endings, but who cares? On loan from Fish and the excellent Tilt, Steve Vanstis supplies fluid, melodic bass lines. Keys player Liam Holmes colours and even thrusts along the overall sound. His octopus-like solo spot to commence the encore and a frenetic display during *God Vs Man* forces Mitchell to announce of his Frost* bandmate and Steven Wilson associate: "Mr Craig Blundell on drums... he's not shit." Shame about the Celine Dion T-shirt, mind.

Three unheard tunes are aired. "This is a slow new song, so you're doubly in trouble," Mitchell grins of *In Floral Green*, a track that reminds us of all the tricks contained in the band's locker with its gently ascending mood, nagging hookline and a soaring, scintillating guitar motif.

A more upbeat and harder-hitting pair, *Sigma* and *Everglow*, are saved till the encore, by which time this fine band has Sub 89 eating out of its hands.

So, are Lonely Robot pop masquerading as prog, or is it the other way around? With songs as good as this, frankly, the debate becomes pointless.

DAVE LING

Up, Up And Away: John Mitchell dons his space suit.



Kim Seviour joins in the fun.



THE CAN PROJECT

VENUE THE BARBICAN, LONDON
DATE 08/04/2017

Irmin Schmidt had originally envisaged a career as an orchestral conductor until he applied himself to unlearning that tradition in the late 60s with Can. Since the group's demise, he has become established as a composer – particularly of soundtracks – and tonight he conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in *Can Dialog*, co-composed with Gregor Schwellenbach.



Irmin Schmidt conducts an orchestral evening.

Although based on pieces by the group, it's a long way from the sort of tacked-on orchestrations that bedevil the worst of this kind of venture. Indeed, Schmidt proves his bandmate Holger Czukay's old maxim that no piece by Can is ever finished by subtly weaving themes into these orchestral fantasias, which at times are rhythmically akin to minimalists like Steve Reich or John Adams, with spikier elements reminiscent of Bartók, Stravinsky and Charles Ives. The version of *Halleluwah* is only recognisable when the tuba plays the bass line, prompting the woodwind to spiral off like Schmidt's keyboards on the record. On *Spoon*, sweeping atonal string glissandi are etched with sharp, bright brass. *La Ferosa*, a Schmidt original, is cut from similar cloth.

The Can Project decided to play on without drummer Jaki Liebezeit, who sadly died in January. The group is Deb Googe (My Bloody Valentine) on bass, James Sedwards (Guapo) on guitar, Pat Thomas on keys, The Oscillation's Tom Relleen on electronics and Valentina Magaletti on drums. Steve Shelley is also on drums, and his former Sonic Youth bandmate, guitarist Thurston Moore, is musical director. Vocalist Malcolm Mooney heads the band.

"With a combination of electronics, keyboards and some flamboyant guitar, the stage is awash with sound."

Not only is no Can piece ever finished, they've always had a unsentimental view of their back catalogue, so it's fair game. Their set starts with *Outside My Door* then *Father Cannot Yell*, *The Thief*, and a thrilling, relentless version of *Uphill*. A few fans, though, are left scratching their heads to *Deadly Doris*, a Mooney-era outtake only recently unearthed.

But as the set continues, the double drum line-up – which works brilliantly on *Mother Sky* – comes across as heavy-handed in places compared to the lean, hypnotic playing on the original songs. With a combination of electronics, keyboards and some flamboyant guitar, the stage is awash with sound. The person next to me says, "I've taken a load of drugs and it's not doing it for me. Sounds like a cross between the Stooges and Hawkwind." It's certainly a combination that appeals to this writer.

The evening peaks with the rotating polyrhythms of *Yoo Doo Right*, as Mooney, who has sung convincingly throughout, shimmies around the stage, inhabiting the music. "This is much better," says my neighbour. He is right.

MIKE BARNES



The Can Project: doing right.

SUNN O)))

VENUE THE BARBICAN, LONDON
DATE 21/03/2017
SUPPORT HILDUR GUÐNADÓTTIR

For most bands with roots in the underground metal scene, the Barbican would seem an unnatural venue, but for Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson's crew, doubling as a flesh'n' blood art installation has long been part of the deal. All that remains is to see if the building collapses as they hit peak rumble.

Sunn alumnus and current live member Hildur Guðnadóttir contributes

a spellbinding set of her own, doing extraordinary things with voice and cello. Her ability to transform feedback and hazy harmonics into startling and otherworldly washes of sound, all underpinned by a refined sense of dynamics, is nothing short of miraculous.

But it soon becomes apparent that no amount of preparation can protect our fragile synapses from the bewildering avalanche to come. Sunn O)))'s set begins with becloaked vocalist Attila Csihar, spotlight and shrouded in dry ice, delivering a perverse and ominous solo piece, replete with maniacal hand gestures and evil preacher charisma. It's a wilfully

obtuse and slightly overlong precursor to the arrival of the band, but when O'Malley and Anderson's guitars finally erupt through their wall of speakers, the entire room is drawn into the eye of the storm.

A thick fog of dry ice is belching from every corner of the stage and, thanks to some inspired lighting, turns the strange vista before us into something akin to a lost scene from Alejandro Jodorowsky's surrealist movie masterpiece *The Holy Mountain*. On a musical level, they are on astonishing form, too. Passages that recall *Aghartha* (from 2009's *Monoliths And Dimensions*) and certain parts of *Kannon*, the band's most recent studio album, are

just about the only breadcrumbs offering a route to familiar realities. Sunn O))) are conjuring fresh magic here, forging a path through swamps of skull-shattering low-end, bursts of feedback and noise, and one bewitching passage interspersed with strident, melancholy trombone.

Even at these insane volume levels, every sound is clear and rich in emotional power. Ending with what sounds like a mutant version of *CandleGoat*, Sunn O))) have never looked or sounded more monumental and, against the odds, they have somehow made this highbrow Mecca seem like their natural habitat.

DOM LAWSON

WOLF PEOPLE

VENUE	THE TRADES CLUB, HEBDEN BRIDGE
DATE	01/04/2017

With the swirling lava lamp visuals and preponderance of facial fungus on display, stepping into The Trades Club tonight is like moving through a portal into 1969 just as the exponents of hard psychedelia were splintering off to explore proto-metal in one direction, or easing into the bucolic comedowns that would produce evocative acid folk in the other. That said, it's a description that befits the Pennine town of Hebden Bridge, the last bastion of bohemia, pretty much any day of the week.

The biggest surprise about Wolf People is not only how loud they are or the fact that they have never previously played this spiritual home-from-home, where the vibe is one of anti-corporate independence (there is real ale in glasses, no need for security, cast members of *Emmerdale* wandering in and out), but just how much heavier their sound is. What on record is melodically tempered on occasion cracks like thunder when played live, the brute force of the quartet tonight summoning the spirits of Cream, Pink Fairies, Groundhogs and especially obscure proto-metal pioneers Iron Claw. Both frontman Jack Sharp and guitarist Joe Hollick's playing is revelatory and transportative, the pair trading liquid riffs with jaw-dropping fluidity. And Wolf People are very much all about the riffs as they stretch their songs to twice their usual length in this live setting, before wheeling away unexpectedly down dizzying, kaleidoscopic wormholes with a hungry, lupine ferocity.

But there is more going on here, too. On the dark incantation of *Ninth Night* the quartet - completed by bassist Dan Davies and drummer Tom Watt - evoke the ancient and insidious mythology of the Hand Of Glory - the stolen hand of a hanged man dipped in wax - while *Night Witch* contains within it the echoing voices of an England past, rising from the foetid loam to walk the land again. For Wolf People are a progressive folk band at heart, but one in love with volume, fashioning a bombardment of the senses and - perhaps crucially - displaying a love of music that goes well beyond the genre. There's a swing to Watt's playing that comes from listening to hip-hop pioneers such as Dilla and Wu Tang Clan that elevates the band high above the usual retrogressive 4/4 lumpen clatter and into the realm of the utterly contemporary. So while the aesthetic might be 1969, the sound is 2019.

Wolf People encore tonight with two songs that perfectly showcase their yin and yang: the pastoral *Kingfisher*, whose glissando-like melody summons images of remote rivers descending through rugged landscapes, and thrusting closer *NRR*, a high-octane boogie rock ritual that sends the crowd reeling into the night, wide-eyed and drunk on beautiful noise.

BEN MYERS

ROADBURN FESTIVAL

VENUE	TILBURG, THE NETHERLANDS
DATE	20-23/04/2017

Roadburn Festival boasts a brilliantly diverse line-up. Though it primarily attracts music fans of the bearded and black leather-clad variety, the bill means you can go from headbanging to doom to being mesmerised by a jazz sax solo to dancing your socks off to electronica, all in the space of a few hours. And if you find the time for a musical break, there are in-depth panel discussions, interviews, signings and a nearby strip of cafés to chill in with a cherry beer.

Crippled Black Phoenix are the first band to grace the main stage. Their swooping, Floyd-tinged heavy rock is a smooth way to ease into the festival, and though it's early in the day, they pull in a good crowd. Soon after, we reach more extreme realms with **Wolves In The Throne Room**, who don't just put on a show, but an entire assault on the senses to a packed main room: their rich yet pulverising churns of progressive black metal pour from the stage with flashes of light as the band perform in near-darkness.

Legendary French collective **Magma's** mega set on the Friday is a show of two halves; first up is part one of *Theusz Hamtaahk*. Its juddery, jangly, syncopated build with swirling pianos and multi-part chants no doubt bemuse any Magma virgins who wander into the main room - it sounds almost like it could be the soundtrack to a trippy children's show from the 1970s. The second half, their most famous work *Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandöh*, is just as avant-garde but more accessible, rumbling along with a mesmerising groove and enchanting the audience. The various

members move across the stage, all playing their parts



"Gong deliver a joyous, kaleidoscopic avalanche of psychedelic magic."



Gong's Kavus Torabi: Daevid Allen would be proud.

with passion - and when he's not thundering away at the drums, Christian Vander takes to the mic. It's a bizarre, beautiful and entirely enthralling ritual of a performance.

Hedvig Mollestad Trio play over in the tiny, jam-packed Extaase bar. Led by Hedvig herself, the Norwegian three-piece formed out of a jazz programme at music college, but their expansive instrumental sounds have a bluesy, heavy hard rock edge that include a double bass.

Mancunian psych subversives **Gnod** have Roadburn's freewheeling spirit screeching through their veins. Their multi-set rampage begins with a barrage of squalling electronic abstractions, continues with Friday's thunderous, guitar-driven turbo-Krautrock extravaganza and peaks with Saturday's genuinely synapse-shredding tribute to Faust and Tony Conrad's seminal drone masterpiece *Outside The Dream Syndicate*. It is all, without exception, insanely exciting.

Instinctively unpredictable, Norway's **Ulver** are on a shadowy synth-pop kick at the moment, and while new album *The Assassination Of Julius Caesar* never quite hits the mark, those same songs make perfect sense here. With a stunning light show and plenty of between-song ambience, it's another stylish triumph for these inveterate weirdoes.

Gong are on blistering form and deliver a joyous, kaleidoscopic avalanche of psychedelic magic, veering from old classics like *You Can't Kill Me* to new flights of unhinged fancy like towering closer *The Unspeakable Stands Revealed* with the featherweight grace of skilled veterans. When they launch into what frontman Kavus Torabi proclaims as "the greatest riff of all time" during *Master Builder*, the room is instantly awash with grinning faces and blissful euphoria, just as the late, great Daevid Allen intended.

HANNAH MAY KILROY/DOM LAWSON



Magma's set is trippy to the max.

A large, stylized fist is raised in the air, set against a vibrant rainbow background. The fist is rendered in a realistic, almost sculptural style, with fingers curled and the thumb extended.

Ritchie Blackmore's **Rainbow**

RAINBOW IN ROCK

PLAYING THE CLASSIC ROCK ANTHEMS OF RAINBOW AND DEEP PURPLE
FIRST UK TOUR IN OVER 20 YEARS

PLUS SUPPORTS

SWEET
(LONDON & BIRMINGHAM)

MOSTLY AUTUMN
(GLASGOW)

Serpentyne
(MANCHESTER)

SAT 17 JUNE - LONDON THE O2 - STONE FREE FESTIVAL

ALSO FEATURING: BLUE OYSTER CULT • THE ANSWER • GUN & MANY MORE - STONEFREEFESTIVAL.COM

THU 22 JUNE - MANCHESTER ARENA

SUN 25 JUNE - GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO

WED 28 JUNE - BIRMINGHAM GENTING ARENA

TICKETLINE.CO.UK • MYTICKET.CO.UK • SEETICKETS.COM • AXS.COM

BLACKMORESNIGHT.COM [f/RITCHIEBLACKMORE](https://www.facebook.com/ritchieblackmore)

A KENNEDY STREET ENTERPRISES, KILIMANJARO AND THE O2 PRESENTATION

POND

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

Methyl Ethel

THU 15 JUNE
BRIGHTON **CONCORDE 2**

FRI 16 JUNE
LONDON **O2 FORUM**
KENTISH TOWN

SAT 17 JUNE
LEEDS **STYLUS**

MON 19 JUNE
GLASGOW
THE ART SCHOOL

TUE 20 JUNE
MANCHESTER **GORILLA**

WED 21 JUNE
BRISTOL **THEKLA**

AN SJM CONCERTS PRESENTATION
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH 13 ARTISTS



PONDBAND.NET NEW ALBUM **THE WEATHER** OUT NOW

GIGSANDTOURS.COM / TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

SUN. 11 JUNE 2017

PBII

ALBUM RELEASE ROCKET

SAT. 19 AUGUST 2017

MYSTERY

10TH ANNIVERSARY BENEATH
THE VEIL OF WINTER'S FACE

FRI. 1 SEPTEMBER 2017

BRYAN CUMMINS

PLAYS PETER GABRIEL

SAT. 2 SEPTEMBER 2017

INFLOYD

THE FINAL CUT & MORE

THU. 7 SEPTEMBER 2017

PROCOL HARUM

50TH ANNIVERSARY

FRI. 8 SEPTEMBER 2017

**THE TANGENT
KARMAKANIC**

THU. 14 SEPTEMBER 2017

**THE PINEAPPLE
THIEF**

SAT. 23 SEPTEMBER 2017

SOUTHERN EMPIRE

KARIBOW

CO-HEADLINE SHOW

SAGA

40TH ANNIVERSARY

THE FINAL CHAPTER TOUR 2017



BEST OF SHOW

SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER

cultuurpodium

BOERDERIJ

WWW.BOERDERIJ.ORG

ZOETERMEER, THE NETHERLANDS

TICKETS: WWW.TICKETMASTER.NL

SAT. 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

MARATHON

THE FIRST RUN BY ENORM

SAT. 14 OCTOBER 2017

CARPET CRAWLERS

THE INVISIBLE TOUCH TOUR

SUN. 22 OCTOBER 2017

SAGA

THE FINAL CHAPTER TOUR

SAT. 28 OCTOBER 2017

PENDRAGON

SAT. 4 NOVEMBER 2017

STILLMARILLION

SAT. 11 NOVEMBER 2017

MANFRED MAN'S

EARTH BAND

SAT. 25 NOVEMBER 2017

PFM

SAT. 2 DECEMBER 2017

MOSTLY AUTUMN

SAT. 9 DECEMBER 2017

THRESHOLD

DAMNATION ANGELS + DAY SIX

SAT. 16 DECEMBER 2017

IQ

THE CHRISTMAS BASH



Recycle your magazine and
seven days later it could come
back as your newspaper.

 **recycle**

The possibilities are endless.

www.recyclenow.com

Where's home?

Aberdeen. The core members of the band are all still here.

Your earliest prog memory?

In 1972 my girlfriend at school bought us tickets to see Lindisfarne at Aberdeen Music Hall. The support was a band I'd never heard of, Genesis. My abiding memory is hearing the opening chords of *Watcher Of The Skies*, and Peter Gabriel in a red dress and a fox's head. I was blown away. That was me hooked on prog for life.

First prog record bought?

After that gig I went straight out and bought *Foxtrot*, *Nursery Cryme* and *Trespass* at Bruce Millers. It was Aberdeen's best music shop – they had booths so you could listen to the records first.

First prog gig attended?

About a year after Genesis I went to see Yes with Rick Wakeman at the Music Hall; it must have been the *Close To The Edge* tour. I saw Chris Squire play bass and thought, "I'm going to do *that*."

Favourite gadget?

My iPad. I remember Colin our drummer got one on the day they came out. He brought it to the studio and we all said, "What's the point of that?" After five minutes playing with it, we all got the point.

Any guilty musical pleasures?



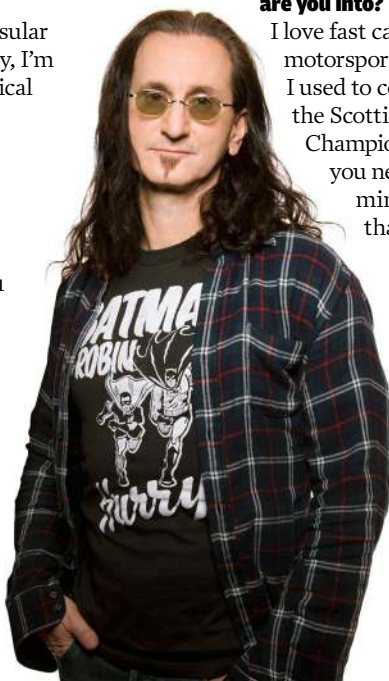
Sweet Fanny Adams by The Sweet. It's glam, but there are some absolutely kick-ass songs on there.

Your specialist subject on Mastermind?

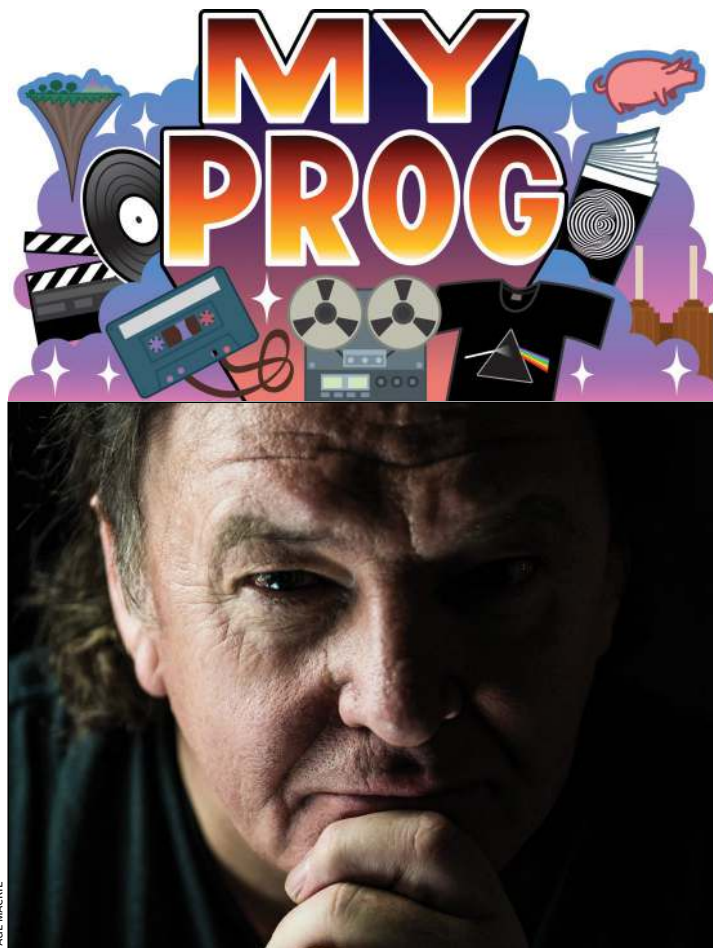
Possibly the Peninsular Wars. I love history, I'm a big fan of [historical novelist] Bernard Cornwell's books.

Your biggest prog extravagance?

My black Rickenbacker 4001 bass, which I bought as a lad from Bruce Millers. It was £350, eye-wateringly expensive at the time, but I still have it to this day.



PAUL MACRIE



Pallas' Graeme Murray

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon.**

Favourite prog venue?

The Marquee [in London] was just legendary. We have so many fond memories of playing there. I actually shed a tear when I heard it was sold and was going to be turned into a car park. I mean, it was a dump, but it was an iconic dump. It was like The Cavern Club to us.

Outside of prog, what are you into?

I love fast cars and motorsport generally. I used to compete in the Scottish Rally Championships, but you need to be minted to do that now.

What do you collect?

Speeding tickets!

Your all-time prog hero?

That's got to be Geddy Lee.

I really enjoy listening to Rush, I love his voice. He's a great player.

The last prog album you bought?

The last-but-one Muse album [*The 2nd Law*]. And Comedy Of Errors supported us recently so I bought a copy of their *Fanfare & Fantasy*.

Last prog gig you saw?

Rush at the SECC in Glasgow [May 2013]. It was the *Clockwork Angels* tour. The set was two and a half hours long. They must've been knackered!

Ever had a prog date?

Well, I got into prog by going on that date to see Lindisfarne with

"I saw Chris Squire play bass and thought, 'I'm going to do *that*.'"



Genesis. My wife's a big Kate Bush fan, but on the whole she's a prog widow.

Who do you call in the prog fraternity for a good night out?

Fish. Back in the day, when Marillion came to Scotland they'd play with us, and we'd play with them in London. We've had quite a few interesting nights out.

Most important prog song?

ELP's *Karn Evil 9* from *Brain Salad Surgery*.

Prog muso you'd like to work with?

I'm a big Floyd fan, so David Gilmour. Or Geddy Lee, but it'd be weird having two bass players...



Which prog album always gets you in a good mood?

Hold Your Fire by Rush. It dates back to when I met my wife and we were first going out. Lots of happy memories.

The best prog gig you ever saw?

I saw Queen on their *Night At The Opera* tour. They were astonishingly good, and their energy at that time was incredible.

Pick us a good proggy read.

Bernard Cornwell's *Warlord Chronicles* trilogy, starting with *The Winter King*. It's the Arthur story, and it's absolutely brilliantly done.

Your all-time favourite prog album cover?

I'm going to be a tosser and say *The Sentinel*. I love Patrick Woodruffe's work, God love him.

When we saw the artwork he'd done for that album we're blown away, it was so beautiful, so detailed. I still look at that to this day.



What are you up to at the moment?

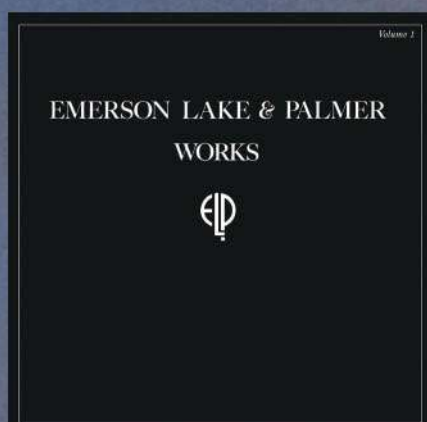
We're working away on new Pallas material at the moment. We're currently interacting with each other's ideas and shaping them into songs. We're still around!

See www.pallasofficial.com.



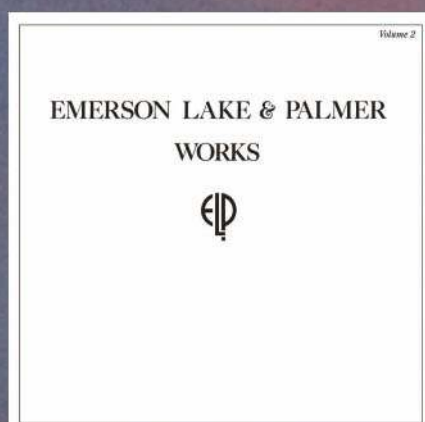
EMERSON LAKE & PALMER

REMASTERED CLASSIC ALBUMS FROM THE PROGRESSIVE ROCK SUPERGROUP NEW RE-ISSUES ON CD, LP & DOWNLOAD



WORKS VOLUME 1

- **2CD & digital / HD:** New 24Bit/96kHz HD remaster, from the analogue tapes for the first time, of the original 1977 double album
- **2LP:** Original artwork and triple gatefold, double LP sleeve
- Features the hit single 'Fanfare For The Common Man'
- ELP's fifth studio album



WORKS VOLUME 2

- **2CD & digital / HD:** New 24Bit/96kHz HD remaster, from the analogue tapes for the first time, of the original 1977 album, plus 'Works Live' (2017 Remaster)
- **1LP:** Original artwork and sleeve
- ELP's sixth studio album
- Includes the hit single 'I Believe In Father Christmas'



LOVE BEACH

- **1CD & digital / HD:** New 24Bit/96kHz HD remaster, from the analogue tapes for the first time, of the original 1978 album, plus previously unreleased alternative track mixes and 'Love Beach' studio rehearsal recordings
- **1LP:** Original artwork and sleeve
- ELP's seventh studio album

All formats expertly remastered by Andy Pearce. CD booklets feature recent Chris Welch interviews with Keith Emerson, Greg Lake and Carl Palmer. Foreword on LP audio by Greg Lake.

OUT 26TH MAY

BMG



www.facebook.com/EmersonLakePalmer
www.emersonlakepalmer.com | www.bmg.com

hmv
hmv.com

ana_thema

the optimist

9 JUNE 2017

NEW STUDIO ALBUM

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCK VANGUARDS RETURN

"ANATHEMA HAVE DELIVERED THE ALBUM OF
THEIR CAREER THUS FAR. A DELIGHTFUL,
EMOTIONAL MASTERPIECE."

JERRY EWING (EDITOR)

PROG

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY / CD+DVD / CD / HEAVYWEIGHT 2LP / DELUXE 4CD BOOK SET / DIGITAL DOWNLOAD FROM KSCOPEMUSIC.COM/STORE OR OMERCH.EU

anathema.ws kscopemusic.com/ana omerch.eu



SUNDAY 11TH
Zippo Encore Stage



k scope