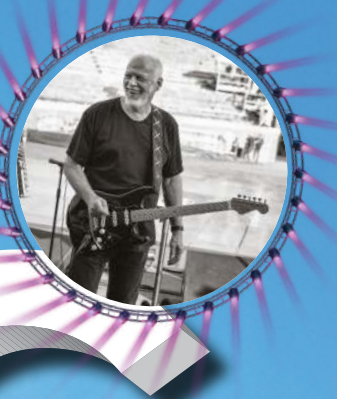


EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

DAVID GILMOUR

"The question of whether we will reform will never go away."



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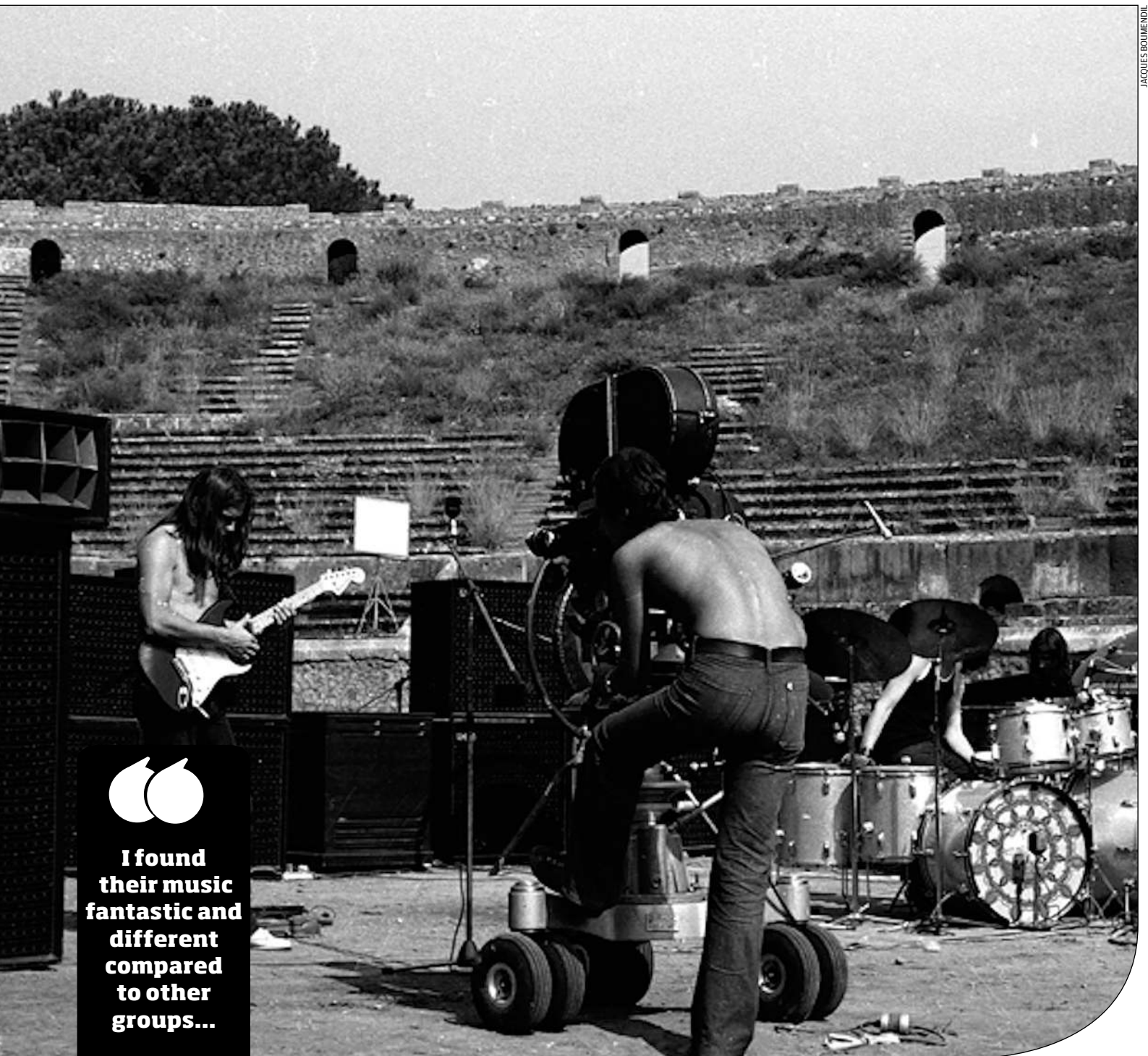


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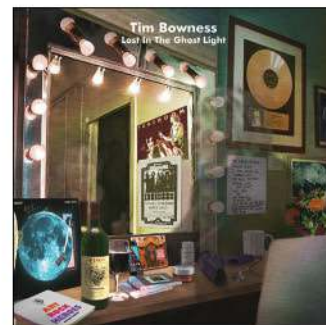
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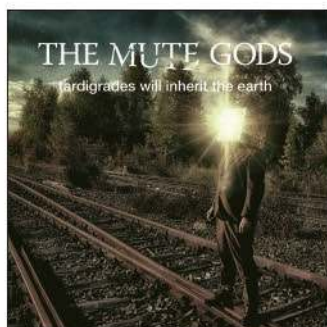
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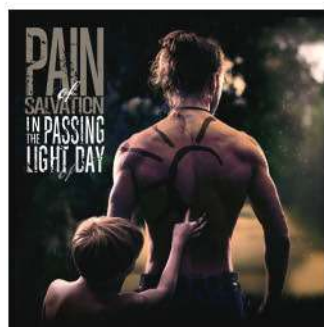
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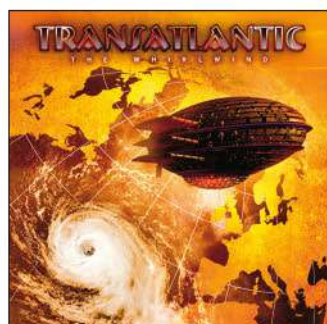
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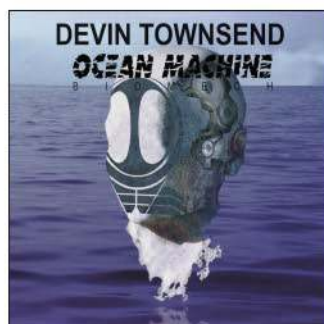
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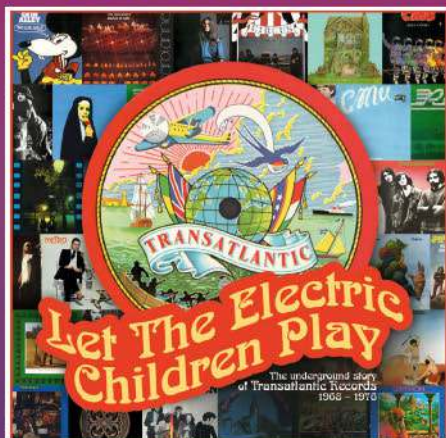


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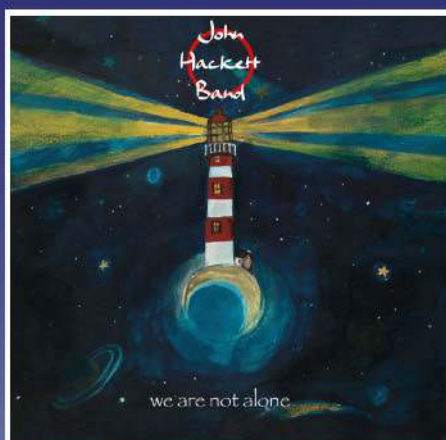


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THE JOHN HACKETT BAND

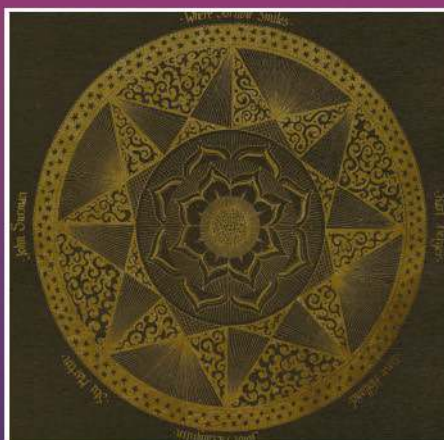


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- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of the wonderful new studio album by The John Hackett Band; "We Are Not Alone". Includes a bonus disc, "Another Live", recorded at the Classic Rock Society in 2016 featuring live performances of songs from John's previous albums "Checking Out of London" and "Another Life".

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- This release fully restores the original album artwork and features an illustrated booklet with a new essay and exclusive interviews with Dave Greenslade and Clem Clempson.

'TRUTH: THE COLUMBIA RECORDINGS 1969-1970'

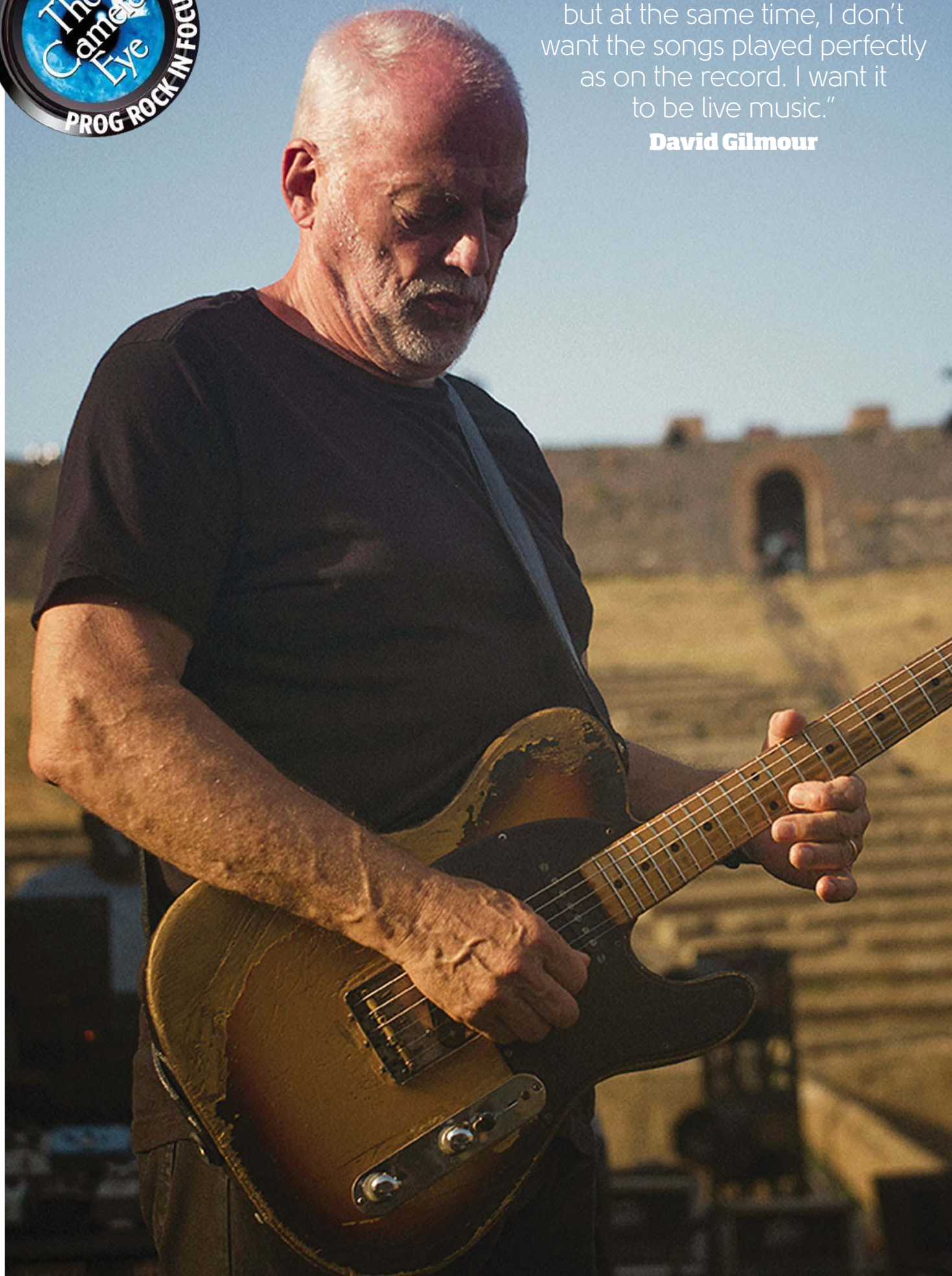
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- The anthology features an illustrated booklet that includes a new essay with an exclusive interview with Flock guitarist Fred Glickstein.



"I'm into perfection in a way, but at the same time, I don't want the songs played perfectly as on the record. I want it to be live music."

David Gilmour





So the day that we put this current issue of *Prog* to bed, last month's cover star still seems to be dominating proceedings. I refer of course, to Steven Wilson, whose new album *To The Bone* sits at No. 1 in the midweek album chart, which means it's almost certainly going to chart on Friday in the Top 10 – his highest ever chart position. It's not the pop album many feared, rather a seemingly natural progression from *Hand.Cannot.Erase*. Still very proggy, but perhaps with a bit more of a contemporary air.

Such success brings with it the attention of the wider media, and this morning I was interviewed by a national newspaper to discuss whether "prog is back". I preferred to suggest it had never gone away and reminded them that months after we launched as a magazine back in 2009, the BBC were on the phone asking similar questions because Muse were at No.1 with *The Resistance*, while Porcupine Tree were also in the Top 30 with *The Incident*. "Was prog back?" they asked.

To see Steven finally get to emulate Muse is great news for all of us (and yes, I am aware there will be naysaying grunts of disapproval from certain corners of the Internet). Prog isn't "back". It really never went away. But to see an artist who does things on their own terms surely serves as inspiration to young musicians starting out today, as well as the rather nice feeling that we proggers were right all along. It's a good day to be a prog fan, you mark my words.

Pink Floyd are a band who reached such lofty heights many years ago, and this issue we dip back to 1971 when they filmed that legendary performance at Pompeii and look at guitarist David Gilmour's return to the ampitheatre last year. A fascinating story, I hope you all agree.

Next issue we'll be bringing you all the news from this year's Progressive Music Awards. On the back of the news I write about above, it's a great time to be celebrating such great music. So prog on, my friends. And on, and on, and on...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



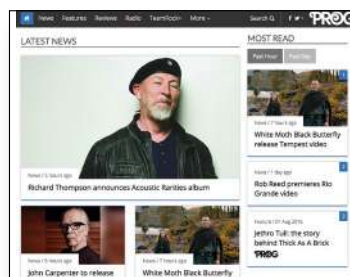
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Bloody Well Write

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NEVER READ ABOUT YOUR HEROES...

I have to be honest, I haven't read your magazine since cancelling my subscription a couple of years ago. However, as a big fan of all things Steven Wilson, I had to shell out the money to buy this issue. I was initially excited to read it. I was kind of glad to hear he was making a more accessible album. While I like his last few albums, I found them much less accessible than the last five-six studio albums he made with Porcupine Tree. I actually like most of his shorter, more concise songs, so the idea of a whole album that might be 'easier' to listen to might be a nice switch after the (for me at least) more challenging listens of much of his last two solo albums. As I got further into the interview, I starting seeing him in a different light than I had portrayed him. I thought of him as a pioneer, someone who shunned becoming a sell-out to instead make music he believed in. That image of him was destroyed. Instead, I was reminded of an interview/argument he had a few years back where he basically insulted Roine Stolt and Spock's Beard for making music that was too much a copy of 70s bands like Yes and were not really original (which I thought very odd since he pretty much started out as a carbon copy Pink Floyd). I initially dismissed that as maybe some kind of odd one-off. Now, after hearing him whine and complain about not being popular enough and being jealous of Thom Yorke, sadly, I have a totally different opinion of him. He came across as a spoiled, ungrateful brat. He did not seem thankful at all of his legions of fans (myself included) who not only bought everything he's done, but turned my young children on to his music: my 20 year old daughter has recorded videos on YouTube playing piano and singing his songs. I'm really not sure how this will affect my future as his fan. I was initially excited for the new album. Now I'm not so sure anymore...

Chris in CT

GET WITH THE TIMES

I find myself fuming at an insane comment I have just read in your



Above: Steven Wilson, *Prog* 79.



Steven Wilson: one reader wasn't happy with his interview in *Prog* 79...

LASSE ROILE

otherwise excellent and essential magazine, of which I've been a reader since issue one. In this month's *Prog* on Your Shout [in *The Outer Limits*, *Prog* 79] a so-called reader has the audacity to claim that there has been nothing prog since 1973. How can anyone who reads the magazine make such a preposterous claim? Your magazine has covered lots of modern prog bands, from the 80s onwards, even the old guard of prog released some excellent, career-defining albums after 1973. I suggest that this Mr Bumbridge get off his bum and check out many of the new and wonderful modern prog bands that are out there and give them the support that a new band will desperately seek. Apologies for the rant but people like him make me so furious. Other than that, keep up the excellent work.

Chris

THE GREAT YES DEBATE

Normally, I consider myself a fairly 'live and let live' kind of guy on the vexatious subject of classic bands and their legacies, but after several years raising the odd eyebrow at some of the more impassioned correspondence in *Bloody Well Write*, my patience has finally snapped.

Yes, here's looking at you, Steve Whiteside [whose letter appeared in *Prog* 79]. I have never been able to understand the derision that some

Yes fans, especially those who were contemporaries of the band in the late 60s and early 70s, routinely deploy to describe Yes music of the 80s and beyond. I had the great pleasure to meet my hero, Trevor Rabin, at an ARW show this year (such a warm, generous and friendly guy), and it meant so much to thank him for sustaining Yes during their 90125 renaissance. This undoubtedly opened a door to earlier Yes music that many 40-somethings like myself walked through, extending the reach of the band to a new generation. For me, the past and present of Yes are indivisible.

This notion that a band can no longer be regarded as a going concern or the 'definitive' band unless its line-up corresponds to a period that the self-appointed keepers of the flame anoint, is just ludicrous. Surely by now, and as the group members themselves affirm, Yes is a collective, a spirit, an idea, as much as it is a traditional four- or five-piece.

So "Owner Of A Lonely Heart isn't fit to lick *Roundabout's* boots"? Mr Whiteside, you're welcome to your opinion but I'm sure that several million people would disagree with you.

And "none of the modern line-ups have produced material remotely close to classic Yes"? No, no, no. How can you dismiss with such faint praise moments on 90125, *Talk*, *The Ladder*, *Magnification* or even (yes, even) *Fly From Here*, that are truly worthy of a band with a legacy befitting the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame.

TWEET TALK

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DAN BRIGGS

@danbriggsx
Halfway through rhythm guitars and bass!
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GEOFFREY DOWNES

@asiageoff
I must confess that I have never seen one episode of *Game Of Thrones*. Have I missed out on a major life experience, or is it a blessing?



MARIUSZ DUDA

@Marivsz_Riv
Polish mountains... :)

LETTER



I totally understand what Fish is saying about touring and doing gigs where he can do more than break even. With Spotify and streaming music, fewer and fewer people buy albums, and so, to make money, the artist has to tour. However, touring can only be viable where it turns a profit. We should all understand this and thank God for the gigs the bands do put on, and do what we can to travel distances to see them and support them.

In the 70s a hot single could make a band millions. Today, even the top bands and artists don't make enough on a hit single to not have to tour. Streaming should be used to listen and trial an album but we should all go out and buy it if we like it and help today's bands and artists to make money.

Jon Pickles

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

I am, and always will be, grateful to see any members of Yes perform together or as individuals. They've more than earned the right to please themselves. Anyone who saw Jon Anderson roll back the decades with astonishing vocal performances with Anderson Rabin Wakeman this year will attest to being blessed, but that doesn't discredit what Jon Davison is trying to do in keeping the spirit of Yes music alive on stage with the other Yes magnates.

I end as I began. Live and let live. And long live Yes!

Andy Dodd, Barcelona

PROG OVERLOAD!

Another stimulating read with *Prog* 79 this month, which once again proves that there is so much prog out there that it is difficult for the average fan to keep up with it all. I'm not complaining, but

prog as a genre takes in so many diverse influences, that inevitably some are loved more than others.

I've been listening to your *Prog* Magazine Show on Team Rock Radio which is hugely entertaining and enlightening and helps to narrow down the new artists and material for further consideration. For that I am very grateful, but I have to ask: why only one hour per week? If one genre of music deserves and perhaps necessitates more time, it's prog!

Can I just add, Carl Palmer 2017's *Prog* God Award is richly deserved, as anyone who saw him in his prime will testify! I remember seeing ELP at Wembley back in the 70s and being blown away by his sheer talent and technical ability. *Prog*'s greatest ever drummer? — probably!

Keep up the good work.

Jerry Clark

Below: The ARW branch of Yes.



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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 Mark Wheatley

Designer Louise Brock

CONTRIBUTORS

Joe Banks, Mike Barnes, Geoff Barton, 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 Keavill, Dom Lawson, Paul Lester, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Roger Lotting, Alex Lynham, Rachel Mann, Rhodi Marsden, Clay Marshall, Julian Marszalek, Giulia Mascheroni, Greg Moffitt, Grant Moon, Ben Myers, 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, Philip Wilding, Rich Wilson, Sarah Worsley, Holly Wright

Cover Jacques Boumendil

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ADVERTISING

Media packs are available on request

Commercial Director Clare Dove

clare.dove@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

INTERNATIONAL

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department to discuss partnership opportunities

International Licensing Director Matt Ellis

matt.ellis@futurenet.com

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Overseas order line and enquiries +44 (0) 344 848 2852

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Head of subscriptions Sharon Todd

CIRCULATION

Circulation Director Darren Pearce 01202 586200

PRODUCTION

Head of Production US & UK Mark Constance

Production Project Manager Clare Scott

Advertising Production Manager Joanne Crosby

Digital Editions Controller Jason Hudson

Production Controller Keely Miller

MANAGEMENT

Finance & Operations Director Marco Peroni

Creative Director Aaron Asadi

Art & Design Director Ross Andrews

Editor-in-Chief Scott Rowley

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NICK BEGGS

@NickBeggs
Having a good old Prog snog before going on tonight



BRUCE SOORD

@bsoord
New @ProgMagazineUK just dropped through my door. Dave Everley's pieces on Yes - best thing I've read in years! There's no Yes without drama

INTRO

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

THE HOWES' OTHERWORLDLY DELIGHTS

Yes guitar virtuoso teams up with his multi-instrumentalist son for an album of cosmic proportions!

► **Steve Howe** has teamed up with his younger son, Virgil, on a new instrumental album, called *Nexus*. It'll be released via InsideOut on November 17 and, says Steve, the recording will surprise a lot of fans.

"I've done a wealth of different things but I haven't done anything like this before. I feel it's steering me in a different direction," he tells *Prog* via the phone in the US, where Yes are currently on tour. "It's a full-on collaborative album, not a duet. It's been refreshing to work with Virgil and we've pulled this beautiful album together. Although it's got shades of mellow music, it doesn't sit still. It moves across electronic music and my guitars — this is an opportunity to discover what Virgil's been doing on the side of his drumming with Little Barrie. He's got a hard rock and funk side but this has totally different shades."

The idea for the recording came about last year and is based around piano and synth pieces that the rock drummer has been sending his dad over the last few years. When Howe Sr realised the tunes weren't being used anywhere, he picked out his favourites and added guitar parts, which Virgil then reworked into full songs.

"I tried to bring a different style of guitar, both in the instrument and the styling of my guitar work," he explains. "Some have my famous ES-175 sound, for others, we moved onto acoustic guitars and used things like Dobros. I got the colourful guitar approach onto the album, that's what I call guitar texturing. Virgil then brought in more orchestration and that started building the strength of the album. I would say it has a current feel. We didn't need anyone else, we didn't need anything else — that's why it's just Virgil and Steve Howe."

"Most of the credit goes to Virgil on this; it's Virgil's bed and melodies but I've come in to add a little bit more. The proportion that he wrote is reflected in the way that my name is second on the writing and the performing because he's the one putting the big stamp down here. What I like about [the songs], and the reason I've put this together, is that he has a melodic virtue in his music and that's something I can never ignore. When somebody comes to you with a tune, it's a tune — it's not a hodgepodge of ideas or beats, it's actually a tune and I think that's a great strength he's got."

Although Virgil's synth playing can be heard on Howe's *Spectrum*, this is the first time the pair have fully collaborated on a studio album. The

finished recording comprises 11 instrumental pieces with spacey titles such as *Passing Titan*, *Moon Rising*, and *Dawn Mission* — which at just over five minutes, is the longest track on the album. Then there's *Nick's Star*, a song that Virgil wrote in memory of the guitarist Nick Hirsch, his

bandmate in The Dirty Feel, who died in 2012. "Virgil played it to me and asked what I thought. I said, 'I think it's beautiful and let's play on it,'" reveals the Yes guitarist. "All the titles are slightly cosmic because that's the kind of music it is."

In addition to *Nexus*, Steve Howe has recently released *Anthology 2: Groups & Collaborations* via Rhino. The three-disc collection spans more than 50 years of the guitarist's career.

See www.stevehowe.com for more. **NRS**



"I've done a wealth of different things but I haven't done anything like this before."

All's In A Chord: Virgil
and Steve Howe.



This month, Intro was compiled by

Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Jo Kendall
Hannah May Kilroy
Fraser Lewry
Rhodri Marsden
Chris McGarel
Martin Kielty
Nataasha Scharf
Sid Smith
Rick Wakeman
Phil Weller



WRIGHT'S BACK AT THE PROG AWARDS!

The Wright Stuff host to compère this year's event, with live music from Beatrix Players.

► **TV presenter Matthew Wright** returns as host of the Progressive Music Awards 2017, in association with Orange Amplification. The event will be held on September 14 at London's Underglobe.

"I still can't believe this is happening to me, I pinch myself on stage every year!" says Wright. "Ultimately I'm a prog fan, I was listening to the music long before I was writing. Standing up there, you meet hero after hero after hero and you get the chance to connect with them. I'll always remember meeting Jakko Jakszyk last year. We've become good friends now."

"During my newspaper days, I used to cover showbiz news and I've been to everything from the Oscars to premières at Cannes, but nothing compares to the atmosphere that's generated at the Prog Awards. I look forward to it every year."

Get all the latest news from the awards at www.teamrock.com and make sure you tune into the hour-long special on TeamRock Radio after the event.

This year's musical entertainment will come from chamber prog trio Beatrix Players. The Limelight Award-nominees will be performing material from their most recent album *Magnified* with violinist Maria Kroon, as well as a surprise cover version.

"We can't wait, it'll be brilliant," says lead vocalist Amy Birks. "It's incredible to be part of something so prestigious and to be surrounded by people who are prepared to accept something a little bit different. We're so excited."

Beatrix Players' new single is out on October 6, and they'll play in London and Manchester on October 5 and 13 respectively. **NRS**



Angelic Sounds: Beatrix Players.

PRIMUS ANNOUNCE THEIR MISCHIEVOUS NINTH

And it's Claypool and co's first new studio material in six years.

► **How do you** follow an album that re-imagines the soundtrack to *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*? If you're Primus, you make *The Desaturating Seven*, based on a children's book that tells the story of seven goblins determined to remove all the colour from the world. It's released via ATO on September 29.

"Many years ago when my children were little kidlets scurrying around the place wreaking havoc and whatnot, my wife turned them on to a book called *The Rainbow Goblins* by Ul De Rico," says Primus mainman Les Claypool. "The dark imagery and beauty of the art struck me immediately and I thought, 'This would make good fodder for a piece of music.'"

It's not the first time De Rico's book has been used for inspiration: in 1981 Masayoshi Takanaka (former guitarist with Japanese psych/prog act Flied Egg) released a jazz rock album based on the same book.

For more info, see www.primusville.com. **FL**



JEFF HANNE

DANIEL CAVANAGH ANNOUNCES SOLO CD

Songwriter teams up with Anneke van Giersbergen and Anna Phoebe for debut.

▶ **Anathema's Daniel Cavanagh** releases *Monochrome*, his first solo album of original material on October 13 via Kscope — and he's already certain there will be a follow-up.

He described the vibe of the deeply personal work as “a late-night, candlelit feeling”. Much of the material has been in existence for some time, and had been considered for use with his main band.

Cavanagh tells *Prog*, “I kind of give Vinnie Cavanagh and John Douglas first refusal. Making an Anathema record is brutal in terms of leaving songs out — a ‘kill your darlings’ kind of thing. There’s always stuff left over. I thought, ‘They’re not doing anything. Maybe I can make them work.’”

He insists the nocturnal feeling is “all real” and he’s only half-joking when he claims, “Daylight is boring! I tend to come alive at night.

I love the city at night. I walk, I think, I spend hours going, ‘This is how I feel.’”

Prime examples are opening track *The Exorcist* and nine-minute epic *The Silent Flight Of The Raven Winged Hours*, both favourites of his.

“The long suite in the middle of the record, I couldn’t see the band doing that, because there’s so much more for them to focus on. It wouldn’t get through the

Anathema process. *The Exorcist* is the big one — the whole album is pinned

around it. It’s been around since the year 2000 and the subject matter is important to me.”

While he recorded most of the instruments himself, *Monochrome* includes contributions from vocalist Anneke van Giersbergen and violinist Anna Phoebe.

“Both are brilliant at what they do,” he says. “Anna joined us for the DVD we made in Liverpool [2015’s *A Sort Of Homecoming*]. I got on well with her. She doesn’t even need to hear the material — she can just improvise on the spot. It’s the same with Anneke. I knew she’d be able to add something, and she did, adding harmonies that I didn’t have to write. And having that female energy, and the wonderful tones they have on their instruments, was great.”

Anathema are riding high with the success of latest album *The Optimist*, but Cavanagh hopes there’ll be time to tour *Monochrome* in solo, duo or band format. And there will definitely be more solo releases. “I’ll just see how this album and the next album land,” he says. “There will always be another one... I think I’ve just got to keep going now.” **MK**

Anathema are on tour later this month. For dates see www.anthemamusic.com.

INTRO extras

NEW KANSAS LIVE ALBUM

Kansas are to release their first live album in eight years on November 3. *Leftoverture Live & Beyond* will be available on double CD and a 4LP vinyl box set via InsideOut. The collection was recorded during the *Leftoverture* 40th Anniversary Tour back in the spring and features 19 songs, including tracks from last year’s *The Prelude Implicit*. It’s been produced by *Leftoverture*’s Jeff Glixman.

“One helluva show!”
Steve Rothery Band are
headlining Trinity III.



KATIA OGIER

TRINITY III TAKES A TRIP TO LONDON

Steve Rothery Band confirmed as headliners for 2018 prog charity event.

▶ **Trinity III**, in association with *Prog*, will be held on May 12, 2018 with Steve Rothery Band headlining a six-act bill. Touchstone and Ghost Community have also been confirmed to play, and there will be a return of the popular prog raffle and auction. More bands are still to be announced.

“The whole aim of Trinity is to raise as much money as possible for cancer charities so if we could sell out next year’s event, that would be amazing,” says co-organiser and Ghost Community bassist Matthew Cohen. “We want to give fans good value so we’ve decided to keep the ticket cost at the flat rate of £30. This means six bands, at £5 a band, at a top London venue.”

The idea for Trinity first came about back in 2014 and the events have so far raised around £15,000 for cancer charities. Organisers have already secured some top auction prizes for next year’s event, which they hope to announce soon.

“We get so many incredible bands offering so many incredible prizes — they always want to know what they can do to support the event and help as raise as much money as possible,” says Cohen. “Marillion have been very generous with prizes for the auction, and to have Steve Rothery Band headlining next year’s event... what a coup that is! It’s going to be one helluva show.”

Tickets are on sale now from www.trinitylive.co.uk. **NRS**

NORDIC GIANTS THINK BIG

Post-rock duo announce multimedia project for the autumn.

▶ Nordic Giants are spreading positivity with the independent release of a short film and soundtrack on October 20. The mysterious masked duo, whose real identities are shrouded in mystery, say the aim of *Amplify Human Vibration*’s uplifting theme is to help “raise the collective consciousness of the planet”.

“This project is our small way of reminding people that there’s so much positivity in the world, despite the fear-led narrative often portrayed by the mainstream media,” say Rôka and Loki via email. “This film will follow some inspiring people and their unique journeys, from a Columbian photographer changing lives with just his camera to a female swimmer braving seven of the toughest seas.”

The seven-track release follows on from 2015’s *A Séance Of Dark Delusions* and *7 Depths Of Consciousness* and unites the pair’s atmospheric sounds with guest vocals from long-term collaborator Freyja.

“This soundtrack is a blend of all our styles, sounds, dynamics and previous releases,” they say. “It has some louder tracks with big piano riffs and drums similar to the likes of *Together* or *Evolve Or Perish*, mixed with some quieter ambient tracks.”

Nordic Giants are touring the UK and Europe this autumn. For the full list of shows, see www.nordicgiants.co.uk. **NRS**



NEAL GRUNDY

Digital minds:
Nordic Giants’
Rôka and Loki.



“Daylight is boring! I tend to come alive at night.”

CALIGULA'S HORSE | IN CONTACT



CALIGULA'S HORSE IN CONTACT

In Stores 15th September 2017

The highly anticipated concept LP and fourth studio album from Australian progressive powerhouse Caligula's Horse.

Mastered by **Jens Bogren** (Opeth) at Fascination Street Studios in Sweden. Mixed by **Forrester Savell** (Karnivool) and **Sam Vallen** (Caligula's Horse). **Jørgen Munkeby** (Shining) features on saxophone on the 15-min epic 'Graves'. For fans of Devin Townsend, Karnivool, Opeth, Pain Of Salvation, Leprous etc.

Available as CD Digipak, 180g Gatefold 2LP + CD and digital album



KAIPA CHILDREN OF THE SOUNDS

In Stores 22nd September 2017

The 13th studio album by legendary Swedish progressive rock act KAIPA! Featuring **Hans Lundin**, **Per Nilsson** (Scar Symmetry), **Morgan Ågren** (Karmakanic), **Jonas Reingold** (The Flower Kings, Karmakanic), **Patrik Lundström** (Ritual) & Aleena Gibson

An inspired & dynamic sonic journey with soulful vocals and stellar musicianship.

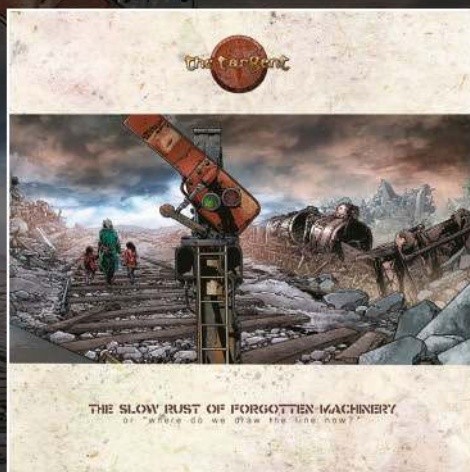
Available as Special Edition Digipak,
180G Gatefold 2LP+CD & digital album

Don't Miss Out On!



Leprous Malina

"nothing short of infectious"
- Prog Magazine



The Tangent The Slow Rust of Forgotten Machinery

"eloquent, far-reaching prog"
- Prog Magazine



Bent Knee Land Animal

"If prog rock has a future then Bent Knee are surely it"
- Mojo Magazine

PFM UNVEIL THEIR NEW DOUBLE ALBUM

Italian proggers release first album of original material for two decades.



PFM put the finishing touches to their album at Metropolis Studio.

► **PFM's *Emotional Tattoos*** will be out on October 27, and it'll be two albums in one. For the first time in their 46-year career, the influential Italian band will be packaging the English-language and Italian-language versions of the album together. The bilingual release is in response to their new worldwide deal with InsideOut, which they hope will help their music to reach an even larger audience.

"Franz [Di Cioccio, lead vocals/drums] wrote the Italian version and I wrote the English," says bassist Patrick Djivas. "The music is the same but the lyrics aren't translations so we've ended up with 20 different sets of lyrics. We did this because we know our English-speaking audiences aren't always interested in the same subjects as our Italian ones. We also have an instrumental called *Freedom Square*, which takes its title from the Italian lyric. It's about the political situation in Italy, although it's not a political song — Freedom Square is where people meet and talk about the life they would love to be living."

The title comes from the album's intensity, which reflects the band's heritage and diversity. "We try to make every song so it gets under people's skin," says the bassist. "There are no weak songs on this album, which was a problem when it came to picking the singles. This is definitely a PFM album and everyone who's heard it so far has been very surprised by it."

The album is a return to Premiata Forneria Marconi's early sound, following recent diversions into classical and theatrical collaborations, and it's also their first original 'rock' album since 2000's *Serendipity* — their last original recording since then was 2006's instrumental CD and DVD *States Of Imagination*. The reason for the delay? According to Djivas, it's all down to their hectic touring schedule.

"We've been playing so many concerts that we never had time to sit down to write new material. We would start writing and then we'd have to stop because we were touring, but about a year ago, we sat down and started writing properly."

With all-new material under their belts, the Italian seven-piece are ready to begin touring.

They've already got a string of shows lined up in Europe for later this year and have been confirmed for RoSFest on May 6, 2018. They hope to head over to the UK next year. **NRS**

For the latest news about tour dates, visit www.facebook.com/premiataforneriamarconiofficial.

INTRO extras

THUMPER MONKEY ANNOUNCE NEW DISCS

Thumpermonkey are breaking their studio silence with two new releases via Sel Balamir's Rockosmos label. The *Electricity* EP will be out on October 13, and their fifth studio album, *Make Me Young*, etc, will be out next year. Meanwhile, the band's guitarist Rael Jones has been nominated for two Emmy Awards, one for his score to *Suite Française* and the other for his music editing on the BBC's *Sherlock* series.

The Continuation Of Livid: Godsticks with new members Tom Price and Gavin Bushell.



GODSTICKS FACE THE RAGE ON LATEST CD

Welsh band reconnect with Bruce Soord for their "dark" fourth album.

► **Godsticks' frontman Darran Charles** describes *Faced With Rage* as "a lot darker" than their band's previous releases. The album, out via Kscope on October 13, is also the first one they've recorded as a four-piece, with new drummer Tom Price and guitarist Gavin Bushell.

"[2015 album] *Emergence* was a statement of intent, but for this album, I wanted to retain the heaviness and explore other shades," says Charles. "Our songs have always been quite short and snappy but I've let them develop a little bit more on this one. There's even an eight-minute song on there called *Everdrive*, which is unheard of for me. I didn't think I'd be capable of writing something that long. Lyrically, it's about emotional conflict and people who've resolved to change their behaviour. Maybe it's a bit autobiographical, who knows!"

The album includes guest appearances from two members of The Pineapple Thief — a band Charles has recently been playing guitar with. Bassist Jon Sykes contributes backing vocals to the elongated *Everdrive*, while frontman Bruce Soord plays synths on *Guilt* and *Revere*.

"*Guilt* took about 14 months to write and probably went through about 13 different versions before it ended up as the album opener," Charles says. "I'd trashed it about four times and sent it to the bin, then resurrected it four times, but I really liked the intro and I thought it had something to offer."

Godsticks are currently previewing tracks from the album on their current tour with The Pineapple Thief. For more, visit www.godsticks.co.uk. **NRS**

BURIED CATHÉDRALE TRACKS ARE FINALLY UNEARTHED

Ex-Renaissance bassist Jon Camp's 90s collaboration with Lifesigns' John Young gets a release date.

► **Cathédrale's *J2=B2*** will be released via Angel Air on September 29, almost 30 years after the tracks were first recorded.

The project formed in the early 90s, soon after bassist Jon Camp left Renaissance, and also featured Greenslade's John Young (now with Lifesigns), Brett Wilde and Money's drummer Tony Bodene. Singer Mark Goddard-Parker joined towards the end of the band and performs on only a handful of the songs.

"The tracks were originally recorded on 16-track between 1990 and 1993," reveals Camp. "The opener, *One By One*, was one of the first we did, but the sound isn't all similar to Renaissance. It was still proggy, but quite commercial, a little like *It Bites*."

Meanwhile, the bassist has teamed up with Maurice Douglas (ex-Martin Turner's Wishbone Ash) for the MoJo instrumental album, *Urgent Deliver*. It will be out via Repertoire in November.

For more, visit www.mauricedouglasmusic.com. **NRS**



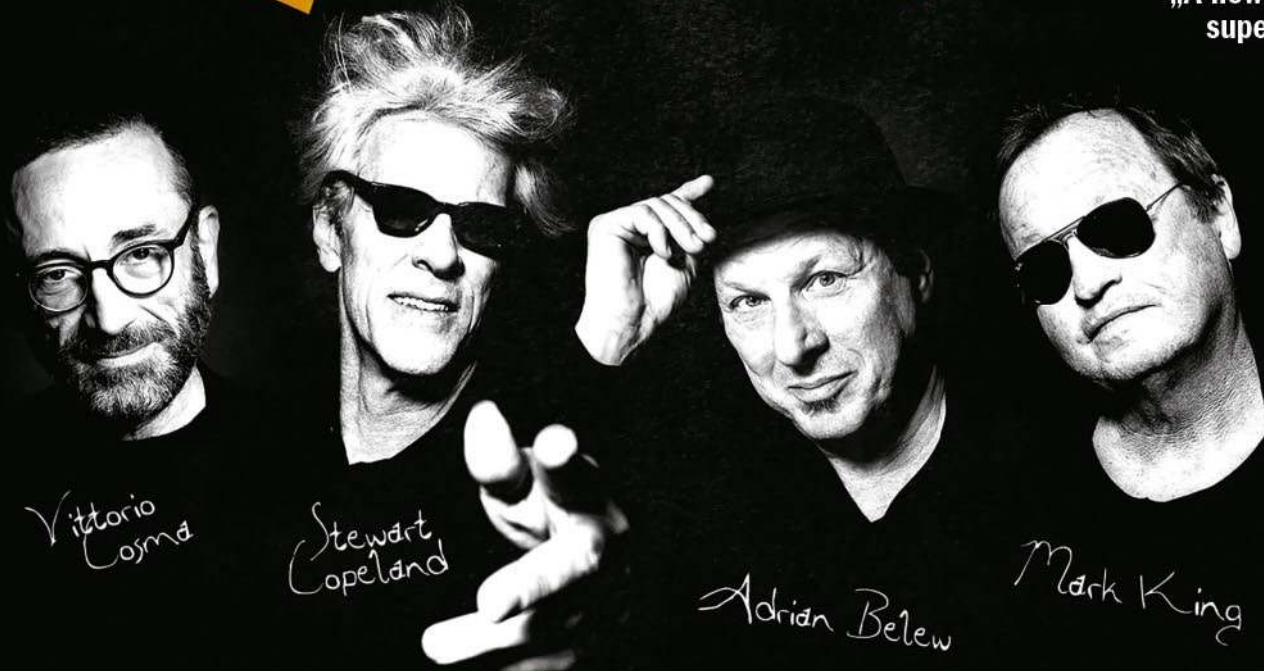
The band as they were in the 90s.



"There are no weak songs on this album."

GLIZMODROME

„A new punk prog
supergroup“
PROG



THE DEBUT BY THE NEW BAND OF

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www.facebook.com/Glizmodrome

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includes

"Time On Our Side"
"Redefined"
"Eye Of The Storm"

FAD GADGETS

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

FENDER BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS



In an ideal world I'd stop going on about Bluetooth speakers here, but companies will insist on coming up with unusual spins on the old formula. Fender's Monterey and the Newport are inspired by the '68 Custom amps, and have the iconic grille, knobs and labelling. The Monterey needs plugging into a wall but packs a powerful 120W punch, while the Newport is portable and gives you 12 hours of music on a single charge.

www.fender.com

LUZLI ROLLER MK01

It's the eternal headphone dilemma. The small ones which fit inside your ears can feel a bit insubstantial. The big ones, however, are rather big. Where do you put them when you're not using them? I mean, they'll often come in a special bag, or box, but where do you put that? This Swiss-made pair solves the problem with a Rolex watch-like headband, with metal links of "aircraft-grade aluminium" that roll up in a similar way, allowing the headphones to pop into your pocket. Unfortunately, they cost £2,300.

www.luzli.com



ECO-FRIENDLY GUITAR

Deadheads will be aware of the kind of causes supported by The Jerry Garcia Foundation, set up after the death of the former Grateful Dead frontman: humanitarian, artistic and environmental. To mark Garcia's 75th birthday, this eco-friendly, completely plastic-free guitar has been crafted by custom guitar maker Tom Lieber in conjunction with the foundation, and has one of Garcia's etchings on the fingerboard. It's a one-off, so you can't buy it, or play it, but you'll be able to look at it if

you happen to be attending one of the foundation's forthcoming fundraisers.

www.jerrygarciafoundation.org



(I WANT TO BE) ELECTED!

Rick gets political - with The Progressive Rock Party.

► I'm seriously considering going into politics. As of this current moment in time, I have absolutely no faith or confidence in most of the MPs walking round Westminster. Therefore I need to form a political party of my own. If I go ahead, it will be called The Progressive Rock Party. Should we ever get into power, my cabinet would include Brian May as animal rights minister, Rod Stewart as sports minister, Ozzy Osbourne as foreign secretary, Keith Richards as minister for health and Brian Johnson as minister of transport. The all-important job of minister of arts would go to Sir Paul McCartney, and all the press and media would be overseen by Prog's Jerry Ewing. I would end every parliamentary session with a concert, which would be televised by UKTV Gold. The programme would be presented by Ricky Gervais.

The Progressive Rock Party would go on to form its own multi-nation parliament with The European Progressive Rock Union, and we would invite all the countries who are pissed off with their own politics to join us. I accept this would present problems as the likelihood is that that once the Progressive Rock Union is up and running, the only country left in the EU would be Germany.

I admit, there's a lot of work to do before we can get to this stage. We would also need to prepare for our first conference, which would coincide with the current political parties' conferences although ours would be held in Glastonbury, as part of the festival.

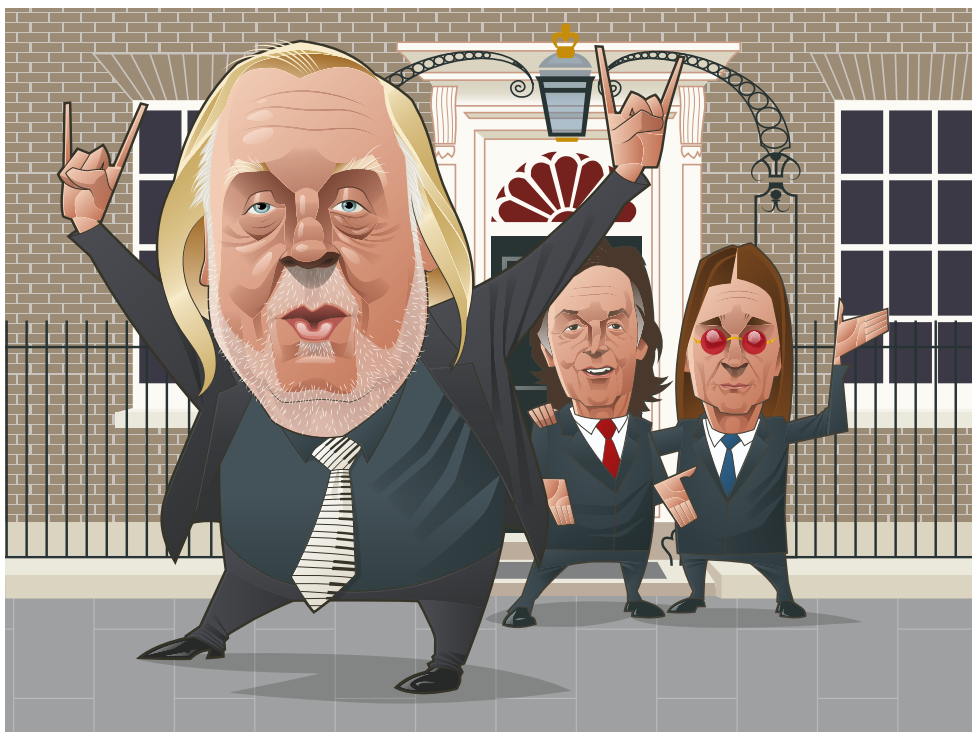
Televised debates would be part of *Later... With Jools Holland* and *Any Questions* would be re-launched as *Don't Bother Asking Anything As You Won't Get Any Honest Answers*.

I was great friends with Screaming Lord Sutch and amazingly some of the Monster Raving Loony Party's manifestos have actually happened, 24-hour licensing laws being just one

example. Even Maggie Thatcher said he brought a strange form of sanity to our bizarre political system.

So there you have it. It's a dream I know, but if the arts were brought into mainstream politics rather than hidden away, we would be in a much better country. Let's face it, when there's a crisis, it's musicians, actors and comedians who step up and get things done, so isn't the obvious solution to put us in charge?

But the first thing I'd do as Prime Minister would be to change the curtains at Number 10. They're awful!



GOLDEN CAVES

The Dutch band on a collision course between prog and pop.

WITH LLOYD WEBBER'S *School Of Rock* currently on Broadway, a five-piece from Holland have literally graduated from prog school.

Golden Caves met at Rotterdam's Codarts University — an institution that specialises in music and performing arts. Vocalist Romy Ouwerkerk explains how a chance collision on campus altered her trajectory.

"In our second year, me and the drummer Erik were in a disco project. Our new guitar player Alex heard me talking about Porcupine Tree and Anathema and he said we should form a band. In the end, we chose prog and the drummer and I skipped the disco band," she laughs.

To gauge reactions they released a self-made EP in 2013. Award nominations and a victory in the Dutch Band Boost talent competition led to an enviable spot playing in front of 20,000 people at Wantijpop Festival in Dordrecht.

After graduating in 2015, the quintet concentrated on writing new material for their first full-length album. Fittingly for a fusion of pop and prog influences, the release is titled *Collision* and it's a multifaceted jewel that reflects differently depending on the listener's own perspective.

Drummer Erik Stein describes how that sound coalesces. "That mixture comes naturally with the five of us in the room," he reveals. "It's our biggest friend and biggest enemy. People can't put us in the corner of typical prog because it's too modern, too poppy. For the pop world it's too prog, so we sit in the middle of two fanbases or two genres."

Ouwerkerk goes further, explaining that while the end result may be a natural meeting of minds, that journey needs everyone on board. "We don't do concessions," she emphasises. "If we have three band members who like an idea and two who don't, we

continue to make it better and better until everyone stands behind the product. That's what makes all the layers. We all have different backgrounds growing up and listening to music. You automatically take that into the rehearsal room without even knowing it. For me, it's London Grammar, Anathema, Radiohead, Massive Attack. Ambient meets prog."

There are layers of significance in the album title too, beyond a superficial description of styles.

"We were confronted with real life," Stein reflects on the shift between student life and the reality of trying to make a young band a viable concern. "Suddenly you're an adult and you're getting bills on your doormat. It was a hard transition for us and we tried to use the lyrics and the music to help us go through that phase. *Collision* also reflects on the problems going on in the world."

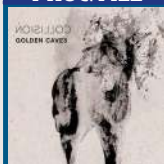
The band are working now on delegating some of the business processes to allow more time for creativity and have already begun writing sessions for a follow-up.

"We hope it's gonna explode!" enthuses Stein.

The singer tempers, "Explodes in a prog way, not like a Katy Perry pop song!"

Golden Caves are more than qualified to succeed with the former and to do so with distinction. **CM**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Alex Ouwehand (guitar), Romy Ouwerkerk (vocals), Erik Stein (drums), Elise Polman (keyboards), Tim Wensink (bass guitar)

SOUNDS LIKE

Anneke van Giersbergen collaborating with Steven Wilson

CURRENT RELEASE

Collision is out now on Freia Music

WEBSITE

www.goldencaves.com



"We don't do concessions... we continue to make our ideas better and better."

Golden Caves, L-R: Erik Stein, Alex Ouwehand, Romy Ouwerkerk, Tim Wensink, Elise Polman.



VILMA JOVALSA

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

YOUR PROG CHEF:
**MARJANA SEMKINA
(IAMTHEMORNING)**

On the menu: Post Souptum (Borscht)
(makes three litres)



ROMAN SOKOLOV

“In Russian society, it’s expected a woman will be a great cook and enjoy her time in the kitchen. I prefer spending my time writing music or travelling, but I do enjoy cooking for special people. My granny used to cook borscht when I was very small. This is my quick and relaxed veggie version.”

Ingredients:

2 medium beetroots,
3 medium potatoes,

1 large carrot, 250g white cabbage, 1 large onion, 1 medium tomato, 3 tbsp tomato paste, 3 cloves of chopped garlic, 2-3 bay leaves, salt, black pepper, vegetable oil, parsley, dill, spring onion

Preparation:

“Finely chop the onion, grate the carrot and beetroots, chop the cabbage into fine strips, dice the tomato. In a pan, fry the onion and carrots for two minutes, add the beets for two minutes. Add tomato and cook for three-five minutes. Add the tomato paste (if thick, add a little water), and simmer for five-seven minutes.

Cube the potatoes and bring to the boil in a separate pan of salted water. Add the cabbage and cook on low heat for five minutes. Add the rest of the stewed veg and cook for another 10-15 minutes. Add the bay leaves, pepper, salt and garlic. Remove from the heat and allow to infuse with a lid on for 15-20 minutes.

Serve with sour cream and sprinkle with chopped dill, parsley, green onion. You can also add some chopped boiled egg.

Gleb [Kolyadin] loves good cooking more than anyone I know



and every time I cook for him it makes him very happy. Borscht is one of his favourite things. It’s a special process for me, too, because my family never had gatherings over

dinner when people sat at the table discussing the events of the day, so to dine properly from time to time is very lovely.

Russian cuisine, as with everything Russian, is a bit of a mystery. Last New Year, my UK friends asked me to celebrate the Russian way and I cooked them ‘herring in a fur coat’, a cake made out of boiled beets, carrot, potatoes, eggs, with a huge amount of mayo and pickled herring. To say they were bewildered would be an understatement!” **JK**

MY PROG HERO Inspiring the wider music world...



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

For Your Pleasure:
Roxy Music, with
Brian Eno. Inset:
Tom G Warrior.

TOM G WARRIOR

Would you believe that the Triptykon and former Celtic Frost frontman is *mesmerised* by early **Roxy Music**?

“People might be surprised to read this, but I was very heavily inspired by progressive music when I was younger. I listened to so many different artists that it’s very tough for me to talk about just one. It seems almost insulting when there are lots who had an effect on me when I was in my teens.

I have to make an honourable mention of Keith Emerson. The way he used classical music with ELP on albums like *Tarkus* had a massive impact on me. But I’m going to celebrate Roxy Music here.

I can’t exactly recall when I first heard them, but I would think it was on a southern German radio station which played a lot of prog. What I loved about them was their fearlessness and delight in experimenting. If you listen to them now for the first time, then you might wonder what all the fuss is about, because what they did sounds like no big deal in 2017. But in the 70s, it was radical and exciting, and they were pushing the boundaries without any concern for commercial compromise.

Phil Manzanera’s guitar playing made an impression on me as

a budding musician, but it was their all-round style that impressed me most. They became more mainstream, but in those early days there was nothing quite like Roxy Music.

I got into them through their second album, *For Your Pleasure*, and then retrospectively discovered their self-titled debut. And there’s no doubt they had an influence on what Celtic Frost did on our [recently re-released] albums *Morbid Tales*, *To Mega Therion* and, especially, *Into The Pandemonium*.

If I have to select the best Roxy Music album, then it would be *For Your Pleasure*. What sets this apart from the rest of their catalogue is the songwriting: it’s of the highest calibre, and is very powerful. If you combine this with the band’s devotion to being individual and cutting edge, then you

have a very potent album that, to this day, still resonates with me.

There are so many progressive artists to whom I owe so much. But Roxy Music are one band that I would always choose as being a major part of who I am today.” **MD**

Celtic Frost’s reissues are out now through BMG.

“The
songwriting
on *For Your
Pleasure*
is very
powerful.”

PROG IN BRIEF

Horror director and musician **John Carpenter** (right) releases his greatest hits on October 20 via Sacred Bones. *Anthology: Movie Themes 1974-1998* includes all-new recordings of classic intros from 13 of his films including *The Thing* and *Halloween*.



Graham Gouldman’s *Love And Work* will be out on double vinyl for the first time on September 22. The expanded edition contains two bonus tracks including *Let’s Get Lost*. The 10cc frontman is touring the UK this autumn.



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THE CHAMBERS BROTHERS

THE TIME HAS COME

(COLUMBIA, 1967)

For whatever reason, not many bands who've come from a soul background have ever effectively embraced psychedelic prog. The Chambers Brothers are one of the exceptions.

Hailing from Mississippi, they got their first taste of musical performance in a local baptist church. When eldest brother George was discharged from the army, they relocated to LA, and spent the next decade playing a mixture of gospel and folk. It was in '65 when they got their big break. American folk singer and former member of the Weavers, Pete Seeger helped get them on the bill for the prestigious Newport Folk Festival, and they received such a strong reception that it led to further appearances at high profile venues like Fillmore West in San Francisco and Fillmore East in New York.

By this juncture, the brothers - bassist George, guitarists Willie and Joe plus harmonica player Lester - had developed a style that was a mix of rock and soul, with daubs of gospel and blues. But by 1967, when *The Time Has Come* was released, they'd signed to Columbia, convincingly reinventing themselves as a band, and had revised their approach to include more than a hint of the psychedelic sound which was sweeping the nation at the time. It's on this album where it all comes into fruition. With the addition of drummer Brian Keenan, the band stretched out and engagingly explore how to organically meld their established soul and gospel inferences with a more rigorous psychedelic routing. It's a triumph.

Things begin with *All Strung Out Over You*, before a majestic version of *People Get Ready*, punctuated by some deft guitar touches. Much of the rest of the tracks here - and there are 10 in total - flow in the same pattern, as The Chambers Brothers show just how to combine all these elements without ever making it sound forced.

But there's one track that stands taller than the rest, an 11-minute stroke of pure genius called *Time Has Come Today*. A 1968 single edit, clocking in at just over three minutes in length, was the band's biggest hit, reaching number 11 in the US chart, but it's the long form album version that's a real triumph. This is the apogee of the band's craft: a remarkable epic that eases its way into a densely driven initial rhythm, with the addition of fuzz and clean guitar, as well as cow bells. It cleverly winds down after three minutes, before relocating to a surreal, acid-fuelled instrumental passage that re-emerges to connect with the early part.

It's the centrepiece of an album that shows how psychedelic prog and soul really can co-exist.

MALCOLM DOME



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



As easy as 1-2-3!
Re-TROS are ready to
knock down the wall.

RE-TROS

Could one of China's biggest bands break the wall with their UK debut? Meet multi-instrumentalist **Hua Dong**.

The walled city of Beijing is better known in the West for its rich history than its music, but Re-TROS could change that with their first ever UK release, *Before The Applause*.

Formed in the Chinese capital in 2003, the trio - Liu Min (vocals, bass, synth), Hua Dong (vocals, guitar, synth), Huang Jin (drums) - began as a reaction to the local indie scene. "We were not so satisfied at that time," says Dong. "It was a little boring and depressing. We thought we could do something cool to shock the audience."

Their latest release adds EDM elements to a post-punk sound that's inspired by rule book-breaking bands Gang Of Four, Public Image Limited and Talking Heads. The results are wildly experimental and a million miles away from China's more melancholic post-rockers such as Summer Fades Away and Hua Lun. The key to their creative success? A gizmo!

"A few years ago, we bought a Boss Loop Station pedal and it's a very interesting tool for us," reveals Dong. "It's made our music more diverse and colourful. I really enjoy the process of building songs up from a very minimal riff with the loop station."

Their aural experiments can be heard throughout the album, but are particularly effective on the minimalist *8+2+8 I*, inspired by Steve Reich's *Clapping Music*.

Their choice of gadget came from the loop-friendly Battles. "[Their 2007 album] *Mirrored* really wowed me," says Dong. "It was totally different from anything I'd heard before. I started to think about trying more musical possibilities, to experiment with breaking the tethers of the typical post-punk style, and express my mind."

Re-TROS' progressive vision has also helped raise awareness of China's musical scene. Dong has noticed a growing number of young bands creating what he calls "interesting music", and more live showcases, which all helps this trio climb over that wall.

"I hope we'll make even more interesting music in the future," he says, "and have even more

opportunities to showcase our music to new audiences around the world. But that's the one of the reasons for forming a band, right?" **NRS**

Before The Applause is out on September 15 via Modern Sky. For more, see www.bit.ly/ReTrosOfficial.

"We thought we could do something cool to shock the audience."

PROG IN BRIEF

An exhibition showcasing *Tubular Bells* sleeve artist **Trevor Key's** 40 greatest album covers opens at Hull School of Art and Design on September 20. Selected artwork will be displayed throughout libraries in the area until December.



And So I Watch You From Afar (left) are to release their new album *The Endless Shimmering* via Sargent House on October 20. The "complex" release will be the Belfast post-rockers' fifth and is the hotly anticipated follow-up to 2015's *Heirs*.

GAUDI

Italian multi-instrumentalist following his instincts.

DANIELE GAUDI SPENT a lot of his time as a child in a hospital, suffering from crippling asthma. Unable to go out much, he read and watched TV. However, his life changed at seven years old when he and his parents visited family friends. As the adults talked in another room, young Daniele found a piano. "I pressed one key and felt like I'd been catapulted into heaven," he says. "The surprising thing is I started playing music from the adverts on TV that I'd heard, the only music I knew at the time, with both my right and left hands."

Not having played before, the experience was utterly transformative. "That was the light at the end of the tunnel and for the first time I had the idea that this was what I wanted to do in life."

Following his signing to PolyGram in the 90s, his career success beyond his native Italy took off, garnering a high-profile reputation in dub, dance, rap, reggae, world music and electronica. The commercial success of 2004's *Bass, Sweat & Tears* and *Dub Qawwali* (2007), featuring his reimagining of sacred singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, might have given him a lucrative niche, but he wasn't interested in staying still.

"Another human being might simply carry on doing the same thing over and over in the same field, but for me, that's the moment where I need to change."

For his latest album *Magnetic*, he was given access to the multitrack tapes selected from RareNoise Records' back catalogue. Emphatically not remixes of existing pieces, for this Gaudi created brand new compositions and has since put together a band, The Gaudi Allstars, to perform the resulting music in concert.

"When you bring together people who don't know each other, it's not obvious that it'll make for great music. I'd been working separately with drummer Nikolaj Bjerre and guitarist Pippo de Palma, and now we've added Colin Edwin on bass. I'm so happy. After 10 years of solo gigging around the world, I really wanted a band to play the music from *Magnetic*. I want that energy and interaction that comes from working together."

Creativity is all about the challenge, he says, pushing where the inspiration takes you, rather than worrying about where fans might expect or want you to go.

"I love music, full stop, and I follow my instinct wherever it goes. This morning after I woke up, I started my day listening to music by Erik Satie. Then I was working with files sent from Sly And Robbie for a future project. After that, I took a break and then I was listening to King Crimson's *Discipline*.

"Music should be divided into two slices with a line in the middle: good music and bad music. And in my opinion, there's so much beautiful material out there to explore. I'm not interested in boxing myself into one genre. I would get bored!" **SS**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Gaudi (keyboards)

SOUNDS LIKE

Spacious grooves percolating with a psychedelic infusion of jazz, prog and dub

CURRENT RELEASE

Magnetic is out now on RareNoise Records

WEBSITE

www.gaudimusic.com

Daniele Gaudi: "I love music, full stop."

"I pressed one key and felt like I'd been catapulted into heaven."



A PAUSE FOR QUIET REFLECTION

Jerry Ewing asks: Could an event like Be Prog! My Friend happen in the UK?

It didn't take long after *Prog* had made our first visit to Barcelona's prog fest Be Prog! My Friend for us to wonder whether or not we could ever have such an event in the UK. I mean, what's not to like? An outdoor festival, bathed in sun, well attended and with a wide-ranging bill attracting an all-ages and enthusiastic crowd. That spells winner to me...

Of course, when *Prog* magazine launched back in 2009, the universally adored Summer's End was the kingpin of the live UK progressive scene, and remains, for me, the finest weekend of progressive music you'll find in the UK. We can now add to that the prog stage at Ramblin' Man, HRH Prog, charity event Trinity, Eppyfest and Danfest, all of varying sizes, and sometimes it seems like every Tom, Dick and Harry is ready to chance their arm with another prog event. Reading that list makes it look like the UK is awash with prog-style festivals, so do we need anything else? Possibly not, although it should perhaps be noted that half of these are relatively small in scale, and aside from perhaps Eppyfest, attract similar bands and a similar crowd.

The weather in this country is clearly something that you can't count on, which is one factor to consider. One only has to look at the washouts that have plagued Download in recent years! But

if a 2-5,000 capacity outdoor prog-based event was a consideration in the UK, would it work?

The beauty of Be Prog! is not only its bill, which lines classic old bands against rising young proggers, but also the audience. You swiftly get used to seeing a Mogwai T-shirt next to a Magma one, a Tesseract next to a Tull. Aside from the expected dismissive online reaction news of such an event would inevitably bring, could the unification of ages we see in Europe really happen here in the UK?

I quote from David West's Vola live review elsewhere in this issue: "It's a different audience to those of bands like Lifesigns and Touchstone." Is the gulf between the audiences that would flock to Ramblin' Man's prog stage and that who would attend ArcTanGent too wide to be drawn together? Even between those who triumph The Tangent but hide away from Haken?

I sincerely hope not. Because to see an event which happily allies bands and an audience of all ages, with a wide progressive spread of music, can only be of a real benefit to the wider progressive community.

JERRY EWING

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



Fun In The Sun: Barcelona's Be Prog! My Friend.



HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene's supporting crew



Pen And Paper Man: Limelight's Mark Fisher

LIMELIGHT FANZINE

From fanboy to founding editor - **Mark Fisher** remembers his time at XTC's official mag.

It was a Christmas present that changed Mark Fisher's life. In 1979, the Merseyside teen received a copy of XTC's *Drums And Wires* and it marked the beginning of a long association with the Swindon band.

"I remember becoming obsessed by XTC," says Fisher. "I'd been reading a lot about them in newspapers like *NME* and was intrigued so I went to Virgin Records and bought up the back catalogue. I got my friend Paul Badger into them as well. Very naively, because we didn't know anything about anything, we just said, 'Let's make a fanzine about them!'"

The pair were still at school at the time and, with no contacts in the music industry, they embarked on the long and rather haphazard task of reaching out to the band.

"We knew they lived in Swindon, so we went through the phone books in our local library looking for every D Gregory, A Partridge, T Chambers and C Moulding!" says Fisher. "It's funny looking back at how naïve we were. We sent these letters off and the next thing we knew, we got a reply from the real Dave Gregory."

Limelight — named after a rare single — was

launched in 1982 and became the band's official fan publication. It attracted readers from all over the world and developed a cult status, but after 10 successful years, Fisher decided to call it a day. He's now a journalist and theatre critic.

But his fanzine days aren't over yet. Following a chance conversation between his daughter and comedians (and XTC fans) Stewart Lee and Joanna Neary at last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Fisher dug out his *Limelight* archive and has rekindled his "inner fanboy" with an anthology, *The XTC Bumper Book of Fun for Boys and Girls*. He's updated it with all-new interviews as well as cover art from reader-turned-illustrator Mark Thomas.

"It was lovely going back through all that stuff and feeling it was a time capsule of a pre-internet era," Fisher says on the 'zine's 35th anniversary.

And *Limelight* fans take note: if the book sells well, Fisher might return with more XTC-friendly treats. "I have ideas..." he teases, "and I might even do some T-shirts as well!" **NRS**

The XTC Bumper Book... is out on October 2. Pre-order at www.xtclimelight.com.



"It's funny looking back at how naïve we were."

PROG IN BRIEF

Twelfth Night's Clive Mitten is finishing off his first album as **The C:Live Collective**. It's due out this autumn, and also features Henry Fool's Stephen Bennett. The project will be playing at next April's Winter's End Festival.



Worriedaboutsatan (left) release a special cassette edition of *Blank Tape* via Spun Out Of Control on October 14. It includes a new version of *This Restless Wing* with Vincent Cavanagh (Anathema). A short tour will follow.

Threshold's former guitarist Pete Morten will release his second album as **My Soliloquy** on September 14 via Rare Artist Records. *Engines Of Gravity* is the long-awaited follow-up to 2013's breakthrough album *The Interpreter*.

Trans Siberian Orchestra and Renaissance violinist **Joe Deninzon** releases a new album with Stratosphereus on September 29. *Guilty Of Innocence* is out via Melodic Revolution and includes a cover of Muse's *Hysteria*.

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US, THEM & YOU

What got us all
grooving this month...

Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

August 2017

Compiled by  Official
Charts Company

- 1 **RADIOHEAD** OK Computer (XL RECORDINGS)
- 2 **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** Every Valley (PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)
- 3 **ROGER WATERS** Is This The Life We Really Want? (COLUMBIA)
- 4 **RICK WAKEMAN** Piano Portraits (UMC)
- 5 **MIKE & THE MECHANICS** Let Me Fly (BMG)
- 6 **JANE WEAVER** Modern Kosmology (FIRE)
- 7 **MASTODON** Emperor Of Sand (REPRISE)
- 8 **BIG BIG TRAIN** The Second Brightest Star (ENGLISH ELECTRIC)
- 9 **AMPLIFIER** Trippin' With Dr Faustus (ROCKKOSMOS)
- 10 **TANGENT** The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 11 **MIKE OLDFIELD** Return To Ommadawn (MERCURY)
- 12 **ANATHEMA** The Optimist (KSCOPE)
- 13 **KATE BUSH** Before The Dawn (FISH PEOPLE)
- 14 **HAWKWIND** Into The Woods (CHERRY RED)
- 15 **PINK FLOYD** The Early Years - 1965-72 (RHINO)
- 16 **BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST** Octoberon (CHERRY RED/ESOTERIC)
- 17 **POND** The Weather (MARATHON ARTISTS)
- 18 **FLAMING LIPS** Oczy Mlody (BELLA UNION)
- 19 **VANGELIS** Rosetta (DECCA)
- 20 **MARILLION** F E A R (FEAR MUSIC)
- 21 **OPETH** Sorceress (NUCLEAR BLAST)
- 22 **BIG BIG TRAIN** Grimspound (GIANT ELECTRIC PEA)
- 23 **NAD SYLVAN** The Bride Said No (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 24 **STEVE HACKETT** The Night Siren (INSIDE OUT)
- 25 **GOAT** Requiem (ROCKET RECORDINGS)
- 26 **JETHRO TULL** The String Quartets (BMG)
- 27 **TANGERINE DREAM** Particles (INVISIBLE HANDS)
- 28 **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** 50 50 At 50 (MATTY GROOVES)
- 29 **BRAND X** But Wait There's More (BRAND X LIVE)
- 30 **AYREON** The Source (MUSIC THEORIES)

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

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Fanfare: Emerson, Lake & Palmer 1970-1997 continues BMG's comprehensive ELP release series. The lavishly produced, super deluxe box set contains nearly three decades of work from ELP. It's available from September 29 and we have one copy to give away.

The box set includes all of ELP's remastered 11 albums, five previously unreleased CDs of never issued recordings, a never before issued triple vinyl set (*Live In Italy, May 1973*), one Surround Sound Blu-ray audio, plus some high quality memorabilia including a 40-page hardback book with rare band photos, as well as tour programmes and a must-have repro 7" of *Fanfare For The Common Man*.

Despite the sad recent deaths of Keith Emerson and Greg Lake, Carl Palmer continues to play sell-out shows all over the world with his group Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy and they will be appearing in the UK in November. See www.carlpalmer.com for more information and tour dates.

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

On what record label were ELP's first three albums released on?

- a) Island
- b) Manticore
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Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing



DANIEL CAVANAGH
MONOCHROME
KSCOPE

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



GIZMODROME
Gizmodrome
EARMUSIC

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



AVATARIUM
Hurricanes And Halos
NUCLEAR BLAST

The Musician
Darran Charles



NORDIC GIANTS
A Séance Of Dark Delusions
KSCOPE

The Writer
Sid Smith



THE ORCHESTRA OF THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE
Theta Three
DISCUS MUSIC

The Reader
Allison Blue-Sky



GOLDRAY
Rising
AKASHIC

Ufomammut, L-R:
Urlo, Poia, Vita.



BARBA

UFOMAMMUT

Psychedelic space rituals abound in Italian trio's progressive sludge.

FUTURE LEGEND TELLS of a band so heavy that their instruments are played via remote control from an orbiting spaceship. With his fictional band Disaster Area in *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, Douglas Adams may have predicted the questing cosmic metal of Italian trio Ufomammut, whose live shows are psychedelic space rituals – Hawkwind spaghetti-fied as they pass the event horizon.

With their eighth album they condense that dark matter. Their time-stretching, long-form psyche vortices of sound have been chiselled and sculpted into eight monolithic slabs of progressive sludge.

"We focussed more on the way songs should go one into the other, and how to create a full fluxus of music," says bassist and vocalist Urlo, coining a word from its Latin root meaning 'flow'.

"We put the songs together little by little and then we tried to shrink what we had, to focus more on the impact of the album," he elaborates.

Ufomammut formed in 1999 and are well-established as pioneers in the extreme metal scene, a categorisation that doesn't do justice to their outré and unique aesthetic.

"A lot of magazines write that we are doom. When it's heavy and slow, it's doom. We don't know what doom music is," laughs Urlo. "We don't listen to doom metal. The two bands that we all agree were great are The Beatles and Pink Floyd."

Drummer Vita expands on this definition of the pigeonhole. "You could say Pink Floyd were doom sometimes," he theorises. "If I think about doom I think about slow or sad music with a kind of atmosphere. *Atom Heart Mother*, for example."

The trio grew up far from the Italian cities to which other music fans would gravitate, and have stayed put. "In the middle of nowhere!" exclaims Vita. This isolation informs their esoteric sound.

"We have to invent," muses guitarist Poia. "It's the only way we know."

However, there are indeed influences in their music from their country's prog heritage, something which the drummer thinks was unjustly overlooked at home. "In the 70s, Italy had a lot of [prog] bands," he says. "In a way they were connected with British prog bands. For example,

Osanna from Napoli or Delirium from Genoa were connected with Van der Graaf Generator and King Crimson. Unfortunately, the Italian prog scene wasn't recognised in Italy as a real scene. In England or the United States or Japan, Italian prog is a big thing. They didn't have what they really deserved at that time."

"Le Orme, Area were really peculiar bands. Different from other prog bands," Urlo expands. "Morricone has been a great influence for us. The atmosphere he creates is something we've had inside us since we were children watching spaghetti westerns and gangster movies, which are connected to bands like Goblin or Osanna with the movie *Milano Calibro 9*. These movies had progressive soundtracks.

"We also try to create something that is Italian but ours," he concludes. "We've tried to reach that since the beginning – to be ourselves and not a copy of someone else."

Mission accomplished, gentlemen. Bravo. **CM**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Poia (guitars, fx)
Urlo (bass, vocals, fx, synths)
Vita (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

"A big cosmic brain screaming from the middle of a black hole." – Poia

CURRENT RELEASE

8 is out September 22 via Neurot

WEBSITE

www.ufomammut.com



"The two bands that we all agree were great are The Beatles and Pink Floyd."

PROSPEKT

Oxford prog metallers reborn and reshaped with new line-up and second album.



"We made sure we had the right twists and turns in there at the right times."

PROSPEKT ARE A macro thinking band who typify everything that makes prog metal great. Subtly infusing the snarling yet grandiose musical attack of Dream Theater and Symphony X with epic power metal pomp and quirky chords and scales atypical to metal, the band have moulded a deft balance between aggression, technical wizardry and supple anthemics. They may have graced the pages of Limelight before — around the release of their 2013 debut album — but four years later, bolstered by a new line-up and the benefits of time, they are a very different prospect, hence a Limelight reappraisal.

"We've taken the sound of the first album up a notch," reflects guitarist and founding member Lee Luland, who witnessed his band mature after vocalist Michael Morris and keyboardist Rox Capriotti joined in 2015. "The vocals fit better, Rox is a brilliant musician to work with and we've really bonded as a band. We're all into the same bands so we understood what sound we wanted to go for straight away."

Indeed, *The Illuminated Sky* is the realisation of a distinct vision. The album's entire journey, from the warfare of guttural guitars that ignite its early moments to the vulnerable and luscious orchestrations that mark songs like *Distant Anamnesis* were all meticulously mapped out before a single note was played.

"With this record we had a blank canvas. So we started with a game plan, where we wanted to go with it and what we wanted to achieve. I think we've got a more cohesive sounding album than if we just wrote

10 songs and put them together. This way we made sure we had the right twists and turns in there at the right times. We wanted something which really flows and takes you on a journey through ups and downs with heavy bits, technical bits and melodic bits that keep the listener interested across 60 minutes. Then it came to the specifics, when we had seven songs we knew what we were missing. There's more to us than what you hear on just one song. With people's attention spans you need to keep them engaged and entertained. We hope people catch onto the ups and downs of the album."

In short, this is a band who adores plot twists. Adorning their barraging, guitar-centric approach, Capriotti's orchestrations, which draw from the hellish tonalities of Dimmu Borgir through to today's most cinematic composers, stretch and redesign the band's dynamic greatly. Then there's Morris' soaring, James La Brie mark II vocal lines: high octane and highly eccentric. Each member boasts a high grade repertoire into which they dip extensively. With each a gifted and imaginative songwriter and musician, rolling out the punches and taking sharp left turns just makes sense. *Akaibara* uses traditional Japanese scales, *Cosmic Emissary* sounds like John Petrucci writing a battle theme for Pokémon and the sci-fi lavished, Greg Howe featuring *Alien Makers Of Discord* marries neo-classical chaos with memorable melodies. And those are just a small few plot spoilers.

Says Leland, "We're just mixing it up a bit." **PW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Lee Luland (guitar), **Michael Morris** (vocals), **Rox Capriotti** (keyboards), **Blake Richardson** (drums), **Phil Wicker** (bass)

SOUNDS LIKE

Traditional prog metal à la Dream Theater and Symphony X. So technical it should come with its own instruction manual

CURRENT RELEASE

The Illuminated Sky is out now on Laser's Edge

WEBSITE

www.facebook.com/ProspektUK

The Sky's The Limit: Prospekt's second album began as a blank canvas.





Photo taken by Paul Adam

*"What kind of guitar do you choose when you're asked to join King Crimson?
Something that feels, looks and sounds like a vintage instrument, but is built with all
the reliability and precision of a modern one.*

*A guitar capable of delivering everything from the most subtle of details, to the heaviest
of riffs. A guitar that brings an easy playability to complex lines, and the recreation of
acoustic parts. That'll be a PRS then!"*

Jakko Jakszyk - King Crimson

Jakko uses a PRS Custom 24 with Piezo System fitted.
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info@prsguitarseurope.com



PHIL MCNULTY

The long-serving chief sports writer for BBC Online started supporting rock and prog back when he was a tuned-in Liverpool teen. But which proggers are in his premier league?

Words: Jo Kendall **Portrait:** Tony Hutchings

“ was born in Toxteth, Liverpool, and grew up in Aigburth. Up until I was about 13 or 14 years old, music was just something around me. But then I found a rock show on Radio City, the local radio commercial station, called *The Great Easton Express*. The presenter was Phil Easton and it was three and a half hours every night of the week from 6.30 to 10pm. He would play whole albums and have all the new releases before anyone else.

I still remember the programme as if it was yesterday. He was a fantastic DJ, a great champion of rock. He'd always have people like David Coverdale and Ian Gillan on, so every night at 6.30pm I'd put the radio on and that'd be it. I remember when Pink Floyd's *Animals* came out, he played the whole album, so you'd stick the old C90 in the deck and get cracking [with home taping]. Later he became the pitch announcer at Anfield when I was covering matches there — it's a small world.

The Great Easton Express really fired my imagination and gave me the patience to listen to longer things. Phil would also DJ at Liverpool Empire, which was a great place to see bands. My gateway to prog was **Deep Purple's** *Made In Japan* and I was at the infamous last Purple concert at the Empire in 1976. Tommy Bolin had replaced Ritchie Blackmore, which went down like a lead balloon, and it was nightmare to watch as it all fell apart. Afterwards Jon Lord went into the dressing room and said to Ian Paice, 'It's finished, isn't it?' and Ian said, 'Yeah.' They shook hands and that was the end of MkIV.

My favourite **Supertramp** album is *Crime Of The Century* but I saw them at the Empire on the tour after that. *Crime...* seemed to be the band's last shot at doing something after the two previous albums did nothing. The songwriting's great, the singles are great. Live, John Helliwell was the frontman and really fun to watch. I saw so many amazing bands at the Empire, from Roxy Music to Elton John. It attracted big, big names.

I was at school at a time when prog was really big and you'd see the sixth-formers with Yes logos on their bags. I found albums like *Relayer* a bit of a struggle. I liked more melodic stuff such as **Pink Floyd** but I'd give other things a try. My favourite Floyd album is *Dark Side [Of The Moon]*. It's so memorably melodic and has the rock of

tracks like *Money*. Then they follow it up with the brilliant *Wish You Were Here*. There was a place I'd go in Liverpool called Penny Lane Records — the guys in there knew their music and they'd give you an honest opinion before you bought something. I'd also buy all the rock magazines and later on, through work, I got to know Richard Williams, a journalist on *The Guardian* who used to be at *Melody Maker* and was one of the early presenters on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. Meeting people like that is a perk of what I'm doing.

Much as I love a lengthy prog track, when I heard **Rush's** *Moving Pictures*, I was drawn to the shorter, punchier style. *Tom Sawyer*, *Red Barchetta*, *Vital Signs*... they all have that melodic style melded with their talent as musicians. You might not care for the prog sound but the musicianship is dazzling. As someone once said about Neal Peart, his drum solos are the kind that empty bars, not fill them.

When *Drama* came out, I remember reading about it in the papers as a ridiculous idea of Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman leaving Yes and being replaced by The Buggles. But listening to it at the time, people were almost scared of saying, 'That's quite good.' I really like it — it was an interesting idea. From the ashes of that, my great favourite **Asia** were formed.

Seeing the names on the cover of Asia's first LP, I thought this could be four massive tracks. I'd heard *The Heat Of The Moment* on the radio and I thought, 'That sounds like a hit!' And *One Step Closer* — 'That's a hit too!' It's a classic album, from Mike Stone's production to the songs, the musicianship... It wasn't what people expected from those four individuals and it's massively underrated in this country.

Years later I'm on Twitter, tweeting about Derby County and this guy responds to me immediately. It looked like John Wetton in the profile pic and it was! We got chatting, so I said, 'I've always been a fan of Asia.' We became constantly in touch online, then Geoff Downes became involved because he's a big Cardiff City fan. I saw them on the last Asia tour and met Geoff and John and became very friendly with them. I was invited to John's funeral service. It was a great occasion because so many people were there — Bill Bruford, Carl Palmer, Robert Fripp, Eric Clapton, Marillion — celebrating his legacy. If I wasn't picking this album I'd pick the third one, *Astra*. If Asia fans haven't listened to this, they should. I could bore for Britain on it.

Once you're into something, you go back in time to find out more. **King Crimson's** *Red* is an album I got into quite late, in the 80s, because of John Wetton. It's a very powerful, metallic rock album, and the personnel are incredible, especially on *Starless*.

Genesis' Selling England By The Pound is from school. All we'd do is chat about football and music: 'You must listen to this.' It's a very musical record, and slightly off the wall. On the *Firth Of Fifth* there's that fantastic Steve Hackett guitar solo. He and John Wetton did a great version live.

Whereas I prefer Peter Gabriel-era Genesis, even though they are influenced by them, **Marillion** are a funny one — I prefer the Steve Hogarth era. I was reading *Kerrang!* and *Sounds* at the time and *Brave* was recommended to me. It's a concept album with some immense standout tracks, such as *Alone Again In The Lap Of Luxury* and *The Hollow Man*. I'm sure I saw Hogarth in [his earlier band] The Europeans at Liverpool Empire.

My final choice is **Roger Waters' Amused To Death**. I'd not liked *Radio K.A.O.S.* — that was antiseptic and computerised. *Amused...* is something you have to pay attention to, and some tracks on there are just fantastic Floyd-like stuff. If that had come out with Floyd on the cover, it would have sold millions. It's got the usual themes: God, death, war... and it's got Jeff Beck on guitar. And now *Is This The Life We Really Want?* is out. I made a point of getting it the day before the Champions League final as I knew I was driving down to Cardiff and I'd get to hear the full thing uninterrupted in the car. It's typical Roger Waters and *Smell The Roses* is very *Have A Cigar*.

My love of music still goes back to that radio show in Liverpool in the 70s and two blokes who seemed to run it all on their own. You can throw in some sport, too, as I wouldn't have got to know John Wetton or Geoff Downes if it wasn't for football..."

Find Phil on Twitter at @philmcnulty and follow his sports blog at www.bbc.co.uk/sport/correspondents/philmcnulty.


"I tweeted about Derby County. A guy responded immediately, and it was John Wetton!"





THEO TRAVIS

The in-demand prog jazz saxophonist and flautist is busier than ever. He takes time out to tell us exactly what he's been up to, from creating a new album of looped flute music to playing with prog royalty and avoiding elves and goblins.

Words: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Miles Skarin

With a foot in both jazz and progressive rock, Theo Travis is one of the busiest sax and flute players on the scene at the moment, having recorded and toured with luminaries such as Steven Wilson, Robert Fripp, David Sylvian and Gong. In addition to leading his own quartet, Double

Talk, he's also been a member of Soft Machine since 2006. He's just released *Open Air*, an album of solo flute processed via effects pedals and looping technology. Although on holiday in America, he took the time to chat with *Prog*...

Your new album *Open Air* is very hypnotic in its use of loops. How did you get interested in that way of playing?

I've always been very attracted to slow, hypnotic music, although you wouldn't necessarily know that from my jazz stuff. I can probably date that interest back to two artists. I remember getting into John Martyn and his use of Echoplex sometime in the 80s. Then I started going through his back catalogue. It blew me away.

The other artist that got me involved in that whole sound world was Brian Eno with *Music For Airports* and *On Land*. That last album had a three-dimensional quality. It wasn't just an 'interesting sound that was as ignorable as it was listenable' thing – I found it very musical. If you actually reduce the whole thing to the harmonies and melodies on a piano, it'd be very sparse, but there's also a whole lot going on.

You released an album of solo flute music back in 2003, called *Slow Life*. How does *Open Air* differ?

I suppose what's different is me. In the intervening years I've done a lot of exploring in that looping sound world, particularly with Robert Fripp. Robert has his whole distinctive

soundscape world and being able to work alongside and with that helped me develop the concept for a new album. Whether it's solo or with Soft Machine, The Tangent, Steven Wilson, or with Cipher, I've done so much since *Slow Life* I was keen to try to explore an album of that kind of music by going in as deep as I could.

With *Open Air* I've explored quite a few different flutes – bass flute, concert flute or various wooden flutes. It's broadening the texture and using a little bit more technology as well. The core sound, though, is coming from the same place: texture, harmony, melody and a bit of three-dimensional slowness.

Are you planning on working with Robert Fripp in the future?

Well, we're going to release a three-CD Travis & Fripp set soon. I loved working with Robert. It was very easy going to work with him. We locked in very comfortably. Working with textural, slow music, Robert is one of the pioneers and playing those concerts in the church environment, it just changes everything [the duo recorded a series of live shows in churches and cathedrals in 2009–'10]. You approach the music in a certain way; the audience listens differently. It was a very special way of making music. Working with Robert was very easy, which doesn't sit well with a lot of the public's perceptions of him!

You reverted to being called Soft Machine after dropping the Legacy tag in 2015. What's been the response?

It's been great actually. We've been in Europe recently and in November we're touring the UK. One of the things I've been pleased with is that we've played to audiences both young and old who are hardcore Soft Machine fans. They'd tell us, "I know Soft Machine music and this is Soft Machine." That felt very good. The music is very real and it's not trying to be something it isn't. Obviously, John Marshall [drums], Roy Babbington [bass] and John Etheridge [guitar] were in Soft Machine for a long time and you can't trick hardcore fans. If they thought it was a band trying to be something it wasn't, they would tell us. We are drawing on some new material but also some different older tracks, such as *The Man Who Waved At Trains*, and we're looking at other tracks from *Seven* and *Fourth*. There's such a great catalogue of music for us to dip into.

Who else have you been playing with?

I'm on *The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery*, the latest album by The Tangent. Andy Tillison is such a talented musician and writer. I've been involved in the band since their second album and after Andy, I'm probably the longest-standing musician to be associated with the group. It's very much new progressive rock. There are no elves or goblins to be seen within a hundred miles of it! It's quite socially conscious and real. It's not all metaphors and vague, ambiguous words that might mean this or that. You hear the words and you know what it means. It's very much heart-on-the-sleeve stuff.

I've guested on a couple of other albums recently. One is by Niko Tsonev, who was in Steven Wilson's band from the *Get All You Deserve* DVD. The album's called *Moonparticle* and it sounds great. The other album I did quite a lot on is [the debut solo album] by Gleb Kolyadin from iamthemoorning. Nick Beggs and Gavin Harrison are on that one as well. It was quite an involved project. It was a mixture of complicated parts and blowing.

Gleb is very impressive as a pianist. He's as technical and as complex as Rick Wakeman or Keith Emerson at their very best on the piano. I had to really work on that one! It was more complex than a lot of stuff I've done. I really enjoyed it. It was nicely written and recorded.

You've worked with some pretty big names along the way. Who else would you like to play with?

I'm a big Traffic fan. I love John Barleycorn *Must Die* and *The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys*. I love Steve Winwood and he did a great album called *Nine Lives* a few years ago. I'd like to work with him if you can get that organised, please!

Open Air is out now on Tonefloat. See www.theotravis.com for details.


"It's very much new progressive rock. There are no elves or goblins to be seen within a hundred miles of it!"



An Embarrassment Of **RICHES**



A maverick filmmaker, a band reaching the peak of their powers, an iconic venue steeped in history, and a singing Afghan Hound: this is the inside story of **Pink Floyd**'s classic *Live At Pompeii*.

Words: Daryl Easlea **Images:** Jacques Boumendil

In 2017, to coincide with the release of the DVD of his return to Pompeii, David Gilmour said about the film of his old band's performance at the same venue 46 years previously: "I find it rather embarrassing. I'm sure it's a lot of fun for many people, but not much for me."

Of course, a great deal of what Gilmour says often comes with an inbuilt wink — at times in the past he has been very affectionate toward the film. It's an antique and a curio, to be sure, but is it embarrassing as part of the band's legacy? Let *Prog* take you on a journey

"I don't think any of us thought it would be as well-received and last in people's minds for as long as it did. All credit to him [Maben]. It's his idea and it was great."

David Gilmour





back to four beautiful young men, a sultry, historical amphitheatre, and a young film director, brimming with art and ideas...

Although it was grandly billed as "More Than A Movie! An Explosive Cinema Concert", *Pink Floyd: Live At Pompeii* is a small, personal film, which sets Pink Floyd, then at the tail end of their space rock phase, at the very heart of the European art scene. It crowned the era in which the group were scoring ballets, adding soundtracks to foreign art movies and recording in Paris. With a German-Belgian-French-made film set in an arena at the heart of the origins of Europe, *Live At Pompeii* represents Floyd as part of a continental musical movement, quite distinct from their American contemporaries.

In its own quiet and archaic way, *Live At Pompeii* expanded the band's reputation throughout the 70s, in tandem with the success of 1973's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. As the decade progressed, through one-off and late-night screenings in the UK and the US, it did their touring for them. For new fans, *Live At Pompeii* (as with their cut-price sampler, *Relics*) catapulted the band back to another era.

The film's second version, released in 1974, as the Floyd became glacial and removed, showed the band sharing lunch and recording in a moment of seemingly Fabs-type bonhomie. Although today these sequences bear out Gilmour's view, it was enough for this writer and countless other viewers to be happily taken in.

"It's just us playing a load of tunes in the amphitheatre with some rather *Top Of The Pops*-ish shots of us walking around the top of Vesuvius and things like that," Roger Waters said at the time of the film's release. "I think Pink Floyd freaks would enjoy it."

Although shot on 35mm, *Live At Pompeii* was originally made for television. Like so much in the Floyd's career, it was a happy accident. It was



**"It's just us playing a load of tunes in the amphitheatre with some rather *Top Of The Pops*-ish shots of us walking around the top of Vesuvius and things like that."
Roger Waters**

"I found their music fantastic and different compared to other groups. You had all the little whispers, and the noises, and the shrieking. It was a different world, and that different world was absolutely fascinating."

Adrian Maben

Clockwise from far left: setting up the camera; Floyd walking over the top of the amphitheatre; posing on the wall.

A Parisian youth at an exciting time, Maben had met Jean-Luc Godard and marched with the students in 1968, but despite all this, there was a general mistrust in the capital of rock music. "There were few rock programmes — it was just noise to the people who ran TV, even the intelligent ones."

It was not the case in neighbouring Belgium. "Belgian TV was more open to the possibilities of making rock films, so I went to Brussels and did a couple of films there with East Of Eden and Family. I learned a lot."

With these films under his belt, Maben set about ensnaring the group that he really wanted to record. Pink Floyd seemed to marry both his love of art and music perfectly. More to the point, they had piqued his curiosity — he was intrigued by them. "When you listened to their records at the time,

world, and that different world was absolutely fascinating."

Maben phoned the group's manager, Steve O'Rourke, in early 1971 and set up a meeting with him to discuss his vision, "a marriage of art and the Pink Floyd". After this initial contact, he heard nothing. He called O'Rourke again and a second meeting was arranged, this time with David Gilmour present. Gilmour was, as Maben says, "very nice and told me they would think about it". And then, again, nothing.

Then there was a tentative agreement — the group would film later in the year. No location had been decided on for the film. It was only when Maben was touring Italy that summer that he found his spot. He chanced upon Pompeii, the city on the outskirts of Naples that had been destroyed by the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in AD 79, with up to 11,000 residents buried in ash. The city was first rediscovered in the late 16th century, and soon established itself as a magnet for visitors from around the world.

It was a mishap with Maben's passport that led to him going back to the once great city's amphitheatre at night. He thought it would be perfect for the group to play in. Maben was later to say, "It was the silence, it was the night time, it was eerie — this is the place the Pink Floyd have got to be."

Importantly, unlike recent concert films, it would just be the group performing alone, without an audience, playing to the silence.

Putting a rock band, let alone making a film, in what was to become a World Heritage site just a handful of years later was not straightforward. Again, Maben, an extremely methodical individual, was not going to let red tape stand in his way.

Through one of the film's producers, Maben knew of someone onside at Naples University: Ugo Carputi, a professor of ancient history. Carputi went to Haroun Tazieff, the Soprintendenza in charge of the site.

"Rock'n'roll in the centre of Pompeii wasn't exactly their cup of tea," says Maben. "They were frightened of a huge crowd clambering over monuments, taking away stones."

it was very strange — you didn't quite know how they made their sounds.

"I thought it would be very interesting to show how they made their noises, their electronic sounds, and put them all together. I found their music fantastic and different compared to other groups. You had all the little whispers, and the noises, and the shrieking. It was a different

Meddle-ing Kids: Floyd playing in front of director Adrian Maben.

the vision of UK-born, Paris-residing director Adrian Maben. Maben had not emerged from the Cambridge/London art clique that had surrounded the group. He was young and working for French television. "I was into art films, making portraits of Magritte and art movements," Maben tells *Prog* from his residence in Paris. "Art became something new and vibrant."



I told him I wanted to do a concert where the only thing we will see is the Floyd themselves, a bit of the crew, zero spectators. That's what finally clinched it. The Soprintendenza didn't know who Pink Floyd was, but fortunately Carputi did – he'd heard their music and liked it."

Carputi could get the amphitheatre closed to the public for six days.

The whole thing was to move away from, as Maben said, "the show and people reacting to the show". Ever since the footage of the hyperventilating girls experiencing Beatlemania, the audience cutaway shot had become *de rigueur* in film, with *Woodstock* and *Gimme Shelter* featuring their audiences almost in equal measure to the bands. Maben was adamant that it should not be just another concert film, and he was clear that he wanted to capture Pink Floyd differently.

"It was to be an anti-*Woodstock*," Maben continues. "Above all, there should be the notion of silence, and the images [of Pompeii] would speak for themselves with the music. It was something that had to stand on its own: the Floyd and the emptiness of the theatre. Maybe, just maybe, it was like they were playing for the ghosts of the dead. The real miracle is that *Live At Pompeii* escaped a TV format and became a film with international distribution."

The film was to be made and financed for TV by the Belgian Radio Télévision Belge Francophone, the German company Bayerischer Rundfunk and the French Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française. However, producer Reiner Moritz suggested that it should be filmed on three cameras using high-quality 35mm film. This contributed to the film's longevity and success. The main

stipulation from the group was that they would not record to playback – it had to be live – and they needed to make the film to full studio quality. Road manager Peter Watts pushed for full multitrack recording and for it to be as good as any studio.

"The one thing the Floyd insisted on was doing a multitrack recording and they were 100 per cent right," Maben says. "That meant recording in situ, so the recorder came from Paris because we couldn't get one in Rome."

Hired from Studio Europa-Sonor, it came with engineer Charles Rauchet, who set it up in a corner and recorded everything. "He was very good, because he accepted that we would stop and start. The Floyd seemed fairly happy about it."

As a result, the live performances are remarkable for the way the sound

"I wanted to do a concert where the only thing we will see is the Floyd themselves, a bit of the crew, zero spectators. That's what finally clinched it."

Adrian Maben

bounces off the stone walls. "Peter Watts said the sound had a kind of echo to it, not a dry sound like in a studio. He suggested that the Romans who built the amphitheatre thought not only of the structure but also of the acoustic qualities."

Filming took place in early October 1971, just after the end of the band's short European tour and their recording of the BBC's *Sounds Of The Seventies* at the Paris Cinema. Maben had booked six days for the

shoot. The Avis trucks unloaded the group's equipment... and then the electricity packed up.

"I'd been to see the Soprintendenza two weeks before and he assured me that the electricity would be no problem as it worked for the whole of the site. When we tested it and the Floyd were arriving, it didn't work."

The Floyd arrived from London, and two days passed – which meant they only had three days in which to shoot. Eventually, a cable was run from nearby modern Pompeii to the amphitheatre, meaning the filming could happen.

It wasn't straightforward either when they went to film the cutaway shots of the group walking amid the sulphurous mud at nearby Boscoreale on the slopes of Vesuvius. That day, the band's transport became stuck behind the annual Our Lady Of The Rosary procession in Pompeii.

On the eve of shooting, Steve O'Rourke sprang a surprise – he produced a test pressing of the group's yet-to-be-released album, *Meddle*, and told Maben that the film was to feature two of its songs – and one of those songs, *Echoes*, was 23 minutes long.

Maben says: "Steve arrived and said, 'Here's what we really want to do.' I told him that he couldn't expect me to work on this for the following morning because I'd planned for everything else."

A deal was struck that the group would do the new numbers and then



SARAH LEE/EVERETT



FILM STILL: JACQUES BOUMENDIL/ADRIAN MABEN

On Track: seated on the tracking rails are Claude Agostini with his camera assistant, waiting to film Nick Mason after the *Echoes* Part I introduction.

Left-hand side: David Gilmour with cameraman Jacques Boumendil and his Italian assistant.



Then And Now: Adrian Maben with David Gilmour at Pompeii in 1971 (below) and in 2016 (left).

everything else. All the camera angles and tracking were mapped out the night before shooting. Everything had to be very precise.

Maben was filming with experienced cinematographers – the Hungarian-Italian veteran Gábor Pogány and Belgian Willy Kurant, who had collaborated with Serge Gainsbourg and Orson Welles – and several people he'd already worked with, such as cameraman Jacques Boumendil and script person Marie-Noël Zurstrassen. The film equipment came from Italian studio Cinecittà, to save money on shipping it from Paris. In the end, only three numbers – *Echoes*, *One Of These Days* and *A Saucerful Of Secrets* – were recorded at the amphitheatre.

"It was hard work," Nick Mason said in his Floyd biography *Inside Out*, "with no leisurely nights out sampling the local cuisine and wine list, but

the atmosphere was enjoyable, with everyone getting on with their jobs."

Probably most lovingly remembered from the film is Roger Waters

Bang A Gong: Roger Waters' iconic moment in *Live At Pompeii*.



FILM STILL: JACQUES BOUMENDIL/ADRIAN MABEN

whacking his gong during *A Saucerful Of Secrets* and the tracking shot of the rear of the wall of amps during *Echoes*. It's so iconic, and the stencil on the cabinets ('Pink Floyd. London'), with its lone full stop after 'Pink Floyd', is so powerful. When you think of all the money they went on to spend on kit, pyrotechnics, walls and so on, this simple lettering is equally memorable.

The inclusion of *Echoes* really made the film. And the final pan away, making the band look so small amid all that space, is incredibly haunting, there among all the ghosts.

"The elements that seemed to make it work," Mason told Hugh Fielder in 2016, "none of which we really thought about during the filming, were the decision to perform live instead of miming, and the rather gritty environment created by the heat and the wind."

After the final day's filming on October 7, 1971, the band departed to commence an American tour. But there was still footage needed, so time was allotted from December 13 to complete the film at the Studios de Boulogne near Paris. Waters and Gilmour also suggested that some overdubbing of the Pompeii sound was done at the nearby Europa-Sonor studio, which was where Edith Piaf recorded.

"We spent a whole day working with Charles Raucher, eating oysters, drinking a few beers, joking and working," Maben recalls. "It was a wonderful experience that I will never forget. That was filmed with a small black-and-white 16mm Éclair Coutant camera."

That footage was later to surface in the film's 2003 *Director's Cut*. This could be viewed as rather embarrassing. Waters and Gilmour look as if they have had a private competition to see who could appear more wasted. Waters performs his well-worn obstreperous shtick when asked, "Are you fairly happy about the film?" He replies, after ostentatiously puffing out smoke rings, "What do you mean, happy?" Maben: "Do you feel it's going in a direction that is interesting?" Waters pauses. "What do you mean, interesting?"

For someone who downplayed drug use, he looks out of his gourd.

The Studios de Boulogne sessions spawned new versions of *Careful With That Axe, Eugene* and *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*. "We had to do some recuts of songs in Paris for continuity, and they tried to convince me that I wouldn't notice in the final thing," Gilmour told *Rolling Stone*.

Rick Wright had had a shave, and the band performed in front of a huge screen showing Transflex projections of them recorded at Pompeii. Although the band and director weren't keen because of the tight timescale and

budget, it had to stay – and it adds tremendously to the film's charm.

"I think if I'd not told anybody it was done in Paris," Maben ruefully adds, "I think everybody would have thought the whole thing was done in Pompeii."

There was a third number recorded in Paris. Floyd are not known as a 'fun' band, but *Mademoiselle Nobs*, the second of Floyd's canine quadrilogy (after *Seamus*, and before *Dogs and Dogs Of War*), was recorded with Maben's friend Madonna Bouglione's Afghan Hound, Nobs. The images of Wright holding the mutt at a microphone while she moaned over Waters and Gilmour's generic blues is possibly not the group's greatest achievement, but it's a wheeze.

The original hour-long cut of *Live At Pompeii* was premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1972. Maben only knew this after reading a snippet in the newspaper the following day. The film was to be shown on November 25, 1972 in London. Some 3,000 fans turned up for a screening at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park, only to be turned away as there was a clause in the lease of the Rank-owned venue that meant it couldn't do anything that would compete with its cinema chain. On top of that, it couldn't be shown as it had yet to be properly certified. Waters was asked his opinion of the Rainbow fiasco. He answered: "Rank."

Maben felt there was still work to do. "In the summer of 1972, I began to suspect that something was missing in the first version of the film. The band played like frozen statues in the amphitheatre, but we knew nothing about their character or how they create and produce their extraordinary sounds. I went fishing with Roger on the River Teme near the Welsh border and asked him if it might be possible to film them recording their next album. Roger replied that he would think about it and ask the other members of the band. A few months later, he rang me in Paris and told me, 'OK, we'll do it. Come to London next week with a minimal crew and please, no interference with our work.'"

Maben arrived with a small crew at Abbey Road on October 16 and remained around Studio 2 for a couple of days before getting "politely thrown out". "He came to Abbey Road where he filmed us finishing off the recording of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*," Gilmour said in 2017. "It captured a moment in time."

It was this footage that extended the film to 80 minutes, and became the version that gained a general release in the summer of 1974.

Waters said, "He came to London and shot us... for a couple of days, which has made it much more lively and it's quite an entertaining film."



**"I liked it because it's just a big home movie."
Roger Waters**

Reviews for this version of *Live At Pompeii*, however, were mixed: *Cash Box* magazine said the film went "beyond perfection", while *Melody Maker* reckoned it was "a Zappa-esque musical pastiche". *Billboard* weren't keen – they called it a "floaty film of ancient statues and artefacts, sunstruck shots of the boys cavorting carelessly over the hills, and cheap psychedelic atmosphere stuff that looks left over from the mid-60s mixed-media shows".

Some of the confusion may have come from how the film was billed – "At Last The Rock Wizards Are Unleashed On Film" and "More Than A Movie!"

"The movie is not particularly explosive and certainly not 'more than a movie'," *Billboard* sniffed. "It is, in fact, rather dull, unimaginative and hokey and does not do justice to the Pink Floyd vision."

All of this meant nothing to the group's legions of fans, who quietly set about seeking out and loving the film as it appeared fleetingly in one-off screenings and, that pre-video stamping ground of the rock movie, late-night cinema.

"It was the American midnight circuit that was the key to understanding the modest success of the film," Maben says. "Philippe Borak, based in Cincinnati, was the original American film distributor, but it was George Ritter, based in Canada,



Dave Gilmour, Nick Mason and Richard Wright in action.



Set The Controls:
Nick Mason gets
behind the camera.

"It was hard work, with no leisurely nights out sampling the local cuisine and wine list, but the atmosphere was enjoyable, with everyone getting on with their jobs."
Nick Mason



who was responsible for the film's cult status. George understood that the students on the campus of North American universities were looking for something different. The operation was referred to as the 'midnight circuit' and George sent the heavy 35mm cans of film to as many cinemas as possible in North America. It was a brilliant idea because the other cinemas in the malls were for old people who watched Hollywood blockbusters. *Live At Pompeii* was not their idea of fun at all."

In the UK, the film frequently went out on a double bill with Tony Palmer's short film of Fairport Convention and Matthews' Southern Comfort live in Maidstone in 1970.

Live At Pompeii marks closure for the European Floyd, before America tried to drag them to its breast. It's nothing to do with stadiums, cherry bombs, firecrackers or good times — it's Floyd, alone at the cradle of modern civilisation, making unusual, space-focused music, on the site of one of the greatest natural disasters in history, with the sun and its rays reflected off the walls and their gong. *Pompeii* itself, and its incredible October light, is in many ways one of the stars of the film. Its majesty, eeriness, sense of broken progress, of a civilisation brought



EGGS, SAUSAGE, CHIPS AND BEANS AND A TEA

Behind the scenes at Abbey Road on the Director's Cut of the film.

The second version of *Live At Pompeii*, with its infamous Abbey Road canteen sequences, has been said to diminish the film's mystique. Before the days of being coached on how to present to camera, the group appear as an unruly bunch of kids trying to act grown up.

In fact, as the road crew pass around Allen Jones' art book *Figures*, the discussions between the group about the glasses of milk and apple pie "without crust" could almost be like the Haribo adverts for sweets which are on UK TV at the time of writing, which replace adult voices with those of children. Here are some of the choice quotes from these fabled exchanges.

Gilmour: "Can I have a glass of milk please?"

Mason: "How do you know this isn't yours?"

Wright: "Because it hasn't got peas on it."

Mason: "Well, this has got ham on it."

Wright: "Is this your milk, can I drink it, have a sip?"

Mason: "I'd like some pie and not the crust."

Elsewhere, there is a very 1972 undercurrent of man and machine: Gilmour talks about whether the equipment is controlling them or whether they are being controlled by it, while Waters adds that it's "a question of using the tools that are available when they're available. And more and more now there are all kinds of electronic goodies which are available for people like us to use, who can be bothered and we can be bothered."

On whether these new machines could be responsible solely for their success, Gilmour insists, "It's all extensions of what's coming out of our heads," while Waters says, "It's like saying, 'Give a man a Les Paul guitar and he becomes Eric Clapton.' It's not true. Give a man an amplifier and a synthesiser and... he doesn't become us."



Food Fight: Floyd
get candid in
the canteen.

FILM STILL: JACQUES BOUMENDI/ADRIAN MABEN

The images of Gilmour and Wright playing are complemented by the timeless image of Waters' veiny arms twiddling the knobs of his synth, saying, "Can I put this down? It's just on the... It's just on the first note?" There's a delay; the phrase 'Stay cool' is said, almost as if a Vesuvius-like eruption could be encountered.

Waters is prescient in saying that rock'n'roll will not be dying any time soon. Mason also suggests that their era may be passing, and that the group represent their fans' childhood. As this dissolves immediately into Wright playing *Us And Them* at the grand piano, it's strangely moving. And then we're back to that canteen and their fruit pies...

"Now I think about it, the main quality of each member of the band was probably a great sense of humour," Maben says. "Roger once told me that it enabled them to avoid infighting." **DE**

to its knees, suited the Floyd and their audience's cosmic consciousness.

And the band's look was crystallised in that moment: Waters in his black T-shirt with the haircut that eventually every comprehensive schoolboy had in the early 70s; Wright with his shirt off, obscured by a beard; Gilmour looking like someone who had just come to life from an Etruscan fresco in Pompeii; and finally, Mason, captured in his all-time classic look, all tache and curls, looking like David Bedford, the contemporaneous UK Olympic long-distance runner and the initial inspiration for the 118 TV adverts.

What made *Live At Pompeii* unique for its time was that you saw all the workings of a pop group. The Beatles had attempted to do this with *Let It Be*, wishing initially to film their rehearsals and culminate in a gig on an ocean liner or at the pyramids, but instead ending with a downbeat show on their office rooftop.

With *Live At Pompeii*, there's no artifice. You can see all the wires and a band at work. This is what makes it so intriguing.

"The band at work is exactly what we wanted to get," Maben says.

"We're very tolerant with each other, but there are a lot of things unsaid as well."
Richard Wright



The Wright stuff: Richard warming up in the amphitheatre.

The juxtaposition of their barrage of technology in that ancient, empty place never ceases to excite. And although the trucks that drive in the equipment have dated, as have the players, the rest is timeless.

Live At Pompeii is never less than vastly influential, and a capture of beautiful young men finding their feet. But is it, as Gilmour suggests, embarrassing? There is, when anyone is presented with footage of their younger selves, an immediate instinct for one's toes to curl. Gilmour spoke of himself in 2006 as that "young chap", saying, "If I hear him speak, like in *Live At Pompeii*, I do find it excruciating, because he was pretentious and naïve."

Gilmour, of course, is never one to look back that often. He added in 2017: "Doing the actual recording in the amphitheatre back then in Pompeii was great, but we had to turn it into a more interesting document of what was going on. Adrian wanted to make an art film with art and music in a special place. So the idea changed a bit and it felt to him and to us that more stuff was needed."

"They were curious, I think," Maben says. "They wanted to explore different avenues visually and on the music side. They did the ballet with Roland Petit. No other rock group that I can think of would have done that at the time."

Maben was subsequently asked to repeat his formula – Deep Purple at the Taj Mahal or The Moody Blues in the Grand Canyon – but the very fact he didn't helps the film retain its uniqueness, and that the Floyd never made another conventional performance film in their heyday keeps it pristine. Like the albums it primarily showcased, it still remains a rite of passage for new generations of fans everywhere.

Roger Waters was in favour of the film: "I liked it because it's just a big home movie."

Although Rick Wright didn't say a lot on record about *Live At Pompeii*, his comments in the Paris segment of the film have gone on to be possibly the most heard of all. "We're very tolerant with each other, but there are a lot of things unsaid as well."

These words were to open 2014's *The Endless River*, Gilmour's coda to Pink Floyd, and tribute to Wright.

"I don't think any of us thought it [*Live At Pompeii*] would be as well-received and last in people's minds for as long as it did," Gilmour said in 2015. "All credit to him [Maben]. It's his idea and it was great."

Perhaps *Live At Pompeii* wasn't that embarrassing after all. ☺

Pink Floyd: Live At Pompeii – The Director's Cut is out now on Universal. See www.pinkfloyd.com for more information.

A FILM IS NEVER FINISHED

There have been three versions of the film so far, released in 1972, 1974 and 2003, with another potentially on the way. Adrian Maben explains why.

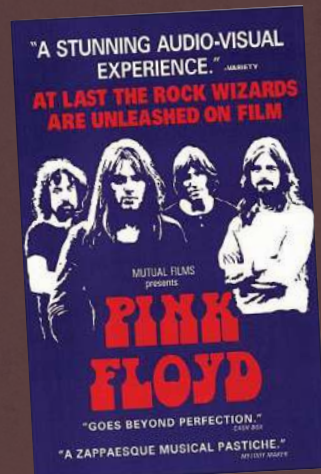


"In reality, a film is never finished and one's opinion changes over time. You don't just put it in six cans or on a hard disc and say, 'That's it, let's move on to something else.' On the contrary, you try to find a method, and some money, to change the old version into something new that hopefully will be more contemporary.

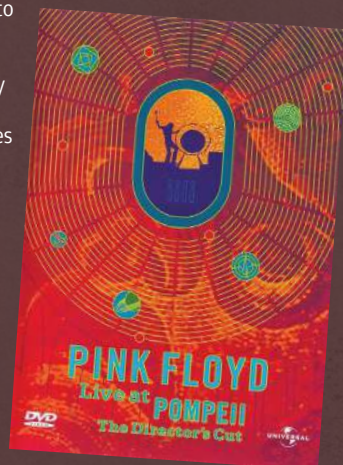
"It's like the French painter Pierre Bonnard, who was well known for always wanting to retouch his paintings, even when they were hanging on the walls of the Louvre. He always carried a small paintbox in his pocket and used to tell the irate museum guardians who tried to arrest him that they were his paintings and that he could do whatever he wanted with them. The word 'Bonnardisme' even found its way into the dictionary: 'A discouraging tendency to be overly perfectionist!'"

Live at Pompeii tries to adapt to the extraordinary changes that are being made in cinema techniques today: from the original 35mm film shot in 1971 with a release on VHS cassettes and laser discs to the DVD version released in 2003. Now, of course, everything is on hard discs, with the possibility of releasing a 4K version in the future – and the Japanese are reported to be working on 8K television sets.

As Roger Waters once remarked, "Technology is advancing at an incredible speed and we need to take advantage of the electronic goodies that become available on the market." DE



Above: the two original film posters for the film's UK release. Below: the cover of the Director's Cut DVD.



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UP POMPEII

As **David Gilmour: Live At Pompeii** reaches cinemas ahead of its release on DVD, CD and vinyl, the Pink Floyd man talks about touring, the film and the future.

David Gilmour was in conversation with Matt Everett.

Article: Daryl Easlea, with thanks to Julian Stockton

David Gilmour has long been known to conclude a tour with a flourish, be it playing in the middle of the lagoon in front of St Mark's Square in Venice with Pink Floyd in 1989, or at the historic shipyards of Gdansk in 2006. However, in 2016, he surpassed himself even by his own standards by bringing his show to a place firmly etched in world history, and in the history of Pink Floyd – at the amphitheatre in Pompeii, the site trapped in the pyroclastic flow of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

In 1971, of course, his old group, under the direction of Adrian Maben, shot their legendary *Live At Pompeii* film, which captured them playing in an amphitheatre, empty, save for the crew and a few local kids. In 2016, it couldn't have been more different – Gilmour brought his entire touring operation along to perform a spectacular show in front of a paying audience. It was to be a time when ghosts were laid to rest.

Gilmour first had the idea of returning to Pompeii in 2015 as he was touring Europe and then South America.

"I don't get out on tour very often and I like to create a special occasion for people, so it's nice to play in beautiful old places that have a special vibe to them," Gilmour says.

"We started at Pula in Croatia in an absolutely spectacular amphitheatre, which is a place I'd never been to before, and we continued that idea all over Europe. In these beautiful places, you know there's a whole added element of specialness that the building gives to it. Hopefully the audience will remember it forever."

Playing venues such as this is not without enormous logistical issues. "Luckily I don't get to hear about most of them," Gilmour laughs.

Production manager Roger Searle and lighting man Marc Brickman scope each location out, months in advance.

"Roger is brilliant and completely unflappable," Gilmour reveals. "He gets everything done and if you ask him to

do something, he always says 'yes', never 'no'. We need people like him."

The South American leg of the *Rattle That Lock* tour was a key experience for Gilmour. The continent has a reputation for audience intensity and complex logistics, with tales of payments not being made and legs of tours having to be cancelled.

"Through all those years of our Pink Floyd touring, no one ever managed to convince us it was worth going through all that, so we never did. But times have changed and things are now far more professional. We were playing to up to 50,000 people a night, which for me as a solo artist was quite a surprise, but the audiences are so fantastically enthusiastic, polite and welcoming. There's a more even split between men and women, which is refreshing. Many people have told me, over the years, how great the South American audiences are and I would go, 'Yeah, sure, it's just the same as everywhere else really.' But they were right – it really was a treat."

The *Rattle That Lock* tour lent itself to extraordinary venues

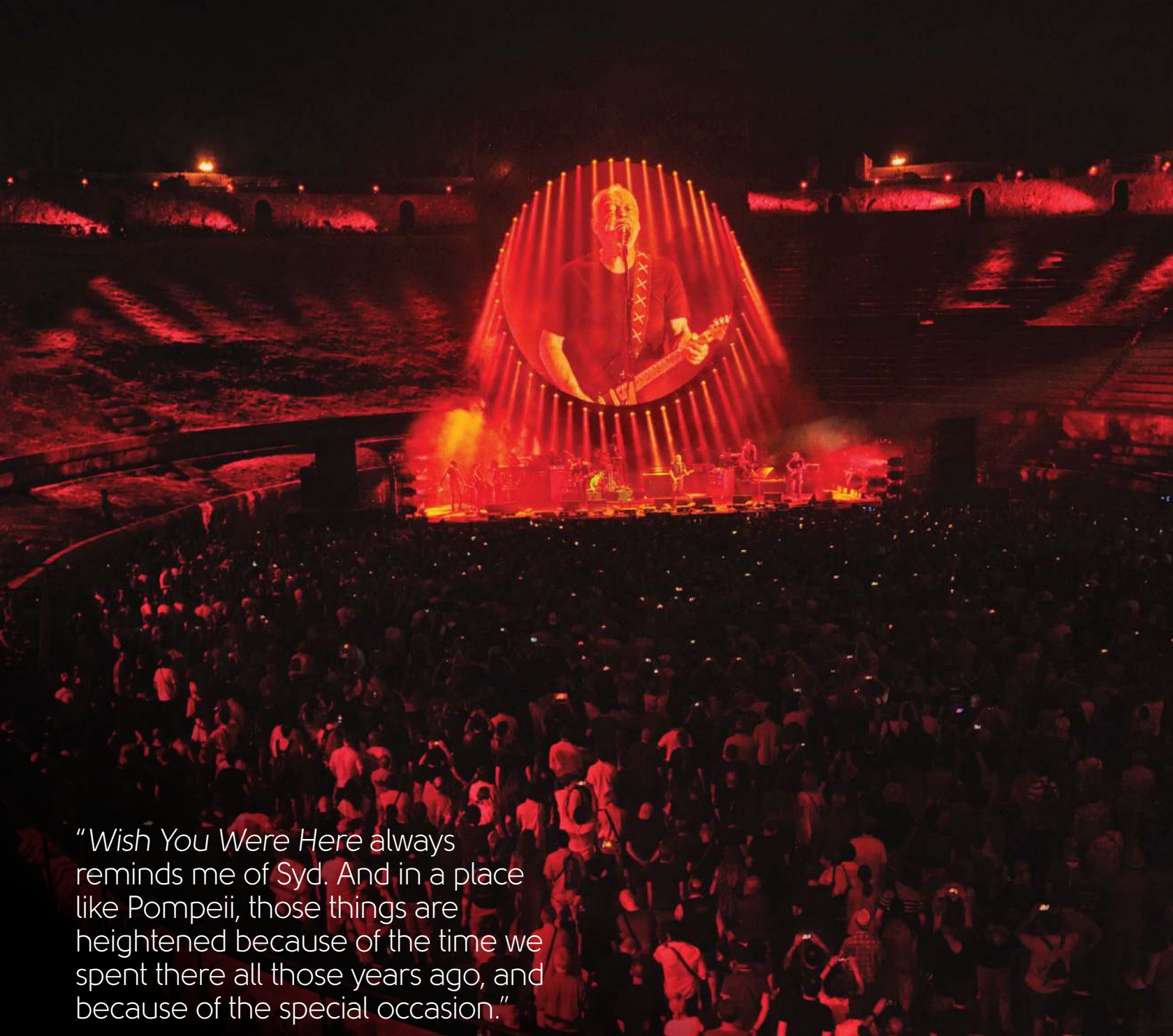
and, as it progressed, it seemed to lead to one in particular.

"I don't want to get completely stuck only in amphitheatres, but someone suggested we try for Pompeii again. The minute the idea of playing there was mooted, I said, 'Go for it. Absolutely.' I said, 'We'll never get it.' I didn't think they'd allow it."

"So we sent our trusty team off to negotiate with the town of Pompeii. It turned out that the mayor and the townspeople were thrilled with the idea and were very keen to expedite it. They all made it work fantastically well."

Playing Pompeii was a huge statement. Although Gilmour did not watch the original, fabled 1972 film again, he was aware that by revisiting, and adding an audience, it would become a full-blown spectacle.

"The statement element of it came along a little bit later. I don't think we originally were that concerned – it was just one of a number of places we were playing. At some point, we thought we did okay with it back in '71 without an



"Wish You Were Here always reminds me of Syd. And in a place like Pompeii, those things are heightened because of the time we spent there all those years ago, and because of the special occasion."

audience — maybe it would be fun to do the DVD there. We recorded and filmed shows all over the world, but we thought this one would be something extra special, which indeed it was. The two shows went really well."

Whereas original director Maben had to negotiate minefields with local authorities to get the group to play there in 1971, now the world had turned sufficiently for Gilmour to be welcomed with open arms. After all, a significant number of tourists visit the World Heritage Site every year because of the Floyd connection.

The Avis trucks that trundled in back in 1971 were now replaced by fleets of equipment, all of which had to be wheeled carefully down aged paths so as not to damage the legendary structure.

"All of that had to be negotiated," Gilmour says. "Things like the

fireworks and pyro are designed to look exciting and haphazard. You want it to look dangerous but it's very carefully done and controlled and our people know exactly what they're doing. It's a highly professional system, and so no damage was done to the site. You have to convince people that you are that sort of organisation.

"We've been through that in the 70s. That highly dangerous sort of stuff was, in fact, highly dangerous in those days. Health and safety didn't exist, pretty much, and there were a lot of very shaky moments on major tours. But these days, it's very slick."

The spectacular concerts in July 2016 obviously opened doors in the minds of the media to Pink Floyd again, but Gilmour wasn't especially worried. "You can't worry about the media — they're going to find *something* to obsess about. And the story of 'will

Echoes: Gilmour's return to Pompeii summons the spirit of Pink Floyd in '71.

we, won't we' comes up time and time again and will never go away, I suspect, however convincing I try to make the argument."

For Gilmour, walking back into that amphitheatre after a gap of 45 years was unforgettable. "It brought back all sorts of memories of the times we had there and the Heath Robinson sort of setup we had then. We had a Brenell 8-track tape machine sitting at the back and hundreds of little wires and a little mixing desk. It's amazing that we got anything as good sound-wise out of it as we did, doing take after take in the blazing sun. There are a lot of memories and ghosts in that place."

Adrian Maben was there, as well as historian Mary Beard. "Entirely coincidentally, Adrian was there with an exhibition of photos from 1971. It was not connected to our visit. It was booked to be there anyway. We had



As the original performance and film has had an indelible impact on a whole generation, Gilmour had to go through the modern-day duties of meeting local dignitaries, being whisked off into the modern town and given the freedom of the city by the mayor.

"There are a number of people there who had been kids when we did the 1971 show with Pink Floyd who had managed to wheedle their way into the amphitheatre to watch. They said what a significant memory in their childhood that was, and for me to come back was such a thrill and a treat for them."

The strict capacity limit in the amphitheatre gave the show a special resonance, one that translates well to the film. "I was unusually nervous, but we got to the end of the first night and thought we'd cracked it. It was really good and the second night was even better. You may be doing exactly the same set, but they can have a completely different vibe. It's one of those weird, magical things when you really don't know what you're going to get."

As one would expect, the show — as anyone who caught the tour would testify — was outstanding: the balance of new and old, of supporting players and the star wrapped in a major league *son et lumière*.

"Putting it all together and fitting everything into that venue was a challenge for Marc Brickman. We had drones filming from about a mile away and you see a tiny little circle in the distance with light and smoke sort of pouring out and pulsing. It's spectacular, and beautifully shot."

Of course, being a Gilmour show, there are some bombastic moments.

"I haven't managed to grow out of those yet!" he laughs. "I keep thinking that bombast is a thing of the past, but it still sneaks back in."

"As for Floyd reforming, the story of 'will we, won't we' comes up time and time again and will never go away, I suspect, however convincing I try to make the argument."

talked about getting someone there to talk about the place itself. Mary was mentioned. It turned out that she was coming to the concert anyway. Things serendipitously just fell into place.

"Mary paints it as rather more prosaic than our idea of what it might have been like. Somehow that makes it feel even more real and more alive than watching *Spartacus* or something. The audience would have been sitting there with no beers, no refreshments and no loos."

Gilmour's performance chimes with Beard's philosophy that sites like Pompeii are there to be enjoyed.

One such moment is when the band don sunglasses during *Run Like Hell*. But as with a great deal of Gilmour's work, it's borne out of practicality.

"There are the strobes that Marc is using at that moment and you actually cannot see a thing. With the flashing, it makes your brain do strange things and it's easy to forget where you are. Someone wanted to wear sunglasses and we thought, 'Yeah, let's get everyone to do it and it'll be just like *Wallace & Gromit* when the rocket takes off to go to the moon and all the mice put their sunglasses on.'"



THE HISTORY WOMAN

Ancient Rome expert and Floyd fan Mary Beard relives her most memorable Pompeii experience.

Words: Natasha Scharf

Is This A Dream Or Is It Real Life? Mary Beard with David Gilmour.



SARAH LEE/REX/NEVE

It was on a sunny day last July when classicist Mary Beard found herself in a situation that would have amazed her teenage self.

"If you'd told me at 19 that some 40-odd years later I would have been going round the amphitheatre in Pompeii with David Gilmour, I wouldn't have believed you!" she laughs.

Now Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge, Beard has presented countless documentaries and written many books on Ancient Rome, but it was after watching Pink Floyd's *Live At Pompeii* in '73 that she developed a passion for prog. At the time, she was on a gap year from her degree at Cambridge, and knew nothing about the band except the enticing title of their new film. She soon discovered *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and fell

"He's a very nice guy and we had a good time, but the concert was just *amazing!*"

in love with the "cleverness of its lyrics. They spoke to my generation," she says.

"I saw [the film] before I'd ever been to Pompeii, which I realise sounds rather odd... I did go shortly afterwards and it was exciting, but I'm not sure that it absolutely lived up to what I'd seen on the movie! I found out about Pompeii in that live way and I found out about Floyd through that movie. In a funny way, I knew more about Floyd at Pompeii than I did about Floyd as a band, but for a young classicist who wanted to be a hip and sexy young classicist, it



With a show in two halves that builds to a climactic finish, Gilmour added *The Great Gig In The Sky* to the set for Pompeii. "And of course, we did *One Of These Days*, which we hadn't been playing on the tour. That's the only song that we played there back in 1971."

Pompeii is a place of ghosts, and it would have been impossible for Gilmour not to be touched by their presence.

"There are songs that Rick [Wright, Floyd keyboardist] wrote [*The Great Gig In The Sky*], and there's *A Boat Lies Waiting*, which is about Rick, for which I wrote the music and Polly [Samson, Gilmour's wife] wrote the words, which we put into a sequence.

"*Wish You Were Here* always reminds me of Syd [Barrett] when we play it. And in a place like Pompeii, those things are heightened because of the time we spent there all those years ago, and because of the special occasion. These things all come on to you while you're performing and hopefully heighten the emotion of the occasion for the audience as well."

Gilmour had around six shows before Pompeii to break in his new touring band, which he introduced after the first leg of the tour, with only himself, bassist Guy Pratt and vocalist Lucita Jules remaining constant. The group gelled well.

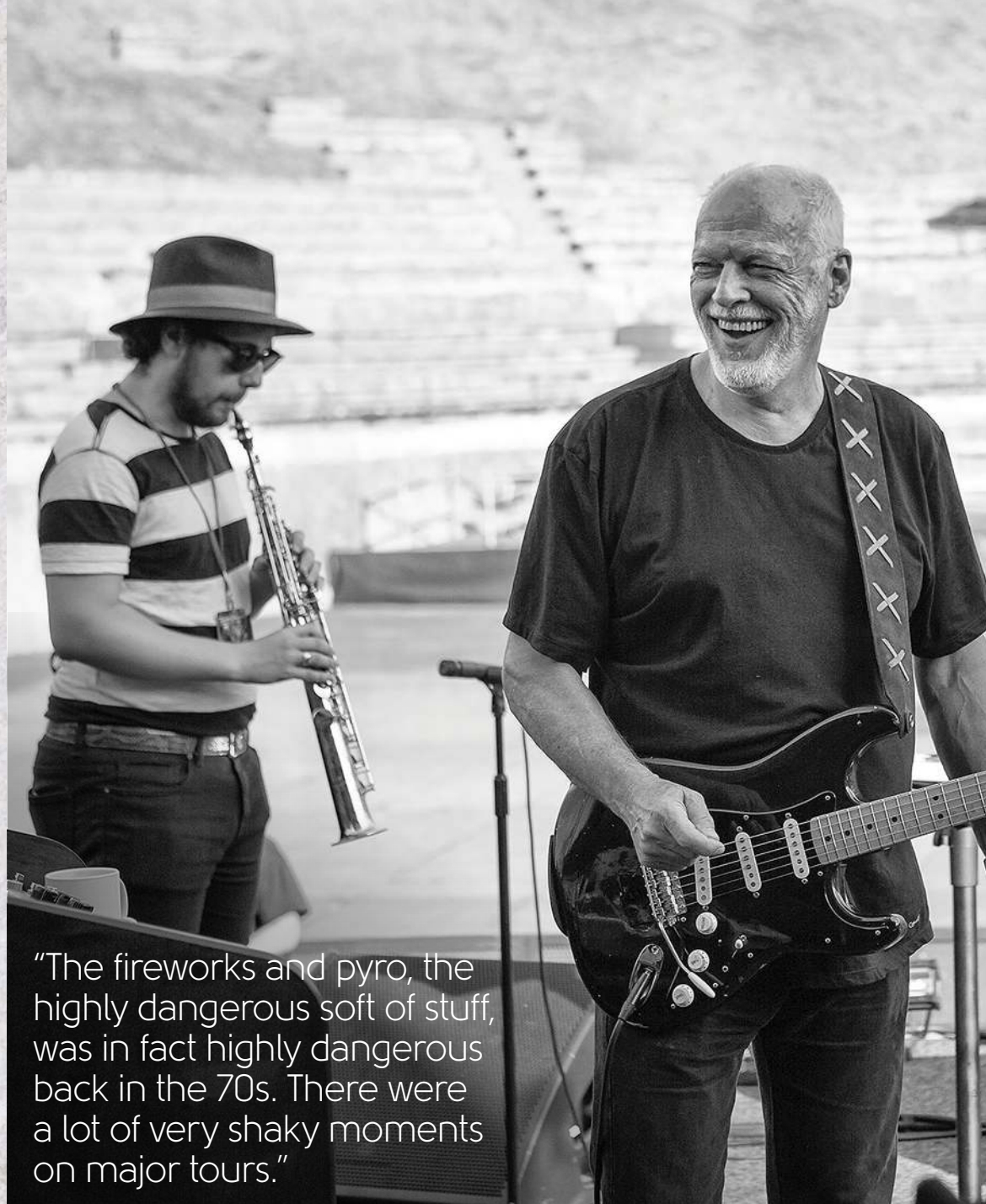
"There are a number of songs that have moments for improvisation. I get to do most of it, of course, but Chuck [Leavell], Greg [Phillinganes], João [Mello] and Chester [Kamen] are the new people on this leg of the tour and they all get their moments to stretch out.

"I'm into perfection in a way, but at the same time, I don't want the songs played perfectly as on the record. I want it to be live music. I want people who play with me to have some autonomy to be able to change something that suits them and suits the mood of the moment. And, of course, if that goes wrong, we discuss it afterwards! But I would rather that we go for something and enjoy actually playing, rather than holding them tight to a format."

One of the highlights of the tour was the sax playing of young Brazilian Mello, who handled Dick Parry's legendary parts with great elan.

"He's a beautiful player, really good. He had his 21st birthday when we were in Brazil, playing in his home town, and it's kind of special to think of all the different ages playing in a band and feeling like you are part of something together."

Gilmour thoroughly enjoyed shooting the film, and it shows. It's directed by Gavin Elder, who helmed the capture of his 2006 show in Gdansk.



"The fireworks and pyro, the highly dangerous soft of stuff, was in fact highly dangerous back in the 70s. There were a lot of very shaky moments on major tours."

David Gilmour back on the stage where Floyd filmed their iconic live movie in 1971.

Below: Nash and Crosby with Gilmour at the Royal Albert Hall, 2015.



WHEN YOU'RE IN

A look at some of Gilmour's special guests.

David Gilmour has become known for his revolving door of select guests on his tours. "It's nice to offer *Comfortably Numb* to other people to have their take on it so we have done it with quite a few different people. Going back to 2002 when I played the Royal Festival Hall, Kate Bush did it, Bob

Geldof did it and Robert Wyatt did it. Of course, in 2006 at the Albert Hall, David Bowie did it, on condition that we did *Arnold Layne* as well. A great moment. People often just aren't on the same continent as you at the same time. Bowie wasn't, in fact - he actually flew over especially. It was very, very kind of him."

Gilmour's son Gabriel replicated his piano part from *Rattle That Lock's In Any Tongue* at the London shows - the only time so far that father has been able to cajole son onstage.

"He said, 'I've done the Albert Hall - don't

need to do anything else really, do I?'"

The currently estranged David Crosby ("a character of the first order") and Graham Nash (whom Gilmour had first met with The Hollies at Abbey Road in the 60s, on the night Nash left the band) have joined Gilmour too.

"They were on tour and they came to the Albert Hall in 2015 and did two or three songs. They were, of course, on *On An Island* and sang on *A Boat Lies Waiting* on *Rattle That Lock*. Fantastic.

"They have that magic in their voices and allow me to be a part of it on these special occasions."



"It looks fantastic," Gilmour enthuses. "I'm dying to go in and watch and hear it in a cinema, with those big bass speakers that make sound travel through a room in a way that speakers in a small room don't quite have the wavelength for. It's very special."

"I'll be sitting there in September watching it in that proper way for the first time myself. A cinema release is the best way of putting it out there – the sound and the occasion, having a lot of people together enjoying that moment. I can't wait."

The DVD package, naturally, is crammed with extras: footage from the South American leg of the tour, from other legs, and from a Polish TV broadcast with an orchestra conducted

by Zbigniew Preisner. Material from the band's two sets of shows at Gilmour's beloved Royal Albert Hall is also included. "The Albert Hall has an atmosphere. I've always loved it. If you treat it with respect, it'll pay you back. It feels like a second home to me. It fits in with my ethos of performing in beautiful and exciting places."

There will be the customary CD and vinyl sets too, with photographs by Gilmour's wife and collaborator Polly Samson, director Elder, Polish tour photographer Anna Wloch, and Sarah Lee, who shot the Pompeii gig.

"We have a wealth of material that we have used in the booklets and on the jackets. I'm a big fan of the physical, of the object, of the big thing where

was great to see *your* music being played there. It made a really big impact because of the symbolic importance to me. It made me think that working on the Romans wasn't just about having your head buried in the past; it was about *now*."

Pompeii's stone amphitheatre was built around 70 BC – 100 years before Rome's Colosseum – and is thought to have originally seated around 20,000 spectators in its glory days. It lay buried for centuries after Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD and was rediscovered during a lengthy excavation of the town's ruins which began in the 18th century.

"It's the earliest surviving amphitheatre in Italy and was a tremendous, hugely expensive building," Beard explains. "It was once very beautifully painted and there were scenes all around the arena of the kind of things they'd like to imagine happened there. Sadly, a few winters meant that all the painting disappeared so now it seems a very stark building to us and that fits with our idea of the brutal games that went on there, but it would have been more colourful and more splendid in the past."

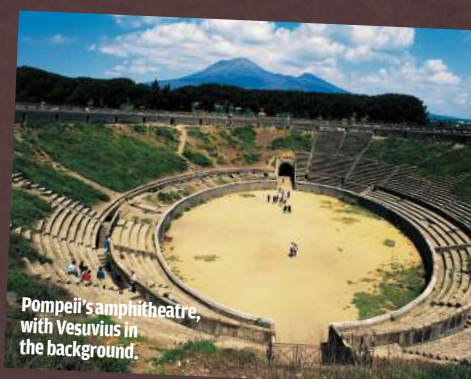
As the settlement's main venue for entertainment, the amphitheatre would have hosted Roman spectator sports, including gladiatorial combat and wild beast hunts, although according to Beard, those beasts were more likely to have been sheep and wild boar than the more exotic lions and tigers often depicted in history books. "I suspect that there would have been the odd bit of singing and dancing there too," she says. "I doubt that Floyd were the first people ever to sing in the amphitheatre at Pompeii."

Although the classicist has been to Pompeii many times since her first visit via celluloid, David Gilmour's return to the amphitheatre last year gave her the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience one of her favourite musicians live in concert at this historic venue.

Not only was she in the audience but she also gave Gilmour and his wife Polly Samson a guided tour through the ancient site. The trio had met previously at social events, but this was the first time they had spent quality time together.

"He's a very nice guy and we had a good time, but the concert was just *amazing*! The music and the lights – everything," Beard enthuses. "What David Gilmour managed to do was tremendous – he captured something of the spectacle of a real Roman extravaganza. The Romans would have wet themselves over those fireworks. We get very hung up, rightly so, on the brutality [of amphitheatres] but they also had spectacular entertainment. It was colourful, and there was music. Even at the gladiatorial games themselves, there were people playing pipes and drums – it was a kind of 'all your senses are in action here'. David Gilmour recaptured that rather well. It bridged that time gap."

The appreciation is mutual – Gilmour has been tweeted reading Beard's books and the classicist is now immortalised as a tangential part of the Floyd family in the Blu-ray edition of *David Gilmour: Live At Pompeii*. Footage from her guided tour appears on the *Pompeii: Then And Now* documentary, and an interview with her is reproduced in the sleeve notes of all formats of the release. It's a remarkable journey that's far beyond the high hopes of her 19-year-old self.



Pompeii's amphitheatre, with Vesuvius in the background.

DEAGOSTINI/GETTY IMAGES



"It took 10 years to release new music last time. I'm really hoping, without making any promises, that it won't take 10 years this time."



Left: Gilmour in the ancient amphitheatre. Above: the spectacular light show at Pompeii.

you can see what's written on it and the stories that used to be written inside those covers and on the backs of the covers. It all has to be part of one artistic experience. That's something we really work at and concentrate on. I want to create something that people can have at home and relive the experience, or live it for the first time if they weren't there. You can't cut corners when you're trying to create something that has that sort of magic to it."

So with the magic of Pompeii captured on film, what's next for David Gilmour? He's stated that he won't tour without new music, and as we know, that takes him a while to make. "There are several songs that are close to being complete that didn't make it onto this album for one reason or another. You never know what you're going to do

until you start and when you do, you find that something you absolutely loved before doesn't fit quite into what you're trying to do now. You just have to wait and see what comes up. It took 10 years last time. I'm really hoping, without making any promises, that it won't take 10 years this time, but that I will get back in soon and start working again. Then, following that, I'll be out again."

And will Gilmour ever return to Pompeii? "Of course. Most of the places I played I'd go back to. Verona is such a lovely place, we played both times in 2015 and 2016; Orange; Pula; and the great places in America. We did a couple of nights at the Hollywood Bowl — it has a magic to it. Marc Brickman did some new films to project. Usually we project onto the circular screen but you can project

film onto the whole of the inside of the Hollywood Bowl's dome.

"The Chicago Auditorium is a beautiful old theatre that I'd played with Pink Floyd in the early 70s. I had a half-memory of doing it. You think, 'God, oh I hope I was right, it wasn't just a fantasy.' Thankfully, it truly is a beautiful venue. Radio City Music Hall in New York, which we'd also played with Pink Floyd, is one of those special places. Madison Square Garden is always a favourite. It has a great sound and a great atmosphere."

So, *David Gilmour: Live At Pompeii* claims Gilmour's share of his old group's legacy in the way that Roger Waters did with his live show of his portion, *The Wall*, several years earlier. However, ironically, the performance, in such heightened nostalgic surroundings, serves to underline the greatness of Gilmour's music now, more than merely being frozen in time.

With the concert, film, the DVD and audio, does David Gilmour think, in a way, that doing Pompeii again was a nice way of drawing a line under that one part of his legacy?

"Let's hope so!" he says. [®]

David Gilmour: Live In Pompeii will be shown in selected cinemas on September 13. The live album will be available from September 29 on various formats. See www.davidgilmour.com for details.

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DOOL

WORSHIP

Ten years into their career, **Arcane Roots** are preparing to release their proggiest album to date, inspired by frontman Andrew Groves' eclectic listening habits. *Prog* discusses soundtracks, immersive concerts and hymns of a melancholic nature with the math rockers who've come of age.

Words: Eleanor Goodman

Images: Kevin Nixon

Dark Side Of The Room:
Arcane Roots.



When Andrew Groves was 14, he went on a family holiday to the Greek island of Zaente. He used this time to devour huge textbooks on modular synths, re-reading each page. “I would sordidly read about the theory,” admits the Arcane Roots singer. “I really loved them and I wanted one, and it just never happened, so it was a dirty little secret.”

In September 2015, he bought himself a Doepfer A-100 analogue synthesiser for his 28th birthday, opening up a whole new world for his guitar-driven band. The result is second album *Melancholia Hymns*, an electronically tinged, melodic rock record that shuns the shouty bombast of their debut, 2013's *Blood & Chemistry*, as well as their four EPs. It's a bold reinvention of their sound: a layered, experimental journey addressing some of life's heaviest themes.

“This is definitely our proggiest statement by far!” Groves exclaims.

The need for this change of direction was bubbling under the surface around the time of their last EP, 2015's *Heaven & Earth*, their first release for Easy Life, a Sony offshoot. They wrote 250 songs for it, but only used five. They would turn up to venues to play, not caring whether the sound was good, because they were confident they could ace the show regardless. After a decade as a band, being in Arcane Roots felt easy. *Comfortable*.

“We were thinking, ‘What do we do to challenge ourselves again?’” says Groves. “We hit 10 years, and it feels like there's more to do. There's more than just black and white...”

The synth reignited Groves' interest in electronic music, colouring his world. As a teenager, he had listened to The Cinematic Orchestra and Trentmøller, and now he was checking out BT, Venetian Snares, Aphex Twin, Thom Yorke's electronic stuff and Björk, following

// Growing up I only listened to Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Van der Graaf Generator... all these kinds of bands. My dad got me into them, and that's the kind of guitar playing I was into.

Andrew Groves

//

recommendations friends had been making for years. He then had to convince his bandmates, bassist Adam Burton and new drummer Jack Wrench, to make a left turn with their music. “We leapt in head first!” Burton laughs.

Work began in late 2015. As Groves got deeper into synths, he bought a Prophet 08, and began learning piano and violin. His interests turned to classical, to James Blake, and Keith Jarrett's jazz; then to the soundtracks of Jóhann Jóhannsson, Ólafur Arnalds, Trent Reznor and Jonny Greenwood, and the work of Richard Devine. Suddenly, the possibilities for Arcane Roots seemed boundless. Their minds opened to new ways of composing.

“For the first time, a lot of our stuff was not written in a rehearsal room. It was just written at a computer,” says Groves. “I had this idea, we'd build it up, we'd put in the parts and then be like, ‘Let's walk away from it. What's the best thing to do? If it's 100 violins, let's do that. It could be Justin Timberlake's *Like I Love You* right up until the second chorus, and then it's Stravinsky!”

His voice rises and his eyes widen with enthusiasm. Today we're talking in a quiet bar in central London, the trio dressed uniformly in grey T-shirts. But Groves, in the centre, is clearly their well-mannered eccentric genius leader, talking in long, rambling sentences and gesticulating wildly. Back in the early days, Arcane Roots wrote at a shared house they dubbed ‘Arcane Residence’. For this record, Burton and Wrench would stay at Groves' place in south-west London, for long sessions they jokingly refer to as the ‘Conservatory Club’.

“A lot of the sessions were based around reminding ourselves of what we were doing,” says Groves. “We would end up falling on comfort, on a familiar pattern, and then we would just be like, ‘Let's get rid of the riff!’”

Let's really concentrate on it being the best thing and not have any expectations about what it should be."

The first song they finished was *Curtains*, which starts from a brooding, fragile foundation of electronics and keys, and swells to a stabbing crescendo that incorporates those riffs at the last minute ("We dipped our toe into the water," explains Groves). They released it in December 2016, nervous and excited to hear people's reaction. When it was positive, their course was set. Ensnared in London's Decimal Studios until April, with producer and 'fourth member' Chris Coulter, they recorded nine more songs that transcend their alt rock template. Groves cites indie pop singer Feist's backing band, and her 2011 record *Metals*, as an inspiration when it came to dialling back the heavy and playing with dynamics and space.

"That album's magic. It's *really* hard," Groves says. "And we've always said the hardest thing of any record is playing the clean parts. The distortion parts are all easy. All the riffs, so easy. Anything that anyone fanboy or fangirls over, they're the easy things. Getting something to resonate cleanly when all eyes are on you, there's no room for error."

He was also inspired by his prog upbringing. On previous Arcane Roots records, Groves has written about his own life and relationships. For *Melancholia Hymns*, he was determined to turn his gaze outwards, taking on universal themes instead.

"Growing up, I wasn't even into rock music at all," he reveals. I only listened to Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Van der Graaf Generator... all these kinds of bands. My dad got me into them, and that's the kind of guitar playing I was into. So I loved the idea of making something that was timeless, very much like *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Those subject matters are still just as pertinent today as they were then. Everyone still worries about time, and money, and age, and madness. Everything was so personal before, about me and my life. And I was like, 'Well, it's now or never.' Same with the music. It was like, 'Just do something – don't be afraid to say it.'"

In the studio, he would get out his phone to follow vocal warm-ups, but end up reading depressing stuff about today's political situation that would feel "like a stone dropping" inside of him. His mood would turn, and he would insist on taking a break. In the midst of trying to create a "beautiful achievement", the world was turning to shit. He had found his lyrical inspiration. *Melancholia Hymns* is beautiful, but it also speaks of decay.

"I avoid politics like the plague," he begins. "Before this, we played with bands who would rant in the middle of the set, or they would get off the stage and start tying their microphone around their arm, and that's just not me. I'd be like, 'Don't come near me.' I was uncomfortable. And much against any sensibility I've had before, I was like, 'Well, they seem like they need to do something about this. And *maybe* if I can get over myself and say something, no matter how armchair politics...' It felt like we had a responsibility to

Arcane Roots, L-R:
Jack Wrench,
Adam Burton,
Andrew Groves.



We are obviously getting older, and I don't wanna be Slipknot, playing biblical shit at 50.

Andrew Groves



say something, no matter how small. So it kind of became a 'this is how things are in 2017' biopic."

In 2017, Arcane Roots are in an altogether different place from where they started. They've previously supported bands such as Muse, Biffy Clyro and Twin Atlantic, as well as playing rock and metal festivals. They've found favour with younger fans, but hope *Melancholia Hymns* will broaden their appeal and attract an older, proggy crowd.

"It's something we really desire, and I don't see any point in the great rock pretence of being forever young," says Groves. "I like the idea that yeah, we are obviously getting older, and I don't wanna be Slipknot, playing biblical shit at 50, do you know what I mean? It's cool, some people manage it, but at the same time I feel like we can only be honest."

To that end, they're planning to change up their live shows. After so much experimentation during the writing sessions for *Melancholia Hymns*, they ended up with multiple versions of the same songs, and are keen to surprise people with them.

"I like the idea that you go and see a song live, and we'll play it in a completely different manner," enthuses Groves. "When we finished the record, it was more of an acceptance that this is just the beginning – these are the songs we are presenting *for now*. I like the idea of exciting people to be like, 'On the record it's cool, but you should hear the version they did at 2000trees!', and then we do a nice little recording of it and put that out. And it keeps evolving."

Beyond that, they have big dreams for their tours, taking visual cues from Nine Inch



TAKING ROOT

Andrew Groves' prog top five.



Animals

Pink Floyd (1977)

"While I was pretty much brought up on Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, it was really when I discovered their album

Animals that I truly had my eyes opened to what could be done musically within a record. All of the transitions and long modulations between the tracks still influence me right up to this day."



Discipline

King Crimson (1981)

"I got into King Crimson after trawling through some of John Frusciante and Omar Rodríguez-López's influences. It also

helped me bridge the gap somewhat between me and my guitar teacher who was deeply into jazz fusion artists like Allan Holdsworth et al. Songs like *Frame By Frame* and the title track were big influences on my guitar playing and songwriting."



Frances The Mute

The Mars Volta (2005)

"It actually took me a long time to get into The Mars Volta, as I was still very prog and jazz-oriented at that time. But once I heard

Cygnus... Vismund Cygnus I was hooked, and I avidly followed them until they split up, as well as Omar Rodríguez-López's solo works. Incredible musicianship, and I remember just feeling like what they were improvising was impossible."



This Binary Universe

BT (2006)

"You may argue if this is prog, I assure you it is. It was a beautiful introduction to electronica for me, and one that I could stomach

and really appreciate. A more or less one-off album by BT and a departure from his usual dance and EDM-based material. This is just so very special, and just modulates and saunters into so many genres and moods. Only listen when you have the time to go the full hog."



Sylva

Snarky Puppy & Metropole Orkest (2015)

"Right up in my top three favourite albums ever. Again, in a small departure from their normal repertoire, they chose to write an album with the Metropole Orkest instead of just collaborating. Just incredibly beautiful, from start to finish, and musicianship like no other. Real magic. Listen with extreme envy." **EG**

Nails and Four Tet, along with events company Secret Cinema. At their screenings, ticket-holders in fancy dress are plunged into an immersive theatre-based experience themed around a movie, before watching the movie itself.

"We wanna take it further," Groves says. "It's the difference between making a film and doing it well, and making a film and making it into a Secret Cinema type of thing. A whole experience. You turn up someplace where you wouldn't normally come to a gig, and you get handed something, and you don't know what it's for, and a story unfolds."

Now Arcane Roots have opened a Pandora's box of ideas, it's clear they're never closing the lid. Groves wants their shows and music to be interesting for fans, but he also wants to live up to his own creative standards. In this

intrepid, risk-taking phase, he's daring to see how far his dreams can take him.

"If we're going to give it everything — and we've given it 10 years, and all our money, and all our youth and happiness — I at least want to go, 'Well, look, I thought that was really good.'" He lowers his voice, leans in, and sounds slightly apologetic for his language. "At least I've had the bollocks, I suppose, to try it..."

"It's like dancing at a party. Imagine if you were like, 'Look, I reckon I could do some amazing dance moves,' but you held back 10,

or five, or one per cent. People would be like, 'Who's this guy?' But if you just went for it, dancing like Phoebe from *Friends*, they'd be like, 'Wow, you're going to be in the new Fatboy Slim *Praise You* video!'"

A British band with a prog

background and limitless ambitions? After hearing *Melancholia Hymns*, you might be called to worship. 

Melancholia Hymns is out on September 15 via *Easy Life/Red Essential*. For more information, see www.arcaneroots.com.

The Moment Is Here

When Billy Sherwood announced that **World Trade** would be reforming two years ago, it came as a big surprise. But the road to their long-awaited third album has been a rocky one. This is the story of the cult prog band whose rise to fame wouldn't have been possible without Toto, Gentle Giant or Yes.

Words: Dave Ling

Dateline: 1984, and the four members of Lodgic are rehearsing in Los Angeles, unaware that their lives are about to change forever. “Toto were in the room next door and suddenly Jeff Porcaro [drums] came running in, so everyone froze because, well, it was Jeff Porcaro,” laughs Billy Sherwood at the memory. “We feared the worst when Jeff ran straight back out again but he returned with [fellow Toto members] David Paich and Steve Porcaro, who said that they loved us.”

At a time when Toto were still among the world's biggest bands, Paich and Steve Porcaro took Lodgic under their wings, hooking them up with A&M Records and producing an album called *Nomadic Sands*. But for bassist/lead vocalist Sherwood and keyboardist Guy Allison, reinvention as World Trade would be necessary for genuine fireworks to fly, and even then, genuine recognition was limited.

As we all know, Sherwood later figured in three different eras of Yes' history, where he currently remains after being hand-picked by Chris Squire to be the late bassist's own successor, while years afterwards, Patrick Moraz selected Allison as the second keyboardist in The Moody Blues.

But until Sherwood broke the news two years ago via *Prog* that World Trade were working on an “incredible” reunion album, the band's name appeared doomed to forever remain lost as some tragic pub trivia question. This, then, is their story.

The first and definitive line-up – the one that's back together again – was completed in 1988 by guitarist Bruce Gowdy and drummer Mark T Williams. The former had been with Stone Fury, the band that gave the world Lenny Wolf of Kingdom Come fame. Meanwhile, Williams had multi-instrumental abilities and, as the son of legendary movie composer John and brother of Toto singer Joseph, he brought his own particular pedigree.

The quartet were signed to PolyGram by Gentle Giant singer-turned-label executive Derek Shulman in what Sherwood calls “a huge deal”, which was appropriate as GG had been a huge influence on World Trade. However, as so frequently happens, Shulman quickly moved on to become president of Atco, leaving the band without support in the boardroom. Let's face it, though, the very idea of a prog band obtaining a major label deal in 1989 now seems unlikely in the first place.

“I suppose so,” says Billy, “but although World Trade still painted within those lines in that we also dealt in fairly commercial songs of four, five or six minutes in duration, and until Derek moved on we were really

rocking; our record was outselling Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe and Trevor Rabin's album *Can't Look Away*. But I certainly don't blame Derek at all for what happened. In fact, he was the one that introduced me to the Yes camp, so he became an integral part of my world.”

Produced by Keith Olsen, *World Trade* was a fantastic album of clashing contrasts, its lush, ambitious arrangements coloured by razor-sharp melodies. Though their back-up system would prove

flawed, the band really were onto something very special. Sherwood chuckles when reminded of his own words in a biography for potential reviewers in which he claimed that the music “forms a link between select virtuoso bands of the past (Genesis/King Crimson/Yes/Pink Floyd) and the future of progressive rock”.

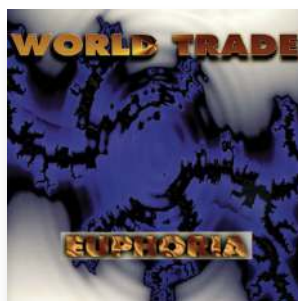
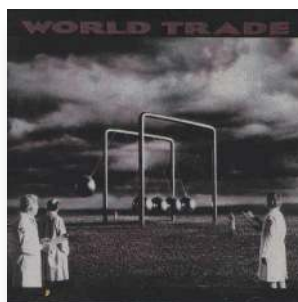
“What a grandiose statement, especially considering how young I was,” he grins. “Those names were the wells from which I have always drawn, and each band member was extremely capable within their craft. I still think we were pushing forward with a new idea of how prog could be interpreted and the debut album remains unique in its own way. It's stood up after all these years – you could pop it on right now and it's still interesting and entertaining to listen to.”

Lyrically, too, World Trade were making bold statements. The same record label biog saw Sherwood declare: “We don't want to jam anything down people's throats but the time is right to express positive feelings. We want world peace and together we can achieve it. It's that simple.”

“Nothing's really changed, has it?” he now sighs deeply. “When we named the band World Trade, 9/11 and all these [terrorist-related atrocities] hadn't taken place. Considering the tragedies we've witnessed, it's kind of creepy that we ended up being called that, but I've always paid a lot of attention to what's going on in this planet.”

Once the sales dried up, a six-year gap would separate debut album *World Trade* and a second effort, *Euphoria*, which featured a certain Christopher Squire on bass and backing vocals on two tracks. By this point, Sherwood had already co-written for Yes and toured with them as an additional guitarist for the *Talk* album. If you like *Big Generator*-era Yes, with a smidgen of *It Bites*, it's well worth checking out. However, the similarities between the two groups were all too obvious, and *Euphoria* surfaced via a relatively small label, Magna Carta, ensuring that it didn't get pushed.

“We still called the band World Trade but *Euphoria* wasn't made in the same way as the debut,” Sherwood reveals. “At the time everybody was really busy with



From Top: debut album *World Trade* (1989), its follow-up *Euphoria* (1995) and new release *Unify* (2017).



"We were pushing forward with a new idea of how prog could be interpreted and the debut album remains unique in its own way."



World Trade, clockwise from top left: Billy Sherwood, Bruce Gowdy, Mark T. Williams, Guy Allison.



various different projects and I suppose it's a bit of hotchpotch, whereas with the debut we had been laser-focused."

And as if the band's main point of influence wasn't already transparent enough, the presence of Squire was a dead giveaway.

"Oh God, I've been hearing that I sounded too much like Yes all the way down the line until I actually joined Yes!" Sherwood guffaws. "I was right on target the whole time."

After World Trade broke up in '95, Gowdy and Allison went on to form Unruly Child, an AOR band whose self-titled debut is now retrospectively considered iconic, though in much the same way as World Trade's own equivalent now remains closeted in the drawer marked 'cult

favourite'. There are one or two parallels between the two groups – first and foremost, Frontiers Records resurrected the careers of both, but there was always a strong melodic rock undercurrent to World Trade.

"Harmony is extremely important to me, and as a matter of fact I sang so hard on that first World Trade record that I ended up in the hospital," Sherwood chuckles. "So you could say that I love melody to the point of hurting myself."

The notion of a World Trade reunion had been around since the mid-2000s but when Frontiers produced their chequebook there was a single important principle to agree on. "It needed to be the opposite of what we had done with *Euphoria*," Sherwood comments. "Were we to do it, everyone had to commit to being the best that we could possibly be – just like the first album. And luckily our schedules parted, like watching clouds disperse on a bright, sunny day."

Poetic metaphor aside, the overwhelming criticism of the resulting record, *Unify*, is that it's simply too one-paced, the title track a rare example of stepping out of first gear.

"Those are the tempos that old musicians write at," he responds, laughing. "We're not as bright as we once were, but we still try. You

could also say it of Pink Floyd so it is what it is. The more people listen to it, the more they'll find, but on first play I tend to agree with you."

Doubts also remain as to whether World Trade are melodic rock enough for AOR fans, and not proggy enough for the alternative camp.

"I've always occupied that no-man's land," Sherwood admits. "Even among the diehard proggers we were too commercial to be considered prog, but I don't worry too much about labels and somehow I've ended up in the premier prog band of all time. And now, regrettably, thanks to John Wetton dying, I've also become the lead singer [and bassist] of Asia. If I listened to haters, I'd have stopped after the first Lodgic record."

Sherwood admits to some uncertainty as to whether World Trade

will tour again. He hasn't abandoned hope of playing some solo shows for his solo album *Citizen*, he's on the road in North America with Yes until late September and of course there are also those new commitments with Asia. Two years on,

although the first tour he did was "super emotional", Sherwood has become a little more comfortable with the role inherited within Yes.

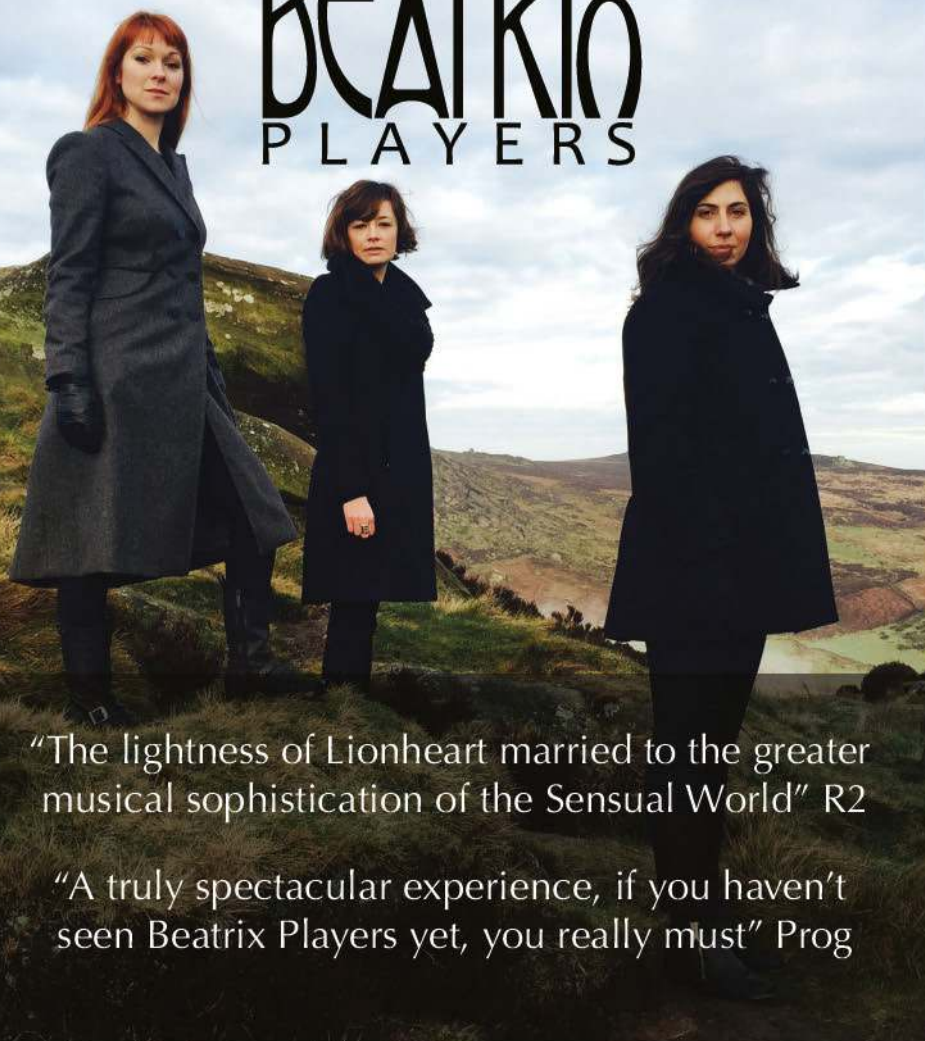
"It was like going to a summer home in that I'd been there before," he states. "I knew all the characters, but standing in that spot [once occupied by Squire] wiped me out."

Sherwood admits he's "still trying to process" finding himself onstage with Asia. "Much like the situation with Chris, who we knew wanted his band to carry on, I produced John Wetton's last solo album [*Raised In Captivity*, 2011] and, as I understand, John was insistent that I should do this," he says. "Getting that call was a bit like lightning striking twice and now I find myself in two of my favourite bands. The arena tour [with Asia] has been very successful, and there's a dialogue within the band to keep things moving. I've no doubt you'll see more, unless there are things that I don't know." 🎧

"We were really rocking – our record was outselling Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe and Trevor Rabin's *Can't Look Away*."

Unify is available now via Frontiers Records. See www.frontiers.it for more.

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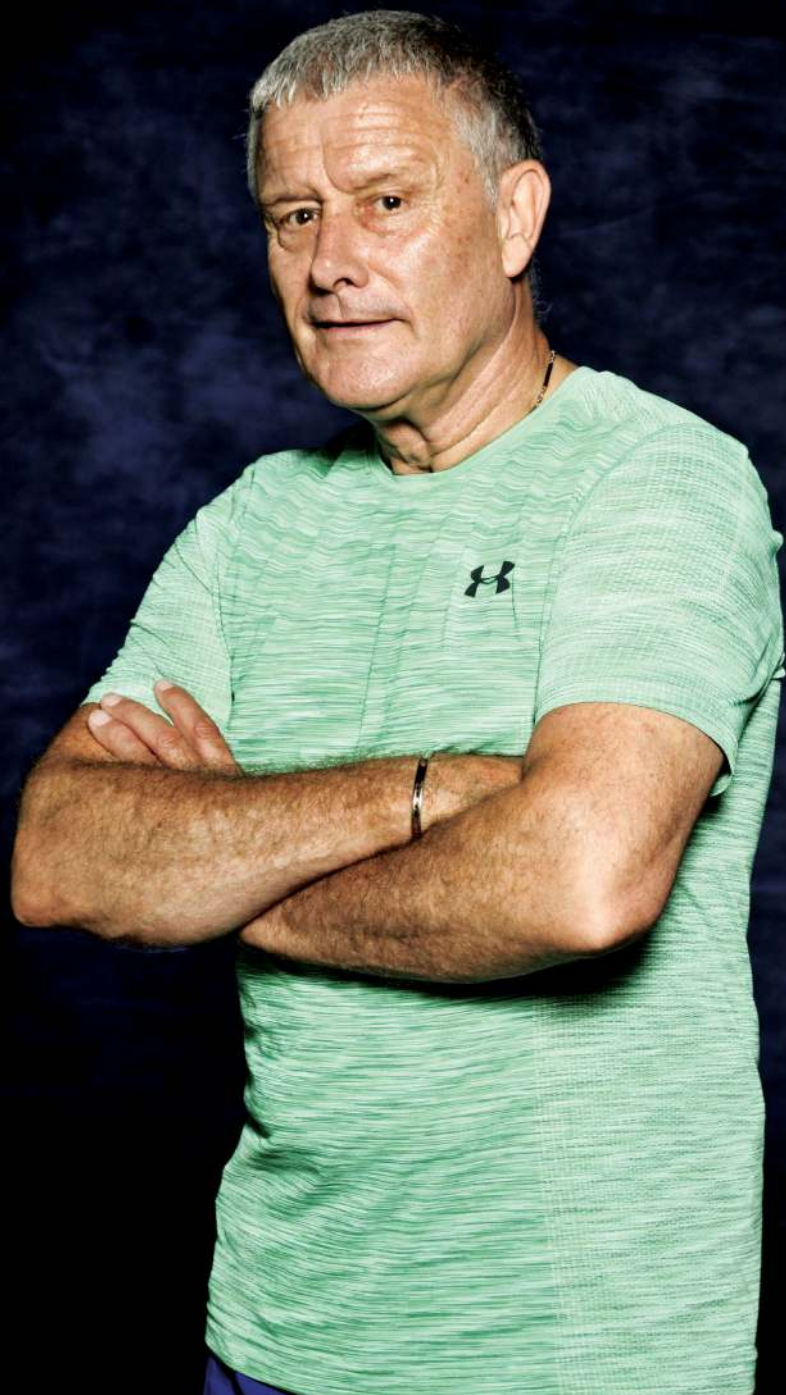
CARL PALMER

Prog God 2017

Prog is delighted to be presenting **Carl Palmer** with this year's Prog God Award at the Progressive Music Awards, which take place this September. This founder member of Emerson Lake & Palmer has worked with some of the biggest names in prog and he's gone on to influence many others. Constantly looking forward and stretching beyond prog's boundaries, this drummer is more than worthy of the greatest prog accolade there is.

Words: Dom Lawson **Portraits:** Frank White

Prog God 2017:
Carl Palmer.



When the greats of modern music reach pensionable age, it seems reasonable to expect everything to slow down a little. Enthusiasm for touring the world and churning out new music often diminishes as the years pass and energy levels inevitably start to flag. That's how things work for most veteran musicians, but Carl Palmer is not most musicians. Now aged 67, the man who has conquered the music world on at least two separate occasions has never seemed less likely to ease off on the accelerator.

He speaks to *Prog* a matter of hours after returning home after an extensive tour with Asia (now fronted by Billy

"I actually started off playing banjo when I was five, had a go on the violin when I was 10 and moved to the drum set when I was 11."

Sherwood, in the wake of former incumbent John Wetton's death in January 2017) as main support to AOR legends Journey. Within days of concluding our conversation, he'll be off again to play shows with his own current band, Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy.

Caught between gigs, Palmer sounds like a man with no time to waste. He speaks quickly, eager to affirm how lucky he feels to have pursued his greatest love for the last 50 years but never slow to herald his own achievements, not least his new-found status as our choice for this year's Prog God. Above all, he sounds thrilled to still be making a living from playing the drums, something he was plainly destined to do.

"I don't want to sound too blasé, but it was like a duck to water thing for me," he says. "I actually started off playing banjo when I was five, had a go on the violin when I was 10 and moved to the drum set when I was 11. My great-grandfather was a drummer. His brother was also a professional musician – he conducted at the London Palladium and was a Professor of Music at the Royal Academy. Their mother was a classical guitar player, so that's where the line came from.

"I learned by ear to start with, but then I got a teacher and learned to read. The story was that my family thought that as long as you could read music, you always had a chance of getting a job somewhere. There was no thought of being a Prog God back then!"

Convinced he was destined to make a living as a jobbing drummer, Palmer began to pay his dues as a member of the orchestra at the local Locarno club. Although increasingly entranced by the somewhat rowdier guitar-based music that was starting to grab the world's attention, his apprenticeship was firmly in the realms of trad jazz and ballroom dancing.

"I'd play Glenn Miller one night, formation dancing the next, then Latin night, and then my favourite, which was *Top Of The Pops* night," Palmer recalls, sounding genuinely thrilled by the memory. "I'd get the chance to play all the stuff I'd seen on TV the week before, The Kinks or whatever it was. I'd been working for eight months or so, playing in traditional jazz groups and blues groups, but I'd never really been in a band with guitars."

Palmer remained blissfully unaware of the glories to come as he made his first steps into the world of bona fide rock'n'roll. In 1964, he spotted a 'Drummer Wanted' ad in the local paper and decided to give it his best shot, heading straight to the local ballroom where The King Bees were holding auditions.

"I was late, actually!" Palmer chuckles. "The ballroom was just a 15-minute walk from the house in Birmingham but when I got there they'd finished the audition and were packing the equipment away. But they asked if I still wanted to try out. They gave me a pile of 45s and

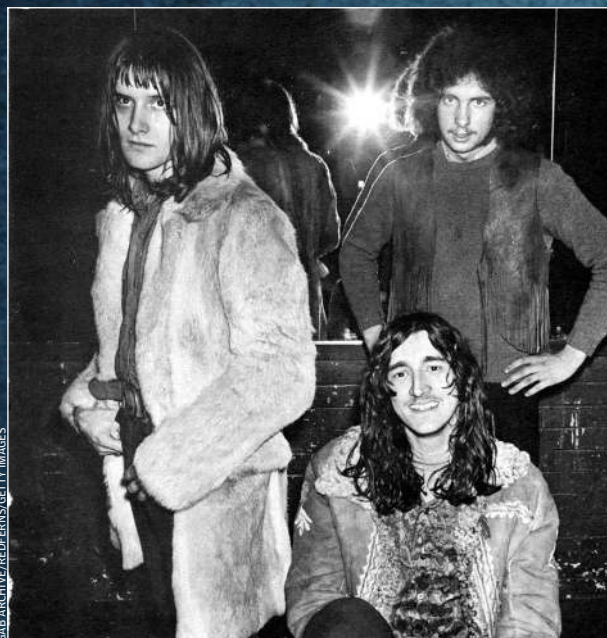


said, 'Do you wanna take these home and learn them?' So I went back and put the records on and they waited for me. I came back and played through everything they wanted and they were amazed! But it was very easy, to be honest. I didn't understand the drama! So that was it. I joined them and played with them right up until I left school."

With the rock'n'roll bit between his teeth, Palmer soon made his next step towards the big time. In 1966, fresh from having a No.1 hit with his version of The Rolling Stones' *Out Of Time*, London's finest rock'n'soul singer, Chris Farlowe, was auditioning for a new drummer. Barely through the school gates as his final term as a student ended, he admits he fancied his chances but was still pleasantly surprised to strike gold again.

"I have to admit it was a really easy start for me. I left school on the Friday, had my audition the next Wednesday at the Bag O' Nails in Kingly Street, and by the following Friday I was somewhere in Germany, playing with Chris at the Star-Club [in Hamburg]. That was my first real professional job. I think I had my 16th birthday in Germany. I was playing with people like Dave Greenslade, Albert Lee... These were great players, so it was a brilliant way to start."

Five decades on from those formative days with Chris Farlowe, Carl Palmer's reputation as one of the greatest drummers of all time is almost equalled by his reputation for taking care of business. Famously clean-living – he claims never to have smoked or drunk a pint of lager, let alone indulged in anything more illicit – he looks far leaner and healthier than most of us will (or do) at 67 years of age, and has clearly benefited from having his eyes wide open throughout his career.



From Top: Palmer with The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown; the drummer (left) with Atomic Rooster; onstage with Asia.

"I remember the first time I saw the way things really worked," he remembers. "Agents would give us a contract stating one sum of money and then I'd go with Chris Farlowe to see the promoter and Chris would pick up an extra £200 on top of the agreed

fee, because that's what the promoter thought was on the contract, and of course it actually was! But then our agent would come in the back door and say, 'Oh Chris, I came up for the day to see you... I was going to come and pick your money up for you!' and obviously he was going to pocket the extra £200. So I saw all that from a young age. It was a proper learning curve and I enjoyed every minute of it."

Hell-bent on earning himself an unbeatable CV, between 1967 and 1969, Palmer was a member of The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, starting with a US tour that followed the band's sudden presence at the top of charts on both sides of the Atlantic. Torn between taking a punt on something new and sticking with the more secure Chris Farlowe gig, the still teenage drummer was once again considering himself to be a very lucky boy.

"I was a bit apprehensive about going to the States with Arthur Brown," he admits. "But it was a good offer, so I said to Chris, 'Look, I've got this opportunity to go to America and if I go and I don't like it, can I have my job back when I return?' It was a bold move but I figured that you've got to try!"

"He said, 'Yeah, you can, but you've got to find me a new drummer and he's got to be really good!' I said, 'Yeah, I can find someone,' and that was the first job that I handed to my mate John Bonham. He jumped at the chance because it was a good, regular job that paid 40 quid a week."

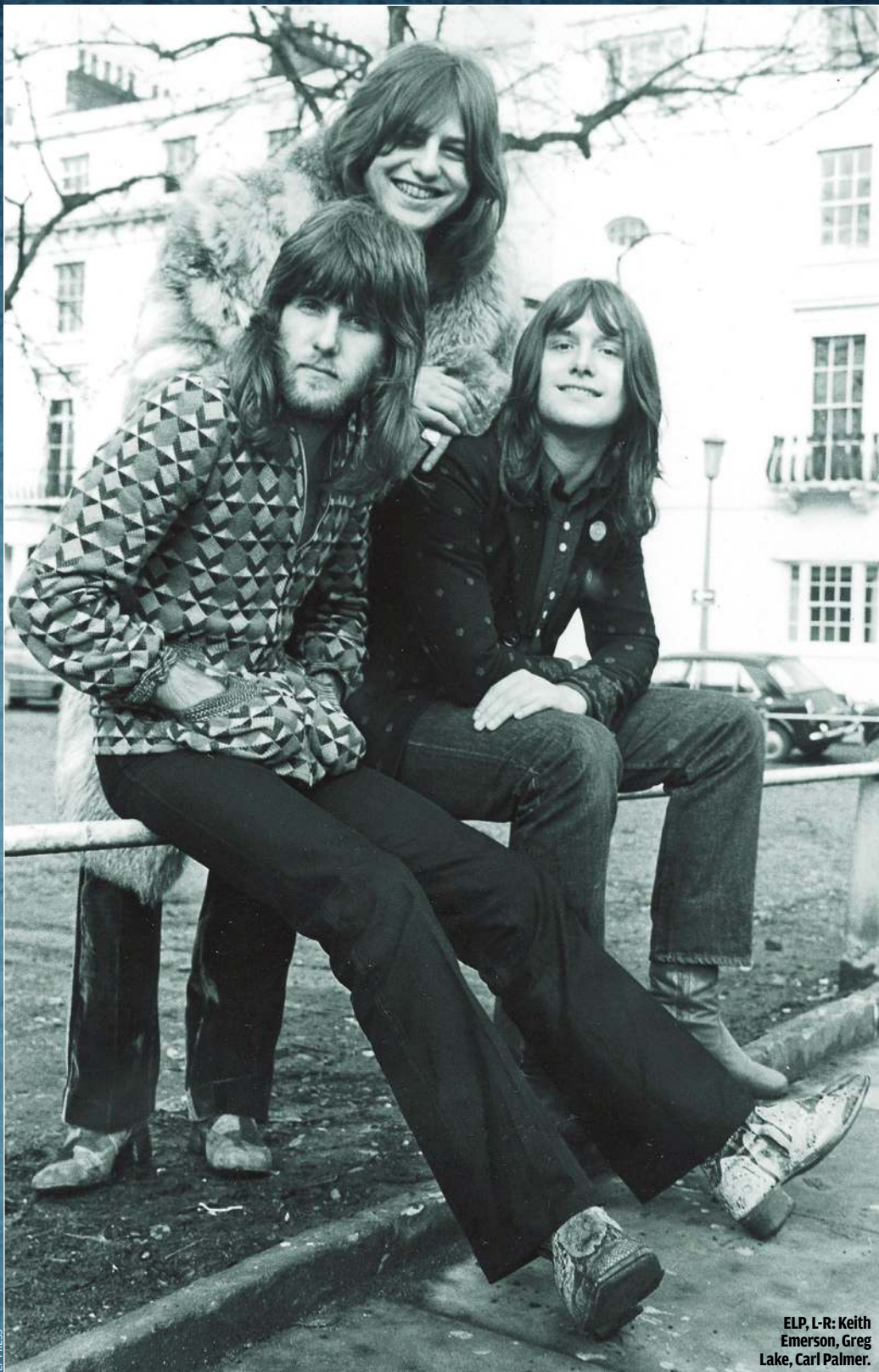
After two years playing drums for a man with (if you'll pardon our French) a flaming helmet, Palmer felt it was time to move on and, ever the pragmatist, he took Arthur Brown's keyboard maestro Vincent Crane with him and formed Atomic Rooster.

The underground prog rock movement was still in its infancy at that point, but both Palmer with his new band and Keith Emerson with his, The Nice, were making waves at a critical moment in music's evolution.

In 1970, after building up a sizeable following in the UK and northern Europe, Atomic Rooster started work on songs for their second studio album, but destiny had other ideas.

"The first track we did for the second Atomic Rooster record was *Tomorrow Night*, which was a big hit later on," Palmer recalls. "But during that period I got the call from Keith Emerson's manager, Tony Stratton-Smith, and he asked if I'd go along for an audition. I said, 'Well, I've got my own band and it's doing okay...' but clearly I ended up joining Greg and Keith, which obviously wasn't such a bad decision!"

It seems safe to say that Carl Palmer is ferociously enthusiastic about almost everything in his non-stop, pulse-driven life, but his love and admiration



ELP, L-R: Keith Emerson, Greg Lake, Carl Palmer.

"When the punk movement came in, we took it badly, like, 'Oh dear, no one wants us any more!' We'd never been through the school of hard knocks. We didn't know what it meant to go out and really have to work hard at it."

for the music he made with Keith Emerson and Greg Lake is patently on another level entirely. Happy to embrace ELP's unofficial status as standard-bearers for prog's greatest excesses but equally determined to celebrate the overwhelming quality of classic albums like *Brain Salad Surgery* and *Trilogy*, he recalls those heady days of world domination with palpable fondness, stating that playing with ELP was "a dream come true, basically".

"I'd always wanted to play classical music but I didn't want to play in an orchestra," he explains. "I didn't know how to go about it until I bought an album by a French piano player called Jacques Loussier. He used to play in a trio with bass and drums and they'd play Bach in a jazz format. I *really* enjoyed that. When I met Keith for the first time, he'd already started adapting classical music, but I honestly didn't think I was going to be in a band with him down the line. Eventually I got the chance to work with him, so ELP fulfilled a musical dream."

Given the way music and pop culture were evolving in the mid-70s, with disco and punk dominating airwaves and column inches, ELP's initial, stuttering demise didn't come as a particularly great shock to the world at large. After 1978's borderline calamitous *Love Beach*, the trio went their separate ways, a decision Palmer maintains was the only credible option.

"I'll be honest with you — we never argued about money, we never argued over women or over equipment, we only ever argued about music," he avows. "But we'd had four unbelievable years and made five really big albums and there was nothing left, really. It was all over by '79. When the punk movement came in, we took it badly, like, 'Oh dear, no one wants us any more!' [Laughs] We'd never been through the school of hard knocks. We didn't know what it meant to go out and really have to work hard at it."

Emerson Lake & Palmer would, of course, reform twice in the decades that followed their initial flurry of chart-ravaging hugeness. Even diehard fans might struggle to conjure much enthusiasm for 1992's patchy *Black Moon* or its even less appealing follow-up *In The Hot Seat* (1994), but that earlier catalogue of groundbreaking brilliance was never likely to be surpassed. Besides which, everyone is allowed to make mistakes, and over 50 years, even Carl Palmer has dropped a clanger or two. Who dares to recall 3 and their 1988 album *The Power Of Three* or, even more amusingly, Palmer's first post-ELP project, the undeniably woeful PM?

"Oh, that was absolute rubbish! I'm not going to hide from that one!" he roars, recalling 1980's wildly



"Asia still had that proggy thing in there but when it came to the tunes, they were so good and the production was so great, I could really appreciate the beauty of it."

Carl Palmer, shot exclusively for Prog in Coney Island, New York City, August 2017.



misguided *1:PM* album. "It was rubbish and I got it wrong. The problem was, I like classical music and I like pop music but it's a terrible combination to be involved with. I like *tunes*, I can't help it. That's why ELP covered it all for me. We had the classical thing but we also had some really pretty tunes that got radio play. With PM, I went into *just* playing tunes and it didn't work. I also broke the rule and ended up playing with all American musicians... and it turns out we do think differently! So yes, that was a complete disaster."

The achievements and sheer bloody-minded uniqueness of ELP alone would be sufficient to earn Carl Palmer our prestigious Prog God accolade, but such is the man's unwavering intensity and remorseless get-up-and-go that he deftly repeated the trick in the 80s, conquering charts all over the world with *Asia*.

Still audibly affected by the death of John Wetton earlier this year, he speaks glowingly of the chemistry that sparked into life when he joined forces with his late friend, guitarist Steve Howe, and keyboardist Geoff Downes in 1981. "Yeah, that time it



Orchadia, one of Carl Palmer's artworks.

was with English guys and so we had a lot of commercial success! We still had that proggy thing in there but when it came to the tunes, they were so good and the production was so great, I could really appreciate the beauty of it.

"Radio had become very corporate in America. They wouldn't play long prog pieces in the daytime, so you'd only hear ELP or Pink Floyd at two in the morning! *Asia* fell into a space that was ready to go and I'm very proud of it."

While we're sauntering along memory lane, it's a good opportunity

to ask Carl Palmer about his rarely celebrated collaboration with Mike Oldfield, on 1982's classic *Five Miles Out* album. One of the more surprising team-ups in prog history (it's genuinely hard to imagine the quiet and reclusive Oldfield clicking with the verbose and energetic Palmer, but evidently they did!), it led to the stunning *Mount Teidi*, an exquisite meeting of minds named after a volcano on Tenerife, the island the drummer called home for nearly three decades.

"I first spoke to Mike when I was putting together *Works I* with ELP, and we had a big, long piece called *Pirates* that I thought he could help with," he recalls. "But then years later he said, 'I've got something which I think you might like...,' so I went down [to Oldfield's studio] and there it was and *Mount Teidi* was born."

"It was just a one-off thing and we never did anything else, but Mike's a really nice guy. He's extremely talented. He's a loner and likes to come out when he wants to. He's unbelievably professional and a great musician all-round."

It might be hard to believe, but Carl Palmer has yet another string to his

multifarious bow. As you can discover by visiting www.carlpalmerart.com, he's been producing extraordinary, eye-frazzling artworks created using drumsticks equipped with LED lights. It's an endearingly eccentric sideline and yet another way for Palmer to indulge his obsession with music and its limitless possibilities.

"It all started in '73 when I started taping little light bulbs to the end of the drumsticks, with a little wire that ran down to a battery on the floor," he says. "I got a photographer friend of mine to take pictures of me *miming* playing the drums, because you'd get all these flashes and arcs and shadows. He took some pictures and one of them ended up in the *Birmingham Mail*, and it was a *fantastic* picture. Roll forward

breathe fresh life into the challenging and ambitious music that first made him a star.

"I've had my band since about 2009. Paul and Simon are both *phenomenal* players," he insists. "It's instrumental prog rock with a kind of metal edge. You'll either like it or you won't. I just think I'm more a delicatessen than a supermarket these days. I understand there's only a certain amount of people that are going to enjoy what I do, but the ones that *do* enjoy it, they really love it and that's what it's all about.

"What's helped me is playing with younger musicians. They're so dedicated to being the best they can be at their craft. It makes me cry sometimes, it's so fantastic. That keeps me on top of my game."



about 30 years, they started to develop drumsticks where the tip was a little LED light, but every time I got a pair, they broke. They weren't very durable. Roll forward *another* 10 years and they invented some that were durable. You couldn't break them, the lights never went out and they were self-generating.

"You can create some incredible canvases. So I teamed up with the guys at a company called SceneFour and I've had two art books out. We've sold a *lot* of artwork and I've raised over 30,000 dollars for charity so far."

The most recent series of canvases that Palmer has created are a trio of tributes to Keith Emerson, Greg Lake and John Wetton, titled *Welcome Back, Lucky Man* and *Heat Of The Moment* respectively. It's not, as he admits, a project he had ever wished to pursue, but it's a great way to pay his respects to such esteemed colleagues.

Meanwhile, the music of ELP is alive and well and being belted out with some force by Palmer and his current henchmen, guitarist Paul Bielatowicz and bassist Simon Fitzpatrick, as Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy. As the only surviving member of the prog titans, he plainly feels a responsibility to

More than 50 years after first earning a crust with sticks in hand, Carl Palmer remains an unstoppable force of nature and the worthiest of Prog Gods. He ends our conversation by noting that, somewhat against the odds, the near-septuagenarian is still improving as a drummer and, as a result, he's enjoying himself more than ever. At this rate, he'll outlive us all.

"My philosophy is as simple as this: if I can improve, I'm gonna carry on playing and working," he concludes. "This is what I love to do and I've never had a proper job, if you know what I mean.

"If I can't improve but I can maintain a standard, I'm gonna carry on. But if I can't maintain the standard and I'm not improving, I'm gonna be gone and you'll never get another interview from me again, because I'll be out. I haven't reached the stage yet where I'm just maintaining a standard, so I'm very happy. I think I've got another 10 years in me!" 🥁

The Progressive Music Awards take place in London on September 14. For more information on Carl Palmer's ELP and tour dates see www.carlpalmer.com.

10 OF THE BEST

Our pick of Carl's classic tracks.



Before Tomorrow (Atomic Rooster, Atomic Rooster, 1970)

A rampant burst of thunderous, subtly proggy proto-metal that showcased the mind-bending percussive chops of a 20-year-old Carl Palmer.



Knife-Edge (ELP, Emerson Lake & Palmer, 1970)

An exquisite example of the intuitive chemistry between Palmer and his cohorts. This is artful rock'n'roll played with orchestral flair and refined pop suss.



Tarkus (ELP, Tarkus, 1971)

An obvious choice, but an unavoidable one. Some may argue that *Tarkus* is Keith Emerson's finest hour, but Palmer just about steals it with a bravura display of rhythmic abandon.



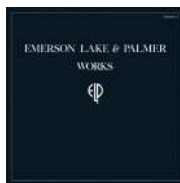
The Gnome (ELP, Pictures At An Exhibition, 1971)

Indulging his wildest classical music fantasies, Carl Palmer takes on Modest Mussorgsky and comes out victorious. One of ELP's weirder detours but an enthralling one.



Toccata (ELP, Brain Salad Surgery, 1973)

Another chance for Palmer to mutate into a one-man percussive orchestra, underpinning some of Keith Emerson's wildest organ-thumping with explosive aplomb.



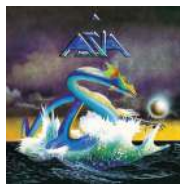
The Enemy God Dances With The Black Spirits (ELP, Works I, 1977)

A highlight from the diverse but slightly confused *Works* albums, this Palmer reimagining of a noted Prokofiev tune is a blur of tribal thunder and baroque pomp.



Mount Teidi (Mike Oldfield, Five Miles Out, 1982)

Instrumental rock bliss from a fleeting team-up between Palmer and Oldfield, *Mount Teidi* is an unsung, magical gem that salutes the drummer's one-time home of Tenerife.



Time Again (Asia, Asia, 1982)

Despite focusing primarily on a glossy, AOR sound, Asia had so much prog in their DNA that more expansive material made perfect sense too. This tune from 1982's self-titled debut is a pop prog classic.



Gravitas (Asia, Gravitas, 2014)

John Wetton's final album as Asia frontman was one of their very best since those triumphant early days, and Palmer's irresistible pulse brought power and passion to its epic, two-part title track.



Fanfare For The Common Man (Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy, bit.ly/palmer-fanfare)

Heavier and harder than the original, Palmer's current band approach *Fanfare*... with thrilling intensity and exuberance, the drummer clearly having the time of his life.

Ihsahn's former backing band have gone from prog to progger on their latest album, *Malina*. As frontman **Einar Solberg** tells *Prog*, **Leprous** are still searching for their true identity.

Words: Holly Wright **Images:** Irene Serrano



From The Flame



From Metal To Prog:
Leprous with Einar
Solberg (centre).

“We’ve never been focused on how people think we should sound, we’re just focused on how we feel at that moment.”

It could be so easy to assume that Leprous belong to the darkest corner of heavy metal. For starters, their name has all the associations of a band that distil their very being into a sonic sledgehammer of blood, guts and gore.

“It has almost become a curse for us, that name,” laughs the band’s lead singer and keyboardist Einar Solberg, who is more relaxed and chatty than his wired, reticent stage persona suggests. “And, of course, we played with Ihsahn.”

As the brother-in-law of the multi-talented baron of black metal, Solberg’s connections with Ihsahn run deep. The nihilistic prog of Ihsahn’s solo work might be familiar to *Prog* readers, but it’s his history with black metal torchbearers Emperor — whose band members included those incarcerated for church burning and arson — that has caused indirect associations to be made between Leprous and the black metal inner circle. And this is why ‘Ihsahn’s backing band’ is a subtext which has compounded the illusion that Leprous are Satan’s biggest fans.

And yet their newest album *Malina* is their closest dalliance with prog rock yet, having more in common with Marillion than the ritualistic rebellion against Christian ideologies.

The truth is, Leprous were heavy once: a very long time ago when they played as teenagers and wore corpse paint on stage. But by the time they had released their first album, 2009’s *Tall Poppy Syndrome*, they had become a certified prog band with not a smear of blood in sight.

“A band can be one thing for so many years,” notes Solberg, “and then change into something completely different. I think that’s kind of cool. It’s better than creating new projects all the time.”

But if there’s one element of extreme metal that Leprous have carried with them through all these years it’s the notion to surprise, delight and sometimes shock with the posturing of their sound, aiming for something that goes further than skin deep.

“We’ve always done big, grandiose songs,” Solberg chuckles. “We’ve always been a bit over-the-top and that’s just who we are. We’ve never been minimalist in our approach in any sense — we’ve always been more focused on atmosphere than being prog with a big ‘p.’”

A willingness to embrace sonic peaks and huge, emotive choruses, set against a backdrop of rhythmic complexity and atmosphere-creating keys with splashes of metallic zeal, has given Leprous a distinctive sound, also thanks in part to Solberg’s impressive pipes. Earlier this year they found themselves playing with TesseracT

and the Devin Townsend Project on a special tour where Townsend played *Ocean Machine* in full. It was no mean feat for Leprous to open for two of the most lauded acts in modern day prog, with arguably the best singers. But with an exceptional set focusing on the more epic outtakes from Leprous' back catalogue, Solberg and co blew the audience away, earning a standing ovation and more than a few teary eyes.

"We know which are the best live songs and the ones which belong together in a setlist," he states. "It's very important to know how to build a setlist; it's not just about taking the most popular songs or the best songs, it's about the flow of the whole setlist."

That's one of the great things about Leprous — or, you could say, prog in general: the luxury of being able to delve into a diverse platter of material and pick out the most appropriate morsels depending on the mood. At this gig, the mood was epic and by default Leprous' more recent albums served that purpose perfectly. But it isn't always the case. This summer, they played a by-request set at Be Prog! My Friend festival in Barcelona and dusted off classic tracks for the old school brigade.

"It worked great in that context but what I've realised with fans is that, on the internet, it seems like the old material is king," Solberg observes, having cast a keen eye over the Facebook and YouTube comments. "While in reality, at the live shows, you see that it's absolutely not the case — the newer the songs are, the better reception they get. At Be Prog! we got to play everything from the first official album to the new single and without doubt the best reception was the new single — without any comparison — and that was very cool to see."

Solberg is talking about *From The Flame*, the first track issued from *Malina* and the closest they've come to having a hit. Part new romantic, part juddering 13/8 beats and with one of the catchiest choruses they've ever written, it encapsulates the brighter chapter of their avant-garde. When it was first posted online, reactions were enthusiastic, but some fans have lambasted them as sell-outs, criticising *Malina* for not being heavy enough for their tastes.

However, as one astute cyber-surfer comments, if they stuck to the same thing all the time, they wouldn't be a progressive band.

"It's not how it works with our music — we don't think about what we did before, we just write. I don't say, 'We need this kind of song now...' I just write. And when we have all the material, we eliminate the majority of it and we steer it in a direction we

IN THE VAULTS

Einar Solberg on the obvious, and not so obvious, sounds that have shaped him.

MASSIVE ATTACK

"I love the simplicity of this band. It's really, really hard to make something so repetitive so interesting and touching but they manage to do it by making tiny changes everywhere that builds the whole thing."

THE LATE 90s

"It was a really good time and a really shitty time. You had some of the best music and some of the worst music. The majority of my favourite bands are from the 90s. There were a lot of innovative artists back then, probably because mainstream music was so shitty. Bands like Radiohead were so organic and so honest."

THE PRODIGY

"With them, it's the sound and the attitude. That's what I love about those bands from the 90s — it was badass attitude all the way. Them and Rage Against The Machine — also a very good example of very innovative sound and super badass attitude!"

BLACK METAL

"I think black metal was really unique in the beginning, but mark my words, in the *beginning*. It's such a formula-based genre and the fans are very conservative, which is ironic considering how it started. It was completely new and different back then. I think the Satanism thing was more like theatre and some people took it a bit further than others." **HW**

Leprous frontman
Einar Solberg.



like,” says Solberg. “We’ve never been focused on how people think we should sound, we’re just focused on how we feel at that moment.”

Malina’s artwork – a moody depiction of a Krypton-like landscape pierced by icy shards and bathed in a warm glow of light – is a step away from the deathly monochrome images of their last two albums, *The Congregation* and *Coal*. The human figure that is barely visible in the centre of this looming vista hints at an existential quest for meaning. Or maybe not. “*Malina* just means raspberries,” states Solberg.

But then maybe there is something in that insignificant figure that graces their album cover. “The main quality of any band is identity,” he muses.

Do Leprous have an identity?

“We’re constantly searching for it, which is why we’re always changing on every record.”

He continues after a pause. “We’ll probably be searching for it our entire career.”

Ironically, by persistently switching their sound, Leprous have identified themselves among the new wave of prog metal alumni that includes Tesseract, Devin Townsend, Haken, Between The Buried And Me and Persefone, with fans often typing about these bands in the same sentence on online forums, almost as though they’d

discovered a water spring in a desert. And while Leprous continue to evolve, the appetite for shape-shifting music with an edge is also growing, earning them a burgeoning legion of fans.

“For some people, the most daring thing you can do as a prog band is to release a straightforward song,” says Solberg, referring to the reactions to *From The Flame*.

But remember that this is ‘straightforward’ in the world of Leprous. In reality, *Malina* is anything but simplistic. From the opening slow build of *Bonneville*, a track that cascades from the delicate rainfall-effect of overlapping percussion through a nihilistic bassline and into a gorgeous crescendo of pain-stricken vocals, the record recalls everyone from Marillion and Karnivool to Queen and Steven Wilson. It ends with *The Last Milestone*, a song that could have been written by Samuel Barber for a chamber choir and features the forlorn stringwork of cellist Raphael Weinroth-Browne.

Solberg recalls the time they chanced upon the talented musician: “We were playing in Ottawa and I was kind of tour managing at the same time. I went to tell the local support that they needed to stop playing soon because they were behind schedule but I just stopped and saw this one guy with a cello on stage. I forgot all about my plan to tell him to finish and I just stood there watching the whole set. It was really, really mind-blowing.”

As well as exploring new avenues with their sound, Leprous have also taken a left turn with the line-up after losing two members in the last couple of years. First, there was guitarist Øystein Landsverk, a long-standing member who had played with the band since 2004 and Solberg describes as a “true friend, comedian, computer geek and generally a spreader of good atmosphere”. Then bassist Martin Skrebergene departed during the recording of *The Congregation*.

The latter left Leprous in turmoil, frantically searching for a fill-in whom they eventually found in Simen

Børven, while six-stringer Robin Ognedal has picked up from where Landsverk left.

Has the line-up change influenced the lighter sound of the record?

“Robin is a pretty different guitarist and that’s definitely set a different vibe on some of the songs,” Solberg openly states.

Despite any disruptions to

the status quo, Leprous have put out another album like clockwork but you’ll have to wait until October, when they will undertake a gruelling European tour, to hear it live.

“It’s going to be a health camp of the strictest kind until we go on that tour... and during the tour actually,” Solberg chuckles.

But rest assured, there will be no prima donna antics if Solberg does catch the lurgy.” I learned how to sing with a really sore throat. During the last UK tour I had really bad flu and lost my voice. I had to stand in the shower for 30 minutes to loosen my vocal chords and then take loads of painkillers.”

Hopefully this time around Solberg won’t be looking for the nearest pharmacy and will be able to enjoy all the delights that a tour bus on the road to rock’n’roll has to offer.

“When I’m at home, I’m super efficient, but on tour all I can focus on is the show,” he says. “So sometimes

I read and sometimes I watch TV series, everything from dark and deep stuff to Marvel. It’s not very original, but I’m a big *Game Of Thrones* fan. I’ve read all the books and seen all the shows.”

Until then, Leprous are enjoying some downtime in Norway, where Solberg has a part-time job working with people with autism.

“It’s nice to get back on the ground and work there,” says Solberg of his job outside the band. “It’s simple and nice and I know all the people. It’s cosy in a way. I mean, I don’t want too much normality... and you don’t get that much normality with autistic people to



Leprous explore proggy horizons on new album *Malina*, the fifth of their career.

“We’ve always done big, grandiose songs. We’ve always been a bit over-the-top and that’s just who we are. We’ve never been minimalist in our approach in any sense.”

be honest.” He laughs heartily. “There’s a lot of weird stuff going on there but I like it, it’s a super important job. But I’m not a nine-to-five guy and I never will be. It’s important that things are always changing.”

And Leprous know a few things about change, not least on *Malina*, which will test their mettle against... er... metal. While it still resonates with dramatic peaks and troughs, their steel coated armour is falling and a new chapter has begun. ☺

Malina is out now via InsideOut. See www.leprous.net for more information.



Laibach

From fusing experimental industrial rock with neo-classical elements and pop art, to incorporating taboo imagery into their work and their subversive approach to authority, this Slovenian troupe are a unique force in avant-garde music. They're also known for their intriguing covers of rock classics and were the first Western rock group to play in North Korea. So now we have to ask: **how prog are Laibach?** **words:** Rob Hughes

What do Pink Floyd, Gustav Holst, The Beatles, Serge Gainsbourg and Swedish hair metal types Europe have in common? The answer: Laibach. Since their inception in 1980, the Slovenian band's vast body of work has included a selection of cover versions as disparate as they are unlikely, from a German language version of Queen's *One Vision* to a deadpan take on *Live Is Life*, the naff 80s hit by Austrian pop quartet, Opus. They've even devoted entire albums to the stuff. 1988's *Let It Be* refashioned The Beatles' last LP as a Wagnerian blowout, complete with choirs, martial rhythms and mad guitar solos. The following year's *Sympathy For The Devil* deconstructed the old Stones' classic in a variety of puzzling ways, while *NATO* (1994) was an international covers project based around the theme of war. Most intriguingly, from a philosophical

Koreans in an ideologically divided country are, with all their differences and similarities and their difficult history, an ideal audience for Laibach.
Ivo Saliger



Laibach's updated soundtrack to *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

Making A Statement: a black cross replaces their name in 1983.

standpoint, Laibach insist that they don't treat these endeavours as covers at all, but rather revisions of history.

"We treat pop culture as historic material that can be reinterpreted the same way as classic theatre works by Shakespeare, Molière, Chekhov or Brecht usually are," explains Laibach's Ivo Saliger via email, the evasive group's preferred method of communication. "Some of the pop songs are hiding within themselves a completely different content if they're approached from a different point of view. And that's what we most often do: we dig out the Hidden Reverse."

It's an ambiguous tactic in keeping with Laibach's MO. Provocateurs at heart, they fuse experimental and industrial rock with neo-classical and pop art. They call it *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a multi-disciplinary practice with music, installations, performance, graphics, paintings and video.

Central to all this is their use of visuals. Laibach have enjoyed toying with taboos throughout their career, from appropriating the symbolic imagery of Fascism and state power to live shows in which political film footage is intercut with vintage pornography. They've been accused of having affiliations to both the far left and far right, which is a good indicator

of how much their work is open to interpretation. Throughout everything, Laibach have refused to directly counter any criticism of them as extremists, merely stating that they're fascists "as much as Hitler was an artist".

What people often miss about Laibach is their humour. They're big on irony, magnifying the ridiculous – be it crap Euro disco or totalitarian symbols of oppression – so that they take on an entirely new context. Poker face is their default setting, which only adds to the confusion about whether or not they're joking. On one occasion, at a press conference in France in the late 80s, Laibach listed their influences as Tito, Toto and Tati. When *Prog* asks about what drew Laibach to *Live Is Life*, Saliger replies: "The pure simplicity of the philosophical content of the song about life as such. And the unbearable Austrian accent of the singer."

If there's one recurring theme in Laibach's music, it's identity – national and cultural. This is understandable as they formed amid a period of political unrest in Yugoslavia, following the death of the long-serving authoritarian, President Tito. The void was filled by a power struggle between new liberals and nationalist hard-liners, while Laibach's choice of name – the German translation of Ljubljana – was a reminder of Slovenia's wartime past under Nazi occupation.

"Given that we originally came from the Eastern European hemisphere, cemented with a communist background and the traditional inferiority complex towards Western pop culture, we were forced to deal with the idea of cultural identity all the time," says Saliger, whose name is a pseudonym of Laibach's oldest active member. "Political turmoil in Yugoslavia was partly the result of



Laibach's current line-up,
with the RTV Slovenia
Symphony Orchestra.





the cultural frustration that this country had to face, being too open to Western influences from the 1950s onwards. The situation hasn't really changed much today. The major cultural ideological and colonialist trends are still dominantly imposed over the region, and the entire Eastern hemisphere, from the West." Saliger adds that the effect of all this has been to transform local identity "into a kind of distorted copy of itself, gloriously culminating every year at creep-show events like *Eurovision* or 'turbo-folk' reality TV shows. Authentic cultural identity in the East is as much alive and existing as a dead poets society."

Laibach's subversive approach to authority has often landed them in trouble. The Yugoslavian government refused to allow them the use of their name in the 80s, so the band started to advertise themselves using a black cross, a product of their involvement with local art collective, NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst). Subject to police raids, censorship and even a lawsuit from the Catholic church, Laibach are nothing if not resilient.

1983's *The Occupied Europe Tour* exposed them to a wider audience, especially in Britain. And John Peel's championing of the band on nighttime radio eventually led to a deal with influential indie label Mute, for 1987's *Opus Dei*. When pushed on Laibach's musical signposts, Saliger reverts to type and gives an elliptical response, citing people like Tesla, Duchamp and Magritte as equally influential. And what about prog? "Of the well known progressive acts we liked Sweet, Slade, T. Rex, Sparks, Suzi Quatro, David Essex..." he says with a straight bat, before adding, "And Yes, Deep Purple, The Nice, ELP and King Crimson."

As befits a band whose creative life has been so open to misunderstanding and cultural translation, Laibach tend to do things that others don't. In 2015, they were invited to play two gigs in North Korea. The occasion, part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the end of Japanese colonial rule, meant they became the first foreign rock group to perform in the country. It was a painstaking process — subject to suspicion, state interference and mounds of red tape — chronicled in the 2016 documentary, *Liberation Day*.

"We just didn't know until the very end if it was really going to happen, because every day new mysterious officials arrived at the venue to see the preparations and rehearsals," Saliger

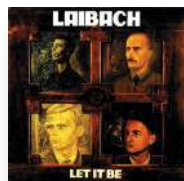
DARIO BANDIC/AP/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



Ivan Novak, aka Ivo Saliger, stands next to a Laibach poster at an exhibition of NSK artwork in Slovenia, 2015.



Above, and top right: Laibach swap sides in 2003, around the time of *WAT*.



From Top: Laibach's Beatles covers album, *Let It Be*, and the war-themed *NATO*.

recalls. "And most of them didn't seem to be satisfied with what they saw and heard. Nevertheless, we believed in good faith that all would be just fine in the end." The biggest surprise, he says, is that the gigs actually went ahead, "despite the North Korean Committee For Cultural Relations With Foreign

Countries receiving warnings about the 'subversive' nature of Laibach".

The band's setlist in Pyongyang was bizarre, even by Laibach standards. Alongside *One Vision*, *Life Is Life*, *Across The Universe* and Europe's *The Final Countdown*, they tackled the patriotic North Korean anthem, *We Will Go To Mount Paektu*, but later dropped it from the set after North Korea censored it at the last minute. It's a cultural exchange that reached full fruition with several numbers from *The Sound Of Music*.

The enduring tone of Laibach's trip was conciliatory. Their decision to play South Korea earlier this year made them the only act to have performed in both countries. "Koreans in an ideologically divided country are, with all their differences and similarities and their difficult history, an ideal audience for Laibach," Saliger declares.



Agent Provocateurs: Laibach in the early 90s.

TICK HUIJON/REUTERS/GETTY IMAGES



Laibach pose at Kim Il Sung Square prior to their performance in Pyongyang, North Korea.

DITA ALANKARA/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

“We treat pop culture as historic material that can be reinterpreted the same way as classic theatre works by Shakespeare, Molière, Chekhov or Brecht usually are. Ivo Saliger

“Symbolically, it was very important that we were able to perform in both Koreas. When we first did the show in North Korea, there was a lot of criticism of us from the South. And when we later performed almost the same material in South Korea, we were advised by North Koreans not to do it and also not to show *Liberation Day* at the South Korean film festival. In spite of all the pressure though, everything went well. South Koreans loved the film and concert and [director] Morten Traavik recently visited North Korea again, where he’s preparing new, demanding cultural activities.”

In the wake of these achievements, Laibach have just issued a new album, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Originally conceived for a theatrical production of Friedrich Nietzsche’s titular novel in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, in March 2016, Saliger explains that, “We later recomposed and modified the mainly fragmented music into 12 tracks.” The



From Top: 1987’s Mute debut *Opus Dei*, and 2014’s *Spectre*.

album, which also features the Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, is more stately and foreboding than its techno-flavoured predecessor of 2014, *Spectre*.

The tension is heightened by chilly atmospherics and found noise – clangs, gongs, engines in overdrive, the sound of knives being sharpened. All of which stays true to the heaviness of Nietzsche’s philosophical text about the death of God, the ‘Übermensch’ and the theory of an infinitely recurring universe. “We first and foremost see ...*Zarathustra* as a deeply moral, anti-nihilist, contemplative and religious work,” states Saliger. “So we’ve approached it as such and created the songs as psalms. Regarding the death of God, Nietzsche may have killed him, her or it, but only to establish a new, better and modern one. God is dead, long live Übergod!”

The album’s contrasting moods, from restful prog to abrasive industrial rock, are illustrated by its two closing tracks, that translate to *Before Sunrise* and *Of The Three Transformations*. The difference between them, Saliger explains, “is the difference between physics and metaphysics. Physics is the mathematical perspective of the universe, and therefore tranquil and rational. Metaphysics, on the other hand, deals with philosophical questions of time and space, life and death, being and not-being...” It’s also a fitting assessment of Laibach’s multi-faceted approach to their own art.

Nations divided. Ideologies at war. Global friction between East and West, North and South. Laibach are operating in the same political climate they were born into. In their own way, they may offer a few solutions. Or at least when it comes to the EU and plotting a route through Brexit. “Laibach will certainly do what we can to steer Europe towards its future and also to keep Britain tidy,” says Saliger. “And if Britain will ever again change its mind – well, we wish it good luck! If nothing else, it’s always warmly welcomed to join our own NSK State.”

Also Sprach Zarathustra is out now via Mute. See www.laibach.org for more info.



YOUR SHOUT!

They’re subversive, big on concepts and refuse to follow the rules. Which begs the question... how prog are Laibach?

“Laibach are many things, a consequence of their association with NSK. Musically you could stick a bootload of labels on them: industrial, avant-garde, experimental, to name but three. There is, however, a huge divide between Laibach’s experimental music and prog, a gap which they probably came closest to crossing with NATO, their 1994 album of war-related covers. At the end of the day though, prog they aren’t.”

Clive Summerfield

“Slovenian protest prog.”

Marc Hughes

“I think, at a fundamental level, it boils down to what separates experimental rock from prog. That distinction is murky (consider Frank Zappa for instance), but, in the case of Laibach, I think they lie deep within experimental rock territory. The music they produce is often atonal and alien, and the industrial/avant-garde classical mix that they often play is unparalleled by any other band.”

Harrison Coombes

“Yes. Definitely progressive. A mix of experimental, classical and with occasional vocal stirrings...”

J Lo Sanchez

“The *Macbeth* album qualifies...”

Eric Prentice

“Borderline prog. Well, borderline music, period! But they are all over the place in so many ways.”

Per Per Lundberg

“Not sure what describes them, but they are not my scene at all.”

Kevin Braithwaite

“I’d agree about *Macbeth*. It’s brilliant. The *Jesus Christ Superstars* album verges on prog at times, but also sounds like Europe at other points. Generally I’d say Laibach are more industrial/metal/goth-ish. As an aside, I’d say that Rammstein pinched a lot of their sound from Laibach and are a poor imitation of Laibach’s heavier moments...”

Richard Johnson

“Very, very industrial, but I’m afraid not prog. Listen to their new release to get a true sense of the band. I think it’s great.”

Anthony Williams

“Certainly not. However, they are interesting. My label for them would be industrial/art rock.”

Peter Brouwer

“I’m getting fed up now.”

Steve Harrison

“Amazing production on *Kapital*.”

Vladimir Titti

“Not prog in any way, shape or form, more like a genre all of their own. Laibach is Laibach.”

Karl-Talbot Jamieson

“They were never previously prog, but are now, by association, as you have included them in your magazine.”

Chris Bembridge

“Just Laibach and enjoy them.”

Solent Area Prog

Super Gizmo!

What began as an impromptu phone call has snowballed into a punk prog supergroup with Stewart Copeland as frontman. Meet **Gizmodrome** - they're "a hell of a lot of band!"

Words: Chris Roberts
Portraits: Kevin Nixon

L-R: Mark King, Adrian Belew and Stewart Copeland, shot exclusively for *Prog* in London, July 2017.



“Is it prog?” ponders Stewart Copeland, who is tall, gangly and adept at a comedy French accent. “Well, recently the French were telling us: ‘It’s progressive, but the songs are short... we are confused. We think maybe it is... punk prog!’ I’d say we’re prog because there are way too many fucking drum fills all over the place. And we’re prog because Adrian’s guitar-playing is *insane* and should *not* be allowed on a pop record. And then Mr King fires up and this is a whole new world of King – all the other bass players, like Stanley Clarke, will soil their pants when they hear this. Oh my God, that’s a hell of a lot of band. Then again, maybe



THE BEATMASTER

Gizmodrome's prog credentials.

STEWART COPELAND



MASSIMILIANO CARDILLI/PRES

Universally acclaimed as one of the greatest living drummers, Copeland's rhythms with The Police were deceptively complex. The range of his other work is under-heralded. He played for Curved Air in the mid-70s (and was later married to Sonja Kristina for nine years). In an enduring film-scoring career he's provided the soundtrack to such movies as *Rumble Fish*, *Wall Street* and *Raining Stones*, and recently he's had success with orchestral, classical and even opera compositions. Peter Gabriel asked him to play on *Red Rain* and he's performed with Mike Rutherford, Tom Waits and with Stanley Clarke in *Animal Logic*. **CR**

it's punk, because of the energy. And because, frankly, it's our intention to burn down the city and eat all the children.”

Lock up your preconceptions: Gizmodrome are here. Something of an all-star musical supergroup – “well that’s better than being called a shit group,” offers Mark King – they combine the fantasy line-up talents of Copeland on drums, King on bass and Adrian Belew on guitar, with Italian keyboardist Vittorio Cosma (a long-time Copeland collaborator) smoothing it all together. Stentorian vocals (and peculiar lyrics) are chiefly provided by Copeland in a manner he describes as “Tom Waits meets Barry White with a little hair of Lee Marvin,” while King and Belew chime in with sweeter voices. The outfit’s phenomenal pedigree coalesces in vibrant, imaginative and unexpected ways. As they eagerly confirm, there was a natural chemistry, and what’s emerged from the lab – a studio in Milan – is a fizzing fusion of prog, jazz, pop, funk, reggae and, er, fusion.

That chemistry is clear today as Copeland, King and Belew, evidently enjoying each other’s company, banter boisterously in a London hotel. Their enthusiasm, humour and sparky interplay perfectly match the eponymous album’s eclectic effervescence. So how did this crackling collaboration, this dream ticket of dexterity, come about? Although the three constantly interrupt each other with quips and teases, they’re equally fast to eulogise each other’s talents. King kicks off the tale.

“Last July, I get a text from Stew, saying, ‘Hey Marco – already with the Italian thing – do you wanna come join a band in Italy?’ Straight away I said yes. Seven days later we’re in the studio. As a bass player, the chance to play with Stewart Copeland is just fantastic. He’s got to be in every drummer’s Top 5. And I started out as a drummer, so the drums are very important to me. Then you see Adrian weave his magic, making things happen. It’s just been an absolute joy. And so easy to do – it’s not as if everyone had to find their place, to settle in... we just played, and it sounded so good that after 10 days most of the songs were in the can. Stew had most of these



“ADRIAN BELEW COMES IN ON SOMETHING THAT SEEMED A PERFECTLY GOOD SONG AND – FUCK ME – WE’RE INTO A WHOLE NEW COSMOS!”
Stewart Copeland

THE SHAPESHIFTER

Gizmodrome's prog credentials.

MARK KING



MASSIMILIANO CARDELLI/PRESS

Police and Queen. In the 90s, Allan Holdsworth and Jakko Jakszyk joined the band, as did Gavin Harrison. King's solo albums further showcase him as the Isle Of Wight's answer to Stanley Clarke. **CR**

“THE ORIGINAL MOTIVATION WAS FUN IN THE SUN IN ITALY. THE MISSION WAS LA DOLCE VITA. THEN, WHEN THESE SERIOUS PLAYERS CAME IN, WE TRIED TO HOLD ONTO THAT NIHILISTIC FEELING... AND WE JUST WENT APE-CRAZY.”
Stewart Copeland

songs ready, but they weren't much like they are now. We did another session in April. There's a real sound to this band, it's happening.”

Belew concurs. While he did add a few parts later, “90 per cent of it is us three in the studio, being able to get excited, to talk about it. Very rarely does putting people in the room together result in the synergy that this automatically had. It was palpable. By the end of the second day I was thinking, ‘Damn, what a great band this is!’ And then I'd think: ‘Oh... is it a band? Or is it a project?’ But every day we'd get up, go to the little piazza. We'd have breakfast, talk about everything in the world. Then go to the studio, play, have a little tequila at five and get straight back into it until a long late-night meal at some Italian restaurant. You do that for a couple of

days, you get to know each other. The jokes and stories start to flow. You become invested in the whole thing. And you realise: this *is* a band! We should go and play this for the world.”

“That,” says Copeland in his best Doctor Evil voice, “was my secret plan all along. Adrian thought he was coming in to play a few solos on ‘Stewart's project’, but by day three, it's his project. I mean, otherwise I can't afford these guys!”

Thus bonded, they plan to tour early next year (with Level 42's Pete Biggin on drums to free up Copeland), hoping the response to the album will be as good as all the early signs indicate.



Feel The Force! Three-quarters of Gizmodrome.

Copeland and King technically toured together back in 1981, when Level 42 supported The Police across Europe. King reckons it was a “fantastic education for a young dude to stand side-stage and watch how these guys, who were becoming one of the biggest bands in the world, were doing it.” He’d never met Belew before Gizmodrome, “so that in itself, if nothing else, has been brilliant.” The pair express excitement at how their voices sat together instantly. And Copeland and Belew knew each other “just marginally... by reputation...”

Butting in to their relentless rapport, I ask if, as primary songwriter, Copeland had to adopt the headmaster role.

“Ah, no, one important part of the process was we dispensed with the notion of ‘sanctity of the composer’. Of course, when you write a song, you imagine it’s perfection, it’s goddam *Stairway To Heaven*, y’know? But with these guys, it’s gonna get better. Whatever chords, riff, etc, I had, they’d chew on it for five minutes then for the next 25 they’d fuck it up, with my blessing and encouragement. For example, Belew comes in on something that seemed a perfectly good song and – fuck me – we’re into a whole new cosmos! Again, that was my secret trick, my plan. I wanted them to realise it was our album, not mine. That’s the way you get things happening. You get stuff out of Belew that Trent Reznor’s not gonna get; you get the *real* shit, coming out of his imagination. Once set free, it gets freer and freer and wilder and crazier. But this got way better than I even imagined: you can hear the excitement of real inspiration. By the way, that’s an old Police trick. Next time you hear a Police record, consider that the drummer and guitarist had never heard that song until 20 minutes before recording it. It’s a useful technique...”

King interjects, “We’d be shouting out, ‘Section change!’ And, ‘I don’t know this part yet!’ At times it was like *The Troggs Tapes* on acid.”

“I have to say,” muses Belew, “it struck me that for the first time in a long time, this material was custom-made for what I like to do. I bring a lifetime of experience in, and everything I’ve learned since I heard *Purple Haze* when I was a kid, anything you want, I can throw it in there. And if you don’t like that, fine, I got another idea. If Stewart’s singing about an alien radio station, cool, I’ll play an alien radio station sound...”

Alien radio stations are just one element of Copeland’s curious, declamatory, serio-comic lyrics, which remind one of his erstwhile punk alter ego Klark Kent. Here be zombies in the mall, horny politicians and “strange things” happening. A recurring theme is that of letting off steam, escaping, going off the rails.

THE AXE GRINDER

Gizmodrome’s prog credentials.

ADRIAN BELEW



MASSIMILIANO CARDELLI/PRESS

Where to start with the in-demand Kentucky-born guitarist’s CV? Twenty-odd turbulent years as frontman with King Crimson are impressive enough, with *Discipline* and *Beat* arguably the best fruits. Prior to that came his 70s work with Zappa (who “discovered” him), his tours and contributions to *Lodger* with David Bowie, and his move to Talking Heads (*Remain In Light*) at the behest of Brian Eno. He’s at pains to emphasise his ongoing solo career, but it’d be a poor record collection that didn’t include his collaborations, whether with Paul Simon, Jean-Michel Jarre, Herbie Hancock, Laurie Anderson, Nine Inch Nails, Mike Oldfield, Porcupine Tree or even William Shatner. **CR**

orchestral arena he’s recently thrived in. Quoting his own lyrics, he says, “*Back home you got a solid life/That don’t mean a thing out here...*” The sense of rootless disorientation in his songs is, however, leavened with madcap humour. Which forces the question: what is the fascination with horses? The lyrics make frequent allusions to our equine friends.

The trio crack up, pointing at each other and declaring, “Oh, that was him!”

“At home, I’m a suburban dad, driving my kids to school,” he says. “But when I’m out in the world, sitting at a lonely train station, riding a cab across a strange foreign city – that’s when your mind goes into really weird reveries. That’s where this shit comes from. Y’know, ‘the pain of the life that I have lived.’” Imagine, if you can, Copeland putting on a Steven Toast voice for that last part.

He goes on to discuss how mistakes are made while “looking for Babylon”, but of course what happens on the road stays on the road, even in the classical-

Finally, King shrugs, “Oh, Stew is just fucking obsessed with horses.”

Eventually Copeland moves us on. “Some things are autobiographical. I’m an old bastard coming down from my ivory tower for a fling, or at least the guy in some of the songs is. Maybe a little dinged and dented, but just give me a Cadillac and I’ll stay all night. We seem to visit many strange cities in these songs. ‘Ah, my life is a strange city,’” he all but winks.

Pressing them on whether their previous rich bodies of work inform or colour this music leads to King

professing his lifelong love of jazz fusion and Belew getting mildly defensive on the subject of his King Crimson past.

“Of course when you’ve partially shared 30 years with a band of that name, some of that’s in there, but I’ve been out of that orbit for many years now. I’ve branched out solo and with my own band, so... I don’t think in those terms any more.”

Copeland clarifies that his own performance style delivery is influenced by the opera he spent three years writing. “It’s storytelling, you *act* the note as well.”

“He’s in character,” adds Belew. “And he’s going for it. Playfully.”

“Playful?” mock-protests Copeland. “I already told you: my intention is to burn down the city and eat all the children. It’s Darth Vader... but in a good mood. Hey, the original motivation was fun in the sun in Italy. The mission was *la dolce vita*. Then when these serious players came in we tried to hold onto that nihilistic feeling... and we just went ape-crazy.” **Ⓟ**

Gizmodrome is out on September 15 via earMUSIC. For more, visit www.facebook.com/gizmodrome.



LORENZA DAVIERO/PRESS

THE ITALIAN JOB

Gizmodrome’s prog credentials.

VITTORIO COSMA



MASSIMILIANO CARDELLI/PRESS

The quiet backbone of Gizmodrome, having worked intermittently with Copeland and others as Gizmo since 2005, the Italian keyboardist, producer and arranger studied classical and jazz piano before touring and recording with his country’s leading prog export PFM (Premiata Forneria Marconi), debuting on 1987’s *Miss Baker* album. He’s since worked with innumerable Italian artists as well as scoring films and TV series. At 52, he’s the baby of the group, but the others are quick to praise his ability, along with that of producer Claudio Dentes, to pull their various noises into shape. **CR**

MAKING

On their fourth album, **Caligula's Horse** have challenged themselves not only musically but also lyrically, with their most ambitious concept to date. Frontman **Jim Grey** tells *Prog* about his inspiration and the pros and cons of being in an Australian prog band.

Words: Rod Whitfield

Image: Stefanie Vallen

Modern progressive rockers around the world are finally beginning to know the name Caligula's Horse, and the band's profile is set to expand further this year. They began as a writing project for guitar maestro Sam Vallen in Brisbane, Australia back in 2010. He had sketched what was to become debut album *Moments From Ephemeral City*, and needed a strong and enigmatic frontman to flesh out his ideas in a vocal sense. Enter Jim Grey.

The pair quickly found their writing groove, and it soon became apparent that their musical and personal chemistry, and the ideas they were coming up with, were so strong that they had to take things further. They built up a tight band and released *Moments...* in 2011.

Subsequent years have seen the release of two more superb albums: 2013's *The Tide*, *The Thief And River's End* — which caught the interest of prestigious German label InsideOut, current home of Devin Townsend, Haken and The Tangent — and *Bloom*, which came out in 2015. Much traversing the enormous continent that is their homeland and several international sojourns followed, and now they're ready to release their superb fourth album *In Contact*.

Many bands reel out the whole 'this new album is the best thing we've done' line, but Caligula's Horse are a group who truly outdo themselves on every release. From his home in Brisbane, Jim Grey discusses the process behind their burning desire to improve on each release.

"With every album, we try to step forward from what we've done before," he says. "We've taken what we learned from doing... *River's End* and created *Bloom*, then taken what

we learned from doing *Bloom* and created *In Contact*. So *In Contact* deliberately has some of the colourful sound that we developed on *Bloom*, but at the same time we've ventured into heavier and more technically complex territory than before."

That new complexity was made possible, at least in part, due to a couple of line-up changes the band were forced to make between the release of *Bloom* and the creation of the new record. These changes saw them working with guitarist Adrian Goleby and drummer Josh Griffin. "We've got Josh in the band now, and he's capable of just about anything!" laughs Grey.

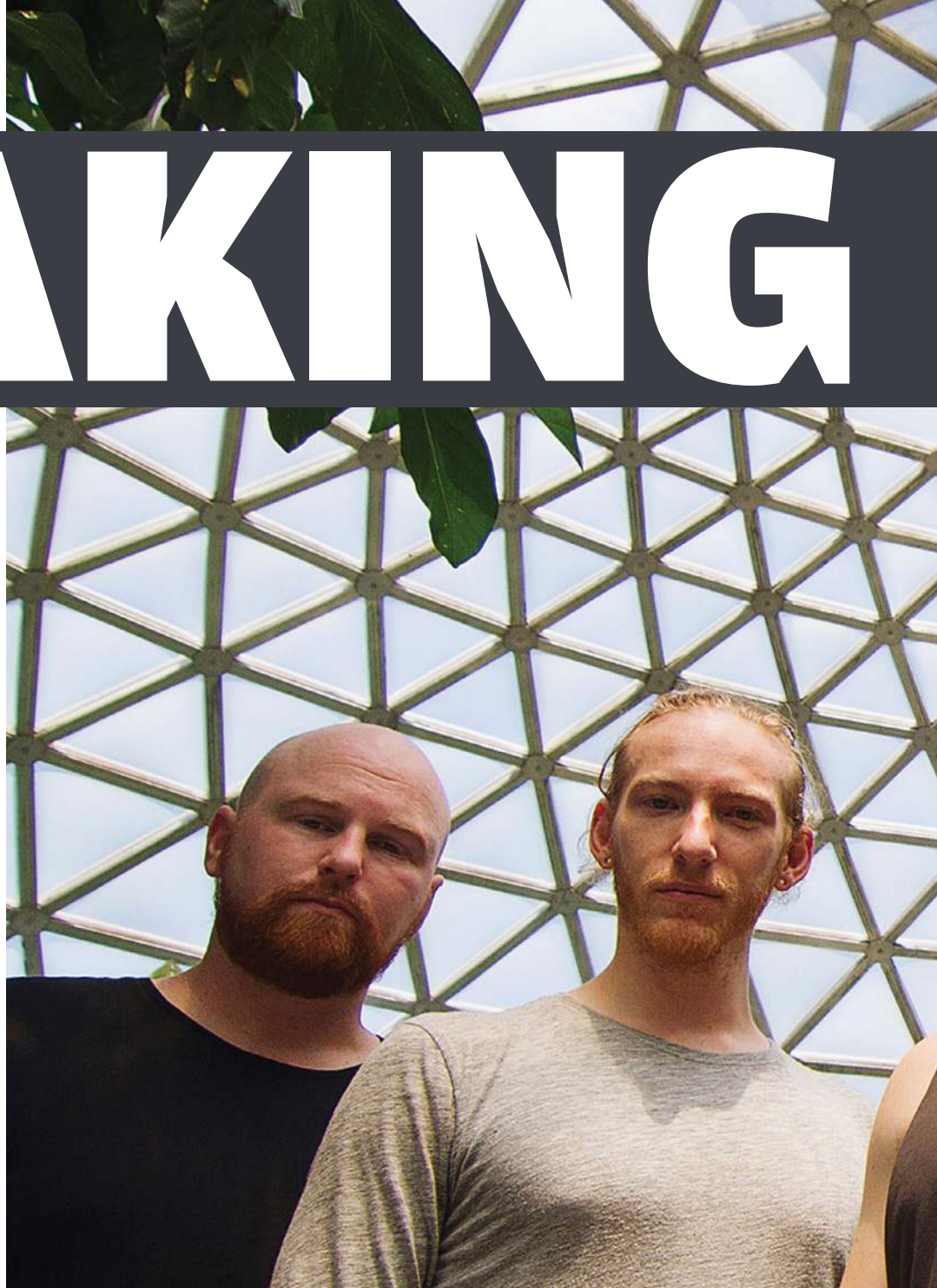
Another major new challenge they took on in creating the new album was the formulation and execution of the complex and somewhat esoteric concept that runs the length of the album and infiltrates all of its lyrics and imagery.

"We sat down and natted out a few ideas, based on a fundamental idea that I came up

with, which was the concept for the universe in which it's set," Grey recalls. "It's a concept where every piece of art that's ever been created is an attempt by human beings to remember, or put their finger on, the memory of a dream that we've all forgotten. We're not actively aware of it, but we all shared a dream once, and just a little echo of that is present in artists and their need to create and their inspirations, so that's sort of the source of their inspiration."

It's a fairly obscure concept, especially relative to some of the sweeping, monumental themes and storylines that have imbued classic records in the past, but after much discussion, they were able to brainstorm a way of making it come to life. When the finished product is placed under the microscope, it works an absolute treat.

"That would be hard to write a concept album about if you just sat down and said, 'I'm going to write a big epic about this...' That's not how I like to write," he admits.



CONTACT



Caligula's Horse, L-R:
Josh Griffin, Adrian
Goleby, Jim Grey, Sam
Vallen, Dave Couper.

"So when we discussed it, we settled on the idea of trying to make it personal and writing personal stories. I think the first of the songs to come out of all that was *The Hands Are The Hardest* from the first chapter, and that really got me into the head of that character. I decided at that stage to really get to know and understand the characters."

production treatment. Grey is more than happy to talk about the origins of the piece and the motivations behind putting it on the record.

"I've been challenging myself to write more poetry, [to move away from] only writing lyrics for stimulus response when I feel the need to write a song," he reveals. "I just write

disdain for it, but also his love for it, and the fact that he can see through the cracks and see how everything is connected. He, more than any of the other characters on the album, sees the connection between people and the reasons behind it. But I think he doesn't draw the broader connection because he's so frustrated with the state of things in the city."

"IT'S NOT PART OF THAT DJENT MOVEMENT, NOT PART OF WHAT'S EXPECTED OF PROGRESSIVE METAL RIGHT NOW. THIS IS US AT OUR ABSOLUTE BEST."

There's more new ground Grey and the band have broken on *In Contact*, and that's with the inclusion of a piece of spoken word poetry called *Inertia And The Weapon Of The Wall*, which is sure to surprise a few people. It's an interesting and compelling piece that's given a life of its own with the aid of some

when I feel like writing outside the band. I'm pretty sure the body of the poem came first, and that sparked the idea of this character, Ink, from the third chapter of the album. It ended up reflecting elements of his character and where it goes in his story. I wanted to paint a picture of this city in which he lives and his

Grey has a very strong suggestion about how he feels people should listen to and enjoy this particular piece of music.

"We tried to get a full take of it, a real performance," he remembers. "It was about the third take we did of the entire poem all at once. Then we went back



and put in little whispers and sounds and different layers, vocally, and Sam did all this textured, synth-based stuff to colour the mood and capture the imagery of the situations that Ink is describing in the poem as well.

"It's very deliberately constructed," Grey adds, "and I would recommend that people listen to that one with headphones on to uncover all the secret stuff that's in there."

and they'll possibly even follow up *In Contact* with some more new music.

"Sam and I have discussed continuing writing straight away and rolling into some new material, since we seem to be on a roll,"

doing anything for a little while on the back of the fact that Sam has to finish his PhD.

"But there's a lot of stuff happening; we're not disappearing. Sam and I are going to continue writing and hopefully we'll be

"A CONCEPT WHERE EVERY PIECE OF ART THAT'S EVER BEEN CREATED IS AN ATTEMPT BY HUMAN BEINGS TO REMEMBER, OR PUT THEIR FINGER ON, THE MEMORY OF A DREAM THAT WE'VE ALL FORGOTTEN."

At the very opposite end of the spectrum is *Graves*, a pounding but dynamic 15-and-a-half-minute epic, which displays the full gamut of what this band are capable of and closes the album in monumental style. Originally slated to be an EP in the style of Dream Theater's *A Change Of Seasons*, the band had a change of heart and decided to include it on *In Contact* instead. It turned out to be a long and arduous process, but the end result is truly stunning.

"Before we'd decided to make the album, Sam and I had toyed with the idea of releasing a one-track, side-length EP," the frontman says. "It's something we've never done before. Little pieces of that started taking place in *Graves*, and the outlet for that was *Graves* and we decided it was going to be an album.

"It was the one that really crushed us – Sam put everything into that song. For a good number of weeks, finishing that thing off, he was chiselling away, spending hour after hour trying to get this thing as good as it can be. We both ended up with writer's block for a month or two afterwards!"

Grey feels that Caligula's Horse have really hit the mark with *In Contact* – it's the album they have been working towards for their whole career so far. It's an album that doesn't fit comfortably with the current trends in heavy progressive music, but still has broad appeal to fans of the style.

"I feel like it's a step forward for current progressive metal," Grey states confidently. "That feels like I'm big-noting myself a lot, but basically what I mean by that is it's not part of that djent movement, not part of what's expected of progressive metal right now. This is us at our absolute best, and discovering a unique voice that we have in the progressive metal scene. It's something very special."

The band recently returned from a highly successful tour of Europe and the UK, which saw them play a number of major festivals and share the stage with the likes of Opeth, Anathema and Pain Of Salvation, as well as headlining shows of their own. The release of the new album sees them undertaking an extensive run of their homeland towards the end of September and early October.

They plan to take a breather over Christmas, but aim to be back on the road in the new year,

Grey says. "I think as far as the live world is concerned, we're going to be on – I'm not going to say 'hiatus' because that suggests a long time – but really we're not going to be

back maybe in the first half of next year for more European shows and more Australian shows. We'll just have to wait and see what happens there."



Grey is very keen to give fans in Europe, the States and other rock-loving territories who may be longing for Caligula's Horse to visit their shores an understanding of just what it's like to be a burgeoning rock act based in what is inarguably one of the most isolated rich Western nations on the planet.

"There's simply no way we could have done this recent European tour without help from the Australian government," he says. "We lost a great deal of money on our first European tour, because of all the thousands and thousands of dollars that goes into getting

a band of our size there. This time round, we took advantage of some grants that were available, and things were timed really well.

"We were fortunate enough to make a positive impact at the shows, and their size was enough to warrant a lot of merch sales that helped us along as well. Even just getting there would have required help. Hopefully over the next couple of years it gets to the point where it's a little less earth-shattering to leave the country."

At the same time, that isolation also has its advantages, giving the diverse range of bands that are currently

coming out of Australia such a distinctive sound, attitude and quality.

"I feel like it actually comes as a blessing and a curse," Grey tells us. "I bitch a lot about the isolation of Australia, but I feel it's unwarranted sometimes because we're not having that close quarters competition with people trying to one-up each other in the same scene. So in that way I feel there's a lot of unique sounds coming out of Australia that the world is really excited about and grateful for.

"We have a unique voice here, and that's the benefit of being in Australia. Obviously it comes with a great deal of expense to spread that everywhere, but I'm grateful for it." 

In Contact is out on September 15 via InsideOut. See www.caligulashorse.com for more information.



Ambitious new concept album *In Contact*.

The Five Horsemen:
getting *In Contact*
from Down Under.





Two decades after he was last in the line-up, vocalist Glynn Morgan reunites with **Threshold** as they embrace their prog proclivities on *Legends Of The Shires*. Just don't expect any public airing of dirty laundry. Or hobbits.

Words: David West **Images:** Shootinghip.com

STRAIGHT OUTTA THE Shires



“We thought, ‘Let’s really unleash our prog wings,’ and from that moment, the songs started flowing and before we knew it we had more than enough for a single album. If it’s going to be prog and a concept album, let’s make it double as well.”

Richard West

March Of Progress: the new-look Threshold, with Glynn Morgan (front) back in the fold.

Sometimes you have to take a step backwards before you can move forwards. It’s been a time of change within the ranks of Threshold.

Guitarist Pete Morten left the fold in February, then vocalist Damian Wilson was released from his duties in March. Glynn Morgan, who last sang with Threshold in 1996, is back as the band release their 11th studio recording, the massive – in every sense – double concept album *Legends Of The Shires*.

“We’d rather not dredge that up,” says keyboard player Richard West when *Prog* broaches the prickly subject of the recent departures. “With no disrespect to the last line-up, sometimes change is good and it shakes things up a little bit. Certain areas were getting a bit stale and a bit awkward in the band and it’s an opportunity to have a new beginning and move on. At the moment, we feel like we’re in a good place, everyone’s happy, we love what we’ve done, can’t wait to get out there to play it.”

Morgan might have waited two decades to return to Threshold, but he had no doubts about rejoining the band when the call came.

“When you get a job opportunity like this, how can you turn it down?” says the singer. “I was thrilled and then even more so when I heard the material because I think it’s a great album. It’s well-written, great lyrics, the sound harks back to the earlier albums. I can only bring to the table my voice, what I do, how I sing. Hopefully I can be the personality that I am when we play live.”

Morgan describes himself as a big fan of his predecessor’s voice, while West is quick to point out that there wasn’t some dramatic clash that precipitated Wilson’s exit.

“I’ve always been good friends with Damian but I don’t think our paths have always been aligned,” he says. “Different people have different ambitions, different goals, and they don’t always line up. When that happens, you either decide to force it

together or you just let people go the way they want to go.”

When Morgan stepped back into the picture, the writing process was already complete for *Legends Of The Shires*. “I got the demos and they blew me away,” says the singer. “There was nothing to be added. Richard said, ‘All the songs are written, there’s no chance to write anything on this album,’ and when I heard it, I just thought to myself, ‘Of all the Threshold albums, this is the one I would have wanted to sing.’ Fantastic.”

As the main lyricist, West has had to learn how to write and arrange for different voices, starting with Andrew ‘Mac’ McDermott, then Damian Wilson, and now Glynn Morgan.

“I did five records with Mac and every record I was trying to learn more and more about his voice so I’d know exactly what he was going to sound like, whatever I wrote,” says West. “I got to know his voice inside out. I loved that, getting to know somebody in that way and being able to write”

for them and hearing it work. For Damian, it was slightly different. His voice changed over the years a little, we only did the two records together so I never quite got that same connection with him. With this album, I was just writing melodies I loved and trying to write songs that made me excited so they were always going to work for anybody, as long as they could hit the high notes and reach the low notes.”

“He seems to bring out the best in vocalists,” says Morgan about working with West, who produced *Legends Of The Shires* with guitarist Karl Groom. “He finds a way to push you to the limit – the safe limit. I remember when we recorded *Under The Sun* [from 1994’s *Psychedelicatessen*], Richard’s on the piano trying to find the right key. He just keeps going up, up, up, to the point where I’m thinking, ‘Are you joking?’ But *Under The Sun* turned out to be one of the standout vocal pieces that I’ve ever recorded, even though it’s not exactly a rock song, is it?”

“With this stuff now, it just seemed to work again,” he adds. “It’s a strange feeling – even though we’ve all got older, it was so familiar again.”

The decision to make *Legends...* a double album grew from a desire to consciously reconnect with the group’s progressive instincts after shifting away from those on 2014’s *For The Journey*.

“We were looking back at records like *Subsurface*, thinking, ‘There’s a bit more breathing room on some of the songs,’” says West. “We thought, ‘Let’s really unleash our prog wings,’ and from that moment, the songs started flowing. Before we knew it, we had more than enough for a single album.”

“If it’s going to be prog and a concept album, let’s make it double as well. We’re ticking every box. I think we could have made it even longer but then it wouldn’t have fitted on four sides of vinyl.”

As a title, *Legends Of The Shires* hints towards a certain Tolkien-esque vibe, but West quickly shoots down that notion. “We never wanted it to be about hobbits,” he says emphatically.

Instead, the title reflects the belief that one of the qualities separating Threshold from their German labelmates on Nuclear Blast is the fact that the band are English.

“Shire is very much an English word,” says West. “All the old counties of England, we’re the shires, so we wanted to make it a collection of stories from, or about, the regions, and how they interact. That’s how the theme came to be. ‘Region’ is a pretty dull word – *Reports From The Regions* just doesn’t work. *Legends Of The Shires* sounded like a great British prog album to me, and that’s what we wanted to make.”

Committing to the concept for *Legends...* meant that every tune had to connect to the central theme, so some songs had to be put in the vaults for another occasion.

“Our drummer [Johanne James] had a song that was a totally different subject so we had to politely decline his offer,” says West. “Steve [Anderson], our bass player, wrote the track *On The Edge* and it was a little bit different when he presented it, so we said, ‘If it’s going to be part of this story, can we make a few changes here and there?’ We did

chop it up a bit and I hope he’s forgiven us. That’s where the compromises come in. But it’s not like we’re telling a very precise narrative – it’s more snapshots, like scenes of a story, all the way through. It’s fairly loose, and intentionally so because you don’t

want a story that you hear once and then you know it. You want open themes that people can put themselves in, identify with and put their own meaning into.”

The band will perform a selection of songs from *Legends...* on their upcoming tour, although West is clearly



“Sometimes change is good and it shakes things up a little bit. Certain areas were getting a bit stale and a bit awkward in the band and it’s an opportunity to have a new beginning and move on.”

Richard West

tempted by the idea of tackling the entire album live at some point in the future. "It's crying out to be done," he says. "Whether or not it will happen I don't know, but it would be fun."

The winter tour sees Threshold playing a series of shows in Germany, but only making two UK appearances – first at HRH Prog in November, followed by a single London headline show in December. West says the band have always found central Europe to be a much more fertile ground.

"I think maybe what happened with Britain is that prog and metal were very much 70s into a bit of the 80s, and then we went somewhere else. We went into dance, we went into Britpop, and we left behind the old stuff. Generally, Germany didn't leave behind the old stuff – they still carried on listening to it, so that's our market."

Whatever the state of the UK's live prog circuit, at least the band have long since left behind the days of touring in a van, now enjoying the relative luxury of travelling in a Nightliner bus.

"It's great and I love it," says West, "but I remember I sent my wife a photo from the last tour, saying, 'Here's my bunk,' just to show her where I was, and she just wrote back, 'You look like you're living in a homeless shelter, mate. What are you doing this for?'"

"I've got to say, it was more comfortable when I was in my 20s. It's a bit of a small, tight, narrow, coffin-like slab where it's either too

hot or too cold and you've got the bumping up and down of the bus and 10 guys around you snoring, so it's not necessarily as glamorous as we thought it used to be, but it's still a great way to tour."

And the venues have changed too. "It's not like the 90s where you'd go to Europe and you didn't know what you were going to get," says West. "We

played one venue with no stage – that was in the former East Germany back in the 90s. It was a small village, and halfway through one of the songs, some guy walked up to our drummer with a CD and a pen saying, 'Can you sign this?' He's playing! He can't stop playing right now!"

As Threshold enter the next stage of their three-decade career, West has only optimism for the future.

"We spent 10 years with the last line-up. We became this family. But now we've changed. It's not the first line-up change and it probably won't be the last, but musically we always carry on. And musically we're celebrating the old and the new, the prog and the metal in one go, so it feels like everything of Threshold all-in-one." 📀

Legends Of The Shires is out now via Nuclear Blast. See www.thresh.net details.

Threshold, L-R: Steve Anderson, Karl Groom, Glynn Morgan, Richard West, Johanne James.





Discipline: back with a glorious fifth album, *Captives Of The Wine Dark Sea*.

Escaping

Detroit's **Discipline** don't have the biggest back catalogue for a band that was born in the late 1980s. But as studio album number five shows, when the quartet hit the 'record' button, magic happens. *Prog* delves deeper.

Words: Chris Cope
Images: Doug Susalla

"I saw King Crimson play music off the *Discipline* album and I thought they were a new wave band."

Matthew Parmenter



Not many bands are named after a King Crimson album, but then again, *Discipline* aren't your average group. Take singer, multi-instrumentalist and founding member Matthew Parmenter, for example. He wears mime make-up on stage, and has done so for years. And why not?

The Detroit four-piece's theatrical sound has a befitting sense of drama, with a penchant for masterful melody making interwoven with grand, explorative journeys nodding back to the prog godfathers of yore.

Despite forming in 1987, *Discipline*'s latest album, *Captives Of The Wine Dark Sea*, is only their fifth studio effort to date. It's a welcome addition to their somewhat skinny catalogue, with the group largely dormant in the early 2000s as they slowed things down to focus on life outside music.

"By the time we had done [1997 album] *Unfolded Like Staircase*, we had been playing for 10 years," says Detroit native Parmenter. "Everybody had families and pressures and we were all trying to focus on multiple things at once. I think it just became a little too much. We had to take a break, and we did."

The group returned from hibernation in 2011 with *To Shatter All Accord*, their first studio record for nearly 15 years, and after more live albums — *Discipline* are prolific purveyors of live recordings and videos — *Captives Of The Wine Dark Sea* was born.

Rocks for a tingling taster as it drifts through a myriad of passages, or the entrancing instrumental *The Roaring Game*. It's both deeply uplifting yet murkily melancholic too.

Is it a fitting introduction to the group for someone who has never heard *Discipline* before? "I would say no," drummer Paul Dzendzel admits. "I think there are songs on it that do not represent what seeing us live is like. But I think it's all good. It's a little step in a different direction."

The band are regularly likened to Van der Graaf Generator — partly because of Parmenter's celestial voice — while *Crimson* and *Genesis* are two other influences from the prog canon. It's all pretty cerebral stuff too, with the expansive concept of learning being a pertinent theme on the new record.

"The first song, *The Body Yearns*, talks about the actual physical process of learning in the brain, and how people forget how difficult it is to learn, because by the time we've learned something, it seems second nature," Parmenter says. "But it actually takes a huge investment of time. We forget that we all learn to walk and talk or do what we do, and many people learn multiple languages, but it's not easy. All these things take time and development in the brain, and of course we now know that the brain actually changes the more that you do the thing."

"So to me, that's sort of a song that's actually about the process of learning. But in

Captivity

"I think it took about two years to record," Parmenter reflects. "It was difficult for us, because we had to bring in the bass player [Mathew Kennedy] from out of town. We had Terry Brown mix it. To me, it sounds really good because of Terry's involvement. It's the best-sounding record I think we've ever had, and it's all because he's an artist."

The record is seven tracks of solid, classy prog fare that at times dips a toe into rock, symphonic and folk hues. Try the near 15-minute closer *Burn The Fire Upon The*

addition, any time you learn something, you're impacting your memories, and I think that's another theme in the album."

Discipline's initial roots reach back to the mid-1980s, where Parmenter was playing in a high school jazz band with classmates. It was, however, in the early 1990s that the group really picked up steam, performing regularly and landing shows outside their native US.

"We were serious about playing all the time, and that's when things started to happen," 

"I actually took mime classes as a young person, and I'm not joking. I did tap dance and I did juggling. I don't know what my parents thought. Maybe they thought I could work in a circus."

Matthew Parmenter

Parmenter says. "We played here in Detroit, we did our first album, and by a stroke of good luck we got invited to play some shows in Norway. There was actually a keyboard player at that time too, which allowed me to get up and put on funny costumes."

While Parmenter released a couple of solo albums in the 2000s, Discipline stayed on the down-low during the decade. But they reformed for a slot at NEARfest in 2008 and haven't looked back since.

They're still impressing with their unique take on progressive rock, a genre that has stuck with Parmenter since he was young — all thanks to his older brother.

"I love Van der Graaf Generator, but I don't consider them an influence," he says about the comparisons. "I understand that I sing a lot like him, and I love that band. I was really grateful when I discovered them through another band that we played with, Anekdoten. They said, 'Oh, you must love Van der Graaf.' But we'd never heard them, and they turned me on to them.

"As far as influences go for me, I would say as a songwriter, I'm influenced by early Genesis, Yes and King Crimson. I was very influenced even by Gentle Giant as a young person. I had a brother who was 12 years older than me, and he played me a lot of that stuff when I was a five-, six-year-old kid."

"I was brought up on jazz and early rock'n'roll,"

Dzendzel counters. "I really didn't know what progressive music was. My brothers had some ELP albums and that kind of stuff, but I gravitated towards that as a kid because of Carl Palmer. But I never listened to Van der Graaf Generator or Gentle Giant or any of that stuff. I didn't even know who they were until I got involved with these guys."

And then there is Crimson. The group's 1981 effort *Discipline* saw Robert Fripp and co veer away from their career-defining 70s offerings, and it struck a chord with a young Parmenter after he saw the icons on TV.

"When I got into junior high and high school, I started hanging out with people and they're playing new wave for me, and we got into punk rock. We even started playing some punk rock in high school," he says. "But then at some point I saw King Crimson on television. I did not know them as a child.

"I saw them play music off the *Discipline* album and I thought they were a new wave band. I said to my brother, 'I found this new wave band, you'll really like them. They're called King Crimson.' He laughed at me, and then proceeded to show me all the old albums that they'd done. That helped me find my roots a little bit."

It's probably fair to assume that 70s prog's theatricality, often linked with the likes of early Genesis, also had an impact on Parmenter and Discipline. The musician proudly

wears mime make-up on stage and is adept at tap dancing and juggling too. He's a creative all-rounder, a seeming tour de force of artistry.

"I actually took mime classes as a young person, and I'm not joking," Parmenter smiles. "I did tap dance and I did juggling. I don't know what my parents thought. Maybe they thought I could work in a circus."

"The mime thing came about when I went to a party one time, a Halloween party, and I dressed up as a mime artist. It was in the late 80s, early 90s. And it sort of stuck, so I started wearing it on stage. I was already sort of doing some theatrical stuff on stage, and it just really helps to separate the singer from the person; the actor from the person.

"It feels theatrical, and for me, it also feels more powerful when I'm doing it. I'm a pretty gentle person, but when I perform, I have to take on these roles of some villainous types and aggressive personalities that I normally might subjugate in the day-to-day. So putting on a mask is a helpful way for people in general to express different parts of their psyche, and that's something that's been going on for thousands of years.

"It's sort of silly," Parmenter continues. "For as long as I've been doing it, there's always somebody that says, 'Why do you do that? Why don't you stop doing that?' I guess I like it too much to stop." ☺

Captives Of The Wine Dark Sea is out now via Laser's Edge. See www.strungoutrecords.com for more information.

Discipline, L-R: Matthew Kennedy, Chris Herin, Matthew Parmenter, Paul Dzendzel.

WELTSCHMERZ

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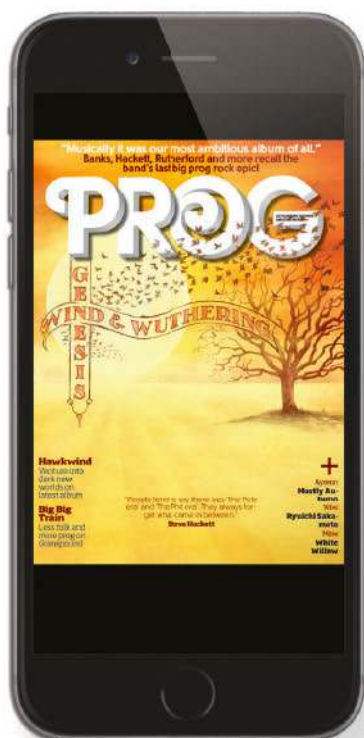
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"Sometimes I'll see a 40- or 50-year-old guy in a Rush T-shirt at our show," says Chon's laconic guitarist Mario Camarena, who's all of 25. "It's cool that older prog dudes like us — it gives us some real credit. Often they'll say that after seeing us, they're not worried about the future of prog, and that's good to hear."

The math rock trio are hearing many good things this year, from old prog dudes and young crowdsurfer types alike. *Homey*, the follow-up to their 2015 debut album *Grow*, came out in June and peaked at No.66 on the US Billboard chart — respectable, given the genre's niche appeal.

Their American tour dates regularly sell out, and you only have to check out online footage to see the connection they're making with people. They packed out New York's Webster Hall, a 1,500-capacity room, and their homecoming gig at San Diego's House Of Blues saw 1,100 heaving bodies going apeshit to the band's complex yet oddly sunny tunes. Of the new stuff, Camarena says the rhythmically tricky *No Signal* has been going down surprisingly well, along with old favourites like *Grow's Perfect Pillow*.

"We'd play that same song nine years ago, when we were starting out, to empty rooms," says Camarena. "We've played to nobody a lot. We'd do any show we could in San Diego for our first two years, usually just to the other bands and our friends. We knew we were making cool music, but instrumental music wasn't thriving as much as now. The first question people would ask was, 'When are you getting a vocalist? You'll never do anything without one.' That's an outdated question now. People know instrumental music is its own thing."

showed us the ropes of being a touring musician. Like, we had no clue about green rooms, didn't even know they existed. Usually each band has their own room and the headliner gets the biggest one, but with Animals we all hung out everywhere and it was like a big family vibe. We thought that was normal until we toured with some other bands! We've been doing that on our own headline tours since."

That family vibe is part of Chon's sweet chemistry (their name itself is an acronym for carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, nicked from a TV science show a decade ago). The family ties and Hansel's position as honorary brother contribute to a certain quality that draws many towards them, and also drives some away. That album name is not for nothing.

There's a cosy, West Coast warmth to Chon's jazz-flavoured music, a major key brightness amid the mind-boggling widdle; an open, positive tone absent from many of their more techy, testosterone-fuelled peers. They're too gentle for the djent-ers, not arch enough for the ArcTanGent hardcore (that's a festival Chon love and have done twice). Maybe it's no coincidence that their crowd features a disproportionate number of female fans for the genre.

"That tone just comes naturally, I suppose," Camarena mumbles. "We write complex stuff, but we love putting humour in there too. On [*Homey* track] *Waterslide* there's a little bit of chromatic nonsense that Erick does before the shredding kicks in that makes me crack up. You can't take this style of music too seriously, otherwise it gets a little dry."

There are certainly some juicy stylistic curveballs amid *Homey's* sweet, mathy melodies. *Nayhoo* is a trip into gentle hip-hop territory,

Elemental

A decade ago, they were playing to empty rooms in their hometown of San Diego, but today **Chon** are packing out venues with their friendly math rock sound. **Mario Camarena** sums up their progress and their sweet second album, *Homey*.

Words: Grant Moon **Image:** Jonathan Weiner

Back then Chon's drummer, Camarena's youngest brother Nathan, was just 11 (type 'Chon live 2008' into YouTube for footage of him hammering away in 7/8 as a pre-teen). Mario's guitar counterpart is lifelong buddy Erick Hansel. The two grew up learning the instrument together, building up a complex style drawing on the technical intricacies of metal guitar. They'd devour everything from Shrapnel-era shredders like Paul Gilbert to fusioners Return To Forever.

"Erick and I have had so many moments that come from jamming with someone who you connect with on a musical level," says Camarena. "Our guitar parts are so interwoven, they totally mesh together. There's no lead and no second guitar, it sounds like one big part. Over time we've tried to be more creative and come up with newer ways of playing with two guitars."

And they succeed. Big fans of jazz pianists Hiromi, Robert Glasper and Tigran Hamasyan, the two will often split a song's melody between them, as if one guitar were the pianist's left hand, the other the right (see *Homey's* fun, fiddly opener *Sleepy Tea*). In a pleasingly old school touch, Mario is always panned left in the stereo mix, Erick to the right.

Run Spotify's Artist Radio algorithm on Chon and it spits out some interesting names — fellow hot newbies Polyphia, Aussie guitar whizz Plini, Scale The Summit, and some of the bands they've supported — tech metal stars Periphery and Animals As Leaders.

"Animals have always been a favourite," says Camarena. "We did our first national tour with them, and we were complete newbs. Every single night we'd watch their whole set, must've been 30 times in a row. We learned so much from them — it was insanely inspiring. They

with guest artist Masego offering a rare Chon vocal line. Chill-pop joint *Feel This Way* was produced by electronic artist Giraffage, and avant-garde guitarist/producer GoYama features on the hypnotically glitchy *Berry Streets*.

You can almost imagine that old Rush fan tutting, downing the dregs of his pint and heading for the door. These explorations have bemused at least some of their fan base, for now.

"Maybe this stuff takes time for fans to really get into," Camarena says. "We had a vocal track on the last album [*Can't Wait*] and our online audience was split about that. Now when we play it live the whole crowd sings along. We're listening to that electronic kind of music more these days, bands like Tennyson, who sound like the future of music. We wanted to go into that realm a bit, but we're not good enough to do it ourselves yet, so we got our friends in. Guitars will always be our main thing though. It's what we love. There are still a lot of possibilities."

After headline dates in the UK in October, Chon tour the US again the following month with Circa Survive and Thrice. It's going well for the little math rock band that could.

"It's insane," says Camarena. "This doesn't even feel real sometimes. I'll be at home playing [video game] *Super Smash Bros*, and the next day we're playing a huge room. We're still trying to make sense of it. And the thing is, we haven't had a bad crowd yet. As long as we perform well and give a lot of energy, it usually goes down well." 🍷

Homey is out now via Sumerian. See www.facebook.com/musicofchon for more information.

"We're still trying to make sense of it. And the thing is, we haven't had a bad crowd yet. As long as we perform well and give a lot of energy, it usually goes down well."



Chon, L-R: Erick Hansel,
Nathan Camarena,
Mario Camarena.

THE PROG INTERVIEW

JUSTIN HAYWARD

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 **Justin Hayward**. As frontman of The Moody Blues, the Swindon-born vocalist, guitarist and songwriter played a key role in reinventing the band's sound and leading them to global success. He continues to tour and also has a successful solo career.

Words: Malcolm Dome **Portrait:** Will Ireland

Justin Hayward has had a long and successful career since joining The Moody Blues in 1966. Through songs like *Nights In White Satin*, he's established himself as one of the most erudite and copied composers of the last five decades.

But Hayward's impact has gone beyond his tenure with the Moodies. The Swindon-born musician has also had an acclaimed solo career, as well as

working with fellow Moodies member John Lodge on the album *Blue Jays*. And let's not forget that prior to being recruited by The Moody Blues, a teenage Hayward had already signed a publishing deal with skiffle king Lonnie Donegan, and in 1965 he was hired by British pop star Marty Wilde to join his backing band. It was from there he made the jump to the Moodies. But let's not forget when he became a member, the band were

a fading R&B act. Together with fellow new recruit Lodge, he helped to turn things around and put The Moody Blues firmly on the path to becoming the icons they are today.

He also found wider fame through the hit single *Forever Autumn* on the original recording of *The War Of The Worlds* in 1978, and even spent time onstage in the touring production of the Jeff Wayne musical. Yet, despite all this high profile attention, Hayward has retained his privacy, and it's something he's strongly protected. All of this makes it surprising that he was the subject of TV show *This Is Your Life* in 1997. But what this did was accentuate his widespread appeal, proving to everyone that he's well known in the mainstream, as well as being a pioneer in the progressive world with the Moodies, who've long been renowned for the way they helped to develop symphonic rock.

“

People said *Nights In White Satin* was too slow and too long to be a hit single.

”

Today, Hayward combines a busy touring schedule with the Moodies alongside an active solo career, both live and in the studio.

Yet despite his high profile, little is known about the real man. For instance, where did his love for music begin, and what made him want to become a musician in the first place? And how does he feel knowing, despite being eligible for inclusion since 1989, the Moodies have been constantly overlooked for the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame? What follows gives us an insight into who Justin Hayward is, and what inspires him to this day.

Was there a moment when you knew you wanted to be a musician?

I got my first guitar when I was 10, and I hustled a few kids at school to get a group together. I recall how much I loved all of us being in someone's front room, trying to work out the chords to some songs. It probably included *Rock Around The Clock*. And then when I heard Buddy Holly for the first time, that brought everything into focus. I knew what I wanted to do.

When you were a child, were you a natural performer?



An early line-up of The Moody Blues at the BBC, with Mike Pinder and Ray Thomas.

LE/PHOTOSHOT/VALON

**In Search Of The Lost Chord:
Justin Hayward today.**



No, I was never like that. And I'm still not what you would call a performer. For me, it's all about the songs, and they open the door. I'm part of constructing and presenting them, but I am always hiding behind these as well.

Who were your musical heroes growing up?

Elvis was the king. When he came along, I must have been eight or nine. But Buddy Holly was the one for me. I was lucky to get to America in 1968, less than 10 years after he died, and was able to visit places like Lubbock, Texas, where he was born. The Everly Brothers were also a massive influence, because they got me interested in vocal harmonies. I was so pleased to be able to spend some time with Phil

When you joined The Moody Blues in 1966, did you think it would last?

I don't think any of us did. We were all trying not to do a proper job. At first, we were really doing another band's act. Because the music belonged to [departed guitarist/vocalist] Denny Laine, and I don't think any of us had our hearts in it until we began to do our own songs. Once that happened, then things began to change. But until then, nobody thought the band could last long.

The Moodies have been hugely successful, but remained almost anonymous. Was that deliberate?

For us, the music has always been the star. None of us wanted to be personalities or celebrities. We've gone out of our way to avoid that

bought a load of tickets off a scalper and gave them away. They had no idea who we were!

Do you ever find your mind drifting onstage when you're doing a song you've done countless times before?

I do with the Moodies, because there's time to do that. But when I'm doing a solo show, I never do it, I always stay in the moment, because the musicians I'm with are so good that I want to keep up with them. Of course, I love playing with the Moodies, but there's a real joy for me in doing solo dates.

Does it bother you that The Moody Blues continue to be ignored by the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame?

Justin Hayward with the cast of the musical *The War Of The Worlds*. From left: Rhydian Roberts, Jason Donovan, Liz McClarnon, Jeff Wayne, Hayward and Chris Thompson.



Everly some years ago. That memory's precious to me now that he's gone.

Was there one record that changed your life?

It would have to be *Love Me Do* from The Beatles. This was when I was still living in Swindon, and I recall thinking that something very different had just happened. I do remember seeing Steve Race, a jazz pianist who seemed to be on every music programme at the time, appearing on a TV show and saying The Beatles would never last. I thought he was a deeply unpleasant man after that. You have to be very careful what you say about other musicians! That was a good lesson for me at the time.

sort of thing. We never had a press agent in our early days. Quite early on, we got a little burned by the press, so we stayed away from that side of things.

When did you realise how successful the band had become?

It took a long time for this to hit me. I think it was in 1973, when we played Madison Square Garden twice in one day. Between the shows, Ray Thomas and I went for a walk and we saw our name in 50ft high letters in the square, and we said to each other, "Perhaps we've made it!" We also

Not at all. For me, it's irrelevant. I know some of our American fans are upset about the situation, but for us it means nothing. This band doesn't feel we need that sort of award to validate what we do. We're too busy getting on

with our lives and careers to care. If a couple of guys had died in the mid-70s, then we'd probably have been inducted into the Hall Of Fame. We're guilty of being boring and staying alive though.

You have done projects away from the

Moodies such as *The War Of The Worlds* album. Do you wish you'd



Above: Jeff Wayne's soundtrack for *The War Of The Worlds*, that included *Forever Autumn*.



Justin performing
with The Moody
Blues in 1970.

**done more of that type
of project?**

Yes, I do. I've done a few. Some have been successful, others haven't. *Forever Autumn* from *The War Of The Worlds* was the big one for me, and I was lucky enough to do the stage show for four or five years as well.

What does *Forever Autumn* mean to you?

I feel blessed to have been the one chosen to do the original version. It has a poignancy to it, and any time I play it live, people really get into it. It has been a great gift for me.

What made you want to work with Jeff Wayne?

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If a couple of us had died in the mid-70s, then we'd probably have been inducted into the Hall Of Fame. We're guilty of being boring and staying alive.

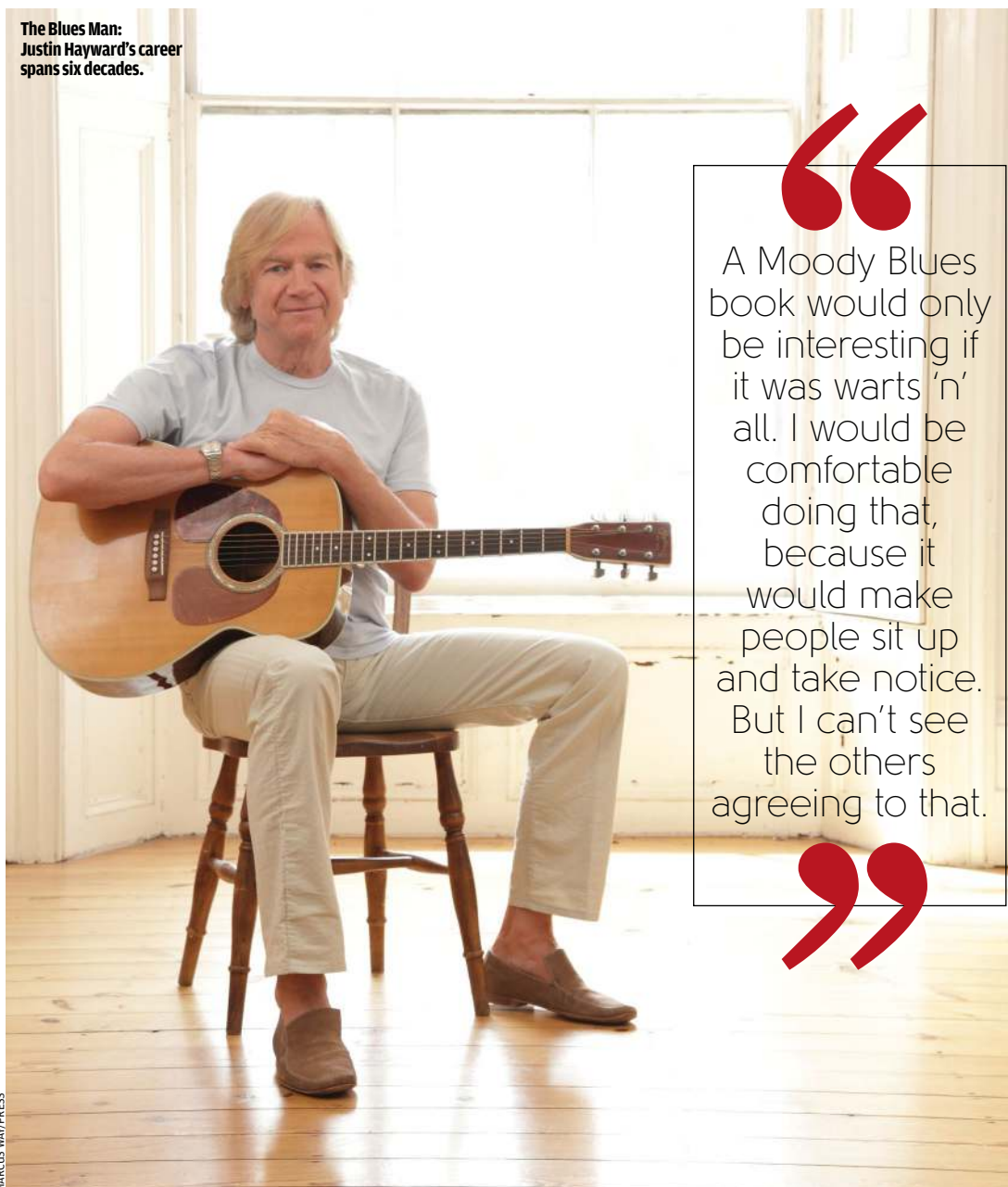
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He sent me a demo of the song, and was certain I was the person he wanted to sing it. I played it a couple of times, but wasn't sure it was right for me. But that day, there was a young lad at my house, who worked in Threshold Records, The Moody Blues record shop in Cobham. He came into the lounge while I was playing, and when it finished he said, "You ought to do that song. It's perfect for you." So that convinced me to try it. I wasn't up to anything at the time, so went down to Advision Studios in Central London, met Jeff, and you know what the first thing he asked me was? "Are you the guy who



The Blues Man:
Justin Hayward's career
spans six decades.

MARCUS WATKINS/PRESS



“A Moody Blues book would only be interesting if it was warts ‘n’ all. I would be comfortable doing that, because it would make people sit up and take notice. But I can’t see the others agreeing to that.”

sang *Nights In White Satin*?” Just to be sure he had the right person!

You mentioned *Nights In White Satin*: what do you think makes it such a classic?

I often ask myself why it’s so popular. Even after we’d recorded it, people were saying it was too slow and too long to be a hit single. So when it happened, I was taken by surprise as much as anyone! It was a song I wrote one night, sitting on my bed. I took it in the next day and played it to the other guys, and they were a bit nonplussed by it. Mike Pinder then told me to play it again, and added in a Mellotron part, and somehow it made everything work. But as to why it’s loved by so many... I haven’t a clue!

What is your all-time favourite Moodies song?

I like the things we did with Tony Visconti. Those are my favourites. And top of my list would be *I Know You’re Out There Somewhere*. Whenever we play it live the crowd sings the chorus, and it resonates with people.

How did you feel when you first heard *Poor Man’s Moody Blues* from Barclay James Harvest?

I thought it was tongue in cheek. But do you know, I can’t even remember what it sounds like now. Sorry, boys!

Do you regard the Moodies as being prog?

Well, we were around before that whole era began. But I get why people put us in that category,

and why we appeal to a prog crowd. But I always thought we were more melodic and our style was different to bands like Yes or Genesis. After a while, the prog label slid off us, really. We probably betrayed it. But in a way, our more pop-oriented approach set the template for the way some of these bands streamlined their sound in the 80s.

You and John Lodge have worked so closely together for so long, not just in *The Moody Blues* but also the *Blue Jays*. Are you friends?

Well, we’re not the sort of people who spend time together away from the band, if that’s what you mean. But then that’s the case of all of us in the band. People often say that members of a band are

like family, but that’s not true for me. I have my brother and sister, and don’t have the same relationship with John. I also think ‘friends’ is the wrong term... there probably isn’t a term that’s been invented yet to describe the way John and I get on. It’s a combination of brotherhood, competition and the way our personalities both clash and also mould together.

In the first few years I was in the Moodies, there was a lot of testosterone flying around. But then the dynamic altered, as some people rose and others sort of retreated. In the 70s, there was an obvious tension in the band that had to be released. In ’74, I was on the sidelines watching what was going on. Thankfully, nothing was said that couldn’t be unsaid. But a few years later this did happen, and Mike Pinder decided he had to leave as a result.

Can you ever see a reunion with Pinder and Ray Thomas?

No. Those guys haven’t played for a long time. You can’t just pull people out of retirement and put them on stage. I was the one who never wanted The Beatles to reform. I loved it as it had been, and knew it could never be the same again. If we did, it would be five really old guys, and all people would end up saying is, “They’re not as good as they were.” That would be the end of the band. Now, there’s a magic and mystery about the five of us, but this would be destroyed by the reality if we ever did get back together.

How much of a shock was it being on *This Is Your Life*?

I was at a promotional event for a new recording. Then Michael Aspel, the presenter, came onstage with *The Big Red Book*, and announced, “Hi Justin, this is your life,” and I responded, “Very funny!” I thought it was a joke, and he was actually there to do someone *really* famous. But it turned out to be me. Then I was locked away for two hours. I was assigned a production girl and a security guy who told me nothing. No matter what questions I asked. In the end, I just said to the girl, “Just tell me, is my wife central to this?” And she replied, “Oh, yeah, yeah.”

Were you at all concerned who might turn up on the programme?



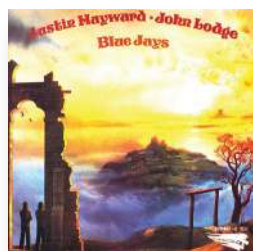
John Lodge and Justin Hayward (centre back row) with the line-up that recorded *Blue Jays*.

Well, there were some I wanted to be there, and others I really did not want around. But [wife] Ann Marie had been with me throughout my career, so she understood there might have been certain people I have met along the way who I wouldn't have been appropriate to have there.

I have no clue how she managed to keep it a secret from me for so long. She knew three months earlier, but there were code words between her and the production company to ensure even if I was at home when they phoned I had no idea what was happening. She was captain of the golf club at the time, so for instance if I answered the phone when they called, they'd say it was the club and ask to talk to the captain.

You're very private, so how did you deal with being on such a major TV show which opened up your life to scrutiny?

Oh, it wasn't a problem for me. I was lucky that my mother was still alive, so delighted she was there. And I had a lot of friends around, like Kenny Swain the footballer and Marty Wilde, who I worked with just before joining the Moodies. So that was great. And the best thing was, they gave



Above: 1975's *Blue Jays* album.

us a magnificent party afterwards.

Do you have hobbies outside music?

Not really. I try to keep fit. I've had horses for quite a few years. I always enjoy riding. I did it as a kid, and then got back into doing it in my 20s. But

music is my whole life. If I'm off the road even for a few weeks, then I get edgy.

Do you constantly write, even when you're on tour?

I can only write when inspiration strikes. I also have to have a project I'm working towards, in order to get into the right frame of mind to write songs. I can be very lazy, given the chance.

Have the Moodies written and recorded material which was never released, or have you always put out everything?

Well, when the box set [*Timeless Flight*] was released in 2013, I thought there were a few songs of which only I have copies. But they managed to find those. They also found things I had completely forgotten about. I listened to them when *Timeless*

Flight came out and you know what? I can't remember doing those!

In our early days with Decca, the company were very tight on tapes. So, if something was left over from a recording session, it would usually be wiped or recorded over. A lot of things got lost that way.

November will mark the 50th anniversary of the release of *Days Of Future Passed*. Will it be marked by a special release?

I don't know. That's something you'd have to ask the record label, Universal. It's out of our hands. But what I can tell you is that we're doing a lot of the material from it on our current 50th anniversary American tour.

Talking of tours, will this come over to Britain?

I would hope so, but right now there's nothing definite I can tell our fans about this. It's been great to do these American dates, and we certainly want to take this tour to other parts of the world, including the UK, if that's possible...

Do you look back with pride when the band reach a landmark like the 50th anniversary?

I'm not one to celebrate anniversaries. I've got so used to seeing such occasions being used as no more than a promotional tool. While I understand the commercial value of these moments, it all gets a bit predictable, and takes away from the genuine pride you might personally have in the event.

What ambitions do you have left to fulfil?

Only to continue doing what we do. To play live and record new music for as long as we can. I'm fully aware that time is running

out for me at my age. So many great musicians have gone in the last few years...

You must have seen musicians who were friends die in recent times. Has this made you think about your own mortality?



The highly coveted *Timeless Flight* box set from 2013.

Not friends, more acquaintances. As for the way it has impacted on me, the only thing I can tell you is that when you get to the age of 71, then you will appreciate what I feel. Until then, no words I use can put people into my mind.

A lot of bands and musicians have done autobiographies. Is that something which appeals to you too?

A Moody Blues book would only be interesting if it was warts 'n' all. I would be comfortable doing that, because it would make people sit up and take notice. But I can't see the others agreeing to that. As for a Justin Hayward book... well, I'd rather let my music speak.

People would be amazed that there might be 'warts n' all' stories connected to the Moodies. Do you actually have some that might shock everyone?

I'm not gonna tell you, ha! Maybe one day you'll find out if we ever do this book. We avoided a lot of the controversies which blighted other bands. But we were around in the 1960s, when so much hedonism happened, so you would expect us to have had our moments of indulgence.

Might there be a Moody Blues musical one day?

It has been proposed, and there have been storylines suggested. But they've not been right. It's an easy option, but not necessarily one we'd want to pursue.

How would you describe yourself as a person?

I don't know. That's a question for other people to answer. I never think of my attributes as a person. All I can tell you is that I'm committed to my music, and want to be as good as I can possibly be as a songwriter and musician. I'm always looking for ways to improve. Anything else I might or might not be as a human being I will leave for other to judge. ☺

Justin Hayward's *The Wind Of Heaven Tour* begins in the UK on September 18 and runs until October 6. For more, see www.moodybluestoday.com.

50 years strong: *Days Of Future Passed* celebrates half a century.



New spins...

GENTLE GIANT

A specially curated selection of songs from Gentle Giant's first three albums get the reissue treatment from Steven Wilson.

Words: Sid Smith **Illustration:** Stephen Kelly

When Derek Shulman bellows out 'The birth of a realisation/ The rise of a high expectation/ Emerging successful, defiant/ Together the parts make a giant,' on the opening track of their 1970 debut album, the lyrics are in reality the blueprint for a new group in new times, a statement of intent to build something completely different. And Gentle Giant couldn't be more different from the cabaret slots in which the Shulman brothers languished towards the end of the 60s as members of Simon Dupree And The Big Sound. Hailing from the boom in home-grown, somewhat contrived cash-in psychedelia, as the emergent underground rock scene was underway, it looked as though their time had come and gone. Surely there was more to life than a week-long residency at some chicken-in-a-basket club out in the provinces? As their Tony Visconti-produced debut demonstrates, the turn-around they achieved was a remarkable transformation. Freed from the restraints of knocking out old hits to largely indifferent punters, Gentle Giant could have followed down the blues rock path with long, gnarly jams. Instead they came up with orchestrated and elaborate, uncompromising creations that pushed the band to their limits and in doing so, probably curtailed their scope for commercial success.

Though the full multitracks of *Gentle Giant*, *Acquiring The Taste* and *Three Friends* are now sadly lost, this is not the first time Steven Wilson has faced the problem of missing tapes. King Crimson's *In The Wake Of Poseidon* had one track upmixed from stereo to create a faux 5.1. On ELP's debut, previously unreleased material was used to fill the surround sound gap. Here, with only nine of 21 pieces that made up the three albums available in multitrack format, the solution of running the surviving items, plus one pre-debut studio demo, into a series of suites has the effect of creating a brand

Three Piece Suite

SOULFOOD



The rollicking 12-bar shuffle at the end of *Why Not?* is a vivid example of why Wilson's sound mixes succeed.

new album. Despite hailing from three different years, such is Gentle Giant's consistency both in terms of compositional technique and the band's full-blooded presentation that there's no discernible unevenness between the tracks as they shift from one year to another. That degree of cohesiveness in music that is so technically demanding and complex suggests a band who knew what they were doing and where they wanted to go from the start.

With extras that include instrumental-only mixes that enable a fascinating degree of access to the mechanics and construction of the music, stunning flat transfers in 96/24 stereo of the original three albums and comprehensive

band interviews and liner notes by *Innerviews'* Anil Prasad, this is a nicely upholstered package. However, the real juice is found in the surround sound remix. There will be some who take the view that the original stereo mixes of these albums remain definitive. Yet during *Pantagruel's Nativity*, as Minnear's sweet voice is swathed in drifts of Mellotron and rich brass embellishments which are counterpointed by soured, descending harmonies assailing the listener from all sides, it feels as though the expansive vistas afforded by the 5.1 setting really is Gentle Giant's natural habitat. A particular beneficiary of Wilson's remix is Gary Green's stinging guitar, here given a vivacity that darts out from the speakers, especially during the Echoplexed circularities of *Peel The Paint*. The rollicking 12-bar shuffle at the end of *Why Not?*, with Kerry Minnear's heavy Hammond stabs at the front and Green's galloping blues licks bringing up the rear speakers, is a vivid example of why Wilson's surround sound mixes succeed.

Such positioning ramps up with excitement without being gratuitous or gimmicky. Even the extended and heavily phased solo drumming section of *Nothing At All*, as it sedately rolls around the array of speakers, feels not only proportionate but actually improves upon the original version. On *Schooldays*, when the intimate voice at the front is answered in the round, it subtly dramatises the storyteller's journey into the echoes of memory. Heard along with an on-screen montage of photographs of band members taken when they were schoolchildren, it's a surprisingly affecting combination and yet another example of the way in which the band have enthusiastically embraced the creative aspects of graphics and animation that are available in the Blu-ray or DVD format. Even in the divergent and innovative early 70s music scene, Gentle Giant were a band apart. Progressive rock's awkward squad has never sounded so vital, vibrant and still ahead of the game as they do here.



ENSLAVED

E NUCLEAR BLAST

A surprising, eclectic aural ravaging from this Viking horde.



It's always a good sign when an album opens with the sound of a Viking horn and a neighing horse. Enslaved's *E* is their 14th studio album and the first with Håkon Vinje, from Seven Impale, handling keyboards and clean vocals in place of Herbrand Larsen. The album's monosyllabic title is a reference to the Nordic rune Ehwaz, which literally means horse, but is used to connote cooperation and symbiosis. So now you know.



Songs to inspire men to pull harder on the oars of their longboat.



The music mines the same vein as 2012's *RIITIR* and *In Time* from 2015, with the notable exception of the unrestrained brutality of *Thurisaz Dreaming* from that record. The opening track *Storm Son* is a sweeping metal leviathan with pummelling drums courtesy of the apparently tireless Cato Bekkevold, although even the fastest, most aggressive sections here don't completely make the leap into the blastbeat territory of the band's 90s recordings. However heavy the music becomes, there's still an eye on maintaining a melody within the onslaught.

The River's Mouth shows off Vinje's fine voice, which sounds all the more pure and unsullied next to Grutle Kjellson's belligerent growling. There's an interest in exploring dynamics too, with the band dropping out to leave just a single guitar keeping the riff going for a moment before they come bludgeoning back in. There's always a temptation for bands this heavy to never take their foot off the accelerator, so even if it's not exactly nuanced, at least the drop-down gives the listener a moment's breathing room.

Sacred Horse gallops faster than Odin's eight-legged steed Sleipnir and features an awesome keyboard solo from Vinje, clearly having a blast channelling the spirit of Jon Lord. The song's long coda features pulsing drums accompanied by the sort of singing designed to inspire large, bearded men to pull harder on the oars of their longboat.

The guitar interplay between Ivar Bjørnson and Arve Isdal is a highlight of *Axis Of The Worlds*, and *Feathers Of Eolh* boasts odd time signatures aplenty. *Hiindiight* sees the band expanding their sonic palette with the aid of some special guests. The track begins with a post-metal, shoegaze feel thanks to a hypnotic, droning riff, then moves into sludgy doom territory, before alternating between solos led by saxophonist Kjetil Møster and Einar Kvitrafn Selvik from Wardruna, who sounds like he's playing a Norwegian lyre called a Talharpa.

It's impressive to hear how far Enslaved have travelled from their black metal origins and, based on the scope of their vision here, it'll be fascinating to see where they go next.

DAVID WEST

ARCANE ROOTS

Melancholia Hymns EASY LIFE

Alt-prog Londoners spread their creative wings.

The way Arcane Roots begin their second full-length album is telling, as they eschew an explosive 'here we are again' approach in favour of a slow-burning ambient squall that has more to do with My Bloody Valentine than Muse. When the song eventually bursts into melodic life, it reveals a band that have plainly grown in confidence. The Londoners' uncanny ability to straddle prog, alternative rock and tech metal remains intact throughout *Melancholia Hymns*, but this is a deeper and more measured record than its predecessor, full of elegant dynamic shifts, atmospheric charm and tunes that are as insidious as



they are off-kilter. Recent singles *Matter* and *Curtains* are both belters: full of urgency and glowering portent, their refined sense of drama and an underlying rush of hazy distortion adding a delicate sense of the other-worldly to what could have been more straightforward indie rock tunes. The finest moments – the beautiful *Indigo*, the grandeur of *Solemn* – are stunning and point to a fascinating future. Clearly thrilled by their own creative freedom, Arcane Roots are dispensing with any easy categories here, while making music that could easily make them superstars. Clever sods. **DL**

ASTRALASIA

Oceania FRUITS DE MER

Two-CD/blue vinyl set from the wizards of psychedelic electronica.

Listening to Astralasia makes you feel psychically pampered. These instrumental musings on the cycles of life and death are sound paintings of "a forgotten time, a land where love was the answer". Back in the day, Astralasia erred toward more generic psychedelic trance, with whumping beats, but on *Oceania* these rhythms are purveyed with a lighter touch, with what sounds like a sampled high tabla and other percussion, and waves of sound created by echoed guitar or sequenced keyboards. In this respect, their techno influences are backgrounded and the music is more reminiscent of Manuel



Göttsching's albums like *E2-E4*, or Rovo and System 7's *Phoenix Rising*. *AlooLand* starts with birdsong, a sunrise of electronics, electric piano picking out sparse notes, spuming synths and oscillating guitar, with all the instruments merging beautifully. There are some

jazzy sax and keyboard solos in places, and on the title track, Peter Pracownik wigs out on guitar before becoming inundated by a phased sea. *Time & Tide Eternal* closes, a 22-minute exploration with ticking percussion and flute lines in a hazy ambience of unidentifiable instruments, whooshing cymbals and looped and echoed voices. **MB**

BUTTONHEAD

Never Or Forget HORSE ARM

Capital madness to fill the Cardiacs void.

The much-celebrated eccentricity of the English has taken a PR battering of late, thanks to swivel-eyed politicians and their warped view of this nation's character. On their second album, Buttonhead offer a more acceptable demonstration of what happens when mad ideas are fully realised: this is art rock with a quirky, unhinged edge, and as English as chips (despite the band's Italian drummer, natch). The opening *Robocop Sunset* feels like eight songs playing at once, its twists and turns making a kind of skewed sense as the prettiest of melodies leak through the scattershot melee. *Call Me Steve* is



something else entirely: a delicate, pleading acoustic refrain that mutates into a thrilling rush of clangorous psych rock. Somehow, it's endearing and faintly unnerving. Both *Tungsten Trail* and *Invisible Children* bring more easily discernible tropes, with shades of

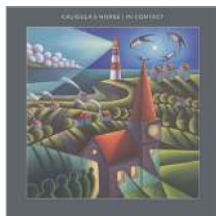
Cardiacs, Gentle Giant, Stereolab and even cult skronkers Blurt colliding. The spectres of Gong and Henry Cow are omnipresent too, but the combination of all these elements never sounds like a self-conscious throwback. Instead, Buttonhead are primarily concerned with spreading their own joy at how wild, weird and wonderful music can be. **DL**

CALIGULA'S HORSE

In Contact INSIDEOUT

Aussie prog metallers return with their strongest album yet.

This fourth full-length album from the Australian prog metallers provides a forceful reminder of how, when intelligently written and consummately performed, a genre that's often derided for recycled predictability still has the capacity to amaze. Part of the unquestionable appeal of Caligula's Horse is their ability to blend progressive moments with the directness of alternative rock, and there's also a maturity here that was sometimes lacking on their previous recordings. That ripening of their sound is striking on the likes of the slick *The Hands Are The Hardest* and *Fill My Heart*, the latter



drifting through segments of delightful bombast and acoustic tranquility. Indeed, it's that knack for fusing musical moods that makes *In Contact* such a compelling listen. The only black mark is the curious and unnecessary am-dram monologue *Inertia And The Weapon Of The*

Wall. The concept may well have been well-intentioned, but it's a needless excursion into self-indulgence. The album closes with the exhilarating *Graves*, which is more befitting of their growing legacy. Those who may have despaired that progressive metal had succumbed to regression will find solace in this, the band's finest album to date. **RW**

CHELSEA WOLFE

Hiss Spun SARGENT HOUSE

And out comes the Wolfe...

Darkness is Chelsea Wolfe's friend. The songwriter has long blended the gothic, electronic and industrial into impressive new forms. Early releases manifested this in unsettling folk tales, while 2015's fourth album, *Abyss*, impressed with its dynamic mastery. Fifth effort *Hiss Spun* takes things further, adding heavy credentials in the form of Queens Of The Stone Age's Troy Van Leeuwen on lead guitar and Kurt Ballou on desk duties. Fans of Russian Circles' aural monoliths may find themselves in familiar territory here (Wolfe appeared on 2013's *Memorial*), but there's diversity in the darkness. *The Culling*'s grazed



vocal proves just what spine-tingling power Wolfe has when she shirks her default whisper, and Vex seems to utilise a guitar raised by a family of rusting church organs. *Twin Fawn* offers respite, exploring quieter spaces. Wolfe's wispy echo trembles across

a reverberating bass, before the most vicious left-turn on the record wipes it out with swift, astonishing violence. Wolfe's aesthetic approach has always impressed, but she's gaining confidence with each step. If *Abyss* was an exploration of the musical depths, *Hiss Spun* is a conquering of the space – the sound of an artist bending metal to their will. **MP**

FOR ALL WE KNOW

Take Me Home FORALLWEKNOWMUSIC.BANDCAMP.COM

Within Temptation guitarist shows his melodic side.

Let's get one thing straight: *Take Me Home* sounds nothing like Within Temptation. It is, however, a cohesive collection of 12 uplifting and melodic prog rock tunes with hints of Von Hertzen Brothers and Headspace. Despite a hectic touring schedule, Ruud Jolie not only found the time to record a follow-up to his side project's 2011 self-titled debut, but he even roped in members of Pain Of Salvation and Ayreon collaborators to help. Gone are the symphonic flourishes from the debut and in their place are sun-baked vocal harmonies and irregular time signatures, all set against a feel-good atmosphere.



There are hints of Jellyfish in *The Big Wheel*'s swirly chorus, *Prophets In Disguise* proffers a glimpse of FAWK's heavier side, and Anneke van Giersbergen lends her distinctive tones to the radio-friendly *We Are The Light*. There are, however, a few moments

where the album sounds a bit too 'nice' – for example, *Breathe In* could be the soundtrack to a car commercial – but fortunately there are standout tracks like the punchy *Colours*, which shows off the project's diversity within a four-minute window. *Take Me Home* isn't the most groundbreaking release of this year, but it has some sparkling moments. **NRS**

GIZMODROME

Gizmodrome EARMUSIC

Four famous friends in a frantic, fun fandango.



Gizmodrome is the first release by a four-piece who between them have already worked on dozens of albums. They're a good old-fashioned supergroup, comprising Police drummer and soundtrack composer Stewart Copeland; Level 42's slap-bassist extraordinaire Mark King; Adrian Belew, the guitar star of records by King Crimson, David Bowie, Frank Zappa and Talking Heads; and keyboard whizz Vittorio Cosma of Italian prog legends PFM.

A collision of opposites that more often than not works.

If this sounds like an opportunity for a whole lot of instrument twiddling, well, that's exactly what Gizmodrome is. They could easily have done it the modern way and swapped sound files, without once meeting. Instead, they did what musicians love to do: they got together to jam. Copeland and Cosma had collaborated before, but it was when they were joined by Belew and King in a Milan recording studio that Gizmodrome took shape.

You can imagine the jostling for position that took place. In a room full of egos, Copeland immediately appears to have emerged as the dominant force: his drumming is to the fore throughout, and he assumes the role of lead singer. His voice is an obdurate instrument that resembles the monotone intoning of a Zappa, although it's nicely balanced out by King and Belew's more melodic vocal backup.

Really, though, nobody is left hanging about here for long, and all four musicians get to enjoy plenty of performance time. It's less a seamless fusion than a collision of opposites, which more often than not works. Gizmodrome showcases four musicians from disparate genres (pop, jazz funk, rock, prog) creating a listenable melee out of their individual virtuoso contributions.

Opener *Zombies In The Mall* is typical: it sounds like The Police at their rockiest and Level 42 at their jazz-funkiest, with Belew and Cosma respectively splashing guitar and keyboards, Pollock-style, on top. On *Stay Ready* and *Man In The Mountain*, Copeland's nasal narrations have satirical intent, although it's not clear what the targets are.

Summer's Coming is, Copeland has explained, about dispensing with "virtuous serenity" and embracing depravity, a bacchanalian romp that captures the protagonist in the throes of a midlife crisis. *Sweet Angels* is prog funky, *Strange Things Happen* a reggae skank. Name a genre, they tackle it.

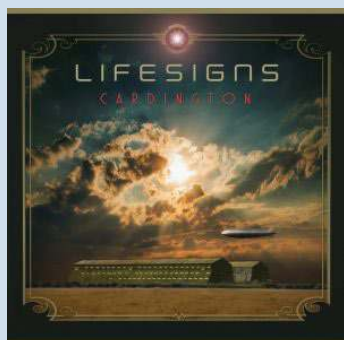
I Know Too Much is like being barracked at a dinner party by a conspiracy theorist, but that was probably the intention. Instrumental closer *Stark Naked* has a pleasing suppleness and invention, the players allowed space to noodle, making it a superb end to a fine album. Welcome to the Gizmodrome.

PAUL LESTER

LIFESIGNS

Cardington WWW.LIFESIGNS.ME

The UK proggers' second proves the sky's the limit.



Lifesigns' vocalist/keyboardist John Young might not be a household name, but his musical CV (including time with John Wetton, Jon Anderson writing sessions, tours with Asia and a stint with The Strawbs) is indicative of the standard expected as a member of this collective. So while it may have taken four years to follow up on their well-received debut, when this group of career musicians turned their minds back to this passion project, it happened quickly. Fan-funded via Pledge Music, the group hit their target in 48 hours, and that sense of momentum is palpable throughout *Cardington*.

It's a story of colossal scope, capturing the ambition of the age.

The great irony of neo-prog is that much of it sounds tired – light on both the new and the progressive. Lifesigns neatly sidestep this issue by channelling elements of AOR and soft rock into an album inspired variously by reflections on culture, creativity and, of course, the rise and fall of British dirigible manufacturing.

The latter manifests itself on title track *Cardington*, a potted history of the UK aviation facility, which finds an Icarus-like metaphor in the British government's attempts to construct the world's most advanced airship, the R101 – a project that ultimately resulted in tragedy and the deaths of 48 people after it crashed on its maiden voyage. It's a story of colossal scope, ably translated into an 11-minute journey that captures the excitement and ambition of the age, the vast spaciousness of the heavens and, in its darker moments, the tragic hubris of this Titanic-esque tale.

Some of the heavier lyrical touches risk undermining this grandiose scheme – 'the onset of dirigibles' should have failed the scan test, for example – but it succeeds where its inspiration failed, delivering on the vision, from the appropriately breezy elegance in Dave Bainbridge and Menno Gootjes's ascending electric leads to the airy harmony vocals of the song's closing stages.

It's an album stuffed with talent. Bainbridge in particular crops up a lot on this record's finest moments, so it's welcome news that he's set to tour with the band. Elsewhere, ex-Cardiacs/Wildhearts man Jon Poole, drafted in to replace bassist Nick Beggs, brings a most welcome spiky texture to these indulgent proceedings. His spaghetti lines on anti-*X Factor* rant *Touch* build in grunt throughout offering a counterfoil to Young's quick-fingered keys solo and forming one of the record's most powerful moments.

The evidence that this prog-based passion play may yet become the day job for Young and co is therefore mounting. *Cardington* could prove the tipping point.

MATT PARKER

JOHN HACKETT BAND

We Are Not Alone CHERRY RED

Flautist's second full-band outing, plus live extras.

With a surname like his, it was no wonder John Hackett took a while to emerge from under the shadow of his older brother. The flute maestro and accomplished guitarist spent many years as a successful session man and a regular guest on his brother's solo albums, often collaborating with other acolytes of Hackett Sr. However, it wasn't until 2005, at the age of 50, that John Hackett released his first solo album proper. But the band he's put together over the past couple of years, featuring classical guitar specialist Nick Fletcher and a rhythm section of Jeremy Richardson and Duncan Parsons,



suggests his midlife creative renaissance has gathered pace since then. As on the JHB's 2015 debut, *Another Life*, the main man's flute, perhaps surprisingly, is quite a low-profile element of his sound, with soaring, jazz-inflected guitar licks taking centre stage on *Perfect Day* and *Castles*. But when that flute does come to the fore, it really stamps a strong identity on the central riff of *Take Control*, and adds an intoxicating atmosphere to *Winds Of Change*. And big brother Steve? His sole contribution is some harmonica work on *Never Gonna Make A Dime*. The family name is being well-served regardless. **JS**

HIMMELLEGE

Myth Of Earth KARISMA

Dark magic from the frozen North.

Is there some unidentified mind-expanding substance in the fjords of Norway? The country seems to be an incubator for a new generation of genre-blending progressive bands – Shaman Elephant, Motorpsycho, the Hedwig Mollestad Trio, and now Himmellege. The group's approach pulls in psychedelia, blues, prog and post-rock to create a massive, musical black hole. Aleksander Vormestrand, who sings in Norwegian, has a high, clear voice full of unfulfilled yearning, akin to Thom Yorke when Radiohead still cared about melodies, matched by the soaring lead guitar of Hein Alexander Olson. The surging title



track is a showcase for the band's instincts for drama and dynamics. *Breath In The Air Like Fire* envelops the listener in swirling currents, while *Kys Mine Blodige Hender* (*Kiss My Bloody Hands* in English) grows from its subdued start into a psychedelic blues

behemoth. The epic *Fallvind* begins with a simple piano line but comes untethered in the midsection to be swept up like Dorothy leaving Kansas. *Myth Of Earth* is the soundtrack to a northern winter, drenched in the melancholy of months of darkness, buffeted by the winds, but with the resurgent power of spring lurking just beneath the surface. Enthralling. **DW**

KAIPA

Children Of The Sounds INSIDEOUT

Feel-good vintage vibes from Lundin and co.

The passing of time and changing personnel have done nothing to take the wind out of the sails of Swedish veterans Kaipa. Keyboardist Hans Lundin is the only member left from their 70s incarnation, but they're not afraid of exploring different sides of prog's heritage, even as their sound remains rooted in the genre's golden era. Where 2012's *Vittjar* leaned towards their folk proclivities, both 2014's *Sattys* and now *Children Of The Sounds* drink heavily from the cup of Yes, with classical allusions, epic songs – the shortest one here is almost seven minutes, the longest over 17 – and marvellously detailed



compositions. Perhaps the shift away from pastoral fields reflects the influence of Per Nilsson, whose guitar work throughout is fluid, articulate and always melodic. When vocalists Patrik Lundström and Aleena Gibson blend their voices in harmony on the title track,

you could be forgiven for thinking it's Jon Anderson. On *The Edge Of New Horizons* sees Karmakanic drummer Morgan Ågren dusting off his best Bill Bruford licks with his jazzy cymbal work, and the whole album has an upbeat energy that suggests it was recorded with sunshine streaming through the studio windows. This is proper prog and no mistake. **DW**

KOYO

Koyo 88 WATT

MBV-flavoured dreamscapes invariably headed for a headrush.

Allying an engaging and accessible neo-prog dynamism with mellifluous vocal clarity and an ambitiously cinematic strain of string-driven soundscapes more readily associated with My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields, Leeds quintet Koyo have identified a unique niche for themselves on this, their eagerly awaited eponymous debut. Born of extensive and spontaneous live improvisations, Koyo's core material could easily have lost much in translation, but like Floyd before them, the band edit assiduously for the studio yet retain the sonic spectacle of their finest, most inspired performance. Against a vocal



so louche as to make even Thom Yorke seem raw-throated and raucous, *Ray Of Sunshine* stretches toward a crescendo that could easily occasion spontaneous levitation in the listener. There are moments of breath-catching

Flaming Lips respite, *What Is Mine* whips out a post-coital acoustic, but it's the broad canvases that are the true crowd-pleasers, and *Tetrachromat (Parts 1 & 2)* fits the bill as only a song with such a title could. *Part 1* eases the already punch drunk earwitness into *Part 2*'s prolonged, psych-bordering coda that spirals all concerned ever-closer to ultimate oblivion. Verdict? Job done. **IF**

LARAAJI

Bring On The Sun / Sun Gong ALL SAINTS

Ambient maverick's two-album sunny delight.

Most people probably only know Edward Larry Gordon's music through his 1980, Brian Eno-produced *Day Of Radiance*. Yet subsequent releases have proved an invaluable exploration of a fascinating sonic space that serenely floats between ambient, new age, electronic and world music. *Bring On The Sun* is initially familiar - wind chimes discretely shimmering in the background while luxuriant ripples of gently hammered zither ride off on plangent waves of echo. However, the album opens out into contrasting but thoroughly cohesive pieces that variously place harmonica, acoustic guitar and



cavernous church organ in the foreground. The autobiographical spoken narrative on *Reborn In Virginia*, evoking Gordon's early-1950s childhood in the backwoods, is suffused in sitar drones and ambling percussion, and it's both beautiful and powerful.

Sun Gong occupies more familiar Larraaji territory, containing two drone-style pieces garnered from close-mic'd overtones emanating from a gong which is made to bloom into swaying, harmonic clusters. The inclusion of a simple falsetto vocal melody toward the end of each piece brings an uplifting transcendence that's simply a joy to hear. **SS**

MAGIC BUS

Phillip The Egg BACK TO THE GARDEN

Devonian deviance with a Canterbury core.

There's always a slight danger that echoes of the psychedelic past will sound more like The Rutles' *Cheese And Onions* than *See Emily Play*. No such mishaps befall Magic Bus on their third full-length: in fact, this is an object lesson in getting everything exactly right. Opening epic *Mystical Mountain* is a nine-minute marvel that starts like a skewed reimagining of Caravan's *Golf Girl* before drifting into hazier pastures with wellsprings of flute, Moog, Mellotron and an assortment of other glittering delights underpinning the song's gently melancholic saunter. The blissful piano interlude that leads into the song's



Hammond-sodden, angular, proto metal denouement is a spellbinding touch. Fans of Gorky's Zygotic Mynci and Super Furry Animals will clock the dewy-eyed love of the Canterbury set (and the first Soft Machine album in particular) throughout, but there's nothing contrived

about these songs. At their most succinct, on the sparky *Fading Light* and lysergic miniature *Kalamazoo*, the Totnes sextet exhibit a lightness of touch that goes some way to explaining how *Phillip The Egg* may soon be regarded alongside the records that inspired it, rather than as some earnest imitation. All aboard for a genuinely magical mystery tour. **DL**

JAZZ PROG

Sid Smith rounds up the best releases from prog's jazzier reaches.



Best known for his prog-orientated suite *Kaleidoscope Of Rainbows*, Neil Ardley's *On The Radio*:

BBC Sessions 1971 (Dusk Fire) contains previously unreleased recordings, with Ardley conducting the crème de la crème of the British jazz scene, including members of Colosseum, Nucleus and Greenslade. His luscious, brass-heavy orchestrations lend an insistent fire to a sequence of animated pieces that include Jack Bruce's lilting, Mingus-style fantasia, *The Immortal Ninth*.

As welcome as it all is, perhaps the real prize here is *The Time Flowers*. A superb 29-minute electro-acoustic suite with a string orchestra and Keith Winter's synth, it originally accompanied a radio adaptation of a JG Ballard short story. Traversing a lyrical romanticism, unsettling scored tonalities and improvising jazzers, it's a setting that reveals the scope of Ardley's grander, eclectic ambition to great effect.

A stellar international cast that includes Hedvig Mollestad, David Torn, Jim O'Rourke, Motorpsycho's Snah, Bill Frisell and others feature on *Sky Music: A Tribute To Terje Rypdal* (Rune Grammofon). They provide a scorching set whose passionate, emotional peaks frequently match those for which the Norwegian maestro of melancholia, now approaching his 70s, is rightly hailed. Startling

arrangements of Rypdal's tunes provide the canvas for vivid, saturated colours, nimble, expressive swirls, euphoric patterns and potent exchanges between the ensemble.

Another Norwegian guitarist, Stein Urheim, releases *Utopian Tales* (Hubro). It's filled with sinuous, sometimes sensual tunes that trickle and shimmer through misty, windblown landscapes. The slow, lonesome peal of slide guitar adds a yearning dolorousness to the bubbling, kinetic vibe created by an ensemble that contains exotic synth, brass and woodwind; rolling, whip-cracking beats; and wispy vocals whose moods drift between trippy, electric Miles and the intuitive sparks of early Weather Report. A gorgeous soundtrack for the widescreen pictures in your mind.

French Canadian outfit Miriodor's *Signal 9* (Cuneiform) might loosely fit under the RIO banner, but there's far more to them than that. The terse intricacies associated with that genre are present for sure, but at times their refracted, dissonant melodies and abrupt contrasts in time and instrumental texture sound like This Heat covering Captain Beefheart. Bracing and engrossing.

Orion Tango's second album, *The Apple Of No* (1k Recordings) operates in the same quadrant of telepathic rock-based improvisation that King Crimson and Can explored so expertly in the 70s. This is no backward-looking knock-off though. Tim Motzer's elasticated guitar playing works with a super tight, empathetic rhythm section through four full-on suites bristling with ecstatic interplay. Their capacity to quickly sift through abstract layers to suddenly hurtle into cathartic release over quick-fire grooves makes this album a thing of wonder.





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JOHN MCLAUGHLIN & THE 4TH DIMENSION

Live @ Ronnie Scott's ABSTRACT LOGIX

Back in his old stomping ground, from earlier this year.

Live @ Ronnie Scott's sees John McLaughlin back in the London club where he played in the house band in the 1960s. Recorded in March 2017, the song selections come from opposing ends of McLaughlin's career, drawn mainly from the first two Mahavishnu Orchestra albums and 2015's *Black Light*. McLaughlin plays with a propulsive energy that puts guitarists half his age to shame. *Miles Beyond* starts out gently restrained with Etienne M'Bappé taking the bassline out for a walk, but McLaughlin's solo injects the track with a shot of adrenaline. *Here Comes The Jis* is



a kaleidoscope of colours and moods. From a sinuous opening, it builds up with funky slap bass from M'Bappé, a rousing drum solo from Ranjit Barot, and a typically explosive burst of speed from the bandleader. McLaughlin puts a fusion spin on the blues in *New Blues Old Bruise*, and the trippy *Sanctuary* sounds as spaced out now as it did in 1973. *Vital Transformation* is all syncopated beats and writhing melodic lines that refuse to hold still and *Echoes From Then* is a freaky R&B jam that goes where other songs fear to tread. Six decades on, McLaughlin's musical homecoming is cause for celebration. **DW**

MOGADOR

Chaptersend MENTALCHEMY

Busy-ness as usual from the Italian group, with Jon Davison guesting.

Album four from Italy's Mogador shows the band continuing to expand their musical ambitions, although at times their reach exceeds their grasp. The group was founded by drummer Richard Allen and his stamp is very prominent, with his drums excessively high in the mix on several songs – he's positively distracting on *Summer Sun*. The rockier numbers have a tendency towards arrangements where everyone pulls in different directions, most noticeably keys player Samuele Dotti, and it's the gentler songs, like the acoustic *Tell Me Smiling Child* and the jazzy lounge vibe of *Breaking Day*, that



stand out. Yes! Jon Davison makes a guest appearance on *Josephine's Regrets*, while the rest of the singing is split between Allen and Marco Terzaghi. Neither has a particularly rich voice – *The Salamander* really suffers on that front – and there's an unfortunate tendency to wander off-key. The powerful instrumental *Floating In The Void* highlights the interplay between the players, with Luca Briccola doubling up on flute and guitar, before the album concludes with the two-part *Mammon's Greed*, which nods towards Yes, Gentle Giant and Big Big Train. A lot of good ideas, but they don't always coalesce. **DW**

MY TRICKSY SPIRIT

My Tricky Spirit BAD ELEPHANT

Knifeworld-affiliated psychedelic gamelan trip hop lives!

My Tricky Spirit hark back to that time in the 90s when trip hop and The Orb provided a stoner escape pod from the harsh world outside, with all manner of cosmic sounds hatching out of further collisions between dub reggae and world music. The band was formed around the shimmering tones of south east Asian music lecturer Nick Gray's gender wayang (a little group of bronze metallophones, used in Bali to accompany the shadow play). Their ever-present spectral entity is bolstered by a panorama of textures provided by the string-driven arsenal of Charlie Cawood (Knifeworld, Mediaeval Babes) and multi-instrumentalist Rob



Shipster, while *Always With You* and *Winter Story* feature the soulful vocals of Roxanne Ainsthorpe. The album is comprised of only five long tracks that usually begin with Gray's luminescent globule rattling before someone uncorks a bassline carrying the fathomless ambience of a passing blue whale's scrotum (adding to several similarities with Jah Wobble's world music dubsapes). Then it's into the main body of the track before a lengthy Orb-style coda as the hallucinogenics taper off. As purveyors of intensely human psychedelic alchemy in an age of machines, My Tricky Spirit deserve a bong of your time. **KN**

LUNATIC SOUL

Fractured KSCOPE

Mariusz Duda's solo project peers into a very personal abyss.



In between making the last four four albums with Riverside, Mariusz Duda has been even busier with his less rock-oriented solo project Lunatic Soul, and this fifth album in nine years would appear to be a welcome distraction from the band that made his reputation, given recent events.

The theme is of yearning for release through music, intoxication or romantic validation.

Fractured is said to be inspired by "coming back to life after a personal tragedy". We're bound to presume that this is a reference to the sudden death of Duda's Riverside bandmate Piotr Grudziński last year, but perhaps things aren't quite that simple, as there seems to be a broader internal turmoil informing the introspective, melancholy mood of this record.

Either way, a more accessible blend of sounds dominates these 55 minutes, compared to the ambient, electronica-influenced diversions of 2014's *Walking On A Flashlight Beam*. *Anymore* has a beautifully plaintive, Talk Talk-ish vibe as Duda pleads, 'You don't talk to me any more,' over a brooding synthscape and some Annie Lennox-like yelps of emotional frustration. *Blood On The Tightrope* seems to deal more with our desire to shut out trauma and survive via fruitless attempts to avoid our darkest thoughts, but its neurotic polyrhythms place us back in more obviously prog territory.

Then more ambiguous shadows fall over proceedings. The acoustic lament that opens *Crumbling Teeth And The Owl Eyes* sees the protagonist wishing he could channel his sleeping child's innocent bliss. But there are hints of something more menacing, as he voices a need to 'steal a part of your childish innocence', which could be taken either as a desperate clinging to a source of happiness or something much, much darker. The desperate breaths and drowning gasps for air that dominate the vocal in the latter part of the song add an extra edge of claustrophobic panic to the piece, and the accompaniment of the Sinfonietta Consonus Orchestra enhances the palpable atmosphere considerably.

Red Light Escape's whispering, nervous vocal delivery, interspersed with fragile, emotive crooning, centres around another skin-crawling arpeggio motif that seems to be echoed in the mostly instrumental title track that follows it. But the overriding theme is cemented within – one of feeling imprisoned by your own emotions and yearning for release, whether through music, intoxication or romantic validation.

We can only hope the creation of this album has aided Duda's healing process and provided some of the catharsis he refers to. That's the least he deserves to take from music, considering the pleasure he gives his listening public.

JOHNNY SHARP

MOTORPSYCHO

The Tower RUNE GRAMMOFON

Norwegian legends rediscover their mojo with expansive double album.



For over 25 years, Motorpsycho have constantly pushed at the limits of what's possible within the rock format, becoming a prog band almost by default as their songs have got longer and more exploratory. Starting with 2008's *Little Lucid Moments*, they've gone through a remarkable purple patch over the past decade, producing an album practically every year while also finding time to soundtrack a series of theatre productions.

A major work in every sense, expansive but consistently excellent.

Not everything's been plain sailing, though. Last year's *Here Be Monsters* got some of the best notices of their career, but it was a surprisingly introspective album, its languid Floydian vibe sometimes tipping over into enervation and burnout. Then Kenneth Kapstad, the band's drummer for the last 10 years, announced his departure, leaving Motorpsycho's founding duo of Bent Sæther and Hans Magnus Ryan to regroup and plan their next move.

And what a move it is. *The Tower* is a major work in every sense, an expansive but consistently excellent double album, and nothing less than a creative rebirth. After all these years, it's quite astonishing how Motorpsycho are able to produce such quality material while still finding new angles on their core sound, something that speaks volumes about their sheer focus and commitment to the band ethos. In particular, new drummer Tomas Järmyr seems to have relit the fire in Motorpsycho's belly, with many of the songs here rocking harder than the band have done for some time, yet never just resorting to empty bombast.

The opening title track perfectly captures the album's mood and its overwhelming sense of ambition, the dreamy fairground Mellotron intro leading into a classic three-part Motorpsycho riff that ripples with majestic power. Sæther and Ryan's Jon Anderson-esque harmony vocals are also present and correct — in fact, there's a number of times on the album where Motorpsycho resemble Yes minus the pseudo-classical pretensions, plus a dash of early King Crimson.

The driving *Bartok Of The Universe* is even more dramatic, a cosmic battle hymn that hints at the baroque metal of prime-time Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. And then *A.S.F.E.* pushes even harder on the accelerator, fighting for the right to party at the end of the world. Of course, it's not all breathless propulsion — *Stardust* and the epic *A Pacific Sonata* showcase the band's mellower, more reflective side, evoking summer evenings spent in the land of the midnight sun. But closing track *Ship Of Fools* returns to the widescreen art rock sound that defines *The Tower*, another big riff that passes through light and shadow before stretching off to the horizon.

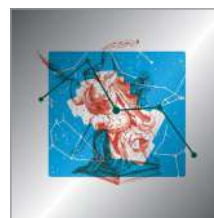
JOE BANKS

HANNAH PEEL

Mary Casio: Journey To Cassiopeia MY OWN PLEASURE

A synth odyssey, with added brass.

If Mary Casio: *Journey To Cassiopeia* sounds like a bizarre collision between an analogue synth wizard and a brass band, that's because it is. The third album from electronic musician Hannah Peel (a member of The Magnetic North, and sometime collaborator of John Foxx) is a seven-movement piece composed for analogue synthesisers and 29-piece colliery brass band. It recounts the journey of an elderly stargazer, the titular Mary Casio, from her home in Barnsley to the star constellation of Cassiopeia. The results are affecting and poignant, Peel creating a tension between Earth and space, and a sense



of longing for home. It's like the *Kes* soundtrack meets Yes, or a team-up between The Flaming Lips and The Brighthouse And Rastrick Band. It starts with the swirling arpeggios of *Goodbye Earth*, moves through the rousing fanfare of *Sunrise Through The*

Dusty Nebula, continues with the brass parps and synth whorls of *Deep Space Cluster*, and reaches an emotional peak on the ominous *Andromeda M31* and majestic *Life Is On The Horizon*. Finally, there's *Archid Orange Dwarf* and *The Planet Of Passed Souls*, the album assuming the tenor of a parable about the journey from life to death. **PL**

PSION

Psion ILLUSIONARY

Promising debut release from ex-Haken member.

Initially attracting attention for the presence of ex-Haken bassist Tom McClean, this EP represents the long-awaited first studio output from Psion. For all its fun, atmospheric bombast, the opener *Entranced* nearly outstays its welcome. It's refreshing in a sense to hear musicians so unafraid to front-load a release with something this self-indulgent, but the snappier movie trailer-like first minute and a half would have served just as well as a tongue-in-cheek intro. Luckily for them, they come out swinging on second track *Void*, the first of three nearly 10-minute songs that make up the rest of the EP. Vocalist Bryan



Ramage seems initially to be a pure classic rock frontman, but when weirder rhythm parts materialise, there's a welcome Devin Townsend influence to his hooks. On the sprawling closer *Tyranny*, the band channel Dream Theater and flirt with the gallop of death metal, but for the most

part stay within the groovier rhythms of mainstream progressive metal — there's more chugging and headbanging than you can shake a stick at. Instrumentally, the members are no slackers, but Nik Wolfe's lead guitar parts deserve extra credit for being technical without being over the top, or losing the grasp of what an appropriate lead melody might be. **AL**

RE-TROS

Before The Applause MODERN SKY UK

Heroes of Chinese underground ready for global acclaim.

This is the first British release from the Beijing-based group who formed in 2003 and were described by John Lydon as his favourite "new" band. Re-TROS (Rebuilding The Rights Of Statues) cite as influences Bauhaus, Joy Division, Television, Pere Ubu, Battles, Liars and Futureheads: post-punk outfits and latter-day proponents of the same. Actually, they can sound like hardcore synth punks, with a heavy techno/trance element, their music hitting with brute force, using insistence and repetition to mesmeric effect. But there's an Eno-esque intelligence too. Indeed, the brainy



one contributed guest keyboards to their 2005 debut *Cut Off!* EP. Produced by Hector Castillo, *Before The Applause* is experimental but embraceable, even danceable, especially the nine-minute analogue assault of *Hailing Drums*, *At Mosp Here's* 12 minutes of

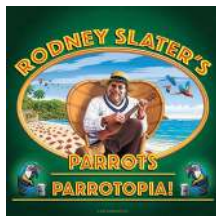
prog-disco delirium, and the pulsating *8 + 2 + 8 I* and companion track *8 + 2 + 8 II*, which comprise 15 minutes of cataclysmic clapping and Huang Jin's Teutonic drumming. Frontman Hua Dong tends to 'sing' in an absurdist gruff monotone à la Yello's Dieter Meier, but it's offset by female bassist Liu Min's blankly pretty counterpoint. Riveting. **PL**

RODNEY SLATER'S PARROTS

Parrotopia! GUILTY DOG

A musical journey through a psittacine Arcadia with the former Bonzo sax man.

Rodney Slater was a founder member of the Bonzos back in 1962. His fame was underlined by the song *Mister Slater's Parrot* on their 1969 album *Keynsham*. Now, an admitted late developer, he has assembled his first solo album at the age of 75, playing saxes and clarinets, with Michael Livesley on a variety of instruments, former Rutle Admiral John Halsey on drums, and Mekon Susie Honeyman on violin. Slater mixes up the boisterous end of Dixieland jazz that the Bonzos so lovingly pastiched with piano ballads and R&B settings - *Shed!* quotes Heatwave's *Boogie Nights* - with humorous dialogue



and recitations over quaint chamber backing, similar to that used by Vivian Stanhall on his *Sir Henry At Rawlinson End* playlets. With its cast of satisfyingly grotesque and absurd characters, this is a hugely enjoyable late addition to that canon. Slater also laments pubs closing down and sings the praises of 20-stone early 20th-century goalkeeper William Foulke on *Fatty*, while describing Trump - 'The big blond yeti makes my palms sweaty' - over the belting ska tune *One Step Behind*. The tone is nicely lowered with a detailed recipe and nostril-flaring gaseous sound effects on *Sprout Curry*. A small portion for me, thanks. **MB**

SPARKS

Hippopotamus BMG

Likeable, hook-laden return from the Mael Brothers.

Of late, Russell and Ron Mael have hooked up with arty indie rockers Franz Ferdinand in the supergroup FFS, while their last album as Sparks, 2009's *The Seduction Of Ingmar Bergman*, was a weird, convincing, long-form concept piece. They're back in more accessible mode on their 25th record, and are on typically catchy, camp and funny form (*Missionary Position*, *Edith Piaf Said It Better Than Me*, *What The Hell Is It This Time?*). There's a fuzz-guitar psych twist to *Unaware*, the urgent *Bummer* has a deceptively complicated vocal arrangement, and the brothers are at their most delicately waspish on



I Wish You Were Fun. Across a substantial 15-track album, Russell's unmistakable voice straddles the opera house and the music hall, while Ron's pianism remains subtly world-class. Sparks' quirkiness is great, but can also grate: the hip-hop flavoured *Giddy Giddy* is silly silly, *Scandinavian Furniture* outlives its welcome, and *When You're A French Director* is a whimsical waltz too far. But it's nice to know there's a corner of the musical world where it's fine to rhyme 'hippopotamus' with 'painting by Hieronymus', or to write a brilliant song then christen it *So Tell Me Mrs Lincoln Aside From That How Was The Play*. **GRM**

THE CONTORTIONIST

Clairvoyant SPV

The crystal ball reveals a bright future for the US proggers.

The Contortionist have always aspired to something grander than being just another progressive metal band, and on *Clairvoyant* there's an eclecticism and wariness about scene clichés that will resonate with fans of the genre looking for a break from the norm. Though they're primarily known for their tours with so-called 'djent' progressive metal bands like Tesseract and Periphery, there's barely a djent in sight here. In fact, as on the sweeping climax of *Return To Earth* or the Deftones-like crescendo of *Relapse*, much of the riffing is atmospheric metal that has more in common with post-metal



than tech metal. There's even a pretty substantial flirt with shoegaze on the title track, although those sorts of guitar textures have been creeping into a lot of progressive metal over the last few years. Combined with some gauzy synth textures, the feel is almost that of early-2000s Porcupine Tree. Indeed, on *The Center*, there's a strong *Deadwing* vibe to the track. While it's perhaps not the most revelatory album you'll hear this year, *Clairvoyant* is the sound of The Contortionist realising their ambition far more clearly than ever before, and the result is a record with scarcely a bad song on it. **AL**



ART ROCK

Chris Roberts samples the new releases on the prog/rock boundary.

Three years since third album *Lost In The Dream* took them from nowhere (well, Philadelphia) to being so critically acclaimed that there was a backlash,

The War On Drugs return with *A Deeper Understanding* (Atlantic). Adam Granduciel emphasises that it's more of a band record, but its magic still emanates from his unique sense of feel. Few warp genres so brilliantly. Those who hear Krautrock or psychedelia in this music are right, yet so are those hearing Springsteen/Petty/Seger/Knopfler. That shouldn't make sense, but the best sounds rarely do.

Laced with synth ripples and blistering guitar solos, these dreamy, chugging, surging songs effortlessly express torrents of emotions. As switch-to-major-label follow-ups go, this is a classic. They're winning.

Also wobbling back to happiness are **Blancmange**, whose classic 80s electropop albums were recently reissued

and who, since resurrecting, have stealthily reclaimed ground. Proof of the pudding emerges in *Unfurnished Rooms* (Blanc Check), which throbs from sweet to sinister, Neil Arthur telling blackly comic *Twilight Zone* tales over analogue synths and juicy guitars, some from David Rhodes.

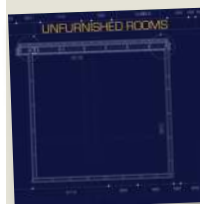
What's The Time matches anything Talking Heads ever did, while John Grant guests on the eight-minute *Don't Get Me Wrong*.

It's co-produced by Bengie, who is also the fantastic Mr Foxx's partner in **John Foxx & The Maths**. They welcome us to *The Machine* (Metamatic), their dark, eerie soundtrack to a stage production of EM Forster's sci-fi story. Nobody does creeping dystopia better. When they break loose (by their careful standards) on *Transworld Travelogue*, there's a wave of jailbreak euphoria.

John Sinclair is someone who knows something about jail, the 75-year-old jazz poet having served time for marijuana possession after a 1960s spent managing MC5 and founding the White Panther party. His sage spoken words now dress the music and production of the ubiquitous Youth on *Beatnik Youth* (Iron Man). Hypnotic ambient noodles and Sinclair's guile and growl make this a renegade masterclass.

The alchemy of **Wand** is hard to pinpoint. *Plum* (Drag City), the fourth album from the Los Angeles trio turned quintet, sees them embrace their expansion, venturing away from their previous spacey rock. The offbeat title track and *Charles De Gaulle* try on art pop, even yacht rock. Not everything sparkles here, but when it does, it's peachy.

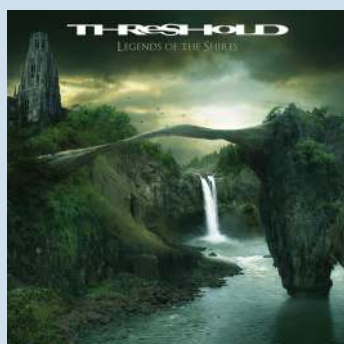
Decades (Diteli), a new album from **David Palfreyman And Nicholas Pegg**, is a true progressive rock curio, being a double concept album split into four acts, wherein the former's songs, performed by Sarah Jane Morris and others, are linked by the latter's narrative, which is recited by actors such as David Warner and Richard Coyle. A meditation on time and memory, its ambition is simply colossal.



THRESHOLD

Legends Of The Shires NUCLEAR BLAST

British prog metallers get over Damian Wilson split in style.



It all went a bit soap opera in the Threshold camp earlier this year. The prog metallers unceremoniously dumped singer Damian Wilson after his third stint in the group as they chose to “start a new chapter without him”. But the singer quickly catapulted a retort back, saying the decision wasn’t mutual. “This was really unexpected. The only contact I’ve had with Threshold these last few months has been via email,” he told *Prog* in March.

There’s more leeway here: harmony, acoustics and grandeur are as important as the riffs.

This type of intra-band squabbling happens all the time, but when it’s a group who have released 10 albums, and a classy singer who has worked with Headspace and Ayreon and once came close to joining Iron Maiden, it’s a big deal.

It was easy to forget about the music amid all the drama, but yes, Threshold have a new album, *Legends Of The Shires*, and yes, it is rather good. Filling Wilson’s rather voluminous boots is former vocalist Glynn Morgan, who was a member of the band for a couple of years in the mid-90s.

Threshold signed to Nuclear Blast over a decade ago and their output since has suited the label’s heavy-leaning ethos, but album number 11, *Legends Of The Shires*, sees the Brits turn up the prog dial a little more. It’s an 83-minute double concept record, with two tracks surpassing that hallowed 10-minute mark, and there’s a little more leeway with the music — harmony, acoustic passages and grandeur are as important as the riffs. And no, the record is nothing to do with *Lord Of The Rings*.

It’s still heavy though, with the metal meets melody sound nodding at times to their label comrades Symphony X. Morgan slots back into the fold nicely too, with his sweeping vocals enjoying a slightly more gruff payoff than Wilson’s operatic style.

Get past some of the more corny, fist-clenching moments, like the chorus to *Small Dark Lines* and some slightly dubious lyrics (*‘I just can’t wait any longer/my heart won’t beat any stronger’*) then there’s plenty to tuck into. *The Man Who Saw Through Time* is a superb salvo reaching nearly 12 minutes, with an absorbing intro metamorphosing into a full-blown prog metal romp, guitar and keyboard in unison, ricocheting around.

It’s sonically pinpoint sharp too, with brooding basslines and atmospheric keys flirting with some slithering groove in style on the likes of *On The Edge*.

Threshold don’t have Damian Wilson any more, but they still have the talent to craft some very fine songs. And isn’t this what it’s all about?

CHRIS COPE

THE MYSTERY FAX MACHINE ORCHESTRA

The Hero’s Journey SELF-RELEASED

Lewis Carroll meets *The Mighty Boosh* on a wildly ambitious second album.

Martin White has long made a living shaping the overblown visions of other musicians as an orchestral arranger for hire. But it’s no small undertaking to compose and present your own “orchestral novelty prog” vision, as White calls it — particularly if you want to play live with a 24-piece band, as MFMO occasionally do. On this follow-up to 2012’s debut album *Master Flea*, they’re on irrepressible form — from time to time you might find it so shamelessly over-theatrical that you’ll find yourself yearning for some undemanding guitar pop. Lyrically, it’s all based on the



late US writer Anthony Campbell’s theory of the monomyth — the heroic story template that he claimed underpins all great adventures. But that still gives licence for surreal, freewheeling soundbites such as *‘I lost my feet in a poker game... my teeth are in the pawn shop,’* either side of mad monologues about drowning cats and *‘a bobbing box of tea’*. But you’ll remain intrigued thanks to an eclectic shower of warped show tunes and Bonzo Dog-ish pastiches performed with the skill and arrangement elan of classically trained aesthetes. Heroic? Arguably. Brave? Invariably. Original? Unquestionably. **JS**

TÍR NA NÓG

The Dark Dance MEGA DODO

Irish folk duo’s return gets the vinyl treatment.

This album was first released in 2015, but is now being made available in a limited vinyl format. The follow-up to the band’s 1973 debut *Strong In The Sun* — yes, a 42-year gap between albums! — on the surface *The Dark Dance* is a gentle acoustic glide. However, if you dig a little deeper, then the duo of Leo O’Kelly and Sonny Condell is certainly whimsical, but they also have wit and a pleasing edge. This gives songs like *You In Yellow*, *Sympathetic Love* and *Time Is Gone* a depth that many might overlook on first listen. It has a well balanced sense of rhythm and touch,



as the band tell stories within the confines of tracks that are never allowed to meander. In this fashion, Tír na Nóg are traditional folk artists, troubadours travelling from town to town recounting their experiences through music. But don’t

underestimate what O’Kelly and Condell can achieve with just a guitar and percussion because they have a passion for mixing complexity with simplicity in a fashion that never appears forced. *The Dark Dance* is modern in its approach, but it also has a firm connection to the 70s. It works brilliantly today. **MD**

TWISTED ILLUSION

Insight To The Mind Of A Million Faces SELF-RELEASED

Scream for me Manchester!

Twisted Illusion are certainly a fearless bunch. Tasked with concocting a follow-up to their well-received debut — 2016’s *Temple Of Artifice* — this Manchester-based act have crafted an album that has been bravely stretched over two discs. Centred around vocalist/guitarist Matt Jones, their line-up has been far from steady, with a variety of members performing on stage and in the studio as needed. That combination of a lack of stability and the sheer mountain of music created here has not been a winning one, unfortunately. Musically, they seem determined to hop on to



the ever-burgeoning prog bandwagon, when in reality, there’s a glaring dichotomy to that claim. The first half of the album harks back to the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, with opener *Reflections* having the aura of Saxon or even Judas Priest, with little in

the way of inventiveness to elevate it above the predictable. Granted, there’s nothing wrong with the musicianship here, but padding out tracks with imitation Bruce Dickinson screaming quickly grates. Luckily there’s a flipside, as the 28-minute title track and the expansive *Discovery* that fill disc two show a vast amount of promise. **RW**

UFOMAMMUT

8 NEUROT

Super dense suite of cosmic metal from Italian power trio.

Electric Wizard might have pioneered the crossover between black metal and space rock, but Italian trio Ufomammut take the form to its logical conclusion on *8*. Comprised of, yes, eight songs, it's best considered as one suite of ear-pummelling, cosmos-bestrident music, as not only are there no gaps between the tracks, but each song builds on the other, with new riffs tested and assembled like cogs in some infernal engine. Opening track *Babel* sets the template, massive drums followed by an assault of interstellar guitars and monster bass, while roared vocals and crackling electronics lurk



around the edges – it's as though a vast ship is ripping a jagged hole through hyperspace. *Warsheep* and *Zodiac* maintain the intensity, then *Fatum* establishes a hammering-at-the-gates-of-oblivion groove with mantric vocals that recall Om. *Womdemonium* offers Sabbath-ian churn in the middle of a laser battle, before *Psyrcle* brings the suite to a close with a fanfare of synth and looped devotional vocal that delivers the album's proggiest moment. *8* is less a journey into the void and more like being strapped to the nose cone of a rocket hurtling straight for the heart of the sun. **JB**

VESSELS

The Great Distraction DIFFERENT

Eclectic Leeds electronic collective move up a gear, now with added star turns.

Over their studio releases, Vessels have gradually moved further and further away from the post-rock upon which they built their name. Bringing in techno influences like many other genre bands, they've successfully used these as the fulcrum upon which to turn their sound and evolve artistically. *Mobilise* and *Glomer* carry the momentum on from *Dilate*, their last studio recording, while other tracks like the sparser *Position* offer a more significant departure. However, there are other new sonics here too. The noir, almost spoken-word vocal of Flaming Lips collaboration *Deflect The Light*



and the creeping tension of *Erase The Tapes*, which features John Grant on vocals, are both interesting sonic and timbral distinctions from much of the material elsewhere on the album. A criticism levelled at both post-rock and electronic music on record as opposed to in performance is that it can be samey. Vessels avoided that pitfall in their past life and they swerve it here. Let somebody tell you that *Deeper In A Sky* isn't dynamic, especially in the final crescendo, and you'll know the face of a liar – or somebody who didn't listen to the record you recommended to them. **AL**

WHITE MOTH BLACK BUTTERFLY

Atone KSCOPE

Atmospheric second record from Tesseract/Skyharbor collaboration.

Avital part of White Moth Black Butterfly's charm is their complementing contrasts. Just take a look at the evocative name, or the way they seamlessly juggle pop sheen with experimental, cinematic soundscapes. The collective's second album *Atone* follows suit, with the record exploring the common themes of loss and hope. The band – led by Tesseract singer Daniel Tompkins and Skyharbor's Keshav Dhar – landed a deal with Kscope for this 11-track album and you can see why the label decided to invest. Although distantly familiar, the interplay between Tompkins and



bandmate Jordan Turner's breathy, floating vocals is at times a treat, while string arranger Randy Slaugh – who has worked with Devin Townsend – helps to concoct some movie soundtrack-style mystery. Hardened proggers might wince at some of the more maudlin, new-school ditties, but immersive tunes like the brooding *Tempest* are reminiscent of Norway's Gazpacho, while *Penitence* is one of the most lush, velveteen pieces of music you're likely to hear this year. *Atone* was recorded across the globe in the UK, the US, India and Taiwan, but the music and its messages are truly universal. **CC**



AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the Prog sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

Some real musical gold for you this month, dear progger. Once you've set this issue down, do yourself a favour, get on Spotify and check out the self-titled debut album from Swiss power trio



The Universe By Ear (Czar Of Crickets). These three guys make a big noise with Sabbath sludge here, psych scale there, and Bigelf poppiness elsewhere. Bursting with big harmonies, blues rock flourishes and Amplifier levels of personality, the Ear deserve to be heard.

On a trippier tip is

California's **Joel Jerome**, whose *Cosmic Bear Jamboree* (Elite Records) kicks off with an echoing, gritty take on T.Rex's *Cosmic Dancer*, and over 10 woozy, Mellotron-friendly tracks, comes across like a lysergically powered Jonathan Wilson, reaching for the stars, clinging to the grass by his toes.



Happy to say I missed the broadsheet hype around **Richard Dawson**'s follow-up to 2014's acclaimed *Nothing Important*, so *Peasant* (Domino) hit me between the eyes without warning. It's a visionary piece of historically informed folk wyrdness. Catgut strings twang and a *Field In England* dusk falls as Dawson tells his



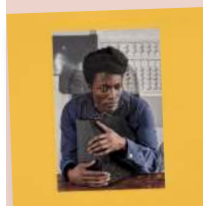
oddly timely tales (*Ogre*, *Prostitute*, the 10-minute *Masseuse*). His extraordinary melodies bend and modulate, treading that Beefheartian line between chaos and catchiness. If modern-day culture's your disease, *Peasant* is the cure. There's genius here.

San Francisco's **Deerhoof** also act on a similarly radical, wilfully underground impulse, but they've got Pro Tools. *Mountain Moves* (Joyful Noise) features guests such as Stereolab's Laetitia Sadier, and amid the original material are inspired covers (The Staple Singers, Bob Marley, Handel!). As ever, their sweet, synthy melodies and Satomi Matsuzaki's lovely voice help the arty medicine go down easy.

Bassist **Dudley Philips** has played with artists from Amy Winehouse to Anja Garbarek, and his second album *BASSheARTMANtra* (BHM) showcases his inventive and listenable approach. Spot the King Crimson and Brubeck references amid a tuneful, intelligent, Robert Wyatt-endorsed celebration of all things woof-ward.



Benjamin Clementine won the 2015 Mercury Music Prize with his debut *At Least For Now*, and his new offering *I Tell A Fly* (Virgin EMI) is an assured and truly progressive work, broaching everything from avant-soul to adventurous musical theatre. It's the product of an utterly modern artistic mindset that's refreshing by dint of its very being. It's unlikely to shift units, but thank God it exists.



And you know it's a packed reviews section when we're squeezing **Crippled Black Phoenix** in last. Their new, self-released EP *Horrific*

Honorifics features six covers, opening with Arbouretum's *False Spring* and closing with *The Faith Healer* by The Sensation Alex Harvey Band. They assert themselves over these tunes as if they were their own, and if this is a mere stopgap until *Bronze*'s actual follow-up, it really doesn't feel like it.



10CC

Before During After UMC

A treasure chest of delights for the 10cc obsessive.



Given the all-encompassing nature of 2012's *Tenology*, a robust four-CD and one-DVD affair that comprehensively covered the Manchester band's entire career as well as marking their 40th anniversary, one might wonder where there is to go with a new four-disc set.



Disc three is very much for diehards only.



Subtitled 'The Story Of 10cc', what this new collection does, aside from collating the band's biggest hits, is explore where the band came from prior to their formation in 1972, and where they headed following Kevin Godley and Lol Creme's departures in 1976 and then the Graham Gouldman/Eric Stewart line-up grinding to a halt in 1984. It overlooks the 90s reunions (largely forgettable in themselves), and Gouldman's own carrying on of the 10cc flame, yet worry not: for there is still gold to be discovered in this particular chest.

Opening with a 'Best of', the first disc is somewhat perfunctory and serves probably as little more than a contractual obligation. It's a very similar tracklisting as you'll find on countless 10cc compilations - *Rubber Bullets*, *Life Is A Minestrone*, *The Wall Street Shuffle*, *Art For Art's Sake*, etc... - highlighting more of the pop side of the band rather than the proggy side, the combination of which, of course, gives 10cc their superbly structured art rock sound.

Things get interesting with disc two, *What We Did Next*, which explores various projects that the original four members have indulged in since. Alas Godley And Creme's superb debut *Consequences* is again overlooked, but we get the expected art pop hits, whilst Gouldman's AOR project with Andrew Gold, Wax, holds up well. There are also two tracks from the Gouldman/Godley GGO6 project, previously only available for download, and the closest thing we've had to a genuine 10cc reunion of any kind in recent years. And there are two tracks from Producers, Trevor Horn's collective of famous pals that features Lol Creme on guitar.

Disc three's collection of early Strawberry Studio related material is very much for diehard fans only, but the final disc offers a few gems, not least two tracks from Ramases' rare 1971 debut *Space Hymns*. Gouldman's *No Milk Today*, a hit for Herman's Hermits, displays his pop prowess and Hotlegs' *Neanderthal Man* displays the sense of adventure at least Godley and Creme would add to the band.

There's a two disc set that features just the hits and the later years tracks, which some may find a little more palatable, but for the 10cc obsessive, these four discs serve as a treasure trove of delights.

JERRY EWING

BARK PSYCHOSIS

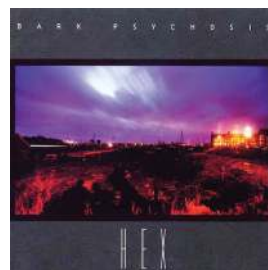
Hex FIRE RECORDS

Double 45rpm vinyl reissue for post-rock classic and nu prog landmark.

Bark Psychosis were one of the leading lights of the original 90s post-rock scene, a disparate collection of bands lumped together by virtue of sharing a dissatisfaction with the perceived limits of rock music. Released in 1994, *Hex* is routinely hailed as one of post-rock's greatest albums. However, what's clear from the perspective of 2017 is that, tonally and aesthetically, it's also a landmark in the development of modern prog, pioneering a sound that's artful but never elitist, experimental yet melodic.

Founder members Graham Sutton and John Ling were young and omnivorous music fans, taking on influences as diverse as Miles Davis, Swans, Can, John Martyn and, most tellingly, late-period Talk Talk. Just as significantly, older drummer Mark Simmet was a dedicated prog fan, with the likes of Pink Floyd, Camel and Mahavishnu Orchestra also discernible in the mix.

While many of their post-rock peers were flirting with electronica and sampling, *Hex* is defiantly organic, with Bark Psychosis adopting Talk Talk's



open-ended approach to both composition and arrangement to create a lush, atmospheric album suffused with small-hours melancholy.

Opening track *The Loom* builds a sombre melody from piano and cello before yielding to a meditative percussion breakdown, a willingness

to drift being a defining characteristic of all the songs here.

Absent Friend pivots on an ascending, ecstatic guitar motif that suggests the classic reverb and chorus-laden 4AD sound was another reference point. *Big Shot* highlights their willingness to cross-pollinate genres, fat dub bass underpinning stretches of jazzy, abstract psychedelia. Similarly eclectic, *Eyes & Smiles* stages a wonderfully lazy horn duel, while *Pendulum Man*'s clip-clop guitar flowers into an Eno-esque swell of heavenly ambience.

It's not a perfect album - Sutton's somnambulant vocals sometimes drain the energy from songs, which themselves can occasionally meander - but there's no question that *Hex* is one of the most important releases of its time. **JB**

COLIN HARPER

Titanium Flag MARKET SQUARE

Limited edition ode to Arctic exploration rolls around again.

S spurred on by the positive response to last year's more inviting album *Sunset Cavaliers*, Irish music historian Colin Harper has revisited his earlier instrumental release. Initially a very limited edition of 100 copies, 2010's *Titanium Flag* returns, much expanded on top of the obligatory remastering. With three new pieces and four vocal tracks now bookending the project, it's the most melancholy concept album inspired by Arctic exploration from the fourth century BC to the present day you'll hear this side of the North Pole.

Lovingly packaged with detailed vintage maps, history notes and a dash of geopolitics (Russia planted the titular titanium flag on the seabed a decade ago, to claim future mining rights after the ice has melted), it's a simpler affair once stripped down to the actual music. Piano-led, quiet jazz with a pinch of folk, it keeps Harper's own acoustic guitars veiled in the background, allowing violin, clarinet and flugelhorn to assist that dominant piano in creating a sparse, wintry soundscape. Two longer jams, however, provide



a shot of adrenaline. The 12-minute title track sees Harper cutting loose on electric guitar, his soloing somewhere between Neil Young and J Mascis. Its newly recorded counterpart, *Greenland: East To West*, the muse for which is 19th-century Norwegian adventurer Fridtjof Nansen, is graced

by guitar from former Focus man Jan Akkerman, clearly a hero of Harper's.

Also adorning this standout is ex-Mahavishnu Orchestra flautist Premik Russell Tubbs, while Phil Shiva Jones, once of Quintessence, guests elsewhere. This pair of rockier grooves lift an album that's at times too introspective and Chopin-esque, giving warm red blood to its chilly intellectualism.

The contemporaneous vocal numbers tagged onto the end sound like they're from a different album, which technically they are.

While its frozen oceans are almost reclusive in their moodiness, *Titanium Flag* is a work of near-devotional purity, and as an extended instrumental passage, it succeeds as a study of courageous spirits and loneliness. **CR**

JON LORD

Windows EARMUSIC

Lord's least loveable work of baroque'n'roll fusion.

Looking back across hard rock history, stylistic parallels with certain aspects of classical music's more bombastic incarnations are unavoidable. The full-tilt Sturm und Drang of Wagner, the opening riff of Beethoven's *Fifth* (surely the allegro con brio *Smoke On The Water* of symphonic fortissimo) clearly presage rock's essential elements. But back when rock was young, Elton still Reg, and Jon Lord endeavouring to fuse two largely disparate genres into harmonious union, his noble experiment couldn't have been greeted with more horror by classicists than if he were attempting to fashion a hybrid of Jeff Goldblum and a fly.

Pop, as it still remained, was way more open to bold progression. Incredibly, record-buyers stoically avoided no less than three Deep Purple albums before *Concerto For Group And Orchestra* (technically attributed to 'Jon Lord With Deep Purple') finally afforded the band their first UK chart placing.

Encouraged - validated even - Lord persevered. 1972's Purps-inspired, Beeb-commissioned *Gemini Suite* with the LSO



and Malcolm Arnold was similarly well received, but then came '74's *Windows* (co-composed with Moog-handed Eberhard Schoener). Comprised of two extended pieces for a rock septet (that included David Coverdale and Glenn Hughes on vocals) and the Munich Chamber

Orchestra, complete with complementary sopranos, it was experimental and ambitious, yet sadly a bridge too far.

Schizophrenic, way beyond loud bit/quiet bit dynamism, it often appears as if two opposing factions are locked in unyielding conflict. *Continuo On B.A.C.H.* peppers sublime romantic interludes with jarring orchestral parps, drum solos apropos of nothing, an ill-judged jazz break that neither fits nor swings and, despite a belatedly apposite trumpet solo, ill serves the incomplete JSB fugue upon which it's based.

Similarly, the 33-minute *Window* is a confused combination of Japanese renga, second hand *Gemini* themes and ill-advised vocal overstatement that only baffles. Crisply remastered, yet still artistically lacking. **IF**

MAGMA

Wurdah İtah Remastered SEVENTH

Magma legacy gains livid archival gold.

Wurdah İtah was reissued as 2015 during Jazz Village's catalogue reissue campaign, but now it's back, on Magma's own label, with the monumental addition of January 1972's original demo version, exhumed from Christian Vander's vaults. At that time, Magma had released only two feet-finding albums in France and, as Vander says in his notes, were bursting "to release our pent-up energy" after a series of volcanic live performances. So manager Giorgio Gomelsky booked a studio and Vander enlisted three Magma members, including stentorian singer Klaus Blasquiz, to try out a work in progress called *Wurdah İtah*. As Vander says in his notes, "We're in a trance... a gang of raving music-driven raving lunatics have struck their studio like lightning!"

Vander returned to the 25-minute track and expanded it into a full work when commissioned to provide the soundtrack to Yvan Lagrange's *Tristan et Iseult* movie in April 1974. It was then released under his name as a solo project, still sung in his self-invented Kobaian



language. By now, Magma had released 1973's breakthrough *Mekanik Destruktiiv Kommandöh* and when the soundtrack reappeared on Magma's label in 1989, retitled *Wurdah İtah*, it was revealed to be the second movement of the epic *Theus Hamtaahk* (Time Of Hatred) trilogy, Vander's

ecological space opera concerning doomed Earth and idyllic planet Kobaia. (Confusingly, *MDK* was actually the third part and the title movement itself has never made it beyond live albums.)

Wurdah İtah (Dead Earth in Kobaian) still stands as a mesmerising record of Magma's classic early line-up, enlivened by demonic bassist Jannick Top, with Vander handling both piano and his thermonuclear drums. Devotees will know every crevice, but it's that demo that provides this reissue's thrills as Vander's piano pummelling replaces his drums under possessed vocal incantations and impassioned soliloquies. As Vander says, "It remains an essential document to understand the origin of *Wurdah İtah* and to feel our frenzy at the time."

Once again, mind-blowing. **KN**

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Come All Ye - The First Ten Years UMC

Fairport's initial decade, documented via familiar and unreleased material in a trove of 120-plus tracks.



In the season in which they marked their half-century with an epic reunion at Cropredy, 10 years out of 50 may sound like a mere teaspoon of the ocean-deep Fairport legacy. But the decision to reappraise the initial decade of these draughtsmen and women of progressive folk is unassailable when you're armed with the keys to the archives.

The amble closer to the band's modern-day sound is fascinating.

In a bijou box with a fold-out poster and an illustrated companion booklet, here are a towering 121 tracks from the group's initial adventures, 56 previously unavailable - a trove drawn from demos, outtakes and live TV, radio and concert appearances. Weaved among album material, with over nearly nine hours of listening, they form a picture of Fairport's early ripening with perhaps unprecedented perspective.

Drawing on a vast catalogue, the anthology could have been scattershot, but not in the hands of Andrew Batt, who curated the stage show *The Lady: A Homage To Sandy Denny*. Fellow Fairport sage Patrick Humphries' essay describes the group's passage from underground imitators of folk, rock'n'roll and the nascent album rock genre to British folk rock founders.

We begin with the now unfamiliar sound of their eponymous Polydor debut of 1968, the only album featuring original vocalist Judy Dyble. As the box opens out with old favourites and new treasures, the contributions of Denny and Richard Thompson are especially to the fore: Denny's solo vocal version of *Eastern Rain*, for example, or five unheard workouts from the *Pop Deux* show of late 1970.

But one must never underestimate the stalwart presence that stuck these changing line-ups together, provided by musicians such as Messrs Hutchings, Nicol, Pegg and Swarbrick. Similarly enjoyable are appearances by the likes of Trevor Lucas and Canadian David Rea, whose *Maverick Child* and *Country Judy Jane* are mixed for their first release.

The newly heard alternative demo of *After Halloween*, known from 1975's *Rising For The Moon*, captures the delicacy of the composition and Denny's precious vocals. Devotees will devour five performances from that year's BBC *The Man They Couldn't Hang* documentary, fuelled by 1971's 'folk rock opera', "Babbacombe" Lee.

CD6 comprises a stirring, newly unleashed time capsule from the Fairfield Halls, Croydon stage of 1973, and we end with a complete 1974 show at the Troubadour in Los Angeles. Across scores of tracks, the amble closer to the band's modern-day sound is fascinating to behold. Who knows where the time goes indeed, but it's nice to leaf through a familiar book with some chapters we haven't read before.

PAUL SEXTON

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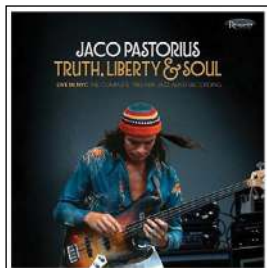
1982 live portrait of a genius at work.

There are few musicians who can credibly claim to have changed the world, but Jaco Pastorius is one of them. After he appeared on the international scene, his unique sound created a wave upon which he surfed triumphantly, and almost everyone else fell by in his wake, trying to figure out how he did it.

That signature sound mixed a smooth, fretless slide with an ebullient swagger, glittering with resonant harmonics. And although almost every bassist around the globe would try to emulate him, nobody ever managed to sound quite like Pastorius.

Though his grandstanding could get the better of him toward the end of his revelatory tenure with Weather Report, on this pristine-sounding two-disc set, containing 40 minutes of unreleased music, the bassist had his ego in check and his incredible gifts firmly in support of the music.

The celebratory feel to the concert allows Jaco considerable expressive scope to show how he was able to back up his oft-stated claim that he was



'the greatest bassist in the world'.

As impressive as his solo perambulations are, the sparks truly fly when he's operating within the capacious embrace of the 22-piece ensemble that includes his Weather Report sidekick, drummer Pete Erskine.

This brass-heavy outing draws upon his 1981 solo album, *Word Of Mouth*. With steel drums and Toots Thielmans' sunny harmonica casting a warm glow on top of swinging, punchy arrangements, pieces such as *Three Views Of Secret*, *Liberty City* and a devastating ensemble reading of *Donna Lee* produce a dazzling festival of colour and counterpoint.

This release is accompanied by an impressive 100-page booklet featuring exhaustive and informative interviews, and it sets the bar for other archive projects. It also does a great job of reminding us of the phenomenal talent that was lost forever just five years after this remarkable concert was recorded.

Taken from us aged just 35, Jaco, we hardly knew ye. **SS**

ANTHONY PHILLIPS

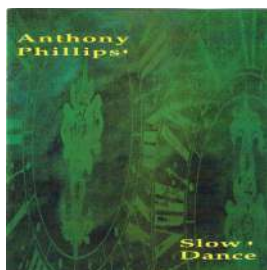
Slow Dance ESOTERIC

Gentle orchestral suite steps out once more.

Even 47 years after he left the band, Anthony Phillips seems destined to always have the preface "Genesis founder member" before his name. He can take solace in the fact that many long-time Genesis fans are still delving afresh into his considerable and charming solo body of work. 1977's *The Geese And The Ghost* remains the most enjoyable album, but the reputation of 1990's *Slow Dance* has consistently risen, albeit at a leisurely pace redolent of the music itself.

An orchestral 50-minute instrumental suite, split over what used to be two sides, it takes its time to enchant. Its cumulative effect, however, is certainly worth staying for. Now freshly remixed and remastered by original co-producer Simon Heyworth, it glides across the dance floor as a three-disc set, with previously unreleased vignettes, mixes and demos. The main event, nonetheless, is the original composition itself.

Phillips was undergoing financial difficulties at the time of creating this album, and by his own admission



took a gamble akin to "a high-wire act in a windstorm". Without record company support at first - Virgin snapped up the album once they'd actually heard it - he committed many months to the ambitious project.

It steps into your ears serenely, almost imperceptibly.

Phillips plays a multitude of instruments and there's dainty interplay between the time-honoured (a variety of guitars) and the then-modish: keyboards, sequencers and drum machines. Strings and woodwind come in and the intended levels of grandeur arrive.

In truth, the easiest comparison for this album isn't actually with Genesis, though you can still discern traces of Phillips' softly-softly approach that brushed their beginnings. And *Slow Dance* doesn't attain the scale or emotional impact of, say, Mike Oldfield's *Hergest Ridge*.

What it does echo is Camel. Phillips had worked with that band's frontman Andy Latimer earlier, and the overall mood and pace of this piece has something in common with *The Snow Goose*. Unhurried and graceful. **CR**

STEVE HOWE/BODAST

Anthology 2/Towards Utopia RHINO/ESOTERIC

Second retrospective explores Howe as team player.



With Steve Howe's son Dylan now joining Yes on tour to drum beside Alan White, the guitarist stands surely as the keystone of this incarnation of the band. His playing has defined the Yes sound as much as any other contribution. Yet this second anthology from his illustrious career seeks out lesser-known nooks and crannies. Fair enough - there are plenty of Yes collections already.



**Fresh insight into
Howe's innovative
50-year career.**



The first anthology, released in 2015, drew from Howe's solo work. This - subtitled *Groups & Collaborations* - cherry-picks from his creations within ensembles. So there's relatively little Yes: *Roundabout* and *Tempus Fugit* exemplify the golden eras, plus there are a few non-canonical choices, best of which is *Hour Of Need* from *Fly From Here*. There's also the delicate *Montreux's Theme*, a *Going For The One* out-take.

Generally, the three-disc, 56-track set - with a Roger Dean cover, naturally - shines a light on slightly off-piste nuggets. Let's qualify that - Asia and GTR aren't exactly unknowns. From the former, *Heat Of The Moment* and *One Step Closer* display that tighter, less free-form version of progressive rock that the group stand for, while Howe and Steve Hackett, as GTR, share guitar duties ever so politely. It's in the formative 60s selections that some might find fresh insight into the ongoing threads of Howe's innovative 50-year career. His style is already unique in The Syndicats and The In Crowd, even when the material is, at heart, conventional rock'n'roll.

When Tomorrow come along, with *My White Bicycle*, he's pedalling more wildly, pushing those sounds closer to the, er, edge. It's fascinating to hear him stretch the strings to his will on what we'd now consider primitive equipment, like hearing Yes unplugged. Then there's Bodast (more on which shortly), an evolutionary leap forward in technique.

Disc three gathers oddities and collaborations with everyone from Billy Currie to Annie Haslam. OK, his sessions for Lou Reed, Queen and Frankie Goes To Hollywood aren't included, but even saying that emphasises how extraordinary his output has been. There's Fish's cover of *Time And A Word*, sidebar work with Paul Sutin and Oliver Wakeman, and unreleased tracks with GTR's Max Bacon.

The prize here is several unreleased recordings with early ally Keith West, capturing the elusive, haunted optimism of their time. Returning to Bodast (née Canto), their 1969 material - produced by West - is remastered and expanded and stands up well. Howe recycled their riffs for *Starship Trooper* and *South Side Of The Sky*, and their seeds here sound scratchy but urgent. Across all these rangy recordings, there's more than enough Howe to wow.

CHRIS ROBERTS

CONCERTS THROUGHOUT THE EXHIBITION

MARTIN BARRE - DAVID CROSS - CARAVAN - GRYPHON - CARL PALMER - STEVE HACKETT



Badger © Roger Dean, 1973

ROGER DEAN

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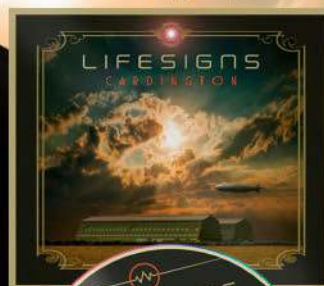
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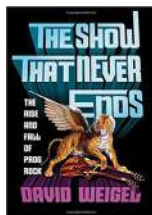
DAVID WEIGEL

The Show That Never Ends: The Rise And Fall Of Prog Rock

NORTON & COMPANY

Word salad surgery.

Does it matter if this book says that Bill Bruford joined Hatfield And The North? Should we care when Gentle Giant's Ray Shulman is mentioned as being the editor of *Melody Maker* or that Adrian Belew was part of Peter Gabriel's 80s reinvention? Weigel's day job as a political correspondent in America requires him to sift through the disingenuous rhetoric and 'fake news' that infests much of today's political discourse. So if facts *do* matter in responsible political journalism, they're just as important in the rock journo branch of the fourth estate, no? While such inaccuracies jar and undermine the



author's credibility as a reliable guide on this subject, his admiration for the creative ambition and musical invention for some of the bands emerging in the late 60s isn't in doubt. However, chronicling prog rock's big beasts by threading press clippings together, along with passages from books

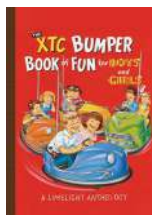
by others on the subject, makes this a well-worn, familiar tale. Adding little in the way of new substance, Weigel's reportage from *Cruise To The Edge* does at least sparkle with well-drawn portraits and waspish humour. A pity those admirable qualities don't extend much beyond the opening chapter. **SS**

THE XTC BUMPER BOOK OF FUN FOR BOYS AND GIRLS: A LIMELIGHT ANTHOLOGY

Mark Fisher WWW.XTCLIMELIGHT.COM

Partridge-packed annual for Skylarking diehards.

It might be hard to appreciate exactly how rabid XTC's global diehard fan base can be unless you subscribed to Mark Fisher's *Limelight* fanzine in the early 80s. But those people are out there, and every one of them will be buying this. A sumptuous compendium of highlights from the zine, *The XTC Bumper Book...* could easily have been an inessential scrapbook, but thanks to the unique way that the prog pop titans' fans pore over every last detail with joyous intensity, this is more of a treasure trove than a toilet book. With extensive interviews with all the key players and numerous revealing snapshots from



important moments along the band's early journey, not to mention a tricky crossword, this arguably amounts to the most comprehensive and incisive book about XTC yet published. And if you're still wondering what all the fuss is about, the brilliant Kevin Eldon pops up in a fascinating feature about

British comedians and their love for XTC and says this: "So many of their songs... have a sort of fountain ideas and feelings and imagery, thick and fast. It's why you can listen to an XTC song for the 500th time and still hear something for the first time."

Nail/head, sir. **DL**

IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO TODAY! - SGT PEPPER: THE ALBUM, THE BEATLES & THE WORLD IN 1967

Alan G Parker/Brian Southall SPECTRUM/CARLTON BOOKS

The Fabs' flawed tributes.

As the seemingly endless output from the cottage industry surrounding The Beatles shows no sign of slowing, we may never get to know how many biographies, memoirs and movies about the Fab Four it will take to fill the Albert Hall. Alan G Parker's doc consists of various talking heads offering gossip accounts of the era, interspersed with news footage of 'the boys' themselves responding to inane press questions or waving at adoring fans. From the 'Bigger Than Jesus' controversy to the closure of their Apple boutique, there's a weary familiarity to this particular telling of



a well-known tale. Unable to secure permission to use a note of Beatles' music, it explains the 'why' but doesn't touch upon the 'how' of what it calls the greatest album rock'n'roll ever made. As a result, it feels somewhat removed from the main event. Brian Southall, whose Fab credentials include a role as EMI

press officer, spends over 180 pages on a predictable sociocultural history parade between '66 and '68, while spending considerably fewer pages on the actual album it purports to celebrate. This addition to the teetering stockpile of Beatles books is gallingly thin. **SS**

DAVID GILMOUR

David Gilmour: Live At Pompeii TRAFALGAR RELEASING

A historic sonic eruption in a crucial Floyd crucible.



Last summer, 45 years on from Pink Floyd's performances there for Adrian Maben's legendary film, David Gilmour played two nights at Pompeii's amphitheatre, in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. He was the first human to play in front of a live audience there since the gladiators back in AD 79, the year Vesuvius erupted and the venue was entombed in ash. Thankfully, the volcano behaves itself this time and Gilmour and his rapt crowd aren't required to follow Spartacus and Commodus to the great gig in the sky during the intermission.

Nevertheless, there's a tangible atmosphere and a nod to



Every gorgeous note seems like manna from heaven.



the passing of time. "Ghosts from the recent and distant past are with us here," says Gilmour after *The Great Gig In The Sky* itself has been given a sublime rendition, led by his steel guitar and gospel-schooled backing singers. "That was a song written by Richard Wright, many years ago. And here's a song written about him..."

A *Boat Lies Waiting* follows, from *Rattle That Lock*, the album that was then being promoted. Songs from the man's solo career dominate earlier parts of the show, but there's a tasteful trade-off between his fresher work and the Floyd landmarks that most are here to witness.

As twilight moves into darkness, the effects, shining on, become more spectacular. If you've ever been to a Floyd/Gilmour show, you'll have high hopes, and they won't be dashed. If you haven't, empty your head for a proper sensory onslaught. Not that it's aggressive. Rather, the bells and whistles by Marc Brickman grow in dazzling stature gradually and gracefully, much like the music, building over two and a half hours to a cathartic climax.

All the knowing Floyd-related symbols, signals, orbs and giant mirrors appear, and — spoiler alert — you might want to prepare yourself for some revolving suns and moons and a phenomenal pulsating grid of green and red lasers. When we get to the euphoric home stretch of *Run Like Hell*, *Time*, *Breathe* and *Comfortably Numb*, the visual wizardry makes Luc Besson look like Gerry Anderson.

For all that, it's the music that makes your heart gently weep. (The package is available in various CD, vinyl, DVD and Blu-ray permutations.) From the first moments, Gilmour's guitar tone emits its unique emotional pull, and with his band flawless, he glides through the gears until every gorgeous note seems like manna from heaven. From the drive of *Money* to the throb of *One Of These Days*, it sounds molten. There's mythology and magic present.

CHRIS ROBERTS

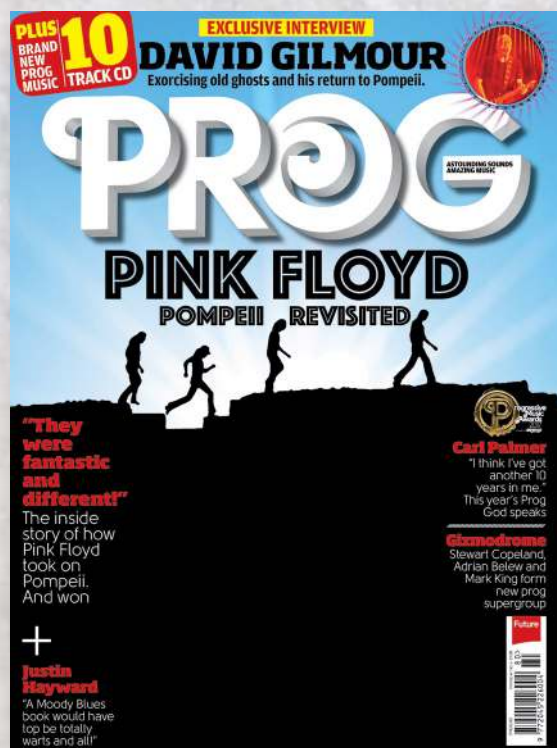
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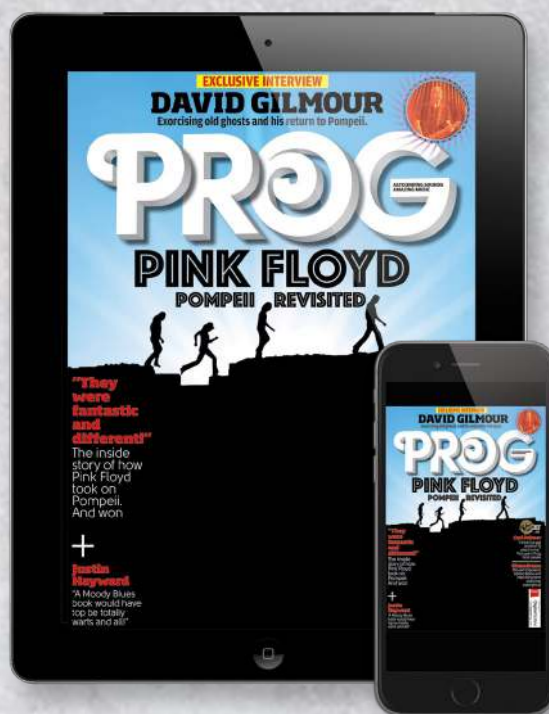
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THE MOODY BLUES

VENUE TOYOTA OAKDALE THEATRE, WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
DATE 09/07/2017

It's amusing that less than an hour away in Hartford tonight, just 30 miles right up I-91, kids are having their first taste of abandon at the Warped Tour, while their grandparents are here reliving the very same thing: tailgating, and maybe enjoying a warm up toke or two in the parking lot before the show.

It's 50 years since the Summer Of Love, which changed their lives, and it's just as many years since *Days Of Future Passed* also changed the fortunes of The Moody Blues. Fitting, then, that this 28-date tour feels like a celebration of who the audience were, as much as what the Moodies became. There's a bit of tribe-like ambience throughout the venue leading up to show time that harkens back to that album changing not only the way the fans here heard music, but maybe their optimism in a chaotic world as well.

So it's curious that commemorating what has become regarded as a pioneering prog LP should start with a set of greatest hits that came in the wake of that album's success. No matter, as the band bound through *I'm Just A Singer (In A Rock And Roll Band)* with a vigour that brings people to their feet.

That opening number and *The Story In Your Eyes* show that guitarist Justin Hayward is still capable of pulling off smart, concise leads, while *I Know You're Out There Somewhere* showcases the combined strength of him and bassist John Lodge singing together.

Hayward, Lodge and drummer Graeme Edge may be the charter members here, but their younger recruits — Billy Ashbaugh, Julie Ragins, Alan Hewitt and Norda Mullen — are all skilful players who earn rounds of applause for livening up the delicate nuances of many of the songs and making them more robust.

In particular, Mullen's flute and acoustic guitar give an airy lift

in all the familiar places, without pandering to any sort of faded hippie nostalgia. Her enthusiasm as a performer also balances Lodge hopping about at stage left.

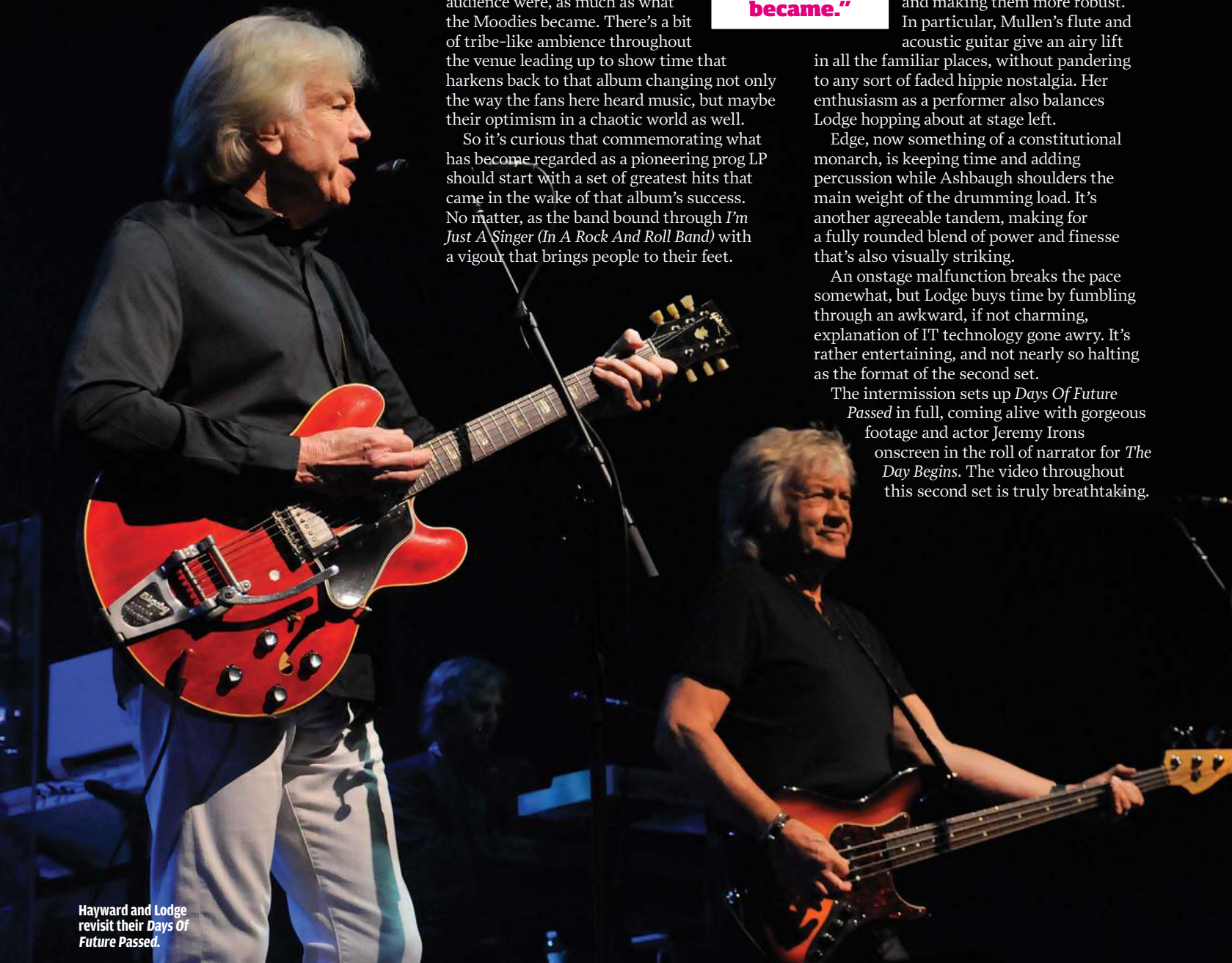
Edge, now something of a constitutional monarch, is keeping time and adding percussion while Ashbaugh shoulders the main weight of the drumming load. It's another agreeable tandem, making for a fully rounded blend of power and finesse that's also visually striking.

An onstage malfunction breaks the pace somewhat, but Lodge buys time by fumbling through an awkward, if not charming, explanation of IT technology gone awry. It's rather entertaining, and not nearly so halting as the format of the second set.

The intermission sets up *Days Of Future Passed* in full, coming alive with gorgeous footage and actor Jeremy Irons onscreen in the roll of narrator for *The Day Begins*. The video throughout this second set is truly breathtaking.



"This tour feels like a celebration of who the audience were, as much as what the Moodies became."



Hayward and Lodge revisit their *Days Of Future Passed*.

Together with the magnificent score that sounds colossal through the PA, the whole thing looks and sounds – feels, really – like some sort of fabulous, panoramic motion picture. And therein lies the problem.

The stop-start action of prerecorded orchestral interludes leaves silhouetted band members standing around, waiting to resume, making too many long minutes seem more like watching a movie rather than a live concert. It's a bit like the infamous Andy Kaufman phonograph sketch on *Saturday Night Live*, giving the whole thing a disrupted feel that drags against the momentum of the actual performance – not that the audience care. *Days Of Future Passed* finally coming fully to life, regardless of how it's done, has them captivated and responding with enthusiastic approval.

The band do sound impressive whenever they're playing non-orchestra sections, such as the well-known hits *Tuesday Afternoon* and *Nights In White Satin*. The encore of *Question* and *Ride My See-Saw* keeps the crowd standing, proof that the Moodies are on point as a live act. However, the uneven pairing of performance and recording puts too much of a dampener on the *Days Of Future Passed* set nearly every time the band start to cook.

Granted, the logistics and finances of travelling with an orchestra, or even coordinating a local symphony in every city, are better left undone. The same is probably true to changing arrangements and recalibrating the orchestral sections to accommodate a more minimal rock'n'roll band format. Still, two shows with a full orchestra filmed for a DVD just days before in Toronto must have been a celebration with much more impact.

The irony of the fanfare about The Moody Blues performing an iconic album in its entirety for the very first time is that the major aspect that made it so beloved in the first place is now a burdensome anchor.

ROGER LOTRING

Julie Ragins adds keyboard textures.



Justin Hayward: smart, concise guitar.



Still Got The Blues: The Moodies live.

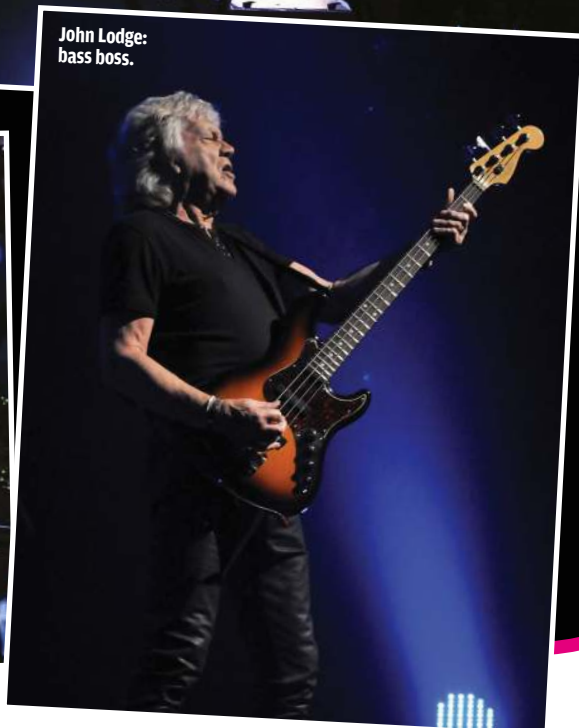


John Lodge: bass boss.



Keysman Alan Hewitt.

Graeme Edge, the elder statesman of the two-pronged drum attack.



KEITH EMERSON: A MUSICAL CELEBRATION OF HIS LIFE

VENUE SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM
DATE 28/07/2017

There is a considerable buzz in the bar of The Symphony Hall prior to tonight's concert. *Prog* hears someone excitedly relaying that they'd heard how some fans had travelled from mainland Europe, the USA and even China. Another voice pipes up, "I used to be Keith's keyboard tech," while someone else tells his friend that Lee Jackson, formerly of The Nice, is sitting just a few tables away.

Once inside, with standing ovations from the word go, it's impossible not to be swept up in a wave of emotion. There is less a sense of build-up than a constant and demonstrative outpouring of love and positive vibes. Comedian and major Emerson Lake & Palmer fan Jim Davidson is both the organiser of the event and this evening's compère, and his blokey banter helps to keep things somewhat down-to-earth.

The first number is a version of *Abaddon's Bolero* with Terje Mikkelsen conducting the 60-piece Keith Emerson Orchestra. Initially it seems to evoke a Disney-style army appearing over the horizon – with a tongue-in-cheek snatch of the old American marching song

The Girl I Left Behind – then bass, drums and guitar add to the heft of the sound, building to the intense, slightly menacing finale, with Rick Wakeman on synth.

This vividly arranged, well-drilled reading puts one in mind of Keith Emerson's early, tentative experiments between rock group and orchestra with The Nice, and ELP's own difficulty playing the multitracked composition live as a three-piece. It's also a reminder that, on the cusp of the 70s, musicians like Emerson needed to fight to get orchestral players to take it all seriously. Times have changed and to hear it played this way makes perfect sense.

Apart from a reworking of The Nice's take on *America* by Noddy's Puncture, with Lee Jackson on bass and Tom Szakaly suitably flamboyant on Hammond organ, and a blazing, brass-powered version of *Fanfare For The Common Man* with Keith's son Aaron Emerson playing synth, the evening concentrates on Emerson's own compositions rather than his classical adaptations.

American multi-instrumentalist Rachel Flowers, who participated in a similar tribute last year in Los Angeles, plays the *Fugue* piano solo beautifully in between the two orchestrated main song sections of *The Endless Enigma*. And later, this slight, blind musician, is led back onstage by her mother to perform the third *Toccata* movement of Emerson's *Piano Concerto*

Number One. She plays it with sharp articulation and considerable power.

Rick Wakeman comes on to tell us that he and Emerson had planned to make an album together, but the idea had been blocked by their respective managements. He mentions how Emerson had written some beautiful melodies and demonstrates this by playing some piano variations on the balladic first part of *Trilogy*, weaving in a little of the Tchaikovsky-derived *Nutcracker*.

Thierry Eliez underlines Emerson's skill as a melodicist – sometimes overlooked in the *Sturm und Drang* of ELP's work – by playing a sublime, jazzy, extended solo piano and vocal

"It's impossible not to be swept up in a wave of emotion: there's less a sense of build-up than a constant outpouring of love and positive vibes."

Thierry Eliez brings Emerson's melodies to life.



Terje Mikkelsen conducting the orchestra.



The 60-piece Keith Emerson Orchestra in full flight.



CARAVAN

VENUE DE BOERDERIJ, ZOETERMEER
DATE 27/06/2017

Because of recent terrorist attacks across Europe, De Boerderij asks for a minute's silence before the band begin their performance. Once those 60 seconds are over, the crowd applaud out of respect and welcome Caravan to

the stage. But instead of the sparkling opening they were expecting, the seasoned musicians begin their set with some soft jamming. The audience exchange confused looks, but the reason for this low-key introduction soon becomes clear. Keyboardist Jan Schelhaas is experiencing some technical issues, but luckily these problems are quickly

resolved so he and the rest of the band can begin properly with opening song *All This Could Be Yours*.

After *Headloss*, Geoffrey Richardson asks for audience participation during one of Caravan's most well-known songs. Fans are asked to make a wibble-wibble noise during *In The Land Of Grey And Pink*, as he explains it's what original bassist and

vocalist Richard Sinclair did in between vocal takes on the recording.

Older material, namely *Golf Girl*, *The Dog The Dog He's At It Again* and *Nightmare*, wrap up the end of the first set. After a short interval, Caravan return with *I'm On My Way*, *Fingers In The Till* and *Dead Man Walking*, all from most recent album *Paradise Filter*. Lead



Symph rock with style.



Keith's son Aaron plays the classic *Fanfare For The Common Man*.



Rachel Flowers: a powerful performance.



Rick Wakeman takes on *Trilogy*.

KATIA OGRIN/JERRY LOFARO

version of Emerson Lake & Palmer's loveliest composition, *Take A Pebble*.

Beyond The Stars is a striking orchestral piece that seems to nod towards Debussy and Ravel in some of the woodwind parts, with a cinematic sweep that also evokes Gershwin. It has a modernist feel derived from some of the same crunchy chords that Emerson would occasionally drop into his keyboard playing.

This is the last piece the musician had been working on prior to his suicide in 2016, and it was finished by Mikkelsen. To add further poignancy, it receives one of the best receptions of the night.

MIKE BARNES

vocalist and guitarist Pye Hastings dedicates the song *I'll Be There For You* to his wife, because he used to be far away from home too often during tours. The set ends with *The Love In Your Eye*, which transitions into *For Richard*. But the band return to play one encore, the 20-minute *Nine Feet Underground*, which is received with a loud applause.

While they're regarded as the pioneers of the Canterbury sound, the newer songs have a more accessible classic rock, jazz rock and even country twang. While the crowd clearly prefer the older material, they still encourage and appreciate the more recent music.

Although Hastings' unstable voice is the weakest link during

the show, the overall performance more than compensates for this. Next year, the band will reach their 50th anniversary, and according to Richardson, it's certain that the inevitable celebration will not go unnoticed. In their own way, Caravan will be making a big noise.

IRIS HIDDING

MERCURY REV WITH THE ROYAL NORTHERN SINFONIA

VENUE	THE BARBICAN, LONDON
DATE	14/07/2017

Jonathan Donahue seems Jawestruck by the skills of the orchestra behind him. "Amazing!" he sighs. "What's also amazing," he continues, "is the urge to conduct..."

And despite a laughing acknowledgement that he has no idea how it works, he can't resist joining in when he's not singing.

At the climax, in a moment surely untarnished by premeditation, he produces a blue lightsabre and takes over the podium with the enthusiasm of Tigger. He's already explained that Mercury Rev's music embraces the childlike. "If I'm honest, most of our records are children's records. We relate to the childhood experience."

There's a sweetness and innocence to their songs tonight, rearranged for the 20-piece orchestra, which confirm that.

Buffalo, New York's Mercury Rev have come a long way since this reviewer attended their home town debut gig in 1991 among an audience of four, which included the guitarist's mum. Their career as experimental psychedelic noiseniks then unexpectedly took off, before they streamlined and rebooted with 1998's *Deserter's Songs*, the simple melodic whimsy of which - to their shock - was hailed as a transcendent classic. The core of Donahue and guitarist Grasshopper have enjoyed a low-key level of success since.

Tonight they're celebrating 20 years of Bella Union and are joined onstage by their label head Simon Raymonde, once of Cocteau Twins, and introduced by the singer as "the Grand Vizier of all things ethereal".

As the venue makes up in sound quality what it lacks in atmosphere, the evening isn't short on beautiful noise. The ensemble dip into most phases from The Rev's back catalogue, albeit more frequently into the later, prettier stuff than those early anti-music forays. From the recent *Central Park East*, back through highlights like *Hercules*, *Racing The Tide*, the ever-popular *Holes* and fan favourite *Opus 40*, it's a delicate, deft ride through their mesmeric body of work.

All is indeed dreamy, and if it gets faintly one-paced after a while, Donahue's likeable goofiness, standing on one leg and clearly in a state of bliss, warms the cockles. Holly Macve cameos onstage to sing an old Dusty Springfield song written by Raymonde's late father, Ivor.

It's mature and dignified: as Donahue quips, "Those of you who've been watching us for 20 years won't recognise this next one, as we no longer have a huge fight as it starts."

Peace broke out long ago within Mercury Rev, and tranquillity reigns.

CHRIS ROBERTS

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR

VENUE MOTE PARK, MAIDSTONE
DATE 30/07/2017

After a Saturday during which the rain fell sideways and misery was unconfined, day three of Ramblin' Man finds the Prog In The Park stage basking in warm sunshine.

Making the most of the good conditions are early starters **The Gift**, whose ambitious music takes pointers from the giants of early prog, but with the dramatics of their presentation, it's possible Thotch are a bigger influence than either King Crimson or Genesis. "We write songs about death and pain and suffering and dead people," says **iamthemorning** singer Marjana Semkina, a statement delivered with a cheeriness and charm entirely at odds with the subject matter. It's as if Kate Bush had continued on the path of *Babooshka* and *Breathing* and ended up in a realm of delightfully quirky chamber pop, instead of wobbling off towards more cerebral noodling. *Matches* ("a song about how amazing it is to burn down houses") is beautiful, while the syncopated handclaps on 5/4 show that it's never too early for a successful plea for audience participation.

Whatever name *Prog's* learned friends demand we use to describe **Martin Turner's Wishbone Ash**, it's difficult not to get sucked in when the band play their classic *Argus* in its entirety, and those crystalline guitar lines suit the warm weather perfectly.

Focus also sound great, delivering a set of classics that includes *Sylvia*, *Focus I* and *House Of The King*. The highlights are a rousing version of *Eruption* during which Thijs van Leer engages in a bout of call-and-response scat with the crowd, and a rattling version of *Hocus Pocus*.

Magnum, unfortunately, are wretched. The sound is sludgy, Bob Catley's once-rich voice is an emphysemic croak, and the backing vocals are wildly out of tune. And

Devin Townsend: puerile jokes and pulsating prog.



"Townsend is one of the few frontmen who can pick up an audience and take them on a journey they had no idea they were about to embark on."

despite a strong opening salvo of *Soldier Of The Line* and *On A Storyteller's Night*, people are already streaming away from the stage as the latter finishes, presumably to find something less painful to endure. Perhaps there's a tattooist on site.

"Fuck prog in the cunt!" shouts **Devin Townsend**. As opening lines go, it's hardly designed to woo the uncommitted, but he perseveres. "And thanks to Kansas for pulling out," he adds, "so we could come along and make your lives worse."

Fortunately, Townsend is one of the few frontmen who, through sheer force of personality alone, can pick up an audience and take them on a journey they had no idea they were about to embark on. And amid all the puerile jokes and inflatable phalluses, there's a band who comprehensively prove they can headline a festival, from the triumphant romp through *Supercrush!* to a churning, vibrant *March Of The Poozers*. An absolute triumph.

FRASER LEWRY

Martin Turner's *Argus* delivery.



KEVIN NIXON

iamthemorning: from Russia with, er, death and pain and suffering.



In Focus: Thijs van Leer leads his band through a set of classic tracks.



TOUCHSTONE

VENUE	BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON
DATE	30/06/2017
SUPPORT	THE ROOM

The Boston Music Room is perhaps only one-third full when The Room take the stage tonight, and it remains stubbornly under-occupied for the remainder of the evening. It's a Friday night, with two good bands – where were you all?

Those who did turn up will have seen The Room's blend of AOR hooks and prog on full display in the opening *Carrie*, with drummer Chris York busting out some dextrous stick tricks. Their live sound has more meat on its bones than their studio output might suggest. *The Book* touches on Neal Morse Band territory, with a bouncing energy that nods towards 60s pop and features an impressive guitar solo from Steve Anderson.

In *The Shadows* moves through tempos and time signatures with ease, prompting frontman Martin Wilson to quip, "Who says The Room can't prog?" afterwards.

Meanwhile, they're as tight as a drum on the stops and starts of *The Hunter*, which boasts a hefty neo-prog instrumental workout, and they then finish big with *16 Tonnes*.

The Room's sound mix is balanced and clear, so it's a surprise when headliners Touchstone kick off and their sound is a mess. With this new incarnation of the group, bassist Moo has assumed the backing vocal duties that former keys player Rob Cottingham used to handle. Perhaps it's down to poor onstage monitoring, but Moo is consistently flat, and it only exacerbates the problem that his voice is louder in the mix than that of lead singer Aggie Figurska.

On previous sightings, drummer Henry Rogers invoked the spirit of Gavin Harrison with his nimble playing, but tonight he goes for the full Portnoy and hammers away from first beat to last. Unfortunately, he often swamps his bandmates in a wash of galloping fills and crashing cymbals.

Figurska is clearly emerging as a terrific frontwoman, from belting out *Spirit Of The Age* to her dramatic stage presence. The only quibble is her confusing banter, covering alien visitations, the lost innocence of childhood and why we're all stuck in a 'frequency prison'.

The set includes two new songs. *Evolve* really allows Figurska to let rip and prove she has more power and presence than her predecessor, and the tune emphasises Touchstone's metal influences. *Stolen Moments*, by contrast, has a wide-open rock feel, with a touch of Tears For Fears. The main set wraps on the epic *Wintercoast* and *The City Sleeps*, the band encoring with *Lights In The Sky*.

It's a shame the mix is so poor tonight – too many of Adam Hodgson's guitar solos are seen rather than heard – as this line-up boasts plenty of talent and, judging by the new songs, there's some potent material in the pipeline.

DAVID WEST

VOLA

VENUE	DINGWALLS, LONDON	DATE	16/08/2017
SUPPORT	NOVENA, VALIS ABLAZE, SÜMER		

Tonight's line-up could be billed as Prog: The Next Generation, featuring four young bands offering their own takes on the genre. Novena merrily mash together death metal, with growls erupting from the hooded Gareth Mason, and grand, melodic passages sung by Haken's Ross Jennings. The compositions might be epic, but there's a playfulness too, with drummer Ray Hearne sporting a hi-vis vest and witch's hat.

With seven-string guitars and deep drop-tunings, Bristol's Valis Ablaze inhabit the same segment of prog's spectrum as Tesseract. *Lost In The Syntax* boasts a crunchy djent riff and Kieren Hogarty's slap bassline kicks on the pummelling *Persuasion*. Phil Owen's voice does occasionally thin out when reaching for the highest notes, but there's drama aplenty in the dips and swells of their performance.

The crowd peaks in size and enthusiasm for London's Sümer, who absolutely nail it. They kick off with *Progenesis*, and, with a triple-guitar onslaught, it's not so much a wall of noise as an all-enveloping tidal wave. The set draws primarily from 2014's *The Animal You Are*. Guitarist/singer Ian Hill apologises for "all this old shit", but nobody seems to mind.

Pinch, Cut features a crushingly heavy breakdown, while the instrumental 9 is a kaleidoscope of swirling guitar lines underpinned by Toby Bonney's rampaging drums. They finish with *End Of Sense*, which builds, drops, then builds again to reach gargantuan size, receiving the loudest reception of the night.

In his white T-shirt, jacket with sleeves rolled up and mane of blond hair, Volá's frontman



"Volá's frontman could have stepped out of 80s cop show *Miami Vice*, but the band's sound is distinctly contemporary."



Sümer attack the young crowd with a thrilling tidal wave of noise.

Asger Mygind could have stepped out of 80s cop show *Miami Vice*, but the band's sound is distinctly contemporary. *The Same War* sets out their stall. From the opening djent battering, it lifts off into wide-open skies in the verse, before Felix Ewert's nimble drum break leads them back to the riff crunching. The band are fond of exploring polyrhythms as Ewert holds a groove, allowing Mygind and bassist Nicolai Mogensen to morph subdivisions over the beat, as they do in *Black Box*, from 2011's *Monsters EP*.

Your Mind Is A Helpless Dreamer sees Martin Werner dancing behind his keyboard, inspiring a singalong from the audience.

The gentle *Emily* is introduced as "a short, quiet tune", but Mygind reassures the crowd that "after that it will be a heavy one, so you don't have to worry". *Owls* is a highlight with its fat bassline, and the climactic *Stray The Skies* inspires a mosh pit.

It's a different audience to those of bands like Lifesigns or Touchstone. Drop-tunings and djent breakdowns are now part of the prog scene, and bands like Volá are among the most energising, exciting groups around.

DAVID WEST



Djent And Drop-Tuning: Volá get the fans moshing.

KEVIN NIXON

LONELY ROBOT

VENUE ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON **DATE** 19/08/2017
SUPPORT TILT, KEPLER TEN

“Nice to see you, to see you...” begins John Mitchell. “Nice!” holler his audience, a reference to Bruce Forsyth, who passed away the previous day. We’ve met the stars of our show, Lonely Robot, and by the end of the night, Mitchell’s fans are trying on “Didn’t he do well?” for size. With stirring guitar solos and songs that surge in muscular chunks, he’s played his cards right.

Dressed in an astronaut suit, though without the helmet (which would, in fairness, be impractical for any vocalist), Mitchell leads his quartet through a mixture of material from new album *The Big Dream* and earlier work. Red balloons and a flickering TV screen adorn the stage. “I suppose by definition this is progressive rock,” he says. “I’ve never really understood that. If it means no queues for the women’s toilets and long songs, then this fits the latter...”

The driving riffs of the new opus’ title track follow. The rhythm section of drummer Craig Blundell (Frost*) and Fish’s bassist Steve Vantsis stay snugly in sync, while Liam Holmes’ keyboards add another layer. The ambition of the songs suggests they could/should be more broadly arranged – like, for example, some of Steve Hackett’s current work – but, y’know, budgets.

Prior to a curious, buzz-killing 45-minute wait for the headliners to emerge, Kepler Ten enthuse their fan base, and then Tilt – who have worked as Fish’s band – offer an introspective, pensive set that fleetingly finds catharsis. Often in near-darkness, they



“Mitchell is dressed in an astronaut suit, though without the helmet - which would, in fairness, be impractical for any vocalist.”

Lonely Robot’s John Mitchell: looking to the heavens.



create a brooding atmosphere. Debut album *Hinterland* might give the impression they’re heavy and grinding, but there’s infinite subtlety at play (if you squint through the half-light) here. A group bow at the set’s end might seem a tad grandiose in a half-filled hall, but credit for confidence.

The concept of Lonely Robot’s *The Big Dream*’s goes off on a tangent from that of its predecessor *Please Come Home*, and one can get confused as to who’s the astronaut, who’s the robot, and where the rest of us come in. Mitchell clarifies somewhat with a zen speech about humanity and how we’re all fundamentally the same being. The respite from rocking out that is the drifting, gentle *In Floral Green* comes closest to capturing such empathy, via the medium of sound. Yet for all the people clad in animal heads who appear on the rear screen (and on the album cover), Lonely Robot’s music has nothing in common – as Mitchell has conceded – with Gabriel-era Genesis. For the most part, despite some quirky time signatures, any link with progressive rock is forged firmly through the rock side. Although yes, it’s true that the queue for the women’s toilets isn’t exactly blocking the stairs. Maybe not one giant leap for mankind, but a solid launch.

CHRIS ROBERTS

Tilt: coming at you from a different angle.



MACHINE

VENUE NEW CROSS INN, LONDON
DATE 05/08/2017

Just three weeks on from an appearance at Night Of The Prog in Loreley, Maschine are taking part in all-day prog metal event Prog.Metal.Madness! in New Cross. It’s an intimate setting for the band, and being up close and personal with Maschine performing in a pub is a mouthwatering prospect.

Resistance, from 2016’s *Naturalis*, effervesces and broods in equal measure. Burbled synths and a groove

that could have come from Tool’s rhythm section gradually lead into the shared male and female lead vocals that are a signature of this band.

As pop melodies share space with metal riffs, bassist Dan Mashal alternates between deft funk-styled fingerwork and Chris Squire-influenced tremolo picking. During *Night And Day* he’s pogoing so high he’s in danger of braining himself against the ceiling.

Frontman Luke Machin’s debt to his hero Francis Dunnery is evident. The songcraft in fusing heavy sections with accessible and memorable hooks is just one aspect of that influence. The timbral

quality of his voice is another, as is the jaw-dropping facility he displays in firing off short, sharp bursts of lead guitar. This is anything but The Luke Machin Show, though – there’s no descent into self-indulgence at the expense of the song, or grandstanding to the detriment of the tight ensemble playing.

Usual drummer James Stewart is on duty with his other band, Poland’s death metal titans Vader. His replacement has been drafted in at a week’s notice to learn all the songs, but Mariusz Marecki, the man in question, handles the machine-like rhythms of *Megacyma* in an undaunted manner.

The looser stop-start feel of *Rubidium* is a fun way to end, and all five on stage are having just as much of a blast as the small but vocally appreciative crowd.

The set has been part of an all-day ‘celebration of fringe metal styles’ hosted by radio show Prog.Metal.Madness. On the prog side of the divide, Awooga’s heavy take on space rock impresses, as does the funk-metal-meets-fusion of The Parallax Method.

What is perhaps most noteworthy is the variety of styles coexisting under the prog metal banner, which is definitely something worth celebrating.

CHRIS MCGAREL

RAW POWER FESTIVAL

VENUE	THE DOME/BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON
DATE	26-28/05/2017

Few things are as tedious as the tiresome bores who claim that music today ain't as good as it was back in their day. Indeed, these are the very people who should be promptly dispatched to Raw Power, a festival spread over two interconnecting venues, and the event is one which proves that, in the main, the areas of psychedelic, experimental and progressive music are currently going through something of a renaissance, if not a whole new golden age.

What becomes apparent over the course of the three days is how the emphasis of these forms has altered over the course of time. Where once the gaze was held by seasoned virtuosity, the opening overs of the 21st century have seen the balance shift more in the direction of rhythm that acts as a foundation and launch pad for third-eye-cleansing activity.

Tomaga's set is a case in point. Essentially The Oscillation's rhythm section of Valentina Magaletti and Tom Relleen, they pick up Can's baton and totally erase all conventional norms of music as their hypnotic and unorthodox drum patterns mesh with drones and throbbing pulses. In the process they blow **Faust** clear out of the building and into irrelevancy.

Similarly, **Sly & The Family Drone's** collaboration with **Dead Neanderthals** sees drums and percussion take centre stage. Their rise from a whisper to a scream, via incrementally insistent percussion and ever-menacing synth activity, plus heavy duty sax skronkage that makes you feel like you're in the grip of some monster fist that shakes out any perceived torpor. So much so, in fact, that **Evil Blizzard's** usually disturbing combination of fright masks, space rock and post-punk, all duly delivered on four basses, keyboards and drums, comes as something akin to light relief.

Of course, not everything hits the mark. Glasgow's **The Cosmic Dead** prove that the line between inspired intoxication and over-intoxication is indeed a fine one, with the latter option almost derailing their set.

Nevertheless, the strike rate remains satisfyingly high, as evidenced by the appropriately titled **High Octane Party Banger**, **Shitwife's** electro blitzkrieg. It's further emboldened by drummer Henri Grimes' gonzo onslaught, which creates one of the weekend's standout sets.

Likewise **K-X-P**. Though the bpm's are dialled back, their blend of electronics and live motorik drums hits the mark and then rubs it out.

Not that any of this is to suggest that six-string action is out. Revived hypno-monotonists **Loop** sound better than ever, with **Collision** having barely dated, while **White Hills'** sonic grooves are as dependable as ever.

Existing purely in the here and now, the Raw Power festival more than lives up to its name.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

RADIOHEAD

VENUE	EMIRATES OLD TRAFFORD CRICKET GROUND, MANCHESTER
DATE	04/07/2017

Radiohead are a band that have been over-intellectualised to the point that even approaching a more in-depth discussion or dissection of their music is to tread very well-worn ground indeed. However, these dates are significant — they function not only as the album tour for return-to-form record *A Moon Shaped Pool*, but also the 20th-anniversary of their opus, *OK Computer*, the yardstick by which not only all mainstream alternative rock must be judged, but also most modern progressive rock.

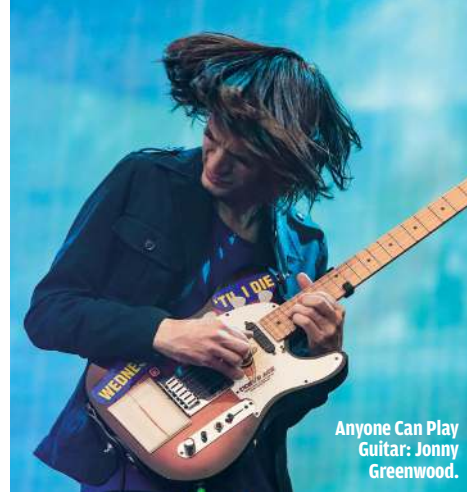
With *OK Computer*, Radiohead opened a crack into the mainstream for left-field acts pushing the envelope, from cult bands like Pure Reason Revolution and Oceansize to those like Muse or Steven Wilson who have found more lasting commercial success.

The wider impact of their music is largely irrelevant tonight, though — this is a pure celebration of a band still able to deliver at the peak of their powers. The setlist is an enviable collection of songs, with everything from the bombastic grunge rock of *The Bends* during their second encore to the paranoid electronic glitch-hop of *Idioteque* in the main set.

Opening gently with *Let Down*, the band quickly start bringing out the heavy hitters, with highlights *Lucky* and *Airbag* played within minutes of each other. During 10/4 synth stomper *Everything In Its Right Place*, guitarists Ed O'Brien and Jonny Greenwood even dispense with their guitars, taking up sampler pads to manipulate Thom Yorke's vocal in increasingly jarring and strange ways. *No Surprises* finds the audience shouting back



"This is a pure celebration of a band still able to deliver at the peak of their powers."



Anyone Can Play
Guitar: Jonny Greenwood.

the line 'Bring down the government/They don't speak for us' at the band, before cheering.

Closing the main set, *2+2=5* is probably the most rabble-rousing song of the night, with the audience jumping around to the energetic climax before the band finish and clear the stage.

Returning for an encore, they ebb into *Daydreaming*, possibly their single saddest and emotionally devastating song, before abruptly changing the mood with the sprawling *Paranoid Android*.

After their gravity-defying Glastonbury headline slot, a clever soul observed on Twitter that where an older generation had The Beatles' *Hey Jude* as a culturally shared singalong song, it's a sign of less confident times that late Generation Xers and millennials have

Karma Police instead. It's the song with which Radiohead end their second encore tonight. Indeed, as Yorke leads the crowd through its outro coda of 'For a minute there, I lost myself', the audience more or less drown the band out.

Tens of thousands of voices keep the refrain going long after the band have left the stage, in a spontaneous shared moment that must send shivers down the spine of even the most jaded onlooker.

ALEX LYNHAM

Thom Yorke brings out the heavy hitters.



THE ENID

VENUE UNION CHAPEL, LONDON

DATE 05/08/2017

Robert John Godfrey, diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2012, may have given up performing as a regular member of The Enid, but that doesn't mean he's retired. In fact, he's here onstage, to share his 70th birthday with many of his fans — or “fellow travellers”, as he calls them.

Such is the love for The Enid mainstay, and his music of matchless symphonic beauty, that people have travelled from Japan, the Emirates, Turkey and Canada. The fact that it is also the farewell performance of drummer Dominic Tofield, the driving force behind this year's album *Resurgency*, adds to the sense of occasion.

Not that The Enid need an excuse for celebration. Godfrey might move weakly to his chair positioned behind his laptop/gadget set-up, but there's nothing

diminished about his contribution as musical director/conductor, nor his music, delivered tonight by Godfrey, Tofield, guitarist Jason Ducker and keyboardist Zachary Bullock. The first half of the concert comprises side two of 1976 debut *In The Region Of The Summer Stars*, and it is by turns ravishing and rousing. And Godfrey's presence onstage tonight gives the music an extra poignant power.

It's not all weepy orchestral transcendence, harp glissandos, pizzicato flourishes and magisterial crescendos. There's plenty of room for laughter too. “I haven't lost my sense of humour,” Godfrey says, with a defiant chuckle. “My marbles, yes.” He announces *Charades I: Humouresque* from 1979's *Touch Me*, “an album I loved and hated — the music was great but being in that band at that time was awful for all concerned,” he reveals of The Enid, who have been prone to more line-up changes than Yes and Spinal Tap put together. “Some marriages,” he adds, “are not designed to last.”

He laughs, before adding, “This isn't meant to be a night of me rambling.” Godfrey then proceeds to discuss his sexual orientation, erectile dysfunction, “butch peasants” and his parents' “mild racism” at considerable length.

Nothing can detract from the music, though. *Sheets Of Blue* remains a thing of schizoid loveliness, *The Lovers* is Gershwin-gorgeous and *'Til We're Old* is dedicated to a woman among The Enid's ardent, yet ageing, audience suffering from cancer.

After the break, Godfrey plays a snatch of *Homily*, the title track from his new solo album, all Gregorian grandiloquence, plaintive music born of pain with a redemptive quality, followed by *Chaldean Crossing*'s quasi-ambient rock, *Childe Roland*, *Ondine*, *Mayday Galliard* and finally *Fand's First Movement* and *Second Movement*, which is Spielbergian in terms of symphonic heft; music of epic sweep and scope. Godfrey was going to end with a cover of *Wild Thing*, but there's no time. Besides, he doesn't need to. Instead, he removes his bow tie and chucks it towards the faithful at the front. Baroque'n'roll!

PAUL LESTER

“Godfrey's presence gives the music an extra poignant power.”



Robert John Godfrey (second from left) back in business.

THE NEAL MORSE BAND

VENUE THE HOUSE OF BLUES, CHICAGO

DATE 18/08/2017

The Neal Morse Band released *The Similitude Of A Dream* in 2016, and tonight they take to the stage in Chicago to perform the entire album.

The show begins with Morse on stage alone, singing *Long Day*, with a single flashlight eerily showing shades of his face. For second song *Overture*, the lights come on, and the tone of the show takes a majestic turn with dual synthesisers from Morse and Bill Hubauer, thumping

drums courtesy of Mike Portnoy, and Eric Gillette's hard-hitting guitar licks.

Morse's theatrics are something to behold, as he directs the audience at every turn with strength and intensity. And with each lyrical and instrumental nuance that Morse displays, the audience get increasingly raucous. Morse switches between acoustic/electric guitar and keyboard throughout the night. At various points in the performance he wears different masks, creating a Peter Gabriel-esque mystique to his stage presence.

Lead vocal duties are split between Gillette and Morse, with Portnoy and Hubauer on lead vocals for one song

apiece. The strong vocals in the band as a whole lead to great backing harmonies, which are very much on display during acoustic stomper *Freedom Song*.

The unsung hero of the night is bassist Randy George. The spotlight shines on him during *I'm Running*, and his playing reaches a virtuoso level. The same can be said for the legendary drum patterns delivered by Portnoy. He's a machine, with an exciting sense of showmanship.

For any fan who loves the synthesiser and organ sounds of Styx and ELP, this is a show that will leave you satisfied. There's an impeccable keyboard sound from beginning to end, running through

nearly every song. Gillette's guitar unleashes tones comparable to legends such as John Petrucci, Allan Holdsworth, and even David Gilmour, showing why he's considered one of the top young guitarists on the planet.

As the show comes to its climax, *The Battle* is unfurled, with instrumental ecstasy and chaos intertwined. Time signatures change on numerous occasions during this three minute mind-melter. The performance balances darkness and light, both thematically and song-wise. The Neal Morse Band put on one of the best shows of 2017.

TREVOR WOODS

GOAT

VENUE	02 ACADEMY BRIXTON, LONDON
DATE	29/07/2017
SUPPORT	THE MOONLANDINGZ, JANE WEAVER

It happens during the extended wig out of Goat's *Run To Your Mama* – those minutes that could easily be hours or possibly even days as the repetitive and circular hypnotic beats increase in intensity and force – that it feels as if nothing at all matters, except losing oneself to the music. All around the venue are groovers who are lost in a deep trance, moving to the sound of the bongos and seductive wah-wah'd guitars. The moment the song returns to its main structure, the effect is akin to an orgasmic release, as cheers are raised, hands are waved and several thousand bodies leap around with unconfined joy.

This decade's psychedelic renaissance has conjured up a wide variety of bands setting their controls for the heart of the sun. As with anything resembling a movement, there are always those chancers trying to muscle in on the action, but as evidenced by tonight's broad spread of sound and ideas, there's more to psychedelia than the mere deployment of a few phaser pedals and hoping for the best.

Jane Weaver's ascent continues in the wake of her new album, *Modern Kosmology*. Blending motorik beats with synth arpeggios, driving bass and a gloriously melodic sensibility, she soon overcomes any nerves that come with playing a venue this big. While opener *H>A>K* feels hesitant, *Slow Motion* finds her settled in. By the time the kosmische pop of *I Need A Connection* has breathed its last, Weaver has assured herself a victory.

Conversely, there's an undeniable sense of menace that runs through the heart of The Moonlandingz. The beats here are harder and more aggressive, and consequently this could be described as psychedelia for the angry and dispossessed. Crucially, though, the music doesn't repel; in fact, it seduces. Consequently, any resistance to something like *Black Hanz* is utterly futile thanks to sound that's a kick in the third-eye by stack-heeled boots. Of course there's a mood of confusion and disorientation but this is less a by-product and more a deliberate objective.

The night, though, undeniably swirls around Goat's performance. Since their arrival onto the music scene five years ago with debut album, *World Music*, the Swedish band have grown in both popularity and musical dexterity, and with that come shows of devastating firepower. Such is the mood of celebration and dance that surrounds Goat, tonight's show frequently feels like a part of a wider ceremony. Indeed, *Goatman*'s heady concoction of chants, heavy-duty riffs, fuzzed guitars and propulsive rhythms tap into something deeply primal.

As Goat leave the stage, all around are wide eyes and smiling faces. Which is as it should be.

JULIAN MARZSALEK

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL

VENUE	FERNHILL FARM, COMPTON MARTIN, BRISTOL
DATE	17-19/08/2017

While the first day of the festival has exciting up-and-coming progressive bands like **Town Portal**, it's the promise of a **Russian Circles** set that has drawn an early bird crowd. Opening with a powerful combination of 309 and *Vorel*, they blast through a stunning set including highlights of *Deficit* and *Afrika*, as well as earlier material in the form of *Youngblood* and *Death Rides A Horse*.

On Friday, **Alpha Male Tea Party** blow the cobwebs away with a set leaning heavily on new album *Health*. The highlight is new single *I Still Live At Home*, and bringing on a choir to sing the end of *No More* is one of the most powerful moments of the weekend.

Capricious geniuses **Wot Gorilla?** destroy the stage with their completely unhinged prog math tunes. 11:11 from new EP *Angel Numbers* is electrifying, though older cut *Fear Of Flying* from *New Arrival* is hard to beat.

Headlining the PX3 stage, **worriedaboutsatan** mesmerise a packed crowd. Unfortunately, there's no surprise Vincent Cavanagh cameo, but instead there's an excellent set of minimal techno and post-rock that's one of the best of the weekend.

Opening up the PX3 on Saturday, there's a surprise in

the form of local Bristol post-rockers **Poisonous Birds**. Their sparse but punchy songs display a 'less is more' ethos with nods to industrial rock. Hopefully they'll put out a proper record and maybe come back higher up the billing.

The highlight of the festival is **The Physics House Band**, who draw one of the largest

crowds of the weekend. Their bananas fusion of classic prog, jazz and intense, psychedelic-influenced math rock can be too dense at times, but *Calypto* from new LP *Mercury Fountain* offers a way in, sneaked between a blinding whirl of drums and saxophone solos. *Titan* from *Horizons/Rapture* also gets a wild reception, as would be expected of their signature track.

Probably the only band that can give The Physics House Band a run for their money are **Tesseract**. *Phoenix* and *Survival* from *Polaris* are lapped up by the crowd, while *Nocturne* and *Deception* are highlights from the heavier material they play. The band are polished and confident after touring *Polaris* and it's impossible not to get caught up in the performance.

Explosions In The Sky are many peoples' gateway into the post-rock genre, and while their music has

developed over the years, they've helped to define a good part of what modern post-rock is, so there aren't a huge number of surprises during their set. Some tracks feel sonically quite a departure, for example *Wilderness* and *Disintegration Anxiety* from new record *The Wilderness*, though the flip side is that the older, more classic material works hypnotically well with their ebbing and flowing light show.

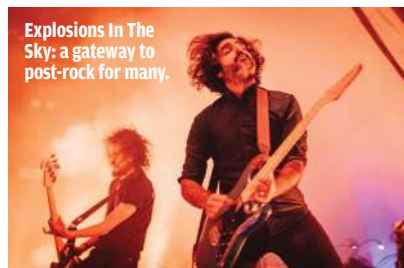
ALEX LYNHAM



Tesseract: "Polished and confident."



Alpha Male Tea Party "blow the cobwebs away".



Explosions In The Sky: a gateway to post-rock for many.



"Explosions In The Sky have helped to define a good part of what modern post-rock is."



The Physics House Band draw in one of the biggest crowds.

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Where's home?

North London. Remember that burning police car on the news during the 2011 riots? That was the top of my road. That aside, it's a fine place to live.

Earliest prog memory?

When I was 14, I was into Guns N' Roses and Iron Maiden, but then my guitar teacher gave me Bruford's *Feels Good To Me* and Mahavishnu's *Birds Of Fire*. It had such an impact on me, it changed my attitude to music forever.



First prog record you bought?

King Crimson's *Red* from the old Tower Records on Piccadilly, in about 1992.

First prog gig?

Radiohead on their *OK Computer* tour, Birmingham NEC, in 1997. They were really good – they're a really special band.

Favourite gadget?

My Eventide H9 guitar pedal. I've been spending my life trying to make a guitar not sound like a guitar, and it lets you really stretch your sound. Other than that, my iPhone – it's essential for all our social media stuff.

Guilty musical pleasures?

All sorts – Joe Meek, Napalm Death, The Shadows. Taylor Swift's album 1989 is a brilliant pop record. It's so well done, you can't help but admire it.

What would your specialist subject on Mastermind be?

Celtic Frost. *Into The Pandemonium* is one of my favourite records. Either that or SNES video games of the early 90s.

Biggest prog extravagance?

I just bought a Dave Smith Mopho x4 synth. You can do all those swirly Hawkwind sounds on it. It was about a grand, but I could've bought a Prophet-5 and they're two-and-a-half grand, so it was a bargain really.

Favourite prog venue?

The Peel. It's where the prog music revival started in the UK. [Promoter] Twang put



Matt Stevens

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon.**

on Galahad, Twelfth Night and the likes of us and Knifeworld. It's demolished now, sadly, but it was such a cool venue to play.

Outside of prog, what are you into?

Nothing remotely cool. Comics, old computer games and science fiction films. My favourite's *Silent Running* – hippies in space, so sad and out there.

What do you collect?

Apart from guitar pedals, I've got some weird esoteric occult books. Robert Ramsay bought me a few recently.

The last prog album you bought?

Ozric Tentacles' *Jurassic Shift*. I had it years ago, lost it and re-bought it. A great, spacey prog record. I absolutely love it.

Your prog hero?

I don't really have heroes, but Robert Fripp has retained his honesty and integrity, and constantly reinvents himself.

Last prog gig?

I went to see Voivod a few months ago with Kavus [Torabi]. They were one of my favourites as a kid, and their guitar player [Dan Mongrain] is amazing.

Ever had a prog date?

Very much no! You didn't get too much romance at The Peel, unless you were prepared to make a financial investment...

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?

Prog's own Jo Kendall, the Knifeworld guys, the boys in my band, Rob Ramsay. I'm lucky to have a good bunch of people to go out for a beer with.

“Bruford and Mahavishnu changed my attitude to music forever.”

Most important prog song?

Crimson's *Red* shows what can be done with instrumental music. It's short, sharp and to the point, but very powerful and intelligent.

The best prog gig you ever saw?

King Crimson's gig at the Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury, when they reformed with three drummers. They took old material and reinvented it – it was very original and exciting.

Which prog muso would you most like to work with?

Dave Brock from the mighty Hawkwind. He's kept it going for so long and is still making interesting music.

Which prog album gets you in a good mood?

Levitation by Hawkwind. It's an uplifting, genius, psychedelic record.



Pick us a good proggy read.

Paul Stump's *The Music's All That Matters*. It's really in-depth and taught me loads about prog, helped me really get into it in the 90s. It's not like you could look it up online back then...

Your favourite prog album cover?

Mahavishnu Orchestra's *The Inner Mountain Flame*. Like those great 70s jazz rock covers it's got an eerie atmosphere – it's genuinely strange, spiritual and mysterious. I was obsessed with it.



What are you up to at the moment?

I've just recorded a song with Judy Dyble for her next album, we're halfway through recording the new Fierce And The Dead album, and we're making a DVD of our RosFest appearance. We're doing HRH Prog in November and booking loads of festivals for 2018, including our first gigs in Europe. You'll be sick of the sight of us next year!

See www.mattstevensguitar.com for more information.

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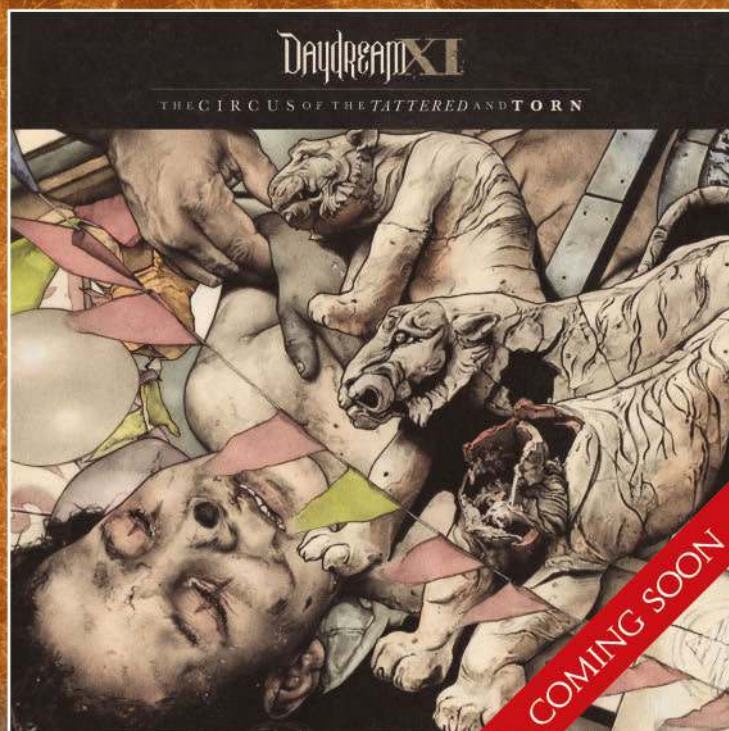


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